



The Montessori OBSERVER

DEVELOPMENT

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IMS in Australia

In May 2000, IMS held its first Montessori conference in Australia (Brisbane, Queensland). Based on the success of this first IMS event in this country, the *Montessori Association of Australia* (MAA) is now cooperating with IMS to provide a further series of these two-day workshop experiences in the country in 2001.

The next two conferences are scheduled for Brisbane (March 31-April 1, 2001) and for Melbourne (April 7-8, 2001). Further similar events will be held in August 2001 in Sydney, Adelaide and Perth.

These workshop seminars aim to help improve Montessori teaching skills through experiential learning. They employ the same successful format of other conferences offered by IMS elsewhere, with significant attention given to resolving disruptive, unnormalized behavior in children through the approach of "control the environment, not the child".

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Participants of the IMS conference in Washington, DC — November 4-5, 2000

Montessori Conferences in Arizona, Washington, DC and Texas

The Society recently held its two-day weekend conference entitled "Creating the New Education" in Sedona, Arizona, Washington, DC and Edinburg, Texas. These events are part of a continuing dialogue, led by Lee Havis, IMS executive director, to help improve Montessori teaching skills through inner preparation. The format is experiential learning, including the analysis and resolution of specific misbehavior situations, role-play drama, demonstrations and interactive exercises. Focus is on the psychology of being committed to laws of nature with children.

Sedona, Arizona October 28-29, 2000

The Sedona conference was the second such event in Arizona in 2000. It was held in the northern part of the state and was attended by parents, teachers and other educators from throughout the state. **Betty Chester**, owner and director of several charter schools in the state helped organize this event as a follow up

to the first IMS Arizona conference she attended in Mesa in July.

The conference discussion directed considerable attention to the visionary nature of Montessori teaching — that we must practice faith and imagination to overcome our ordinary preconceived notions and limited understanding about children and education. Havis noted specifically that Montessori teaching is an experience beyond our scope of immediate understanding. "Quite often", he said, "we must act in ways that seem odd or even contrary to our conventional sense of reality. We cannot always rely and act on our feelings and perceptions of the moment, because these tend to reflect strong negative judgments and emotional-ity in times of conflict and uncertainty."

After the conference, Havis visited nearby schools in Camp Verde and Phoenix, to further help teachers with their various classroom teaching situations. He particularly discussed how to better help elementary children organize and plan their daily study and work routines.

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MONTESSORI CONFERENCES

Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching
Palm Spring, CA

February 3-4, 2000

Tampa, FL

February 17-18, 2001

Brisbane, Australia

March 31-April 1, 2001

Melbourne, Australia

April 7-8, 2001

Hong Kong

May 5-6, 2001

Register 8 weeks before event date for maximum discount. Conference rate

(8 weeks in advance) is:

\$130/member \$170/regular

The Society's two-day weekend conference employs group discussion and dynamic experiential learning procedures, led by Lee Havis, IMS executive director.

For full cost and registration details, contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Development

by Lee Havis

"Neither the latest discoveries nor the theories that arise from them can explain fully the mystery of life and its development..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education for a New World*, p. 19

Dr. Montessori may not have solved the ultimate mystery of human development, but she certainly made a considerable breakthrough in this area with her discovery of the child's true nature in 1906. In essence, she laid out an approach to support the child's true normal path of development as a way of being committed to such laws of nature as "observation", "individual liberty" and "preparation of the environment". We can follow these three fundamental Montessori principles today to help us uncover many of the most deeply hidden secrets of the child's basic inner psychic development.

Psychic Development

"A child has a body which grows and a mind which develops. Both his psychological and psychic development have a single source, life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.61

Montessori education views the child as having its own unerring inner guide to complete normal development. During the formative period of early childhood, this process takes place as a substantial inner psychic development, with profound and long-lasting implications for the child's whole character and personality. However, any efforts we make at directly teaching development during the early years will only interfere with the child's own natural plan of creation as it emerges from within the child itself.

