



The Montessori OBSERVER

Science

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Street Teaching Project Update

Since 2001, the Society has been developing a "Street Teaching" project to help improve the education of poor children who work and live on the streets in many under-developed countries. **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, devised this project to follow Dr. Montessori first Children's House experiment in the slums of Rome, Italy. He believes this project may offer similar favorable conditions and advantages for Montessori teaching with poor children in many countries.

Havis has recently submitted his concept for review and approval by several governments in Latin America. He has also met personally with local educators in some of these countries, to obtain more direct support and cooperation for the operation of this project.

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Participants in the Sacramento, CA Workshop — April 24-25, 2004

IMS Workshops in California and Canada Sacramento, CA

April 24-25, 2004

Professional educators and parents from the states of California and Rhode Island attended this first IMS workshop in Sacramento.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, spoke about the dynamics of following laws of nature with young children. He also offered specific guidance for Montessori teaching with elementary (6-12) children, including the use of such tools as a daily log and questioning in the format of regular classroom meetings.

Workshop discussion focused primarily on resolving specific misbehavior scenarios raised by those attending. Havis offered a number of practical examples to clarify the key technology, including the use of *questioning* to help children resolve their deep attachment to various dramas of fantasy escape from reality.

Havis noted the particular difficulty in resolving fantasy misbehavior. He said "we can at times easily confuse fantasy with normal forms of mental imagination and creative expression. Eye contact and visual scanning is not always sufficient to identify and resolve the situation. At times, we must use a questioning phrase, such as 'what are you doing?' to open up a constructive dialogue with the child about the underlying fear and pain associated with the particular drama."

May 8-9, 2004

This third IMS workshop in Vancouver included the participation of persons from throughout this West Coast region of North America. **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, offered the key presentation of Montessori teaching technology. He particularly emphasized the use of such protocols as the "least amount of adult intervention possible", to achieve the best overall results with the various techniques.

Workshop discussion also considered the practical difficulties of Montessori teaching in the face of resistance and conflict from others. Havis encouraged participants to recognize the higher power of laws of nature over even well entrenched prejudice in society. He said "the obstacles of fear and approval from others represent essentially our own emotional conflict from the past. We can therefore overcome these inner obstacles through disciplined action we take each day in harmony with laws of nature."

Havis noted the particular need to create support with others, to sustain effective progress and development in our efforts. He said "we don't have to act out our fear or need for approval with others. We can rely instead on laws of nature to guide us through those temporary obstacles that commonly emerge in our flawed and imperfect human nature."

Montessori Workshops

Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
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Washington, DC

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June 19-20, 2004

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October 2-3, 2004

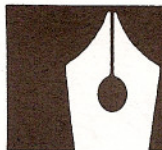
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October 30-31, 2004

Miami, FL

November 13-14, 2004

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SCIENCE

by Lee Havis

"If science began to study man, it would not only succeed in offering new techniques for the education of children....it would further lead to a profound understanding of many human and social phenomena that are still enveloped in obscurity."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.9

Dr. Montessori's 'new education' is a scientific study into the deepest mysteries of man, to discover our true nature in harmony with infinite and eternal laws of life. Montessori teaching follows this experimental approach with children, to discover and free this inborn natural being to fully express itself in the world. Unfortunately, many popular attempts at science with children fail to implement such an exacting type of Montessori teaching, and therefore reach conclusions about man's true nature that are different from what Dr. Montessori discovered and described on the subject.

Attempts at Science

"modern...attempts at science...have developed around the most superficial manifestations of child behavior..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.45

Conventional educators generally study children with a false and prejudicial notion of their true nature, viewing the child as essentially weak, fanciful, dependent and unguided from within itself. Since these superficial attempts at science start with a limited notion of the child itself, they lack the depth and substance of a completely objective, open-minded consideration of the full range of possibilities. By contrast, Dr. Montessori started her research by observing the child as an "unknown entity", to ultimately discover its true nature in 1907 through the exacting procedures of a genuinely scientific education.

Scientific Education

"(The Children's house)...is not simply a shelter for children, but a real school employing rational principles of scientific education."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.336

In the early 1900's, Dr. Montessori began her work with children following the scientific approach laid down by Itard and Seguin in their study of deficient children in France in the 1800's. She applied their scientific education to young children of more ordinary mental capabilities, to study how they would respond under similar conditions of freedom in a positive supportive environment for their self-directed development. Montessori applied the well-established procedures of experimental

science to ultimately find that the inattention, fantasy and disorder of ordinary children changed to a state of complete peace, calm and order in a moment of profound concentration — an event she termed *normalization*, to signify a return to what appeared as a stable path of true normal development.

