



The Montessori

# OBSERVER

Repetition

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Participants attending the IMS workshop "Creating the New Education" in Shanghai, China  
— December 14-15, 2002

## Montessori Workshop in China Shanghai, China — December 14-15, 2002

This first IMS "Creating the New Education" workshop on Mainland China follows two recent similar events held in Hong Kong. **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, conducted the Shanghai workshop in English, with Chinese language translation on a phrase by phrase basis. It was coordinated locally by **Eileen Zhu** and sponsored by her *Shanghai Montessori Education Consulting Company*.

Participating in this workshop were Chinese speaking teachers and educators from throughout the Shanghai, China area, as well as English speaking educators from the local international school community. Each participant received Montessori study materials in their own language, to coordinate with the workshop discussion and demonstrations directed to various Montessori teaching techniques and procedures with children.

Workshop participants showed particular interest in how to control, introduce and help children handle Montessori materials. In this respect, Havis emphasized the need to prevent children from abusing materials, without blame or other forms of

undue restriction in their free use and experimentation. He said "when a child abuses materials, we must intervene to either re-direct the child to other more suitable activity elsewhere in the environment, or show again the proper use with the particular materials in question."

After the workshop, Havis and Zhu visited various schools in Shanghai, to help the teachers implement pertinent skills with children in their own classroom situations. They also discussed holding a further extended workshop event in Shanghai in the near future, to focus particularly on basic physical elements of the Montessori environment, including the presentation and use of a broad range of Montessori learning materials. Zhu also expressed a long-term interest in establishing an operating Montessori classroom to serve as a model observation site for more substantial Montessori teacher education in the future.

Ms. Zhu expressed her hope that this first Shanghai workshop would lead to further productive collaboration between her

## Government Regulation Of Montessori Education Progress Update

Since its inception, the Society has consistently supported greater freedom and fairness in the government regulation of Montessori education. Most recently, it has focused attention on the need to remedy the unfair and restrictive staff training requirements in the licensing of Montessori schools.

In January 2003, the Society sought the participation of several other Montessori organizations to achieve a cooperative resolution of these matters. However, **Lee Havis**, Society's executive director, reports that so far he has received no affirmative response, and therefore intends to proceed ahead with those who are willing and interested in this type of joint effort for the larger interests of Montessori education.

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## Montessori Workshops

Learn Montessori Teaching Skills  
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching

### Vancouver, Canada

April 26-27, 2003

### New Paltz, NY

May 17-18, 2003

### Newark, NJ

June 7-8, 2003

### Rapid City, SD

September 6-7, 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.

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# Repetition

by Lee Havis

*"Repetition is the natural way of learning."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Voice of Dr. Montessori*,  
p17 Nov. 1941, p.D

Dr. Montessori saw repetition as a vital aspect of natural, effective learning — particularly evident in the normal development of young children in harmony with laws of nature. Guided by a perfect teacher within, the ordinary child may fundamentally change from its repeated tendency towards fantasy, inattention and disorder to a totally new way of being consistent with its true normal nature — acquiring such qualities as profound concentration, attachment to reality, spontaneous self-discipline and complete harmony with the entire environment. Montessori confirmed these normal possibilities inherent in all children, as she witnessed their repeating appearance from the time of the first discovery of the *normalized* child in 1907 until her death in 1952.

### Normal Possibilities

*"...only the universal repetition of the same phenomenon...compelled us to conclude that we were face to face with 'normal possibilities.'"*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man* p. 44

Dr. Montessori verified that she had really discovered the child's true nature, only after having observed its repeated emergence in children who fundamentally changed their behavior in the normalizing conditions she provided for their free development. Today we can likewise see these same normal possibilities arise in children by following those basic principles of Montessori that she associated with such terms as (1) *Observation*, (2) *Individual Liberty* and (3) *Preparation of the environment*. Committed to these three Montessori principles with children, we too will eventually witness the child's amazing *normalization* — that sudden psychological shift in the child that occurs in a moment of profound concentration on some particular piece of work.

### Concentration

*"...periods of concentration that made the children oblivious to the outer world...was what I later called 'repetition of the exercise.'"*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 120

Dr. Montessori observed that children enter into their normalized state by concentrating on some physical activity of particular interest. We can see such concentration in the child's repetition of some cycle of activity that we must not interrupt in any way. The time, nature and length of such spontaneous repetition seems to respond to a mysterious inner need in the

child, associated with its basic plan of creation during the critical period of early childhood.

### Need

*"The same exercises are not repeated at every stage. In fact, repetition should correspond to a need."*

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

The young child shows at times a spontaneous need to repeat some simple activity that has no apparent purpose from the adult's point of view. Such repetition is however, a very important aspect of how certain transitory 'sensitive periods' intensely focus the child's interest and attention to one special faculty of mental formation in the child. We can only support this normal growth process by preparing the environment with a wide variety of self-educational learning materials and exercises that will stimulate the child's interest in intellectual activity.

