



The Montessori OBSERVER

*Well-being of
Total Environment*

Published by the International Montessori Society • 8115 Fenton St. #304 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA • Tel. (301) 589-1127

Understanding Cosmic Education

In 1935, Dr. Montessori found "cosmic education" as an ideal support for normal development in children over the age of about six. This cosmic framework of learning involves the total interrelated functioning of the whole, which is now a popular topic of discussion and well-integrated at the theoretical level into Montessori elementary education and beyond.

Unfortunately, applying cosmic education in practice has been largely limited to interrelating subject matter for academic learning only, leaving aside its far more important spiritual dimension to adapt children to their unique time, place and function in harmony with laws of nature. The primary obstacle for using this aspect of cosmic education is a fundamental lack of context for understanding Dr. Montessori's experience of normal being.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1



Participants in the Danbury, CT workshop — Creating the New Education (April 29-30, 2006)

IMS Creating the New Education Workshop in Danbury, CT

On April 29-30, 2006, the Society conducted its Creating the New Education workshop in Danbury, CT. Attending were educators from the states of Connecticut, New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

The workshop presented the IMS technology for Montessori teaching, offering many practical examples of its use in resolving misbehavior. **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, led this event, showing how to use this technology to conduct scientific experiments to *control the environment, not the child*. He presented specific scenarios for role-play drama by participants, to help visualize how the technology works in actual real-life practice.

Havis especially emphasized the importance of controlling the adult personality in social conflict and power struggle scenarios. He said "In power struggle scenarios, you must usually keep silent and motionless, observing to assure the well-being of the total environment. However, even then you can use such light techniques as *patient waiting, eye contact* and reverse *proximity* to restrain any detrimental tendencies you may have towards excessive and destructive involvement due to feelings of stress and frustration."

After the workshop, Havis consulted with local educator and IMS student **Paul Posillo** in planning for a new Montessori school in his area. He said "establishing a fully committed Montessori school is more a problem of psychology and inner preparation than physical concerns for location, space and equipment.

IMAC Accrediting News

On April 5, 2006, the IMAC accreditation committee met in Silver Spring, MD to consider continuing accreditation for the IMS Montessori teacher education program. Attending this meeting were committee members **Jerry Duval**, Ph.D., **Kent Baker**, Ph.D. and **Richard Matteson**, Ed. D. (not attending, **Linda Rusthoven**) Following recommendation made by the IMS review committee, the members agreed to grant continuing accreditation to this program until May, 2011.

Lee Havis, IMAC board chairman, also attended the meeting to inform Accreditation Committee members of other IMAC activities. He noted the pending self-study report of the GEAR Foundation which is sponsoring a Montessori teacher education program in Chennai, India. Havis indicated this report is presently before the Generic Review Committee.

Reflections By Paul Posillo

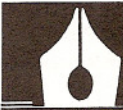
Paul Posillo is a student in the IMS course. He reflects here on using the IMS technology over many years of classroom experience.

Expanding the Fantasy

In 1986, I participated in my first of many IMS workshops...One of the most valuable techniques I learned from Lee at that workshop was called "expand the fantasy". To do this you use proximity, eye contact, ear contact (listening deeply), reflective language, safe words and questioning in tune with what the child is saying or doing — all in a totally friendly, absolutely nonjudgmental way...you stay in reality and do not enter the child's fantasy world. You are an observer in reality on the outside of the fantasy looking inside into the child's world of fantasy...

When done in this way, at the right time, and in the right conditions, it's amazing how quickly, efficiently and effectively the fantasy disintegrates and the child becomes spontaneously connected to reality...

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2



Well-being of Total Environment

by Lee Havis

"Allow the whole to function together and there is discipline, but otherwise there is not!...There is only one problem, and it is human development in its totality...everything else follows spontaneously and harmoniously."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Hum. Potential*, p.9

Montessori teaching follows laws of nature, which the IMS technology approximates in a series of twenty specific protocols. Applying these protocols, you have an effective control of error for conducting your experimental interactions in the scientific approach to normal being of children as described by Dr. Montessori. The first and most important of these protocols is *well-being of the total environment*, which directs you to allow the environment to have its full indirect normalizing influence on children.

