



The Montessori OBSERVER

CAUSE

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IMS Supports Inclusive Approach to Montessori Regulations

The Society recently announced plans to more actively support the work of reforming the detrimental government regulation of Montessori education. **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, emphasized the critical need for an inclusive solution to these issues, to consider the needs and interests of the entire Montessori community.

Havis cited particularly the problems of meeting the requirements for staff training qualifications, group size, composition, curriculum and equipment in the licensing of Montessori schools. He stated that staff training requirements often unduly favor traditional teacher qualifications.

Havis noted that past efforts to solve the problem of staff training requirements have essentially failed because they generally exclude or prejudice certain elements of the Montessori community. He stated that "we must have a fully inclusive solution to assure effective reform in this licensing of Montessori schools — to create an exception that will encompass all available alternatives in the field. One IMS proposal provides for an exception

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Participants at IMS Workshop in Washington, DC — November 3-4, 2001

IMS Workshop in Washington, DC

On November 3-4, 2001, the Society conducted its latest Montessori workshop for the Washington, DC area. Located in nearby College Park, MD, this event was attended by parents, teachers and other educators from the states of Maryland, Virginia, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Texas, District of Columbia, and the countries of Canada and Haiti.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, led the workshop discussion and other experiential learning procedures to present a wide range of skills and techniques for better Montessori teaching. He focused considerable attention on controlling the adult personality through such means as distraction, eye contact, questioning and reflective language

Havis emphasized, however, that Montessori teaching cannot be reduced to any particular set of rigid rules or protocols. He stated "no matter how effective may be some specific techniques or procedures with children, Montessori teaching still remains essentially an intangible experience of being committed to infinite and eternal laws of nature with children. It is this experience, not compliance with rules, or having specific certification or materials, which will bring forth the reality of the normalized child"

Havis also cautioned Montessori practitioners not to isolate themselves from

others who are seriously involved in the work of Montessori teaching. He indicated that "we must create and sustain regular contact with those who can keep us accountable and growing in our skills through inner preparation."

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Montessori Workshops

Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching

Los Angeles, CA

February 23-24, 2002

Newark, NJ

April 6-7, 2002

The Society's two-day weekend workshop 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.

Reflections

— **Erik Mailhiot (Hull, Canada)**

Erik reports home experiences in using Montessori teaching techniques presented at the IMS workshop in Washington, DC, November 3-4, 2001. He refers to such specific techniques as reflective language, eye contact, questioning, direction and distraction.

Reflecting language on questions or on something they want actually make my children act in getting what they need by themselves. The words "give me the object, I'll show you, WATCH" actually make them really concentrate on the demonstration. They do it perfectly for 2-3 times, then wrong, and then, when asking them to give me the spoon again (serving soup), they say: "it's okay, I know how", and they do it right again! No fuzziness, no crying, just peace in

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Cause

by Lee Havis

"...internal activities act as cause; they do not react and exist as the effect of external factors.."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p. 160

Since Montessori teaching is committed to complete *observation* of the child, we cannot therefore limit ourselves to noticing just what is most evident and immediate to our physical senses. We must observe more deeply to discover the ultimate cause of the child's being in harmony with transcendent laws of nature. Only as we observe in this expansive manner can we hope to realize the child's awesome unknown possibilities for being in the world — its true nature that is beyond all external appearances and effects of outward form and behavior.

Appearances and Effects

"...the adult...judges appearance and effects without worrying about the causes that produce them."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Formation of Man*, p. 8

Montessori teaching approaches the child as an "unknown entity", to allow its true nature to freely emerge according to an inner plan of creation that is in fundamental harmony with the absolute perfection and order of the universe. By contrast, conventional education disregards this self-creative cause of life, concerning itself only with such outward appearances and effects as teacher certification, materials, test scores, academic curriculum and grades. Unfortunately, these superficial effects in education do not address or resolve the basic underlying problems of the child's learning and development, since they have their unknowing cause within ourselves.

