



# The Montessori OBSERVER

*Judgment*

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Participants in the Newark, NJ Workshop — June 7-8, 2003

## Montessori Workshops in New Jersey and South Dakota

The Society's "Creating the New Education" workshop is a two-day experiential learning event designed to improve Montessori teaching skills through inner preparation. Conducted by Lee Havis, IMS executive director, the two workshops reported here are the most recent of a series of over 100 such events, which first began in 1986.

### Newark, NJ — June 7-8, 2003

The latest Newark, NJ workshop included the participation of parents, teachers and other educators from New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Havis led the discussion to demonstrate the use of a number of effective techniques to 'control the environment, not the child'. He responded to many practical issues and questions that arose from those attending, to consider how best to use various Montessori teaching techniques to resolve a number of common misbehavior scenarios with children.

The discussion focused considerable attention on managing anger and negative emotional reactions with children — to overcome these distracting "personality" obstacles that so often result in destructive behavior patterns to either abandon or repress the child in some *moment of peril*. Havis suggested participants might help resolve these problems through 'imagination' and 'previsioning'. He suggested visualizing and working out repeating problem situations with children before in our minds — using a type of advance *inner preparation* for the actual situation that is likely to arise later in reality.

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### Rapid City, SD — September 6-7, 2003

This workshop was held in the northern plains region of the United States, and included the participation of parents, teachers and other educators from throughout the states of South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Idaho, North Dakota and Montana. It was the first such event in South Dakota, providing many persons with their first opportunity to experience Montessori in such a distinctive way as being committed to laws of nature with children.

Participants focused considerable attention to the alternative perspectives of Montessori as content or context; experience or understanding. Havis presented Montessori as an experience of the child's true nature, bringing out the distinction from its conventional understanding in association with a prescribed set of materials, lesson presentation routines and various philosophical concepts. He indicated that we could only experience Montessori in this way as we follow and practice the various techniques that completely 'control the environment, not the child', and view the child as an "unknown entity".

Havis noted the danger of confusing the content of techniques with its fundamental context as experience. He said "while

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## Street Teaching

### Procedures, Protocols and Progress

The Society has recently been seeking support and cooperation for its "street teaching" project to provide Montessori learning experiences for poor children in various countries. (See *Observer*, May 2003). Lee Havis, IMS executive director, believes the project's unique "exchange of value" concept is central to the project's goal to create normalizing conditions for the development of poor working street children. Havis explains that this concept will help establish a respectful adult-child relationship by giving a small sum of money to the child in exchange for a brief period of the child's time for instruction.

Havis has designed a set of low-tech Montessori materials and their accompanying lesson presentation procedures and protocols for use in the project. Such materials employ heavy paper, beans, simple measuring devices and writing instruments that would be most suitable for use with children in the streets.

In August 2003, the US Department of Labor rejected the Society's proposals for funding the project in the Philippines and

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## Montessori Workshops

*Learn Montessori Teaching Skills  
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching*

### Anaheim, CA

October 4-5, 2003

### Vancouver, BC

October 18-19, 2003

### Stroudsburg, PA

November 1-2, 2003

### Providence, RI

November 7-8, 2003

### Ft. Lauderdale, FL

November 15-16, 2003

*For full cost and registration details,  
contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver  
Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.*

# Judgment

by Lee Havis

*"The good doctor, like the good teacher, is a person. Neither of them are machines, merely prescribing drugs or applying pedagogical methods. The details must be left to the judgment of the teacher..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.245

Thoughtful judgment is an integral aspect of Dr. Montessori's new educational approach to the child — a commitment to laws of nature that allow each child to follow the guidance of its own perfect teacher within. We must therefore carefully employ our common sense, technical skills and practical experience to create the right precise conditions for this normal self-creative development in children. Unfortunately, many well-entrenched prejudices in society work against and distract us away from using our best judgment to apply this revolutionary new education with children.

## Prejudices

*"Many people cannot help themselves from having their judgments affected by their prejudices."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Voice of Montessori* 24 Nov. 1941, A

From childhood, we have become largely conditioned to think and judge within a framework of limited possibilities in life — a reality of being that is controlled by such deeply hidden ideas as 'others know best' or 'people are evil'. These limiting prejudices however can readily cloud our judgment with children in moments of stress, frustration and impatience — compelling us to repress or abandon the child's true normal development. Then, we may impulsively judge on the basis of outward appearances and effects, to reach false and incomplete conclusions about a child, rather than seeking out the underlying true cause of the matter within ourselves.

## 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

During early childhood, we form our basic mental order and personality for life — a condition of fixed and predictable outcomes and expectations based on certain fundamental experiences with the environment. As adults, we ordinarily tend to continue this fixed mental outlook, allowing outward appearances and effects to lead us towards erroneous and limited judgments of children. From this perspective, we may well falsely judge the cause of a child's misbehavior as coming from its own evil tendencies.