Experimental Science

"The method...namely, experiment, observation, evidence or proof, the recognition of a new phenomenon, their reproduction and utilization — undoubtedly places it among the experimental sciences."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.58

For over 40 years, Dr. Montessori studied and documented her original discovery of the *normalized* child as the consistent result of her particular scientific method. This experimental science allowed the normalized child to emerge with such amazing qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, love of order and complete harmony with the entire environment. However, such a promising new child will only emerge in conditions where the teacher is following such fundamental scientific principles as observation.

Observation

"...the teacher must assume those characteristics which are necessary in the presence of science...The fundamental quality is the capacity for observation."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.129-30

Montessori teaching requires us to observe children and their environment with a commitment to total sensory awareness — to extend beyond our prejudices and preconceived notions about the child, to experience its ultimate truth of perfect being in the present moment. We can only apply such a visionary type of observation in practice as a process of growing awareness, by noticing such key phenomena as deep concentration in children and those various obstacles in the environment that deter the child's completely free self-directed development. Based on this expansive observation, we must then use exacting scientific techniques to remove those influences in the environment that deter the child's normal development, by applying the idea of control *the environment, not the child*.

Scientific Techniques

"The pupil can show his surprising achievements only if the teacher applies the scientific techniques of 'indirect intervention'."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.38

Montessori teaching is ultimately a way of being committed to laws of nature, which

we can only understand and follow through the application of principles and procedures that closely harmonize with such laws. The tools we need for this expansive way of being must include a range of scientific technique that help us judge and analyze what actions to take in our indirect intervention with children. Such technology must incorporate a manageable number of simple rules to help us anticipate and resolve a broad range of likely problem situations with children, to particularly prevent us from imposing such common destructive patterns as abandonment and negativity.

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Look for the
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featuring
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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

Running and Pushing

5 year old Jerry runs and pushes others on a frequent, regular basis. This usually happens when the children are preparing to get in line to leave the room. The teacher recognizes this as dangerous misbehavior that threatens physical harm to all children in his vicinity (*See Observer, March, 2004*). However, her actions to reprimand Melvin to 'walk' have been largely ineffective here for several reasons.

Firstly, the teacher calling out for Melvin to 'walk' is likely violating several important protocols of effective Montessori teaching; i.e., (1) don't speak to a child without first having eye contact and (2) don't draw attention to negative behavior. Secondly, The teacher seems to have established a general pattern of abandonment towards Jerry, which requires a long-term plan of resolution.

The teacher here must first handle the immediate misbehavior scenario, due to its potential for serious physical harm to children. However, she must also deal with the 'abandonment' issue to assure a long-term resolution to prevent further similar moments of peril.

The immediate running and pushing appears as a level 1 priority misbehavior scenario; i.e., actual or threatened physical harm to children. The teacher therefore must remove the detrimental influences around Jerry by using such techniques as *eye contact, proximity, clear direction* and *distraction*. She might therefore approach Jerry (proximity) and place a hand on any children being pushed, to protect them from any further physical harm. This is the teacher 'controlling' the other children in Jerry's environment.

When the teacher touches the other children, Jerry will likely look up at the teacher (eye contact), thus allowing her to safely proceed with some clear verbal direction to focus attention elsewhere in the environment (distraction). Then, the teacher can use a *safe word*, such as 'watch' or 'come over here, I have something to show you.' She may also give a *clear direction* for Jerry to place his hands by his sides and stand behind the person in front of him.

Beyond resolving the immediate situation, the teacher must also deal with her long-term abandonment of Jerry, which comes about by not looking at Jerry when he looks up at the teacher for this type of psychological support. She can best do

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Simple Rules

"Science has suggested for us certain very simple rules by which the child has been restored as nearly as possible to conditions of a natural life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Dr. Montessori's Own Hand*, p.30

We follow laws of nature by growing in our awareness and commitment to such expansive principles as (1) Observation (2) Individual Liberty and (3) Preparation of the Environment. While these three basic Montessori principles provide a general guidance, we need a still more precise and specific set of simple rules, techniques and protocols to assure a consistently effective practice with children. With a sufficiently comprehensive set of reliable, practical tools, we are then better prepared to experience the same normalized child that has been so well documented before by many repeated experiments throughout the world.

Repeated Experiments

"...facts concerning the spontaneous development of qualities...have been confirmed by repeated experiments in a great variety of places made by persons who had no sort of communication one with another."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.72

Since 1907, Dr. Montessori's normalized child has been validated many times as a universal truth that transcends differences of time, place and culture. Through our own repeated experiments, we can gain confidence that this amazing new child will consistently emerge as promised if we create the exact scientific conditions described by Dr. Montessori. Montessori schools must therefore duplicate the same conditions of a scientific laboratory as Dr. Montessori did before, to achieve the same hopeful results of her original experiments with children.