Unknowing Cause

"...the adult himself is the unknowing cause of the difficulties against which he battles, lost in a forest of insoluble problems."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Child in the Family*, p.71-72

Despite years of investment in compulsory public schooling, this popular adult-centered approach to the child has fundamentally failed to overcome the many problematic causes of widespread human degradation, poverty and ignorance. The unknowing cause of these problems remains buried within us under layers of prejudice and restricted ideas about the child and the nature of reality. No mere superficial education can therefore remove the underlying cause of violence and war in the world that yet persists as a continuing drama of fear, alienation, contempt and conflict at every level of human experience.

Cause of War

"...the cause of war does not lie in armaments, but in the men who make use of them."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Peace and Education*, p 25

Adults engage in war as a drama of blame, hate and separation with others — a dysfunctional personality expression that has its roots in unresolved struggles for power and control during the formative period of early childhood development. We can therefore look to remove the cause of war for future generations only by creating more favorable conditions for the child's normal development during these most critical early years of life. This is Dr. Montessori's vision of a *new education* — a non-violent revolution in society that will ultimately overcome the fundamental problems of human civilization by meeting the unsatisfied normal aspirations of children we supervise today.

Unsatisfied Aspirations

"The child's unsatisfied aspirations...cause the human personality to become weak and unstable."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Education and Peace*, p 18

Our ordinary habits to repress or abandon the young child, whether under the guise of teaching or allowing freedom, nonetheless cause it to rebel with various acts of disobedience and misbehavior. The young child will then express its unsatisfied aspirations for normal self-directed development through reactive negativity and fear in the environment. Such defective behaviors can become firmly fixed as patterns of disorder, inattention, dependency, fear, fantasy and caprice in the child's whole personality for life.

Caprice

"We regard as a caprice anything that does not have an apparent cause, any stubborn or unreasonable action."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 41

Teachers and parents may well wonder what causes so much caprice, fantasy and inattention in the young child — attributing it perhaps to some inherent natural need or interest of the child. Montessori education however views these behaviors as abnormal and inconsistent with the child's true nature — a reflection of some detrimental influence or flaw of the supervising adult personality. While we can and certainly should restrain and remove such detrimental influences from the child's environment, we must still look only to the child for the cause of its own development.

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 187

Montessori teaching supports normal development in children, by using various techniques for "*controlling the environment, not the child*". Such an indirect approach follows the guidance of such basic principles as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three fundamental Montessori principles can most effectively guide our actions to support the child to develop its own life according to the order and harmony of nature.

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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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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Excessive Attention

Montessori teaching must give attention to the children according to their individual needs, based on the overall effect and value for the total environment. The teacher here is giving a great deal of her attention to disruptive 4-year-old Phillip, in view of his extremely detrimental effect to the entire environment. (See *Observer*, September 2001).

In this *moment of peril*, Phillip does appear to need greater attention from the teacher than the other children. So, she is well advised to focus her attention according to this obvious "hub" of so much misbehavior and disorder in the environment.

The teacher's attention with Phillip, giving a great deal of eye contact, distracting, direction, questioning and reflective language may be the most valuable use of her time, for the benefit of the whole group. The other children will most certainly benefit indirectly from this attention, as they will experience greater calm and order, for their own focused work with each other and the physical objects.

Phillip is only directing the teacher's attention to those "situations" that will most improve the normalizing conditions for the entire environment. In time, this attention will remove the detrimental influences around Phillip, and the entire environment will achieve a greater of calm and peace for the benefit of all.

The children learn primarily through their experience with other children and the materials; i.e., not through direct interaction with the teacher. The teacher's attention and interaction with Phillip is therefore positively benefiting all the children in the group, to help them progress towards their own individual normalized development through independent, self-directed activity in the environment.

