



The Montessori OBSERVER

MAGIC

Published by the International Montessori Society • 912 Thayer Ave. • Silver Spring, Md. 20910 • (301) 589-1127



Participants at IMS Workshop in Whippany, New Jersey — June 23-24, 2001

IMS Workshops Around the World

From June to September 2001, IMS conducted its unique "Creating the New Education" workshop in widely diverse locations throughout the world. As always, Lee Havis, IMS executive director, led the participants through a series of inner preparation exercises and experiences, to help develop and improve their Montessori teaching skills. The workshop format includes open-ended discussion, role-play drama and the analysis of specific misbehavior situations, to work through and resolve many common problems that are encountered in applying Montessori principles with children.

The two-day learning experience aims to help participants create the unique environment for children that allows their true normalized nature to fully emerge. Havis states that this special Montessori environment is a commitment to laws of nature with children that follows the basic approach of "control the environment, not the child". He also notes "the workshop especially helps participants correct basic errors and detrimental influences of their personality, and to establish new habits of more effective thought and action. We must, however, practice these skills over time if we expect to achieve the ultimate results that Dr. Montessori described as the normalized child."

Whippany, New Jersey

June 23-24, 2001

IMS conducted its first workshop in the state of New Jersey near New York City. Teachers, school owners and parents attended this event from the states of New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont and the province of Quebec, Canada.

Participants discussed particularly how to accurately observe the "adult personality", to better control its various hidden detrimental influences in the child's environment. Havis emphasized, "the adult personality we must control is a complex psychological presence, not limited to our physical body. It is reflected by others we encounter every day. To control its many subtle detrimental influences in the child's environment, we must enlarge our sense of self to include

others, and to improve our communication with those around us everyday, such as parents and co-workers."

Sydney, Australia

August 3-4, 2001

This workshop was the first of a series of three such events in Australia in August. These events were co-sponsored by IMS and the *Montessori Association of Australia (MAA)*. Participating at the Sydney event were teachers and other educators from such cities as Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne.

Workshop participants considered particularly the adult role in relation to infants and toddlers. Havis noted "we must develop a supportive 'guiding' physical

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IMAC Renews IMS

Course Accreditation

On May 29, 2001, the IMAC accrediting agency renewed its approval of the IMS teacher education program, to continue the agency's full accreditation status for this course to May 2006.

The IMAC advisory committee formalized its action based on a review of the IMS course that extended over a period of some two years. The process included a self-study, evaluation and recommendation, which was completed under the supervision and guidance of a special IMAC review committee, composed of several IMS course graduates

The IMAC review also considered the nature, direction and future plans of IMS teacher education. Lee Havis, IMS course director, stated his hope that the Society could soon initiate its new 12-day residential Montessori course, which has been designed for operation in French, Chinese and English. He also noted his hope to expand availability of the two-day "Creating the New Education" workshop, to assure effective continuing education for teachers, parents and other educators throughout the world.

Montessori Workshops

*Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching*

Washington, DC

November 3-4, 2001

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.

Magic

by Lee Havis

"...the child is the magic machine which must be studied itself...that is why it is of such great interest."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Voice of Dr. Montessori*, 17 Nov. '41, p.N

Dr. Montessori discovered a magic in the young child that could transform humanity into a whole new reality of harmony, peace and unity in the world. She saw this magic in the event of "normalization", whereby the ordinary young child was transformed into a state of its true normal being, with such amazing qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, order, deep attachment to reality and being in complete harmony with its entire environment. However, we do not usually see or recognize this magical new child, blinded as we are by the pervasive power of suggestion and influence of strong countervailing forces in society.

Power of Suggestion

"The solidarity of adult society...assumes the power of suggestion and the appearance of an absolute truth on which all agree."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Formation of Man*, p. 69

During the formative period of early childhood, we have an absorbent mind that is uniquely sensitive to the power of suggestion from adults who tend to impose their limited view of reality on children they supervise. As adults, our personalities are therefore formed with the restraints and prejudices of our surrounding culture. We must therefore work very hard to overcome and unmask this convincing illusion, and discover the underlying truth of the normalized child.

Illusion

"To be contented with the imaginary, and to live as if what we imagine actually exists; to run after illusion, and 'not to recognize' reality, is a thing so common that scarcely is it apprehended."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.265

Popular opinion views the child as essentially weak, dependent and unguided from within itself. This deeply held illusion in society is reinforced through many forms of pervasive institutional control and custom in the education of children. We therefore ordinarily regard the reality of Dr. Montessori's new normalized child as an impossible dream or impractical ideal.

Reality

"...the child is a great worker, who can apply himself to his work even with concentration, who can learn by himself, teach himself and who possesses discipline within himself...this seems to be like a fairy tale...No attention is paid to this reality...It is simply impossible; it cannot exist."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Formation of Man*, p 66

In 1907, Dr. Montessori discovered a new reality in the child, vastly different from its ordinary appearance as such in society. Montessori teaching however must allow this new child to emerge in reality, by our commitment to such fundamental principles as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These basic Montessori principles can effectively guide us in creating those special conditions of life that enable the young child to magically transform itself into its ideal normal state of being.

