



The Montessori

The Child

OBSERVER

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Montessori Charter School for Washington, DC

In March 2005, a group of parents and educators in the Washington, DC area submitted an application to operate a public charter school to be known as the *Washington Montessori Public Charter School* (WMPC). It will be located in a low-income area of Washington, DC, and run by a non-profit corporation, to include the participation of **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, on its board of trustees.

The WMPC School evolved from the vision and efforts of several current Board members, to provide a beneficial alternative to conventional public schooling for low-income families in Washington, DC. They decided on a Montessori educational program because of their prior interest and positive experience with this approach. In 2005, they asked Havis to join the Board, to assure the highest possible level of authenticity and quality in the school's educational program.

The school plans to focus its initial program for children aged 3-6. But it will also include a small number of young elementary aged children as well. Ultimately, the school

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Participants in the Honolulu, Hawaii workshop practicing nomenclature lesson presentation using the Seguin three-period lesson for beginning reading — February 12-13, 2005

IMS Workshop in Washington, DC

On April 23-24, 2005, **Lee Havis** conducted a *Creating the New Education* workshop in Washington, DC. It was sponsored by the *El-Iman Learning Center* and held at their school in the nearby suburb of Falls Church, VA.

Mary El-Khatib, director of the *El-Iman Center*, provided local coordination for this event, which included the participation of several other schools, parents and educators in the area. Participating also were educators from the countries of Ghana and Sierra Leone in West Africa.

Havis led the workshop, setting forth the Society's distinctive technology for Montessori teaching, consisting of specific techniques, protocols, safe words and lesson presentations. The discussion directed attention to such issues as the underlying cause and psychology of misbehavior.

Havis indicated that all misbehavior is essentially a psychological projection of the adult's own inner drama of personality. He said, "we resolve misbehavior in children only as we control our personality. Such control requires us to fully observe our thoughts, actions and feelings that come with some present moment misbehavior situation. The misbehavior we see in children is simply an external drama of these unresolved repressed feelings from the past."

Havis noted the powerful force of repressed feeling to forge a false self-image in the present moment. He said "we must observe and resolve these feeling as they emerge with children today. Otherwise, they control our behavior that automatically acts out a pattern of negativity and abandonment. Using the technique of *imagination—pre-visualization*, we must carefully re-create our negative feelings in some moment of misbehavior. Then, we prevision those same feelings in the process of resolving the situation with some new corrected action."

After the workshop, Havis consulted with teachers at the *El-Iman Center*, to assist them put the workshop technology into direct practice with the children. Havis stressed the importance of continuing daily practice with the workshop skills and assuring regular means of inner preparation for sustaining long-term success in the future.

Government Regulations Recognize IMS Teaching Credential

In April 2005, the state of Wisconsin officially qualified the IMS teaching certificate to meet the educational component of licensing requirements for child care centers in that state. This is particularly important because Wisconsin

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Montessori Workshops

Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
The Technology of Montessori Teaching

Stirling, Scotland

July 9-10, 2005

Boise, Idaho

October 15-16, 2005

The IMS workshop presents the most current available technology for Montessori teaching. It includes techniques, protocols, safe words and lesson presentations that anyone can use to scientifically create conditions for complete self-directed normal development in children as described by Dr. Maria Montessori.

For full cost and registration details, contact: IMS, 8115 Fenton St. #304, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Email to — havis@erols.com



The Child

by Lee Havis

"The study of love and its utilization will lead us to the source from which it springs, The Child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.295-96

Dr. Montessori viewed the child as the source of unconditional love — a pure spirit capable of fully materializing itself in the world, to bring about great positive changes for mankind. However, we rarely see this child in reality because the right conditions for this to occur are hard to achieve. Montessori teaching today must overcome some significant obstacles, to bring about the emergence of what Dr. Montessori described as the normal child.

The Normal Child

"...the normal child is one who is precociously intelligent, who has learned to overcome himself and to live in peace, and who prefers a disciplined task to futile idleness."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.148

In 1907, Dr. Montessori followed the direction of scientific observation to discover the child's true nature — a normal state of being that flows from the child's own perfect inner guidance for self-directed development. She found in this normal child such amazing inherent qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, love of order and perfect harmony with others. However, even after her death in 1952, many practitioners came to deny or misinterpret this reality, viewing it instead at best as an inconsistent phenomenon or more likely an entirely impossible fairy tale.

Impossible Fairy Tale

"...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 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

Dr. Montessori validated the truth of her discovery of the child by repeating her scientific experiments with children throughout the world for a period of some 40 years. However, this did not convince those many who gradually came to see her vision as a self-deceptive illusion or impossible fairy tale, and her approach as therefore impractical, out-of-date or wholly unrealistic. For many, it is very hard to overcome the ordinary impression and expectation of the child as inherently weak, dependent, fanciful and disorderly — a popular perception of the child based

on physical senses that cannot see beyond the child's superficial personality.