Disturbing Group Activity

The teacher notices that 4-year-old Michael often interferes with the group activity she conducts just before the children leave for lunch. While she is reading a book or singing a song with the children, Michael wiggles, pinches and laughs in fantasy with any child who will watch. The teacher doesn't want to stop the flow of interest in the group activity or negatively impose herself on Michael. However, she knows she can't just abandon or neglect Michael or his disturbing influence on the group. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer*, March 2002

Cause

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Life

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

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

Montessori teaching is a commitment to absolute laws of nature with the child — a way of being that allows the child to evolve according to a life that is planned and directed by a mysterious teacher within. We can only indirectly serve this self-creative purpose by removing such detrimental influences as arise in the environment, such as patterns of negativity and abandonment in our own personality. Then we can see the child's soul fully express itself according to the perfect plan of nature.

Child's Soul

"...from the depths of the child's soul we can draw...some light that would clarify the obscure causes of human behavior."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p. 54

The young child's soul reveals a love and harmony towards the environment that emerges most perfectly through the its concentrated work with physical objects. Montessori teaching supports this delicate unfolding of the child, by providing motives for its free and independent use of a wide variety of well-ordered physical objects. Within such a prepared environment, the ordinary child can enter into a state of profound concentration on a piece of work — to experience the transforming psychological event that Dr. Montessori described as *normalization*.

Normalization

"Normalization causes the disappearance of many childhood traits...which are generally thought to be virtues...the so-called 'creative imagination', delight in stories, attachment to individuals, play, submissiveness..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.154

Dr. Montessori refers to "normalization" as the young child's sudden shift from a state of inattention, disorder, fantasy and caprice, to one of focused concentration, peace, calm and order in the environment. Then we see the *normalized* child that Dr. Montessori first discovered in 1907 — the central vision of her whole work, showing such inherent qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, order, attachment to reality and a complete harmony with its entire environment. However, this normalized child will only arise within an environment that the teacher carefully prepares by removing its many detrimental influences — by correcting her

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Inclusive Regulations

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where there is a written explanation of an alternative provision that is 'not detrimental to the health, safety and welfare of children served'."

The Society has also proposed a broader form of categorical exception for "alternative education programs". This approach would allow Montessori schools to qualify by complying with recognition standards, procedures and criteria of a particular non-government educational organization, such as the International Montessori Society. The school would then be allowed to substitute that organization's standards and recognition in place of the otherwise applicable provisions.

The Society offers to work with interested parties in any jurisdiction, to develop an effective alternative to currently detrimental Montessori regulations. IMS has specific guidelines and criteria, which can be used to create and operate a suitable inclusive organization to support and unify local efforts.

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Letters to IMS

November 2, 2001

Dear Lee:

We have interest to take part in the (IMS Montessori) workshop. We have about 20 teaches who can attend the workshop and we can contact other kindergarten teachers to attend the workshop also. I have confidence that Guangdong is a favorable place to advocate and conduct Montessori...Nanhai is a city near Guangzhou. It takes only 30 minutes from Guangzhou and 3 hours from Hong Kong by bus...

Hanna Cheung
Nan Guang Int'l. Kindergarten
Nanhai City, Guangdong
China

November 9/20, 2001

Hi Lee,

(after attending the IMS workshop in Washington, DC, November 3-4, 2001), I'm working on a personality overhaul! I have tried to cut "no" ...out of my vocabulary altogether...I am working on increasing POSITIVE eye contact and eliminating "The Look". I am chatting more freely about what I am doing/seeing/thinking. I am refraining from judgmental comments.....I am trying to get together a contact list for area Montessori schools...I will send a copy of your explanation of the conferences to each address I gather, with a cover letter requesting to know level of interest for a 2002 conference in Indianapolis...

Esther Rupert
Indianapolis, Indiana

November 21, 2001

Dr. Mr. Havis,

I will be assisting ... in organizing the potential May/June IMS conference in Poland....We hope to develop interest from schools throughout Poland as well as interest from Eastern Europe....I look forward to hearing from you.

Sheelah Bielenia
Warsaw, Poland

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own mistakes and making imperfect achievements through a constant process of observation, experimentation, analysis and inner preparation.

