



# The Montessori OBSERVER

*Repression*

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

## ***Election Results Impact Montessori Education***

### **Analysis of Elections in the state of Maryland**

November 5, 2002 was general election day in many jurisdictions in the United States — electing government leaders who could greatly impact the opportunity for growth and development of Montessori education. Through various licensing statutes, governments can impose many types of prejudicial and repressive regulations that seriously impinge on the effective operation of Montessori education.

In the state of Maryland, the non-partisan citizen group *Maryland Public Assembly* (MPA) endorsed candidates before the elections on the basis of their commitment to the public interest — to support those candidates who particularly best represent such vital interests as greater educational freedom. Many of

*Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 3*



*Participants attending the Indianapolis, IN workshop — October 28-29, 2002*

## ***IMS Workshops in Indianapolis and Baltimore***

### ***Indianapolis, IN***

**October 28-29, 2002**

This two-day “*Creating the New Education*” workshop brought together parents, teachers and other educators from throughout Indiana, and the surrounding states of Ohio, Illinois, Missouri and Maryland. As always, the workshop aimed to present and improve vital Montessori teaching skills through inner preparation and experiential learning. **Esther Rupert**, IMS student in Indiana, initiated and coordinated local participation for this event.

**Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, led the group discussion to deal with the needs and issues of those attending, many of whom were attending for the first time. Havis particularly emphasized how we must exercise judgment, instinct and common sense to balance our application of “individual liberty” with such other equally vital principles as “observation” and “preparation of the environment.”

Havis noted specifically how the principle of “*individual liberty*” is naturally limited by certain environmental constraints relating to time, space and materials. He said “we must certainly moderate the

child’s access to activity by exercising good judgment and common sense. However, we must not further intrude on the children’s freedom, such as by scheduling excessive and untimely group meetings, imposing teacher-directed curriculum or restricting use of materials within the space provided. We must particularly assure a long period of time for individual work, to assure ample opportunity for children to normalize through concentration on work of their own free choice.”

After the workshop, Havis visited a local school to consult further with teachers there in the classroom. He encouraged them to help each other on a daily basis to apply the various workshop techniques, to assure the best long-term and substantial progress for the future.

### ***Baltimore, MD***

**November 9-10, 2002**

Attending the Baltimore workshop were parents, teachers and other educators from throughout Maryland, and the states of Connecticut, Virginia and the District of Columbia. **Ines Woolgar**, IMS student from Santa Cruz, Bolivia was also in attendance.

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1*

## **Montessori Workshops**

**Learn Montessori Teaching Skills  
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching**

### **Shanghai, China**

December 14-15, 2002

### **Los Angeles, CA**

February 15-16, 2003

### **Singapore**

March 15-16, 2003

### **Vancouver, Canada**

April 26-27, 2003

### **New Paltz, NY**

May 17-18, 2003

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.

# Repression

by Lee Havis

*"A principle of repression that amounts at times almost to slavery has a firm grip on both schools and education."*

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

Dr. Montessori's "new education" is a revolutionary departure from the ordinary repression of popular conventional education. As adult society has placed the needs of a pre-determined academic curriculum above those of the child's own self-directed learning and development, the pattern of repression has become well established and widely accepted among traditional educators. However well hidden may be such repression under the guise of teaching and help, it nonetheless aims to force the child's obedience to the adult-controlled curriculum through a systematic format of punishment, threat and manipulation.

## Obedience

*"To dominate the child, to bring him into subjugation, to make him obedient — this is the basis of education. If this can be done by any means whatever, even by violence, all the rest will follow."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.* p. 29-30

Traditional teaching must implement the prescribed curriculum above all else — by first breaking the child's will for self-directed activity, to assure a complete obedience to various forms of group instruction and teacher-directed subject matter lessons. While the teacher may lecture about respect for liberty, love and help to the child's normal development, the underlying reality is a pattern of repressing the child through fear, threat and even violence. Within such a coercive educational system, the attitude of the adult must necessarily be one of essential indifference, disregard and denial of the child's true natural instincts to act, will and think for itself.

## Attitude of the Adult

*"A typical attitude of the adult is to be always looking for vice in order to suppress it...there follows a lowering in the general quality of social life."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 240

The young child can only learn and grow through the opportunities provided in the environment by the supervising adult — to either freely explore and experiment with self-directed activity, or repress itself according to the authoritative demands of adult-centered values, lessons and curriculum. The conventional attitude of the adult is unfortunately to constrain the young child to a very limited scope of possibility for choice and self-expression.

During the critical formative period of infancy and early childhood, parents can play a particularly crucial role in this process — to variously repress or abandon the child's free choice and activity in the environment.

## Parents

*"...all parents...lean upon each other. The whole of society forms a collective subconscious wherein all act in complete agreement when they remove and suppress the child."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p. 68

Parents tend to follow the popular social customs towards children — to either abandon them to idle fantasy play, or repress their expression through various means of external control and influence. Likewise this common pattern of abandonment-repression ordinarily follows the child in later formal schooling as well. Such destructive adult influences are therefore deeply woven into all aspects of society, forcing the weak and subdued child to acquire a corresponding restricted and limited self-expression for life.