### Growth

*"Growth comes from the repetition of an exercise and not from the first apprehension of something new."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 310

Adults as well as children can only grow skillful in the development of any task through its repeated practice over time. In young children, such growth is guided by natural inner instincts that direct them to form their whole basic mental order and personality for life. To support such normal development, we must allow children to exert themselves with persistence and self-directed will to their chosen tasks, thereby developing a strong self-reliance and independent approach to all problem-solving situations thereafter.

### Will

*"...a child...by patiently repeating an exercise, he exercises his will."*

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

The young child instinctively exerts itself to overcome many common obstacles that arise in the daily course of practical life and learning with others. At times, the child instinctively persists in these efforts by repeating the same simple exercise many times, as part of its natural formation of a strong and self-confident will. Before the age of about six, the child's unique *absorbent mind* enables an effortlessly learning as the child naturally interacts with the environment — engaging with various physical objects, exercises and activities in the nature of a deep and exacting education of the senses.

### Education of the Senses

*"The education of the senses is attained through repetition of the exercises."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p 312

The young child instinctively repeats exercises that focus its senses to the physical order of nature, reflecting such qualities as size, order, sequence, shape, color and quantity. This natural education of the senses builds up the child's basic structure of reality, which provides a foundation for all later abstract learning in such academic subjects as math and written language. We must therefore offer very careful teaching that is directed to the senses, by providing suitable manipulative materials while avoiding any interference with the child's own individual path of self-creative development.

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**May Observer**  
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**New Humanity**

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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

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## Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

### Other Adults

A Montessori teacher cannot achieve effective long-term results in creating a normalizing for children when other adults in the environment are working against these efforts. In this *moment of peril*, the teacher is considerably frustrated in her efforts to control and correct the errors of other adults in her environment. (See *Observer*, November 2002).

The teacher must recognize first that controlling the behavior of other adults, is really a way of controlling the detrimental influence of her own personality in communication with others. She must therefore work to communicate her various suggestions and advice to others in such a manner as will reduce their defensive, negative emotional reactions. She can best accomplish this by maintaining a very impersonal, objective demeanor and non-judgmental tone.

The first step in good communication with others is through modeling — to show by your own actions the desired behavior you want. The teacher must therefore always model good Montessori teaching skills, and ask the other adults to point out any errors she may be making in these efforts. This self-directed analysis will highlight the relevant skills she wishes the others to employ — without directly challenging their own particular faults and errors.

The teacher may then ask the other adults for permission to critically discuss their mutual concerns to improve the environment. A question may serve to start this dialogue: e.g., "Could we discuss how we can better work together in the classroom to help the children normalize?"

Once the basis is laid for this critical discussion, the teacher must first listen carefully to the comments of others — to amplify and extend their remarks with her own specific observations and constructive suggestions for change. Certainly, she should take every opportunity to discuss and clarify how she is trying to control the detrimental influences of her own presence, and convey the relevant skills and techniques she is seeking to use to control the "adult personality".

If the other adults are so attached to limiting, destructive beliefs towards the child, that they are unwilling to enter into any type of constructive dialogue or inner preparation to improve Montessori teaching, the teacher may need to discontinue her relationship with these adults or the

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## REPETITION

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### Careful Teaching

*"...the more carefully an exercise was taught in all its details the more it became an object of endless repetition."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.120

Our careful teaching with children must employ the principle "Preparation of the Environment" — to arrange materials, and properly introduce their purpose and use for the child's self-directed, independent activity. Such Montessori teaching requires us to first discern the child's true interest in using a specific piece of work, and then to present such work in a way that avoids any detrimental influence of the adult personality. Sometimes, our lesson presentations may involve no physical objects at all, such as when giving those lessons in silence that can bring about a profound inner quiet, peace and calm in children.

### Lessons in Silence

*"the first glimmerings of discipline have their origin in work...We can help stabilize such an experience by repeating lessons in silence."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.304

Dr. Montessori found she could instruct young children to remain still and quiet in a group, to thereby help them experience a profound peace and harmony with themselves and others. We can likewise repeat such lessons today, to help children develop the self-discipline required to achieve this particular result. However, we must offer such lessons only in a positive, friendly manner — never drawing attention to the child's mistakes, which might well discourage further efforts, or distract the child's attention towards the opinion and viewpoint of the supervising adult.