## Evil Tendencies

*"The adult judges whatever the child does to save himself as disobedience and the result of his evil tendencies."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 176

The young child misbehaves out of fear or some other negative reaction towards its environment. So, while we may initially perceive the apparent cause of some misbehavior as coming from the child's own evil tendencies, we must nonetheless direct our actions to remove the detrimental influences at real cause in the environment. Conventional teaching, however, employs no such indirect approach to "control the environment, not the child", claiming instead the right to judge and correct the child using a wide range of rewards, punishment and other such common manipulative measures.

## Right to Judge

*"Adults claim the right to judge and even offend a child."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p 152

Traditional teachers judge and control children through such means as grades, punishment, predetermined curriculum, and mandatory group instruction. The adult thereby ordinarily exerts an absolute right to judge a child as bad, evil, empty or lazy, imposing whatever repressive correction there may be available under the guise of discipline, help or teaching. By contrast, Montessori teaching follows cosmic laws of nature that respect the complete authority of a perfect teacher within the child — a mysterious unerring guide to the child's complete peace, order and harmony with all creation.

## Cosmic Laws

*"Cosmic laws...only when we hold to these can we judge and modify the multitude of human laws which deal with the passing moments of external social construction."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p. 14

Dr. Montessori proposes that if we follow laws of nature with children we will eventually discover their true normal being — the *normalized* child thereby emerging with such qualities as attachment to reality, spontaneous self-discipline, profound love for intellectual activity and complete harmony with its environment. These cosmic laws closely comport with such principles as (1) *Observation* (2) *Individual Liberty* and (3) *Preparation of the Environment*. We must however apply these Montessori principles with much more than a superficial mechanical judgment to effectively engage a diverse and complex

range of problem situations that arise with children from one moment to the next.

## Judging a Child

*"...a teacher... must learn how to humble himself...this does not mean we must completely abstain from judging a child or that we must approve everything that he does..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p 153

While we diligently work and act to remove and control the obstacles in the child's environment, we must still notice and deal with a child's repeating patterns of misbehavior, as well its interest to work with some particular activity or material in the environment. We are therefore at times engaged in judging a child through observation, to determine its particular level of normal being. The ability to make such judgments however does not come

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Look for the  
**November Observer**  
featuring  
*Inner Guidance*

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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

### Naptime Wandering

Montessori teaching techniques apply during naptime with children as elsewhere in the ordinary routine of the day. At naptime however, children may experience particular forms of emotional distress and sleeping anxiety. See *Observer*, May 2003. Lucy's persistent agitation and wandering behavior during the naptime period in this *moment of peril* requires the teacher to control her own detrimental personality tendencies by using such techniques as *eye contact*, *clear direction*, and *repetition*.

The teacher's personality is the primary detrimental influence that must be controlled in Lucy's environment, by avoiding the common tendencies to abandon or repress her normal self-directed development. Of course, the teacher must attend to all the children during naptime with as much vigilant observation as during their waking period of work with materials — to employ such techniques as "eye contact" with those children who, like Lucy, need that type of special comfort, support and attention to relax and be still and quiet.

When Lucy wanders away from her cot, and the teacher is unable to get eye contact from her stationary position, she may go over to her (*proximity*) until Lucy looks up (*eye contact*), at which time she may gesture to "come" (*clear direction*), to return to the cot. If the teacher's proximity does not get Lucy's attention, she may then have to approach close enough to touch her gently, and say, "take my hand" (*clear direction*), and walk with her in this manner, to guide her back to her cot.

If Lucy's distress is so severe and reactive when the teacher approaches that she will not take the teacher's hand, the teacher may then have to question Lucy briefly with a phrase such as "what would you like to do?" After a brief conversation, the teacher may then return to a "take my hand" direction (*repetition*), and proceed as before.

As long as the naptime does not infringe on some vital urge in the child's normal development, this quiet resting period can become a routine, orderly and pleasant experience for all. As Lucy becomes more calm and peaceful in her relationship with the teacher, she will more readily follow the naptime routine and remain still and quiet on her cot for a reasonable period of time, in accordance with the specified daily program schedule.

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## Judgment

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so much from years of academic study, but rather from a diligent *inner preparation* that aims to discern and experience the phenomenon of normalized behavior in children.

### Years of Study

"...years of study...years of listening do not form the man of will and judgment."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Ed. for a New World*, p.12

Montessori teacher education is primarily an inner preparation that supports the emergence of the child's true normalized nature — associating this normalization phenomenon with the adult's way of being committed to laws of nature in its environment. Whatever benefit we may gain from years of academic study and technical knowledge of Dr. Montessori's unique approach to the child, we can still only achieve her same results as we remove, correct and control the deeply hidden inner errors and obstacles to observation within ourselves. Such inner preparation must therefore help us control those detrimental actions that abandon or repress the child's full capacity to think and judge for itself through independent, self-directed activity with others.

### Capacity to Judge

"...if we show a child how to do something with too much enthusiasm...the child's capacity to think and judge for himself is repressed."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.91

We ordinarily tend to limit the child's normal capacity to judge and act on its own through our unnecessary, excessive or negative language, movements, help and teaching. We must therefore carefully prepare ourselves to control our actions in the child's environment, to limit our activity as much as possible. This *preparation of the environment* gradually allows the child to develop a self-confident attitude and reasoned judgment that is able to effectively contend with the many unknown problems that will invariably arise throughout its entire life with others.