Teaching Development

"Any one can dominate and repress the weak and subdued, but no one can cause another to develop. Development cannot be taught."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 206

Ordinary education aims at teaching development of various academic skills and moral values to children. However, such traditional teaching invariably includes some measure of adult control and authority — and this disturbs the child's own path of normal self-directed learning. By contrast, Montessori teaching avoids any such adult repression, aiming instead to support the child's own inner plan of development.

Adult Repression

"A child cannot develop and expand as it should because an adult 'represses' it..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.13

Traditional education is based on adult repression of the child's true nature — placing the needs of a predetermined curriculum over those of the child itself. If we force a child to learn only through the teacher's praise or disapproval, we corrupt the child's own inborn developmental processes of life. Before the age of about six, any such repressive adult teaching will particularly interfere with the child's most delicate formative development.

Formative Development

"...the child has not been able to actualize his primitive plan of development because of the hostile environment he encountered in his formative period..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 155

We build up our basic structure of intelligence and mental order during the early years — basic formative development that either limits or enables our opportunities for all later learning and progress in life. To assist in this process, the young child has a uniquely *absorbent mind*, which allows the child to acquire many basic attributes of reality with the effortless ease of natural experience. Montessori teaching supports this natural development by providing a stimulating environment for the child's free and independent activity.

Environment

"To assist a child, we must provide him with an environment that will enable him to develop freely."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.110

The Montessori teacher creates a psychic environment around the individual child that is committed to laws of nature; however, the tangible elements of this environment consist of the "adult personality", "other children" and "physical objects". These elements must be maintained free of detrimental influences that would otherwise act against the child's own independent, self-directed development. The adult must therefore prepare the environment for the child to engage in various forms of constructive, goal-directed work.

Work

"...the child can only develop fully by means of experience on his environment. We call such experience 'work'."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 88

By nature, the young child follows inner guiding instincts to pursue a wide range of orderly intellectual activities. Such work attracts the child's attention

and interest to some difficulty to overcome, and to some process or cycle of activity to complete. In this way, the young child undergoes a basic mental development during the critical early years of life.

Mental Development

"It is essential for our new education that mental development be connected with movement and dependent on it."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education for a New World*, p.39

The young child normally seeks out those unique experiences in the environment that will refine and order its own unique mental development. Certain sensitive periods for order and language are active during the early years to direct

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Look for the
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Lee Havis, Executive Director

The Montessori Observer is mailed four times each year, in March, May, September and November, to Society members throughout the world. The purpose is to provide news and information about the Society's work in Montessori education, and to extend awareness of Montessori principles throughout the world.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

The International Montessori Society is sponsored by Educational Services, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized in Maryland, USA. The Society's purpose is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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ADVERTISING

Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Market-place ads are \$7/line. Position and placement ads are \$20 each and will be set and edited by the Society to conform to space requirements. Write for the Society's advertising outline for details about design advertising rates.

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MOMENT OF PERIL

by Lee Havis

Starting a New Class

Starting a new Montessori class of young children can present a range of disturbing *moments of peril*. The teacher here is concerned because she lacks a prior successful experience in these matters, and has only imperfect models to follow from the past. (*Observer, September 2000*). The primary need here now is to establish the necessary routines for effective order in the class, without violating Montessori principles in the process.

The best way to start a new Montessori class is to get to know the children and parents on an individual basis first — before the first total group session. At a preliminary meeting, the teacher will meet with parent and child, and may then offer a brief introduction to the class, give the child a snack and invite activity in the outdoor recreation area. This preliminary meeting is to establish a bond of trust between the teacher and child.

At the first day for the total class, the children who come in first can be introduced to some simple, easy activity with materials; e.g., a puzzle, building toy or blocks. When all the children have arrived, the teacher will call them together for name introductions, and some simple body awareness exercises, games or songs in a group.