Indirect Influence

"The teacher's first duty is therefore to watch over the environment...its influence is indirect, but unless it be well done there will be no effective or permanent results of any kind, physical, intellectual or spiritual."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.253

Montessori teaching creates a normalizing environment by being committed to infinite and eternal laws of nature. From this spiritual context, your function is then to control the tangible environment, consisting of other children, physical objects and the adult personality around each child in the group. The "total" environment includes all the other children and all the physical objects around a single child in the entire group of children. Following such protocols as *well-being of the total environment*, you must control the indirect influence of what is around each child in the group, removing the various obstacles to the free self-directed activity of children.

Removing the Obstacles

"...we must therefore create a favorable environment...all that is needed is to remove the obstacles."

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

Montessori teaching aims to *control the environment, not the child* by removing the detrimental influences around a central hub child in question. In a specific misbehavior scenario, this means to analyze and resolve whatever is detrimental in that particular scenario, even as other problematic scenarios may exist elsewhere in the environment at the same time. In the total environment, you will

therefore likely notice other scenarios for your attention, each one having its own particular drama and level of priority for your involvement and resolution. The *well-being* protocol directs you to employ a linear concept in resolving these various scenarios, dealing first with those having the highest priority issues of physical harm to children.

Linear Concept

"The linear concept of evolution...is no longer enough. There exists...a force for harmony, uniting the efforts of all, so that they work towards a common end."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.57

While life perfectly evolves as a total unity in the present moment, we can only act in a linear manner to resolve obstacles as they come to our attention. Based on the *well-being* protocol, you must first deal with the highest level priority problems, leaving for later such low priority issues as "fantasy" escape from reality only. While engaging a single scenario, however, you must also recognize the impact of the adult presence on those children not directly involved.

Adult Presence

"...the teacher...must take care never to turn her back on the class while she is dealing with a single child. Her presence must be felt by all these spirits."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.270-71

The *well-being* protocol directs you to notice the impact of what you do in any scenario as it relates to the larger impact on the total environment. For example, while using the technique *proximity* to approach one misbehavior scenario, you are also calling attention of other children to the adult presence as well. The unintended consequences of your actions might then distract some of these children from their own concentrated activity. To avoid this harmful effect, it is therefore important to move as little as possible, following the guidance of another important protocol known as *least amount of adult involvement*.

Least Amount

"We must...prepare an environment in which we do as little as possible to exhaust the child with our surveillance and instructions."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Child in the Family*, p.27

The protocol *least amount of adult involvement* directs you to restrict your action with children as much as possible; e.g., doing only what is necessary and no more in any problem situation. Coupling this protocol with the protocol *well-being*,

you will not be able to completely resolve every problem scenario when it first occurs. Rather, you must use the idea of partial and successive resolutions, leaving the ultimate completion of these problems for children to work through later on their own by independent exercise and experience with each other.

Exercise and Experience

"Only exercise and experience can correct a disability, and it takes long practice to acquire the various kinds of skill that are needed. The undisciplined child enters into discipline by working in the company of others: not by being told he is naughty."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.224

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
September 2006 Observer
featuring
Least Amount of
Adult Involvement

ISSN 0889-5643

The Montessori Observer

Published by

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

8115 Fenton St. #304

Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

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

Worldwide Web:

<http://imsmontessori.org>

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
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 \$25 annual fee. Associate schools, \$30 annual fee. Society members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News* and other membership benefits.

IMS ON THE INTERNET

An on-line IMS discussion group, *Intmonsoc* (International Montessori Society) is available for anyone to join at no charge. To subscribe to this list, send an email to intmonsoc-subscribe@yahogroups.com, and then follow instructions to request placement on the list.

© IMS, 2006

Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Resolving Fantasy

In this *moment of peril*, the teacher is frustrated with six-year-old Gordon because he seems more interested in play and make-believe fantasy than the reality of work. See *Observer*, March, 2006. She sees her error in abandoning Gordon, but is afraid to intervene more actively due to the likely onset of a power struggle.

With any fantasy-only situation, the adult personality is the primary detrimental influence, which often involves a tendency towards abandonment. The teacher's inner error relates to her fear of conflict, and doubt about remaining calm and steady when negative feelings start to emerge.