## Weak and Subdued

*"Anyone 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

Although the young child instinctively seeks to follow the guidance of a perfect teacher within, such guidance can only realize itself through action and experience in a supportive environment. When we repress these natural instincts and expressions with our negative, controlling words and actions, we divert the child from its normal path of growth, and force the child to develop a weak and dependent personality. However well intended may be our motives, such actions nonetheless do great violence to the child's true normal development.

## Violence

*"Any form of violence, in speech or action, does irreparable harm to the child...beware of this tendency...to say 'Don't do this', 'You mustn't do that'..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Ed. for a New World*, p. 36-37

Parents and teachers tend to point out error, negatively correct and impose curriculum demands on children under the guise of help, discipline or teaching. However, such actions are a form of violence to the unformed young mind that cannot effectively defend itself against such detrimental adult influences. Even our sincere efforts to help can repress the young child's development, if it comes in the form of needless assistance.

## Needless Assistance

*"...the needless assistance given to a child is the first of various repressions which he will experience..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 90

The young child has a natural desire for self-directed, independent activity — to exert its own will to overcome the many problems associated with ordinary daily life with others. Our needless assistance therefore tends to damage and divert this natural instinct towards independence — reducing and limiting the child's opportunity for learning experiences that are vital to its true normal development. We can only offer real help to the child as we follow such fundamental Montessori principles as (1) "Observation" (2) "Individual

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 4

Look for the  
**March Observer**  
featuring  
**Repetition**

## The Montessori Observer

ISSN 0889-5643

published by

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

912 Thayer Ave., Suite 207

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Tel. (301) 589-1127 • e-mail: havis@erols.com

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.

## IMS ADVISORY BOARD

Elizabeth Hainstock, Educator, Author  
Dr. R. Orin Cornett, Professor Emeritus  
John Bradshaw, Author, Public Speaker  
Donald E. Seymour, Author, businessman

## SUBSCRIPTION

Subscription to this *Observer* publication may be obtained by requesting Society membership, which is open to all individuals for a \$20 annual fee. Society members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News* and other membership benefits.

## 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.

© IMS, 2002

## Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

### Tantrums

The teacher here is frustrated with Jessica's tantrums that seem to arise from the teacher's very simple directions in the classroom (See *Observer*, September 2002). She wonders what mistakes she may be making with Jessica that are provoking and prolonging such tantrums.

A tantrum tends to arise from deep psychological trauma of the past that is only triggered by some specific event in the present moment. Therefore, the teacher's behavior may have no direct cause in the matter at all.

However, the teacher can certainly help the child resolve its tantrum by engaging in suitable actions that will comfort and guide the child to resolve its inner conflict as soon as possible — to return the child to a state of peaceful calm and order in the environment.

During the tantrum, the teacher must avoid making the episode worse by expressing any form of negativity or abandonment; i.e., no threats or excessive emotional reaction; no non-attention or ignoring. Rather, the teacher must keep neutral eye contact with the distressed child as much as possible, and be available to offer comfort at every opportunity. If the teacher cannot obtain effective eye contact with the child during the tantrum, she may place a comforting hand on the child, to establish a suitable sensorial presence and connection with the child at the time.

As Jessica completes her cycle of emotional expression, the teacher may gently guide her to some simple practical life work, with a phrase such as "take my hand" or "come over here, I have something to show you". As Jessica then exerts her own will in some simple physical manner, she will regain composure and return to a stronger and more normal connection to reality and work in the environment.

### Other Adults

Although the head teacher is making every effort to apply effective Montessori teaching techniques with the children, her co-worker tends to interrupt children who are working, making negative comments to children in misbehavior situations, and giving excessively long lesson presentations with individual children. When the head teacher offers suggestion or guidance to correct her co-teacher's actions, she either walks away with hands over her ears, or argues back that her training endorses and approves of the action she is taking. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, March, 2003

## Repression

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Liberty" and (3) "Preparation in the environment" — to create the necessary conditions for the child's own free self-directed activity, experience and learning with others.

### Child's Nature

*"From the depth of his nature, the child repeatedly pardons the adult and strives to flourish despite the latter's repressions."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 148

The young child's nature is to exercise its will to engage in many forms of intellectual activity in the environment — to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of its full and complete independence, order and harmony with others. However repressed it may be from prior abuse and neglect, a young child may still reclaim its normal way of being with the help and support of the special *normalizing* conditions of the Montessori environment. We can only create such a normalizing environment by our commitment to Montessori principles — to provide a basic liberty for the normalized child to emerge with such qualities as attachment to reality, order, spontaneous self-discipline and complete harmony with its entire environment.