Conditions of Life

"...faults may be made to disappear without the need of preaching, punishment or even setting a good example by the adult. Neither threats nor promises are needed, but conditions of life."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Ed. for a New World*, p 78

Montessori teaching creates the conditions of life that are necessary to support the child's true normal development - a way of being that follows the basic approach of "control the environment, not the child". Montessori teachers must therefore carefully analyze each misbehavior situation with children, to distinguish the specific "child" in the situation from its surrounding "environment". We consider this child as the "hub" of the situation, an *unknown entity*, and then proceed to remove the detrimental influences we find in its surrounding environment.

Unknown Entity

"...all or nearly all, see the child as he is commonly known only, not the child as he is, still an unknown entity."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Formation of Man*, p.60-61

The "hub" child in the middle of some misbehavior situation appears to our mind as the cause of the problem, and so we reactively tend to control it with negative and controlling words and actions. Montessori teaching, however, must restrain this tendency by viewing this child as an *unknown entity* - to avoid the common urge to reactively repress it out of feelings of emotional impulse and impatience. In time, this central unknown entity will indeed transform itself into a very different type of child.

Different Type of Child

"The different types of deviated children do not shake the faith of the teacher, who sees a different type of child in the spiritual field."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Ed. For a New World*, p 86-87

Dr. Montessori promises us that by applying her indirect approach to the child,

we will eventually see the peace, love, joy and harmony of the new normalized child. However, this very different type of child will only emerge as we employ various exacting techniques to effectively remove the detrimental influences we find in the "other children", "physical objects" and "adult personality" around the child. Interruption is one such Montessori teaching technique that can work like magic to distract a child from its negative activity, and return it to more normal activity elsewhere.

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Look for the
November Observer
featuring
Cause

The Montessori Observer

ISSN 0889-5643

published by

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

912 Thayer Ave., Suite 207

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

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Worldwide Web:

<http://www.wdn.com/trust/ims>

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

Reflective Language

Montessori teachers can often use "reflective language" to help children towards more normal, independent reasoning and judgment. For example, when a child asks the teacher "what can I do today?" the teacher reflects back with "What can you do today?" to help the child reach its own self-directed solution to the problem. However, this technique may seem to fail when the child becomes frustrated with this dialogue, and walks off to some fantasy or other form of misbehavior (See *Observer*, May 2001).

This *moment of peril* teaches us that any single technique, such as 'reflective language' is only one step or procedure in a larger process of removing obstacles in the child's environment. So, if reflective language leads the child to some other form of misbehavior, the teacher may then apply another more suitable technique to help the child return to its state of true normal being.

When the child turns away from reflective language dialogue to some disorder or fantasy elsewhere, the teacher may wish to use the technique of "questioning". Here, the teacher questions the child in a friendly manner, to help the child return to reality in the present moment. A simple question, such as "what are you doing?" may open up the child to a new constructive dialogue with the teacher. Then, the discussion may return to more reflective language as before, to eventually help the child towards its normal attachment to reality, peace and order.

Gradually, this combination of such techniques as "reflective language", "questioning" and 'eye contact' will remove the detrimental presence of the adult personality, and lead the child to its more normal, self-directed being in the environment.

Excessive Attention

4-year-old Phillip seems to be constantly disruptive and disorderly in the classroom. The teacher therefore has given him much greater attention than the other children. She is, however, worried that this attention to Phillip may be excessive, depriving the other children of their fair share of her interest and involvement with them. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, November 2001

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Interruption

"If...there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him...to break the flow of disturbing activity. The interruption can take the form of any kind of exclamation...Often a question will serve, such as 'How are you, Johnny? Come with me, I have something for you to do.'..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.254-55

We can very often resolve a child's misbehavior by a friendly, distracting phrase such as "come over here, I have something to show you". This distracting interruption avoids the ordinary direct force and control of the child that leads to power struggle, dependency and conflict in the adult-child relationship. Applying such indirect techniques is like having a magic wand to gently guide the child back to its normal state of harmony and order in the environment.

Magic Wand

"...the whole environment began to be transformed through the children. We seemed to have in our hands a magic wand."

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

Montessori teaching may seem oddly passive and irrational to a casual observer. However, such techniques as 'eye contact', "distraction", "reflective language", "questioning", and "lesson presentations" with materials can work as a magic wand to remove the detrimental influences in the child's environment, and allow the child's true nature to fully emerge in reality. Using these techniques will indeed release the powerful psychology of the child to unfold the magic of normalization.