Simply stated, the solution here is to continue engaging Gordon in conversation, noticing without outwardly reacting to whatever feelings of stress, anger, frustration or fear there may be in the process. You can best deal with these troubling inner feelings through the technique *IP*, imaging yourself in the conflict situation, and then pre-visualizing Gordon finally returning to reality. In the real-life situation, you must especially use friendly language and a calm voice tone to fully follow the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior*.

At a conscious level, use the techniques *proximity*, *reflective language* and *questioning* to stay involved with Gordon as he gradually works through the underlying repressed feelings and pain in the matter. You can slow down the process of your interactions by using such light polishing techniques as *patient waiting* and *eye contact*.

In the power struggle situation, you must especially control your language, using only safe words to stay objectively outside Gordon's wild drama of negative language and behavior. Eventually, your calm persistent actions with Gordon will help him gradually return to a more normal state of being in the environment.

Running out the Door

Managing a new group of very disorderly young children, the teacher can't seem to bring them together for basic orientation in beginning conditions. The children respond to her friendly clear directions and good modeling by nervously avoiding eye contact, laughing at each other, screaming in fantasy to finally run out the door. The pattern of running out the door now seems fixed as a pattern anytime she calls them together. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, September, 2006

Well-being of Total Environment

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Montessori teaching plays only an indirect role in resolving misbehavior, allowing children to resolve their own problems through exercise and experience with each other and the physical objects as much as possible. You must therefore control the conventional tendency to "help" children in an excessive, dependent manner. Instead, trust the perfect inner guidance and natural instincts of children to reach a suitable adaptation to their environment on their own.

Adaptation

"The great power of man is that he adapts to every part of the environment and that he modifies it...while developing himself he unconsciously develops his own adaptation of his environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Meaning of Adaptation*, p.5

Montessori teaching functions experimentally on the premise that children have their own inner guidance for perfect adaptation with their environment. Trusting this guidance, you allow non-adult influences in the environment to have their positive effect over time; i.e., restraining the tendency to act out impulsively to feelings of stress and impatient needs for an immediate resolution of every problem you notice. In a group, children will show their ability for self-directed resolution of issues as a spontaneous sense of community, helping each other for the well-being of all.

Sense of Community

"There is among children an evident sense of community...the emotional life reaches a high level, and the children's personalities are normalized, a kind of attraction making itself felt."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 231

Children have natural instincts of friendship, love and compassion towards others. Removing the detrimental influences in the environment, you are allowing this normal sense of community to emerge as children accommodate their individual needs and interests to those of the group. Once normalized, children gradually express these qualities outwardly by functioning with others as part of one whole unity.

One Whole Unity

"...all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *To Ed. the Hum. Potential*, p. 8

Young children unify their personalities by normalizing through concentration on work with physical objects. Thereafter, these normalized children become one whole unity in the social situation, adapting themselves to their unique time, place and group. This unifying purpose for the

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

BOOK REVIEW

Speak Peace In a World of Conflict

by Marshall B. Rosenberg, 2005

Review by Lee Havis

Speak Peace is a small but very powerful text in support of practicing non-violent communication. In this text, Rosenberg demonstrates how his approach of peaceful speaking can resolve many seemingly impossible social conflicts. He speaks with the knowledge of practical experience as a mediator in such troubling conflict conditions in the world as Rwanda, Israel, Bosnia-Serbia, Palestine and Sri Lanka.

Rosenberg's peaceful language approach follows the basic ideas of psychologist Carl Rogers, consolidating knowledge of many others with practical knowledge of conflict resolution. It also has some important parallels with Montessori teaching, emphasizing observation of facts, present moment experience, clear direction and commitment to the well-being of all parties involved.

The essential steps to resolve conflict through non-violent communication are: (1) observe facts (2) state feelings and fundamental needs associated with these facts and finally (3) make clear requests based on well-being of all parties concerned. Obviously, this simple approach is not so easy to practice due to deeply-entrenched negative conditioning in conventional society, which has been well-established from childhood in the adult personality.

Speak Peace is filled with practical examples from Rosenberg's diverse experiences in using this approach over thirty years. The examples bring his approach into clear focus, allowing readers to apply the same approach in their own conflict situations with others. Unfortunately, his best examples are with adults; i.e., dealing with the complex, fixed framework of defensive mechanisms of the adult personality. However, I still think his approach can have some good application with older unnormalized children who are sufficiently mature to verbalize thoughts, feelings and needs in a rational manner.