### Reasoned Judgment

"A man is one who can make a reasoned judgment and then decide his own course of action."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.96-97

Once normalized, the child seeks to continue this new way of being through its conscious exercise of sound reason and judgment in later childhood and beyond. As adults, such reasoned judgment would constitute an integral aspect of a whole new human personality of self-perfecting cooperation, harmony and ethical behavior with others. We set in motion this new

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## Newark, NJ Workshop

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Havis said "the idea is to imagine ourselves in some reoccurring difficult misbehavior situation with children, and then pretend to change our ordinary reactive pattern, to one that employs instead some useful technique such as 'distraction' or 'clear direction'. Later with children, we can then very often remember the similarity of the actual event to our prior imaginary scenario, and stop to adjust our behavior accordingly. We may also use a trigger word or gesture to focus our attention to the presence of some negative emotion — and then better remember to employ the specific Montessori technique in the real situation."

## IMS Fights for Fair Regulation of Montessori

On June 9, 2003, Lee Havis represented IMS and its accrediting agency, *International Montessori Accreditation Council* (IMAC) in testimony before the US Department of Education. He urged that the Department stop its unfair continuing recognition of another accrediting agency, because of its misleading representation of Montessori and destructive effect on free and fair competition in the field.

Havis argued that the other agency inaccurately represents Montessori as a traditional curriculum, devoid of any central unifying philosophy and principles consistent with Dr. Montessori's vision, purpose and experience. In support of this position, Havis submitted a substantial number of petitions from Montessori schools and practitioners. Havis is now asking the US Secretary of Education to overrule a review panel's adverse action in the matter, and accordingly remove the offensive recognition at issue.

The Society is also urging repeal of the "recognition" law over private accrediting agencies. Havis indicated that many organizations believe that such recognizing activity is an unnecessary interference in the free operation of higher education. He stated, "repeal of all federal government 'recognition' of private agencies would encourage many forms of constructive alternatives and innovative efforts in higher education."

The Society also submitted letters of complaint to licensing agencies in the states of Louisiana and Wisconsin, objecting to their unfair and prejudicial manner of approving Montessori teaching credentials as applied to certain licensing regulations. Havis is urging these states to adopt impartial and less restrictive staff training requirements for employment of teachers in Montessori schools.

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**OBSERVER**  
The Montessori



## RAPID CITY, SD

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such techniques as *distraction*, *eye contact* and *proximity* certainly can be excellent tools for effective Montessori teaching, we must recognize these as content aspects of Montessori teaching — distinct from the fundamental context of being committed to infinite and eternal laws of nature. We must therefore apply such techniques according to our complete observation of the total needs of each situation with children — to adapt and modify their use until we ultimately experience the full emergence of the child's true nature."

After the workshop, Havis expressed his hope to see further inner preparation activities in the region. He indicated the Society's support and commitment to cooperate with interested local persons, to schedule the best time and place for such new IMS workshops.

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Participants in discussion at the Rapid City, South Dakota workshop — September 6-7, 2003

## Street Teaching

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funding the project in the Philippines and Brazil. Havis believes that this rejection was at least partially due to lack of sufficient support, awareness and interest in the project in the respective countries.

Havis indicated "the concept of 'exchange of value' with poor street children is new and unusual, and deviates considerable from the conventional approach to helping such children. In addition, we will have to overcome the wide-spread prejudice that poor street children lack sufficient inner guidance or motivation for their own self-development, well-being and successful learning."

The Society aims to overcome these obstacles by more direct contact and communication with local government agencies and service groups that significantly interact with these children. Havis said, "I am encouraged that we have receive some positive support and interest in this project and will therefore certainly follow this up with further efforts."

Contact IMS for more information about the "street teaching" project, and to help with its operation.

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humanity by our committed actions with children today — consistently exercising sound judgment and common sense based on infinite and eternal laws of nature, and applying those Montessori principles that allow the normalized child to fully emerge in the world.

## Moment of Peril

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### Handling Interruptions

As the teacher begins a lesson with one child, she often notices another child will interrupt her by either misbehaving in some loud or violent manner, or by requesting urgent assistance for something elsewhere in the environment. The teacher does not wish to leave her lesson with the present child, but realizes that she must handle these interruptions in a manner that will best harmonize the interests and needs of all the children in the group. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, November, 2003

## Messages to IMS

August 15, 2003  
Albany, NY

Dear Lee:

...I thought I heard what Montessori was saying but was not applying it literally. She could not have been more specific (now that my eyes are open WIDE)...my work is to undo years of traditional methods...I am re-reading everything Montessori wrote in a new light thanks to you. 'Come with me. I have something...' is right there. Moments of peril, right there...

Ronnie Hazzard (Albany, NY)

Participant in New Paltz, NY workshop  
(May 17-18, 2003)