



The Montessori *Mystery* OBSERVER

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IMS Reviews Teacher Education

The IMS Montessori teacher education program is presently undergoing a review of its program operation, to continue its accreditation with the *International Montessori Accreditation Council (IMAC)*. Since 1984, the Society has maintained its accredited status with the IMAC accrediting agency, to assure program quality to the general public. The IMAC agency is an umbrella organization that

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Participants work out a misbehavior scenario in role-play drama event at the Montessori conference in Brisbane, Australia — May 13-14, 2000

MONTESSORI CONFERENCES

*Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching*

Mesa, AZ
July 15-16, 2000

Santa Barbara, CA
July 22-23, 2000

Hong Kong
August 19-20, 2000

Bucharest, Romania
September 2-3, 2000

Columbia, SC
September 16-17, 2000

Montreal, Canada
October 14-15, 2000

Washington, DC
November 4-5, 2000

Edinburg, TX
November 18-19, 2000

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, led by Lee Havis, IMS executive director.

Montessori Conference in Brisbane, Australia

On May 13-14, 2000, the Society held its latest *Creating the New Education* conference in Brisbane, Australia. Participating were educators from throughout Australia, as well as the countries of Indonesia and Singapore.

Roelie Murphy, Montessori educator in Brisbane and member of the *Queensland Montessori Association*, provided local support, coordination and publicity for this first IMS conference in Australia. She contacted area schools, wrote articles and spoke to groups about the IMS conference she attended in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1999.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, led the Brisbane conference proceedings which included a variety of exercises, examples and discussion directed to applying Montessori principles with children. He particularly emphasized how to control the adult personality through such means as restraint of physical movement, reflective language and distraction of a misbehaving child.

Havis stated that "we must considerably reduce our physical movement around the room if we are to effectively observe all the various scenarios of misbehavior that call for our attention. The best Montessori teaching is the briefest lesson possible, and the least possible interven-

tion necessary to resolve the issue at hand. A brief moment of eye contact with a child across the room is the best lesson of all."

After the conference, Havis visited schools in the Brisbane area that had delegates attending the conference. He consulted directly with individual teachers in their classroom, to help reinforce their learning of skills and work through various practical issues of concern that arose during the conference. Havis stated that "effective Montessori teaching requires a constant inner preparation, so that we can continue to overcome well-entrenched prejudices in society, and improve our skills. I hope this first conference in Australia will open up the opportunity for more such efforts for inner preparation in the future in Australia."

Reflections

By Susan Tong-Danilson

"...it is not so easy...to stand still and watch.."

*Dr. Maria Montessori
From Absorbent Mind, p.272*

You recently commented to me, "talking is an adult thing and it intimidates the child". This statement and illustration has had a profound effect on me in my ability to create and sustain a 'normalizing' environment. I

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Mystery

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 *Ed. For a New World*, p.19

Dr. Montessori considered the mystery of life as an inherent reality in her scientific approach to study and support for the child's true normal growth and development. Montessori teaching today must therefore respect the mysterious development of the child — to observe the child as an unknown entity, to discover its true nature as it freely emerges in a prepared environment of nurturing, positive love and support. In this way, we can discover many mysteries of life that would otherwise remain well hidden by our ordinary thoughtless, prejudicial way of being with children.

Many Mysteries

"Usually we live among many mysteries in the universe and don't stop to think about them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice of Dr. Montessori*,
12 Dec. 1941, p.3

According to popular opinion, the young child is not a mystery at all, but rather well known as essentially weak, dependent, unguided and fanciful. Society therefore overlooks the many mysteries that can be found in the delicate formation of the young child's mind. Following this prejudicial view of the child, we can easily act with casual indifference or outright repression in our supervision of children, to warp their development according to our own patterns of limited thought and defective behavior from the past.

Mysterious Entity

"The master of all is a mysterious entity. The tyrant is all-powerful, like a god. It is the environment that swallows up and crushes man."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.13

In society, we are constantly subjected to unseen yet powerful detrimental forces and influences in the environment — a very mysterious entity that crushes out and opposes our inborn creative spirit. Parents and teachers can be easily drawn into these detrimental social influences with children — distracted by the external effects of such institutions as compulsory traditional schooling. We can easily blame others for problems in the education of children, and rarely if ever take any interest in the ultimate cause of errors within ourselves.

Interest

"...In the human psyche, there exists an enigma, not yet touched upon by our interest."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.10

Montessori teaching must take a deep interest in the *internal* mechanisms of reality — to see the ultimate source and cause of Montessori education as we follow such eternal and infinite laws of nature as (1) "Observation", (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three basic Montessori principles guide us in a way of being to discover the unknown inner cause of problems with children — to solve these problems by adjusting our own way of being to more effectively *control the environment, not the child*. However, this hard work of inner preparation is difficult to sustain over time, and we can easily abandon this indirect approach to the child when we are confronted with such mysterious behavior as fantasy play in children.