Superficial Personality

"The child of three...is a fighter on the verge of being vanquished; he has already adopted a defensive attitude that masks his deeper nature...All that remains active is a superficial personality which exhausts itself in clumsy movements, vague ideas, and the effort to resist or avoid adult restraint."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.264

With our physical senses, we see only the outer effects of the child — a reality that ordinarily reflects our own distorted perceptions and expectations built on limited past experiences. Montessori teaching looks beyond the child's superficial personality to see instead its potential for complete normal being. Then we control the environment, not the child, following the Montessori method that ultimately brings about the emergence of the true normalized child.

The Montessori Method

"There was no method to be seen, what was seen was a child...acting according to its own nature."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.136

Dr. Montessori described her approach only in the most indirect, generalized manner, leaving to others to explain the practical details of its specific application with children. Only in 2003, did these details of the Montessori method become fully known and available as a comprehensive reliable technology for all to employ with children. Happily, anyone can now use this technology to create the same conditions, as did Dr. Montessori in 1907, to bring about the same amazing normalization she described and wrote about occurring in children at that time.

Normalization

"Now children as they are ordinarily known, unstable, lazy, disorderly, violent, stubborn, disobedient, etc., are 'functionally' ill and can be cured...In other words, they can be 'normalized'. What is usually called 'The Montessori method' revolves around this essential point."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.46

Montessori teaching must ordinarily first confront children in a state of considerable disorder, inattention, fear and resistance to adult interaction. The task is then to create the conditions for their normalization — the psychological event that returns a child its state of natural order and harmony with others. We achieve this result by controlling the environment in ways that consider each child as an unknown entity.

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

Conventional education generally views misbehavior as a fixed and stable aspect of the child's own nature — an essential manifestation of its biological mechanism or personality, which teachers and parents must mold or control to fit the demands of adult society. By contrast, Montessori teaching views misbehavior as a reflection of detrimental influences in the environment around the child in question — a cause that we can only remove by treating the child as an unknown entity. In a group

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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.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Fantasy or Work

A child's prolonged involvement with some simple activity may not always be concentrated work. Extending over several days or weeks, such activity may well represent fantasy escape from reality. In the present *moment of peril*, the teacher is not sure by just watching whether four-year-old George is actually engaged in fantasy or work. See *Observer*, March 2005. If fantasy, the teacher must see this as a level #3 misbehavior scenario, and use the pertinent technology to resolve the matter accordingly.

Certainly, the teacher must apply the principle of *individual liberty*, and not simply abandon George to idle fantasy. However, she must also respect the protocol 'don't interrupt concentration'. The teacher must therefore first determine whether the activity is either fantasy or work.

Applying the principle *Observation*, the teacher may investigate the matter by moving closer (proximity) to see what George is actually doing. She may then look and listen to see what the activity is really about for George.

The teacher may also apply the questioning technique, beginning first with a simple safe-word phrase, such as "what are you doing?" Listening to the reply, she will determine better the nature and purpose of George's activity.

If George talks about the reality of the activity, then the teacher sees the activity as work, and moves away to allow the child to continue without interruption. However, if fantasy, she may need to question further, perhaps using reflective language, to help expose and resolve the underlying repressed feelings involved. The teacher can often do this most effectively with a safe-word questioning phrase directed to the child's feelings; e.g., "What do you like about that?"

With fantasy, the teacher may ultimately help the child return to reality, using a distraction safe-word phrase, such as 'come over here. I have something to show you'. If possible, she will first guide the child to return the current materials to their proper place in the environment. With new practical life activity, the child is more likely to return to the reality of healthy normal work.

Questioning

The teacher engages the children in clean-up after the activity period with a phrase such as "does anyone see anything out of place?" While some children

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of children, there may be multiple misbehavior scenarios to analyze and resolve; however, we observe and resolve these only as we observe the children one-by-one, each with its own unique plan of creation and perfect inner guidance for self-directed development.

One by One

"There is only one real biological manifestation, that of the living individual;...our education...should be directed towards these individuals as they are observed one by one."

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

Montessori teaching controls the total environment by identifying and analyzing various clusters of negative energy — misbehavior scenarios each with its own particular priority level for attention and interaction by the teacher; each with a single central hub child as its focus of interest and attention. Observing the children one-by-one, we must then distinguish carefully between the central 'hub' child in the scenario, and the other children we must remove as detrimental influences around that child. Montessori teaching looks through the superficial drama of whatever fantasy, disorder or disharmony there may be in a particular scenario, to see always that single normalized type of child that can ultimately emerge.

Single Normalized Type

"The Montessori teacher is constantly looking for a child who is not yet there...In her imagination she sees that single normalized type, which lives in a world of the spirit."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 110

With faith and imagination, we follow laws of nature, knowing that each child will eventually normalize under the insuperable influence of the Montessori environment. Beyond the drama of whatever misbehavior there may be, we look for a single normalized type of child that can certainly emerge in some moment of deep concentration on a particular piece of work. To create this opportunity, we must control the detrimental influences of our own personality, finding and correcting whatever unknown error there may be that blocks our vision of the child's true nature.

Unknown Error

"The adult must find within himself the still unknown error that prevents him from seeing the child as he is. If such a preparation is not made...he can go no further."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 15

Controlling the adult personality is largely a process of inner spiritual preparation — to identify and control whatever psychological obstacles there may be that

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Charter School in Washington

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will enroll some 400 children, in multi-aged groupings at the primary (3-6) and elementary (6-12) levels.