Imperfect Achievements

"Every great cause is born from repeated failures and from imperfect achievements."

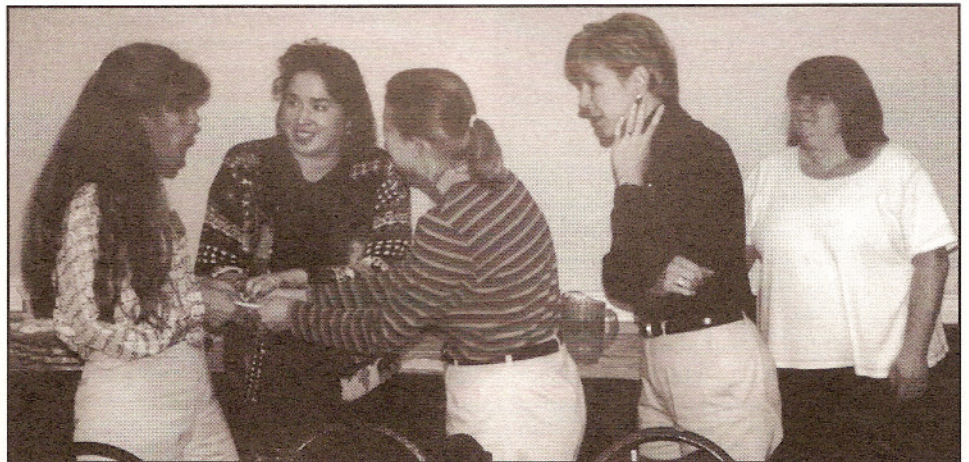
Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Montessori Method*, p. 6

Montessori teaching shows us that we must continually remove the detrimental influences from around the child — those various obstacles in the "adult personality", "physical objects" and "other children" that are causing its misbehavior and disobedience. This is necessarily a process of many imperfect achievements, since we can only remove our own personality defects by engaging with others in the resolution of many complex and wide-ranging obstacles in society. We must therefore undertake this work of creating Dr. Montessori's new education with considerable patience and determination — to serve the great hidden cause of nature that is unfolding a whole new and better destiny for mankind the world.

IMS Workshop in Washington, DC

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Havis also noted that because many of those attending this workshop had attended others in the past, there was a particularly high-level of learning, progress and development for all those present. He stated his hope that the local Montessori community would grow even stronger by working together through organizing similar workshop events on a regular basis in the future.



Role-play drama, practicing Montessori techniques to "control the environment, not the child"

— workshop in Washington, DC, November 3-4, 2001

Reflections

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concentrating on the work!

They also had a tug war about an appealing looking juice can I asked them to pick-up (by asking "where do these go", there were 3 items on the floor to go to the recycle bin). I held tight on the can, and after only 3 reflected language exchanges, the problem was solved when my son (6 ½) gave my daughter (4 ½) another item among the 2 he still had in hands, and got back the can from Christine. Harmony was back within 5 seconds...

Also this evening, Christine made a mess which got partly clean-up without me having to say anything (by both my son, and daughter), and got her to peacefully clean-up the rest 10 minutes later by asking her: "Come over here, what is this?"

Inclusive Regulations

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

Havis noted however that unifying the Montessori community is very difficult because of the many divisions of interest, need and philosophy. He noted "Montessori organizations issue teaching credentials and apply their standards primarily to benefit the economic and philosophical interests of their particular constituencies. We cannot therefore simply avoid or ignore these divisions, as they play out a dramatic struggle for power and control over Montessori in society. This power struggle logically leads to prejudicial, exclusionary forms of government regulations that adversely affect us all."

The Society seeks to achieve inclusive Montessori regulations based on the unifying principles and experience of Dr. Montessori. It therefore intends to cooperate with others through consensus decision-making on behalf of the needs and interests of the entire Montessori community. Contact the Society to obtain copies of applicable information, proposals, and other details to proceed with specific steps in your jurisdiction.