Play

"Play has become exalted as something mystical...instead of placing mystic faith in the play of the child, the faith must be placed in the child himself."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p.10

Dr. Montessori observed that the child's involvement in fantasy play was an escape from reality; i.e., not some mystical creative experience in harmony with its true normal nature. In reality, such play is a projection of the adult's own detrimental personality in the environment — a type of psychological abandonment of the child. Montessori teaching therefore challenges these illusions with a science of truth, to help children return from fantasy play to the reality of needs and interests in the present moment of life.

Science of Truth

"The science of truth, penetrating into nature serves to exalt and illustrate its mysteries."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.267

Montessori teaching aims to scientifically observe children to study the mystery of their true normal nature. Such a science of truth requires us to approach the child as an unknown entity — to observe its actions and behavior without the ordinary pre-conceived judgments and reactive patterns of the conventional way of adult thinking. We must therefore train our minds to look for the subtle outer signs of a mysterious inner will that is guiding the child to unfold its own unique plan of creation for life.

Mysterious Will

"Our first teacher, therefore, will be the child himself...the mysterious will that directs his formation..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.16

The Montessori teacher follows the principle of "individual liberty" to allow the child's mysterious will to freely assert itself in the environment. The child is therefore free to develop its character, to establish itself with such normal qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, independence and order. This inner development is however well hidden and often overlooked because it is only slightly evident in the child's external behavior.

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Look for the
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featuring
CORRECTING ERROR

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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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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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Scheduling Work

The teacher here is allowing the elementary aged children under her care to become disorganized and disorderly in their efforts for self-directed learning (see *Observer*, March 2000). Since they are not apparently able to schedule their work effectively on their own, the teacher must certainly intervene in some effective manner. However, she must not violate the principle of "individual liberty" of the child in the process. To effectively control the environment, not the child in this situation, she must particularly control the detrimental influence of her bi-polar personality which tends to either (a) abandon the children to their own unfocused mental activity or (2) repress their free expression by requiring certain adult-directed work assignments.

In this *moment of peril*, the teacher can use a "daily log" to help children schedule their self-directed work in an effective manner. Such a daily log would specify various subject matter areas of study, providing a corresponding time commitment for the child to apply to each. The log form would provide a space for the child to check-off compliance with each time commitment and a line at the bottom for the child's signature to verify completion of the entire schedule of daily work.

The subject areas of "math", "reading", and "writing" would be most useful, with several problems or key words under each category to identify specific work to accomplish. For young children, the teacher would write down the instructions, topics and problems that the child has to do under each category. On a periodic basis, the teacher would review each child's logs, to evaluate and confirm progress. Such review would also help the child identify and correct errors of spelling, grammar and sentence structure. An audiotape can also be used, to help the child correct its own errors in a more independent and self-directed manner.

Setting time commitments to each category, rather than task-specific assignments, is an important feature of an effective daily log. This allows the child to readily complete each log regardless of the difficulty of task or project involved.

Each child can maintain its logs in sequential order in a three-ring binder. In the back of the binder, the child can compile a vocabulary list of words that have

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MYSTERY

Con't. from Page 2, Col. 3

Inner Development

"There is mysterious inner development which is very great, while the corresponding outer sign of it is very little..."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.162

Montessori teaching helps the young child unfold a mysterious and unseen inner development that is forming its entire basic personality for life. Since we cannot see this inner development directly, we must look for its little outer signs in such behavior as hand-eye focus, interest, attention, concentration and repetition of some particular movement or exercise with materials. With faith and imagination, we can see beyond these physical details to support the child's spiritual growth that is so powerfully taking place during the formative period of early childhood.

Spiritual Growth

"In this sensitive relationship between a child and his surroundings may be found the means for untangling the raveled skein of mystery that surrounds the spiritual growth of a child."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.42

Montessori teaching applies the principle of "preparation of the environment" to support the child's spiritual growth in harmony with fundamental laws of nature. We must particularly restrain the detrimental influences of our own personality in the environment — to control those ordinary impulses to either impose a thoughtless abandonment or repressive negativity on the child. Within this type of carefully prepared environment, the mysterious inner force of life in the child will guide it most effectively towards the formation of an ideal normal state of being.