In the group, the teacher may also give such simple practical life lessons as carrying a chair, rolling a work mat, carrying a tray, handing objects to each other, careful walking, eating a snack, etc. Also, she can show some simple manipulative devices; e.g., puzzles, blocks, picture books, coloring, etc. Then she invites each child to choose some simple material to use during a brief period of individual work. At this time, she can reinforce further basic practical life and completion procedures with the children.

Following this work period, the teacher will call the children together again for more songs, games and perhaps to read a story. Then, allow them to have a substantial period of outdoor recreation time, if possible, before dismissal or break for lunch.

For the next few days, the teacher follows this same routine, giving different practical life lesson presentations in the group, and offering more choices for activity during the individual work period. Each day, she will reduce the amount of

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Development

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the child to take a particular type of interest in such natural attributes of physical reality as size, color, and shape. Montessori teachers must therefore carefully observe each child's work with materials, noting particularly the event of profound concentration, when the ordinary young child will enter into a new, higher plane of learning possibilities.

Concentration

"The first essential of the child's development is concentration...He must find out how to concentrate..."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from Absorbent Mind, p.222

Dr. Montessori noticed that the ordinary young child will 'normalize' in some moment of deep concentration — to return to a natural state of order, self-discipline, attachment to reality and complete harmony with its entire environment. To assure such *normalization* in the child, we must therefore never interrupt a child who is concentrating on work. After this normalization has occurred, the teacher's help is to support the child's further *normalized* development, by removing any obstacles to its continuing successful work in the environment.

Teacher's Help

"General surveillance and individual teaching, given with precision, are two ways in which the teacher can help the child's development."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from Absorbent Mind, p.270-71

Montessori teaching helps the child along the path of its true normal development by removing whatever obstacles there may be in the surrounding environment. With "physical objects", the teacher's help is to sometimes introduce the child to new materials and exercises, and offer various lesson presentations that reflect the fundamental order and harmony of physical reality. However, any such instruction of the teacher must be very brief and simple, and well focused on the piece of work, rather than unduly draw attention to the adult presence.

IMS in Australia

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The conference registration fee rates will be the same as elsewhere. However, MAA as well as IMS members will receive a reduced discount rate.

Contact IMS to register or to obtain more details. In Australia, contact: Mary Tancred (Brisbane), tel. (04) 1344-6981, email — mary@tancred.com.au or *Montessori Association of Australia*, maa@cyber.net.au or *Montessori Association of Victoria* (Melbourne), mav@Montessori.asn.au, tel. (05) 0051-1907.

Montessori Observer, November, 2000

MONTESSORI CONFERENCES

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Washington, DC

November 4-5, 2000

The Washington, DC conference was held in the nearby suburb of College Park, MD. Attending were parents and teacher from Maryland, New Jersey, Illinois, Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia. One person attended from the country of Haiti. As always, the conference offered the opportunity for a direct experience of being committed to laws of nature with children. It included a lively discussion, experiential observation exercises and various demonstrations of lesson presentation procedures for showing materials to children.

The discussion dealt significantly with such long-term issues as improving parent-teacher communication and applying specific rules of thumb to the many problems of controlling the adult personality. Participants also engaged in various exercises dealing with presenting materials to children, and the use of reflective and questioning language to help resolve conflict between children.

Havis stated "when we are feeling upset, we tend to act out various detrimental habits of language and behavior with children. We can best overcome these entrenched negative habits with greater self-control — by using certain *rules of thumb* in moments of peril with children. Just repeating to ourselves a phrase like 'interest driven' or 'negativity' may be enough to keep us moving ahead with effective Montessori teaching at such times. I also recommend using certain fundamental phrases like 'come over here, let me show you something' and 'watch', to help avoid the easy tendencies towards excessive or destructive negative language at times of stress."

Havis acknowledged local IMS members, Sara Pileggi (IMS '00), Alethea Hession (IMS '87) and Eleanora Crawford, as particularly important local support for the success of this and two prior conferences held in the area in recent years.