### Liberty

*"The concept of liberty which should inspire teaching is universal...it is the liberation of a life repressed by an infinite number of obstacles which oppose its harmonious development."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 9

Montessori teaching follows such principles as "individual liberty", to free the child to work according to its own particular needs and interests of the moment. The adult must also closely observe the child to discern its interests, and to prepare the environment with suitable lessons and materials that will satisfy the

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2



Practicing lesson presentation protocols with Sandpaper letters at the IMS workshop — Indianapolis, IN (October 28-29, 2002)

## Reflections

### By Alethea Hession

*Reflecting on her experiences with her child after attending the IMS workshop in Baltimore, MD — November 9-10, 2002.*

### Look at Me Stuff

"Look at me Dad (Mom)" stuff is something we all live with until they (children) feel ready to move on. It feels like attachment and manipulative dependency. I think if we were "looking" more often, in other words, making eye contact regularly throughout the day and not abandoning them, we would hear less requests to "look at me".

In other words, the more I look the less she demands for me to look. Eye contact is absolutely essential as much as possible throughout the day. Staying connected to our children resolves the pattern of "abandonment and repression".

### Abandonment or Repression

There are 2 things I did quite often before if I were feeling impatient. They could both be summarized as abandonment or repression. One would be to tell her (child) she can figure it out. She's not dumb. I know she's smart. The other would be to just tell her the answer or where to find the answer.

This time I gave the help she needed to answer it herself. I gave a hint. What I observed was her reaction. She became upset and whiney. What I learned was that I've been creating a pattern of dependency and she didn't like it when I changed.

But I hung in there and stayed connected with her and in a friendly tone kept with it until she broke through on her own. My sense was that she felt better for having owned resolving the question herself than me telling her or just leaving her to struggle with it.

I can see that this is the area that will need more work as I wean her from attachment to my personality.

## ELECTIONS

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

these endorsed candidates stood for election on November 5, 2002, including **Spear Lancaster**, running for the statewide position of governor. Although he did not win the elections, his campaign did significantly raise such issues as educational freedom for voters to consider.

One MPA candidate was successfully elected — **Nancy Jacobs**, to the Maryland State Senate from Harford County.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

Return Service Requested

912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 3875  
Silver Spring, MD

## OBSERVER

The Montessori



### ELECTIONS

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Lee Havis, state MPA chair expressed his hope that Ms. Jacobs would lead efforts to make the necessary legislative changes and reform for greater educational freedom in the state.

Reflecting on the recent elections, Havis noted, "elections come and go, but issues remain until they are resolved. I hope MPA will continue to speak out for the public interest in Maryland after the current elections, particularly as related to budget-tax policy and education".

Havis suggested that MPA could serve as a good model for citizen action in all jurisdictions where government laws and regulation impinge on the growth and development of Montessori education. For further information, see the MPA web site: <http://www.wdn.com/trust/mpa>



Participants in the IMS workshop held in Baltimore, MD — November 9-10, 2002

### IMS Workshops

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

This workshop included a number of experienced IMS Montessori practitioners, who considerably enhanced the quality and depth of communication. Havis led the discussion to refine and improve many Montessori teaching techniques, particularly as related to the use of "eye contact" and "physical proximity".

Havis indicated, "many major misbehaviors can be avoided by more frequent eye contact and more regular visual scanning of the total environment. We cannot do this so well if we are busy giving too many academic lessons with materials and otherwise moving around the room. We must therefore ordinarily position ourselves in one single stationary spot where we can effectively observe and give those most important eye contact lessons as needed. If we move at all, we must be sure that our action will further enhance the normalizing quality of the total environment."

## Repression

— Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

child's basic needs for stimulating intellectual activity. Montessori teaching follows laws of nature to "control the environment, not the child" — an indirect educational approach that differs totally from even those most innovative and experimental forms of conventional modern education.

### Modern Education

*"...the attempts of so-called modern education which simply try to deliver the child from presumed repression are not on the right path...to led them back to an almost wild state does not solve the problem...the question is not to deliver man from some bonds, but to re-construct..."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Formation of Man*, p. 19

Modern education may offer "play" as an alternative to ordinary adult-centered curriculum — but these types of adaptations only establish a form of destructive abandonment of the child. Montessori's "new education" is neither abandonment nor repression, but rather a freeing of the child to work according to the guidance and direction of infinite and eternal laws of nature. Such a work-oriented concept of the child is a fundamental accusation

against all forms of traditional education that rest on varying degree of repression or abandonment of the child.

### Accusation

*"A child cannot develop and expand as it should because an adult 'represses' it...All those who speak out on behalf of children should make this accusation against adults, and they should do so constantly and without exception."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 13-14

Montessori educators apply laws of nature with children as a fundamental accusation against the popular idea in society that the child is essentially weak and unguided from within, and therefore in need of external control and repression for its proper development. Montessori teaching seeks only to "control the environment, not the child" — to allow the child's true normalized nature to freely emerge. We can however only achieve this result as we steadily apply Montessori principles with discipline and committed action — to ultimately overcome the well-established forms of repression in society and lead us towards a whole new and better humanity in the future.