### Mistakes

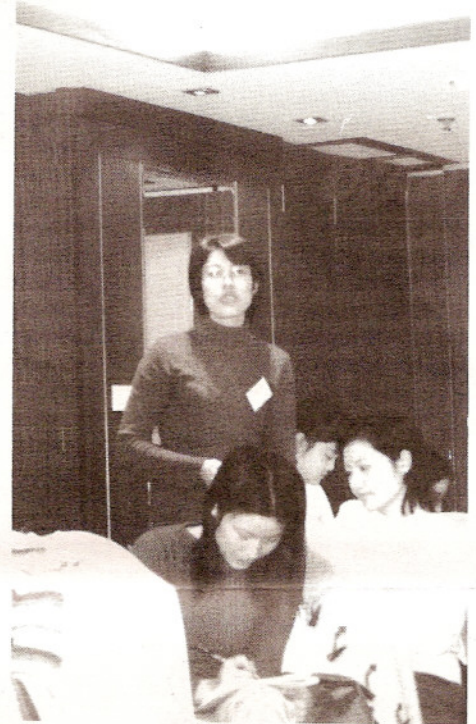
*"Suppose the child makes a mistake; the teacher neither repeats the lesson nor insists any further. She smiles and puts away the colors..."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.107

Montessori teaching follows the principle of "individual liberty", to allow children to make mistakes in their efforts at learning new skills. We must not therefore immediately repeat a lesson when the child makes an error, as such repetition tends to distract the child's attention away from its own efforts, to the approval or needs of the supervising adult. By contrast, Montessori teaching works to control and correct the detrimental influences of the adult personality — a process of *inner preparation* that we must constantly practice if we ever hope to discover the child's secret of perfection.

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Participants speak out in discussion at the IMS workshop in Shanghai, China.

— December 14-15, 2002

## Workshop in China

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2

company and the Society — to help introduce authentic, high quality Montessori teacher education, schools and other Montessori support services in China.

For more information about future workshop activity in Shanghai, contact the Society or the *Shanghai Montessori Education Consulting Company, Ltd.*, Suite 2513, 25<sup>th</sup> Floor, CSSC Building, 580 Nanjing Road West, Shanghai 200041, P.R. China, Eileen Zhu, president, Tel. (86-21) 6217-5909.

## Government Regulations

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Havis noted his concern for the widespread detrimental regulation of Montessori education. He stated "I think we can however achieve the greatest impact in our efforts if we focus on specific issues in those jurisdictions where local associates are involved and cooperating. We have therefore highlighted the problem of unfair and restrictive staff training requirements in the states of Wisconsin, Louisiana, New Jersey and New York."

Havis also indicated the Society's consistent opposition to the US government's *recognition* of private accrediting agencies. He stated "IMS maintains its accreditation through the *International Montessori Accreditation Council (IMAC)* which has no such recognition. We have therefore opposed the 1995 recognition of

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**OBSERVER**  
*The Montessori*



Children working with sensorial materials at the Japanese Montessori School in Shanghai, China. Teachers at this school attended the local IMS workshop — December 14-15, 2002

**Government Regulations**

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

a non-IMAC Montessori agency because of its improper purpose and harm to free and fair competition in the field."

He stated also "we have argued that recognizing this non-IMAC agency creates a false and misleading impression of Montessori to the general public, since it employs traditional curriculum standards and exclusionary procedures in its operation. Such recognition therefore offends the essential vision, work and purpose of Montessori, and interferes with the free, fair and effective operation of the entire Montessori community."

Havis indicated that the non-IMAC agency is presently due for renewal of its recognition, and will come before the US Department of Education for hearings in June 2003 in Washington, DC. He indicated the Society plans to present testimony against such renewal, in view of its improper and offensive purpose. He added "we are also informing the larger accreditation community of the harm of federal government recognition of private accrediting agencies, emphasizing its tendency to unfairly repress competition and innovation in specific areas such as Montessori teacher education."

The US Department of Education invites third party statements from all interested parties. The Society is seeking support for its position, and encourages all interested persons to participate in these proceedings that so significantly impinge on the progress and development of Montessori education.

*For more complete details, contact IMS for its background and position statement concerning the recognition of accreditation in the field of Montessori teacher education.*

**Moment of Peril**

*Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 1*

school itself through appropriate withdrawal or dismissal as the case may be. However, she should apply this action only after exhausting all practicable efforts for mutual cooperation in the environment. She must then clearly envision and accept the consequences of this action to herself, the children and other adults involved.

**Disengaging Fantasy**

Three-year-old Sally seems to spend much time in fantasy; e.g., playing with toys, dolls and small objects in a fanciful manner. The teacher has found that her frequent, brief eye contact lessons with Sally have had little impact to disengage her from such fantasy. When the teacher approaches Sally to question her about what she is doing, Sally becomes defensive and sometimes walks away in a defiant and negative manner.

What to do? Answer in **Observer**, May 2003

**REPETITION**

*Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2*

**Secret of Perfection**

*"Repetition is the secret of perfection..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
 from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 92

Dr. Montessori discovered that the ordinary young child could perfect itself within the unique normalizing conditions of the Montessori environment. However, we will only discover this profound secret of human perfection by applying the most precise and exacting technology possible to "control the environment, not the child" to particularly control the detrimental influences of our own "personality". We can only perfect the skills and techniques of such effective Montessori teaching as we practice them daily in our experience with children and others — to learn by repetition how to create and sustain this new way of being that is committed to infinite and eternal laws of nature.