Scientific Laboratory

"The scientific laboratory...should be the school in which free children develop with the help of material designed to bring about development."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p. 109-110

Montessori teachers function as scientists with children — conducting various carefully designed experiments in support of their true normal development. The classroom must therefore serve as a scientific laboratory that views the child initially as an unknown entity, to test out the premise that it has a perfect teacher within for its own self-directed development. Unfortunately, this scientific education is not so consistently practiced as to present a sufficiently constant instrument to measure and confirm its results to the wider general public.

Constant Instrument

"...in all scientific research, the instrument of measurement must be fixed...the constant instrument in psychological measurement should be the 'method of education.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p. 87

Montessori teaching is not consistently practiced as intended because it is often confused and misunderstood by such outward effects as specialized learning materials, certified teachers and well-behaved children. Such external effects however do not constitute the proper constant instrument of Montessori teaching, which we find only in the teacher's complete commitment to laws of nature. As more Montessori practitioners come to realize and accept this underlying proposition, we will see a more widespread and meaningful approximation to real Montessori teaching with children.

Approximation

"Whatever science has to say is stated as an approximation, never as an absolute...."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.225-26

In practice, we must approximate the pure conditions of being committed to laws of nature by using a range of suitable corresponding lessons, protocols and techniques. Thoughtfully devised, this technology can help us to prepare and control the environment through well-disciplined experiments that we can moderate and adjust with sound judgment, common sense and experience. Given the many hidden errors in our personality formation from childhood, we vitally need this type of reliable method of procedure to overcome those inner defects that otherwise distract and divert our effective efforts with children.

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Messages to IMS

May 10, 2004
Vancouver, Canada

Hi Lee

...I had such a peaceful day at work (after Vancouver workshop). I love the part of keeping my involvement as little as possible. Children loved it even more...Thank you one more time for teaching me that it is possible to make a difference 'out there', for my and other kids.

Sanela Jakovljevic
Participant in Vancouver, Canada workshop (May, 2004)

April 27, 2004
Albuquerque, NM

Hi:

...the (workshop) techniques are working well...The class is much more together as a group, helping each other; being nicer to each other; and much more at peace within themselves...Take care.

Suzette Layman
Participant in Albuquerque, NM workshop (March, 2004)

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Moment of Peril

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this while visually scanning the environment from a stationary observation position outside the activity area of the children. This eye contact will help Jerry stay attached to reality, follow his natural inner guidance, and reduce the fear and anxiety at basic cause in his frantic running and pushing behavior.

As the teacher applies these immediate and long-term measures to control the environment around Jerry, his violent running and pushing activity will subside and eventually disappear. In time, he will return to a more normal state of calm, order and peaceful interaction with others in the social situation.

Repeating Misbehavior

At dismissal time, 4 year old Melvin throws his shoes across the floor in the dressing area. When the teacher gets eye contact with him, she points to the shoes and says in a pleasant, friendly tone of voice, 'where do these belong?' Melvin responds by running away, and then returns to throw the shoes again. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, September 2004

Street Teaching

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

Havis will seek to include as many local persons as possible in this project to serve on each country's consultation board, to help assure its long-term operation and effective integration into the target communities. The project is described in a proposal written in Spanish and English, which is available from the Society on request.



Participants at the IMS workshop in Vancouver, Canada — May 8-9, 2004

Science — Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

Method of Procedure

"The concept of science presupposes that a truth has been discovered, that there is a secure basis for progress, a sure and determined method of procedure and control against error.."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.345

Dr. Montessori and her associates focused most of their research and study on the dynamics of normal development and the various components of academic content learning; i.e., not on what the teacher must do to create the psychic conditions required for this normal development. We must therefore now fill this historical gap of vital knowledge by establishing the essential method of procedure for practitioners to follow in the field. Anyone must be able to readily validate such methodology by conducting their own personal research with children.

Research

"It is not necessary that the whole work of research be accomplished. It is enough that the idea be understood and the work be taken in hand following its indications.."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education for a New World*, p.52

Montessori teaching is foremost a scientific education that uses observation, common sense, logical reasoning and experimentation — a way of being to test out the premise that children have a perfect inner guidance for their own self-directed development. However, this research must observe children with faith and imagination to see a spiritual truth that is beyond all rational human logic and evidence of our physical senses. For such a science of the human spirit, we must have a technology that respects both the child's visionary potential for being as well as the principles of objective reasoning — a new science that is less bound to the mechanical details of lesson presentations and rigid rules of adult behavior, and more committed to laws of nature that aim to eventually free the child's spirit to fully materialize itself in the world.