Psychology of the Child

"...movable letters...the magic does not lie in them, but in the psychology of the child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man.*, p.28

Montessori teaching provides well-ordered physical objects, to allow the child to concentrate deeply through self-directed work, and thereby return to its normal state of being. Such materials as a "movable alphabet" allow the psychology of the child to absorb basic written language concepts, and avoid the later struggle for learning that so often comes with conventional adult-controlled education. The child, not the materials or the teacher, is however the great magician in this mysterious creative process of normal learning and development.

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IMS Workshops

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touch with children, rather than resort to overt force and control. Adults need to gently touch very young children, to guide them at times in a cooperative manner. We must learn to interact closely with children to help them work through the many awkward situations of practical daily living with a relationship of friendship, trust and confidence. However, we must also balance our guiding physical presence with children, to allow them to explore and experiment as much as possible on their own."

After the workshop, Havis worked with one of the workshop participants, **Mary Tancred**, to prepare a set of specific written rules to help guide parents and teachers in their Montessori teaching with very young children.

Perth, WA Australia August 11-12, 2001

This workshop included the participation of educators and parents from throughout the state of Western Australia. **Nicolette Corey**, director of *Rockingham Family School*, organized local support and interest in this event, as coordinator for the *Montessori Association of Australia (MAA)*.

Workshop discussion focused considerably on the need to "let go" of negative habits, judgments and association with others from the past. Havis said "we can only correct our errors of the past by acting effectively in the present moment. Even though we may lack faith and experience in various new Montessori skills, we can still try these out in little ways as a matter of scientific experimentation. In this way, we can develop the confidence and faith we need for greater success thereafter."

After the workshop, Havis visited several area schools to help teachers practice Montessori techniques with children in their own classroom situations. Nicolette Corey also organized several evening meetings for Havis to discuss Montessori teaching skills with interested parents and educators in the area.

Adelaide, SA Australia August 18-19, 2001

Parents, teacher and other educators attended this weekend event from throughout South Australia. **Susan Harris-Evans** was the local MAA representative to organize and coordinate interest and participation.

The workshop discussion emphasized the use of rules and self-discipline procedures to effectively control various detrimental influences of the adult personality.

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The Great Magician

"The child is the great magician; he is the master of the construction of life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice of Dr. Montessori.*,
17 Nov. '41, p.L

Dr. Montessori saw the child as the great magician who could ultimately solve such massive debilitating social problems as violence, fear and deprivation. Montessori teaching allows this new being to emerge by creating the right precise normalizing conditions during the formative period of early childhood. We apply our own form of magic with children when we follow those infinite and eternal laws of nature that will ultimately allow their true normalized nature to fully emerge in the world.



Practicing Montessori teaching techniques at the IMS/MAA workshop in Adelaide, SA Australia — August 18-19, 2001

IMS Workshops

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

Havis stated 'we can best control our hidden impulsive reactions and feelings towards children by following specific rules and techniques. At first, we may have to apply them as an experiment to test their value; however, in time we can confirm their benefit through personal practice and experience.'

After the workshop, Havis visited several area schools, to help their staff apply the various skills and techniques presented in the workshop. He stressed the importance of developing more effective communication, cooperation and mutual support for continuing inner preparation in the South Australian Montessori community.

Rotorua, New Zealand

August 25-26, 2001

This first IMS workshop in New Zealand was attended by teachers and other educators from throughout the region.

Workshop activities included various exercises and demonstrations to develop and improve such basic Montessori teaching skills as observation and presentation of materials. Participants also discussed how to achieve personal goals through cooperation with others.

Havis stated "we must not allow our need to cooperate with others in Montessori education to dilute or replace our ultimate individual commitment to transcendent laws of nature. All human relationships are limited. We must therefore ultimately hold to the truth of the child within ourselves."

After the workshop, Havis consulted with participants on how best to develop and expand Montessori education in New

Zealand. He also provided consultation for a local elementary Montessori classroom.

Jakarta, Indonesia

September 1-2, 2001

The *Jakarta Montessori School* (JMS, **Genia Bryan-Sonneville**, owner) sponsored this first "creating the new education" workshop in Indonesia, to support her school staff and others in the Indonesia Montessori community to develop and improve their Montessori teaching skills. **Carol Engmann**, JMS training coordinator, provided support to assure participation from throughout the country.

Participants specifically discussed the need for better cooperation and communication with school parents and the general public. Havis stated "schools should embrace the challenging questions and philosophical conflict that may at times arise with parents, as an important opportunity to communicate the underlying long-range value and purpose of Montessori education. We should speak out with clear conviction from our experience, and use every opportunity to relate the essential nature and purpose of Montessori education".

During the workshop, participants also considered the possibility of organizing an Indonesia Montessori Association, to help unify and strengthen the growing efforts for Montessori education in that country. Havis agreed to help this effort with specific ideas and continuing consultation.

While in Indonesia, Havis visited several area schools, to consult directly with teachers in the classroom. He expressed his hope to return again to assist further in the teacher education process, to continue the progress achieved at the September, 2001 workshop.