On April 26, 2005, the WMPC School presented its application to a review panel of the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board. Panel members inquired with Havis and other board members about various aspects of its operation, including particularly how it will assure effective support and preparation of the teaching staff.

Havis told the review panel that all teaching staff would be initially selected on the basis of their potential for effective Montessori teaching, including such qualities as patience, humility, love of children and willingness to learn. He indicated that he would personally conduct a two-week intensive orientation training for all staff before the first day of school, to provide a complete presentation of all pertinent Montessori teaching technology. Havis also stressed the school's commitment to continuing regular consultation and staff training to assure their consistent progress and effectiveness in all pertinent skills with children.

Havis pointed out the need to give special attention to the small group of new elementary children, quite likely lacking in language skills and preparation for self-directed learning. He said "we will give remedial academic instruction for all children with such needs; and adjust our efforts to their individual levels of ability and skill. We will also administer the Trust Tutoring *Evaluation of Basic Skills* test to all children before the school begins, to develop a proper baseline for our academic instruction."

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Reflections

By Ester Rupert

Ester is a student in IMS teacher education program; here reflecting on her experiences of Montessori teaching with children

Reported to IMS discussion list, April, 2005

Time Management

Just last week one child was walking around thinking about what to do. She noticed the dirty paint containers in the washing tub and said, "I'm going to wash". Then she noticed the snack in the kitchen area. "I'm going to have snack." She looked back at the washing tubs and decided, "I'm going to wash and then eat snack." She immersed herself in washing until she had finished and then went to fix her snack, following through on her proclamation. "Imagine," her Mom said when I told her on the phone, "time management at 2 1/2".

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limit or distort a clear and complete observation of the child. This is difficult because unknown error is associated with repressed feelings, prejudicial thinking and faulty perceptions that camouflage and conceal its existence as such. These inner errors nonetheless tend to bring about very destructive adult behavior; e.g., giving unnecessary help to children to restrict or limit the emergence of a truly free child.

Free Child

"...when we speak of a free child, we mean one following the guidance of that nature that is powerful within him."

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

The ordinary adult personality is a bi-polar defensive mechanism to block out painful feelings from the past — an automatic functioning with children to either abandon them to idle play or repress them under the guise of help, discipline or teaching. We must control these destructive tendencies to reveal how a free child will emerge with its own inner plan of creation. Montessori teaching must therefore carefully control the adult personality in the child's environment by creating a new separate way of being that allows the child to reveal the surprising secret of human nature.

Secret of Human Nature

"A child is mysterious and powerful and contains within himself the secret of human nature."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Secret of Childhood, p.208

Dr. Montessori has already amply verified the universal truth of the new child she first discovered in 1907. By following laws of nature, we too can discover the amazing secret of human nature that is in the child. Using the pertinent technology, we are serving a vision of the child that is creating a whole new and better humanity in the world.

Government Regulations

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regulates most Montessori schools under these same requirements.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, initiated this qualifying process for the IMS teacher education program over 15 years ago. He offered this assistance at the request of teachers and schools in Wisconsin who were unable to achieve a successful resolution of this matter through their own direct communication with the pertinent state officials. Havis indicated the positive effect of this extensive, detailed dialogue as perhaps bringing about a better understanding of Montessori education among government licensing officials in that state.

Havis said, "the Wisconsin controversy here points to a much larger problem of unfair, harmful government regulation of schools and teachers in many jurisdictions. Such regulation tends to favor conventional education, due to popular prejudices and misunderstanding of the needs and skills involved in the practice of real Montessori teaching."

Havis noted the importance of working together to achieve successful resolution of detrimental government regulation. He said, "government regulations involve a political and legal dimension that requires great endurance, courage and determination. Unless we confront and resolve these regulations, we become their victims. Then we see government continuing to erode, limit and ultimately destroy the expression of authentic Montessori education wherever it seeks to operate."

Moment of Peril

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respond in an active, positive manner, several children seem lost. The teacher then approaches these lost children with a phrase such as "would you like to help clean the tables for lunch?" The children however say 'no' and return to a condition of quiet fantasy. The teacher is unsure whether to continue questioning with phrases like "why not?" or simply leave them alone for a while. What to do?

— Answer in **Observer**, September, 2005

Charter School in Washington, DC

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The Charter School Board held a public hearing to further review the WMPC School's application on May 16, 2005. At this hearing, the Board heard testimony from Lee Havis and other the representatives of WMPC school, Greg Crawford and Belinda Shade-Moore.

The Board inquired especially into how the school plans to provide staff development for effective teacher preparation. Havis indicated his personal commitment to provide this support, which will include a two-week orientation seminar for all staff before school begins, and formal continuing education throughout the year.

With Board approval, the WMPC School plans to negotiate a lease for the physical premises, and proceed with such preliminary matters as qualifying suitable potential teaching staff and enrolling students. Havis expressed his conviction that this school would serve as a highly visible positive model for authentic Montessori education in the local region and beyond.