Rosenberg offers hope based on our true normal nature, reflecting a universal commitment to the peace, harmony and well-being for all. In this hope, we can all share, especially as we practice non-violent communication to resolve conflicts in our own lives as a routine daily habit.

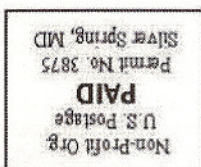
Publ. By PuddleDancer Press (Encinitas, CA)

Paperback, 198 pages Retain price: \$15.95

Web: www.CNVC.org email: cnvc@CNVC.org

Return Service Requested

8115 Fenton St #304 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA



OBSERVER
The Montessori



Understanding Cosmic Education *Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1*

Since 1907, Dr. Montessori sought to describe her original experience of normal being within a conventional context, only generally associating this context with the prior indefinite scientific research of Itard and Seguin. However, what is "normal" from the perspective of Montessori's original experience simply does not exist in a conventional context. Committed practitioners must therefore create the proper context for true normal being without the benefit of proper understanding of its essential nature and conditions.

For over 25 years, IMS has been committed to creating the distinctive context for Montessori's normal being, gradually evolving the language and technology for its effective communication to others. In 2003, a major breakthrough occurred in this research with the completion of a comprehensive technology.

While this knowledge will eventually be detailed in full-text format, IMS has been seeking to apply it to overcome such practical problems as wide-spread poverty and abusive child labor throughout the world. This research has now evolved into the "Character Teaching" (CT) project, which aims to resolve the cause of these problems by providing a proper context and means for the normal character development of poor working children.

Besides a formal model school component, the CT project offers informal tutoring in the streets with poor working children. This informal component employs a novel *exchange of value* concept; i.e., the child giving a small amount of time for instruction in exchange for

receiving a small amount of money. Repeating these exchanges frequently over time, the children involved will acquire experiences and habits of behavior that bring about qualities of integrity, patience and self-respect, which can become deeply incorporated into their whole basic character for life.

In 2006, **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, submitted a paper presenting the critical contextual issues for understanding cosmic education to an international congress sponsored by *Montessori-Europe*. It will be held at Belgorod State University (Belgorod, Russia) on May 15-18, 2006.

The Havis paper, entitled *Understanding Cosmic Education by Overcoming Practical Problems*, highlights the experiential nature of understanding normal being. It also suggests how to apply this experiential understanding to create normalizing conditions in practice, using the CT project as a practical current example.

Reflections

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

Sometimes in expanding of fantasy the fantasy just disappears without having a clue why or what it was about. At other times, expanding a fantasy reveals information about the child's underlying repressed feelings and/or repressed behaviors...Either way, using "expand the fantasy" gives a child's repressed feelings and/or behavior an opportunity to go out of existence, and hence, for the unnormalized behavior that was caused by the repression to no longer exist.

Messages to IMS

April 15, 2006 (Germany)

Hi Lee:

You can use me anytime as a personal testimony to the success of the IMS technology taught in the workshops: techniques, protocols, presentations and safe words...I have first-hand observation of this success. I began my class this year and it was running so smoothly with this technology. Then I had to take a long absence due to back problem and surgery and the class has deteriorated substantially even though I worked and worked at teaching my assistant this technology. She did not believe in it and went right to the conventional ways of the world. I visited the class last week and the children were yelling to one another across the room, running, and fawning for the teacher's attention. A disgrace. I return next week and it will be interesting to see how the return to normalcy progresses.

Donna Curtis, IMS '02

Participant in Scotland workshop (July, 2005)

Well-being of Total Environment

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

well-being of all is the cosmic plan of nature, demonstrating itself more consciously in the learning and interaction of children after the age of six.

The Cosmic Plan

"If human unity...is going to be organized, it will be done only by an education that will give appreciation of all that has been done by human cooperation, and readiness to shed prejudices in the interests of common work for the cosmic plan..."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from To Ed. the Hum. Potential, p.50

Children naturally adapt themselves to function in harmony with others in the present moment. In the proper normalizing conditions, they unfold this cosmic plan, creating in time a whole new type of spontaneous order, harmony and peace in the world. Following the protocol *well-being of the total environment*, you are working in harmony with this cosmic plan, allowing children to fully reveal their true normal nature as described by Dr. Montessori.