Marketplace

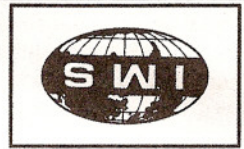
FOR SALE: Montessori school, Est. 1970. Grades pre K – 6th. New York State Absolute Charter. Long Island-New York. Suburban location, Central Nassau County. Contact: William Budin, 463 Edgefield Ridge Pl., Henderson, NV 89012. (702) 260-0056.

Development

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Development

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Instruction of the Teacher

"The instruction of the teacher consists then merely in a hint, a touch — enough to give a start to the child. The rest develops of itself."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Dr. Montessori's Own Hand.*, p.58-59

In Montessori education, a lesson is any interaction between the child and the adult. Most favorably, such lessons are nothing more than brief, simple eye contact with individual children as they glance up from their various activities around the room. With materials, the instruction of the teacher must aim to offer just enough of the idea of the work to get the child started and moving ahead on its own. The teacher's development here is from an initial active role with the child, to one of detached, passive observation — a process of controlling the "adult personality" that ultimately removes all discernible forms of adult distraction or dependency with the child.

Teacher's Development

"Whether I am present or not, the class carries on. The group has achieved independence. To arrive at this mark of success, there is a path to follow for the teacher's development."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p.67

Montessori teaching works to entirely remove the adult's imposing presence from the child's environment — to allow each child to experience its own free and independent being in complete harmony with the entire environment. The teacher's development in this process is achieved through constant *inner preparation* — to notice and correct such inner errors as negativity and abandonment that would otherwise tend to impose an obstacle to the full emergence of the normalized child. In this way, the adult serves a vital cosmic purpose beyond the lives of those in the immediate situation, to support the eventual development of a whole new and better humanity in the world.

Moment of Peril

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time in the beginning group meeting, until it is eliminated altogether. This allows the children more time to choose and concentrate on their own activities according to individual need and interest.

As the children adjust to the basic routines of classroom order and practical life activity, the teacher can give more individual lessons with advanced sensorial and cultural materials. Then, she will become more and more of a passive observer, as the children proceed on their own self-directed path of normal development.

Grabbing and Holding Things

2-½ year old Oscar has the bothersome habit of grabbing and holding almost everything within his reach. The teacher must therefore constantly follow Oscar around the room to prevent him from taking things off the shelf that he cannot properly use and return in good order on his own. However, when the teacher touches Oscar's hands and otherwise tries to gently lead him away to more suitable objects to handle, Oscar violently objects, sometimes throwing objects or crying. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer March, 2000*

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: (3-6). Wilmington Country Day School in Wilmington, NC. Mid-year replacement. Available in January of 2001. Additional lead teacher needed for Fall, 2001. Call: Barbara Kretschmer at WCDS, (910) 686-1110 or fax resume to (910) 686-2129.

Montessori Conferences

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Edinburg, Texas

November 18-19, 2000

This conference follows up a similar event held in the south Texas region in March 2000. Attending were parents, teachers and other educators from throughout the state. **Claire Vanderput**, owner and director of the *Claire's House Montessori*, was the primary coordinator and IMS contact for support in the area.

The Edinburg event focused particularly on Montessori as an experience beyond specific rules and conventional understanding. Havis stated, "Rules and procedures can only help us move along towards that ultimate experience we associate with the eventual emergence of the normalized child."

After the conference, Havis visited the nearby Mexican border town of Las Flores, to initiate the operation of "*Montessori de la Calle*" (*Montessori News, Fall, 2000*). **Grace Avila**, conference participant and teacher at the Palmer Elementary School (Pharr, Texas), accompanied Havis on this initial visit. During this visit, Havis and Avila gave Montessori lessons to the poor street children in accordance with the *Calle* plan.

Havis viewed this first visit as quite successful and a very hopeful beginning to a more regular program operation by Spanish speaking Montessori teachers in the local area. He stated, "I can see how this program could easily expand to include training of local Mexican teachers, to work with these children on a regular daily basis. It has the potential to expand to include all the communities along the Mexican-American border and beyond."