Mysterious Inner Force

"Man is...urged by a mysterious inner force to the attainment of an ideal determined form."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *To Ed. The Hum. Pot.*, p.78

The young child has a teacher within itself to perfectly direct all learning activity in the environment. Such a mysterious inner force leads the ordinary young child to profoundly concentrate on some particular object of interest — to experience a moment of *normalization* that brings it into perfect harmony with its entire environment. Thereafter, the new *normalized* child emerges to show us the secret of human nature as it expresses the ultimate peace, order and harmony of man's true personality.

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Reflections

Con't. from Page 1, Col. 3

believe that this is a key to why I have been experiencing such a power struggle with my son whenever we worked together.

...I remembered your comment so I decided to experiment with this new knowledge — and it's working! I now recognize that he (son) has been using non-verbal signs, over and over again, to let me know he was frustrated and intimidated.

...my experiment started...I restrained myself from talking to him...Lo and behold, he started interacting with me in a manner that we had never before experienced. Every movement was through eye contact and non-verbal gestures...we had a wonderful time interacting for 45 minutes. I was so excited!...I would just nod or remain quiet and motionless. This is more difficult than I thought (not talking). It seems easy, but to practice it is actually very hard.

Susan is a student in the IMS Montessori teacher education course. She reflects here on some of her experiences applying Montessori principles with her two-year-old son.

IMS REVIEWS

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

also offers accreditation services to the entire Montessori community.

The initial step in the current review process is for the Society to prepare and submit a *Self-Study Report* of its program operation. This report will detail the Society's program compliance with IMAC standards in such areas as Resources, Curriculum and Operational Policies.

The IMS report will also include a substantial program evaluation and self-analysis of its various strengths and weaknesses. As part of this evaluation, the Society plans to distribute a survey questionnaire to IMS program graduates, to elicit their opinion and comments about the Society's program as related to their current skills and preparation for Montessori teaching with children. The self-analysis portion of the report will include recommendations and plans to improve program operation in the future, with specific reference to the recent development of its new 12-day workshop concept.

The 12-day workshop is part of an overall plan to expand participation of more students and instructional personnel in its teacher education activities. Lee Havis, IMS executive director, states that "the workshop will enable local school

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Moment of Peril

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been misspelled on the daily logs. The child can take a spelling test from this list as the list is updated on a regular basis, to add or take off words as needed. The whole binder then becomes a valuable portfolio of work that the child and teacher can review together on a regular basis, to measure and evaluate progress in all fields of academic activity.

Adult-child Dependency

The teacher notices that the children in her primary (2-6) classroom seem unable to develop full independence in their various work activities with materials. They frequently approach her for help, and she finds herself giving many lessons. However, they still seem too dependent on her help. She senses an undue adult-child dependency with the children; however, she does not want to abandon them in their efforts for successful learning. What to do?

Answer in Observer, September, 2000

IMS REVIEWS

Cont'n. from Page 3, Col. 2

owners and teachers to participate directly in the training process, as their schools and classrooms will be used as observation sites for students."

After the IMAC review committee accepts the *Self-Study Report*, it will conduct a personal visit to follow up details in the report, and eventually submit its recommendation for final IMAC accreditation.

For further information about IMAC accreditation, contact: IMAC, 912 Thayer Ave. #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA.



Participants in the IMS Montessori conference in Brisbane, Australia — May 13-14, 2000

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: trained lead teacher or self-directed intern for a 3-6 classroom. Position will begin the week of August 14, 2000. Send resume to: Sharon Packer, Director, Charlotte Montessori School, 219 East Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28203. or fax to (704) 370-6111.

Montessori Teachers: (3-6) primary and (6-12) elementary for fall of 2000. fully equipped and spacious classrooms in school operating for 34 years in quiet, residential community. Send resume to Joliet Illinois Montessori School, 1600 Root St., Joliet, IL 60435 or fax to (815) 741-4185.

School Principal for Shrewsbury Mountain school in Shrewsbury, Vermont. 94 students, grades K-6. Must value parental participation. Send letter of intent, resume, 3 current letters of recommendation, and transcripts to: Superintendent of Schools, Rutland South Supervisory Union, PO Box 87, North Clarendon, VT 05759

MYSTERY

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

Secret of Human Nature

"A child is mysterious and powerful and contains within himself the secret of human nature."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.208

Since Dr. Montessori first discovered the normalized child in 1906, many have tried to duplicate her experience in being with children — to discover the amazing secret of human nature that is in the child. However, we can achieve this result only as a process of expanding awareness of Montessori principles — to free ourselves from the common prejudices and misconceptions that prevail in the popular surrounding culture concerning the child and education. This is the essential work of creating Dr. Montessori's *new education* in the world — to ultimately reveal the great mystery of life as it emerges in the reality of the new *normalized* child.