



# The Montessori OBSERVER

Least Amount of  
Adult Involvement

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Lee Havis (right) engaging in lesson presentation exercise using pink tower materials at the Danbury, CT workshop — *Creating the New Education* (April 29-30, 2006)

## IMAC Accreditation Activities

Since October, 2005, the Generic Review Committee (GRC) of the IMAC accrediting agency has been reviewing the self-study report of the *Gear Innovative Montessori Institute* (GIMI), located in Bangalore, India. After several revisions, the GRC in August 2006 finally accepted this report, authorizing the next step, which is an on-site evaluation team visit.

The on-site evaluation will verify the substance of information provided in the self-study report, offering a report of its findings to the GRC for further action. Thereafter, the GRC will make its recommendation for accreditation to the IMAC advisory committee.

The IMAC agency also accredits IMS teacher education through a separate review committee. The Generic Review Committee is designed for non-IMS teacher education, providing criteria that are sufficiently broad to allow for a wide-range of program styles and formats.

For further information on IMAC standards and application procedures, contact: IMAC, 8115 Fenton St. #304, Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA.

## Character Teaching Project in Honduras

In August, 2006, **Erlinda Bonilla**, member of the consultation board of *Character Teaching* (CT) in Honduras, submitted a project proposal to IMS to conduct a CT project in the San Pedro Sula region of that central American country. Snra. Bonillo is director of an organization, known as MAMA (Mujeres Amigas Miles Apart), which has been active in helping improve education for poor families in Honduras for many years.

**Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, will collaborate closely in this project, serving as key consultant to introduce the IMS Montessori technology for use in all phases of its operation. The project contemplates three essential components: (1) an after-school tutoring program for low achieving elementary students in the nearby schools (2) informal tutoring for poor working children in the streets and (3) a daily Montessori school program for a group of 3-6 year old children. All components would be centrally located at the MAMA facilities in the San Pedro Sula area.

Havis says that this initial project is only a small scale demonstration of what

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3*

## International Congress Montessori Sweden, October, 2005

By Donna Curtis (IMS '02)

Last October, I was one of three keynote speakers in Sweden at the *International Congress Montessori —Europe*. I represented our esteemed IMS community in my address entitled, "Montessori Approach of Children's Rights".

Over 300 Montessorians from many countries participated in this forum. In addition to our keynote speeches, workshops were held and a Congress meeting was held with elections of Officers and a vote on the Declaration. It was fantastic to be surrounded by so many Montessorians from so many places, especially for me since I have been living in German for the past three years without any Montessori support nearby.

I shared myself—my nitty, gritty real-life story as a mom who early on never heard of Maria Montessori and then journeyed onward to become a certified Montessori Directress teaching in Okinawa, Japan and Germany. Mine was a story everyone could relate to because the tales I told were true and generally experienced by all who travel this road. It makes no difference where we are along this road as long as we continue to move toward the sun.

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3*

## Montessori Workshop

Learn Montessori Teaching Skills  
The Technology of Montessori Teaching

Utica, New York  
Sept. 30 — Oct. 1, 2006

The IMS workshop features Lee Havis, IMS executive director, presenting the unique 2003 technology of Montessori teaching. The technology consists of a set of techniques, protocols, safe words and lesson presentations that anyone can use to effectively create conditions for normal being as discovered by Dr. Montessori in 1907.

For full cost and registration details, contact: Marcia Burrows, Tel. 315-823-3031, email: [Marciapaper@msn.com](mailto:Marciapaper@msn.com)



# Least Amount of Adult Involvement

by Lee Havis

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

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Child in the Family*, p.27

Montessori teaching always seeks to limit adult involvement with children as much as possible. The IMS Montessori technology therefore has a protocol *least amount of adult involvement* to help guide you in following this idea in practice. In general, the least possible involvement with children is as a quiet spectator, watching the children from a stationary position outside their activity area.

## Quiet Spectator

*"...it is the environment itself which helps to make the children continuously better... the teacher...can remain a quiet spectator of all the little mistakes that occur around her."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *The Child*, p.12-13

Children have their own inner guidance for perfect self-directed development. As a quiet spectator of this normal development, your involvement is then usually no more than patient waiting and occasional eye contact to support children in their free, independent activity. In this position, you can make the prudent observations necessary to best determine what interactions to carry out from one moment to the next.

## Prudent Observations

*"The teacher...must be able to make prudent observations, to assist a child by going up to, or withdrawing from him, and by speaking or keeping silent in accordance with his needs."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.150

Before children normalize, you must certainly observe and analyze what to do to resolve the various misbehavior scenarios that emerge. Based on these prudent observations, you then decide on a specific course that will best control the environment in that situation. When you do intervene, it will more likely be simple and central to the needs of the total situation.

## Simple and Central

*"...an unpracticed teacher...must not waste time on the many confused actions of the children but focus entirely on the indications they give of fundamental requirements...She must always aim at something simple and central..."*

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from *Absorbent Mind*, p.250

New teachers especially can become over-involved with children due to fear and confusion about their disorderly behavior. Following the *least amount* protocol, you must restrain this type of reactive involvement,

focusing instead on what is most simple and central at that particular time. You will then usually do only what is necessary, consistent with the most important protocol *well-being of the total environment*.

## What is Necessary

*"The adult must give and do what is necessary for the child to act for himself...if he does less than is necessary, the child cannot act meaningfully, and if he does more than is necessary, he imposes himself upon the child, extinguishing his creative impulses."*

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from *Child in the Family*, p.72

The right amount of involvement with children depends largely on the priority level of the particular scenario in question. In low level fantasy situations, what is necessary may be nothing more than eye contact and patient waiting. In fact, some fantasy activity will simply resolve itself without any direct adult involvement at all. However, you must still be prepared to interact more actively with children when their uncontrolled movements threaten physical harm to others or materials.

## Uncontrolled Movements

*"A teacher of experience... before she draws aside to leave the children free,...watches and directs them for some time, ... eliminating their uncontrolled movements..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.245

In beginning conditions, new children usually require considerable direct adult involvement. You may then need to help them resolve their uncontrolled movements, using such heavy polishing techniques as *distraction, cooperative touching and questioning*. In high-priority misbehavior scenarios, you may even need to interact quite energetically and severely at times.

## Energetic and Severe

*"The teacher can address the pupil energetically and severely...Our method certainly does not encourage respect for defects or superficiality...We must help the child to liberate himself from his defects..."*

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from *Child in the Family*, p.66-67

The *least amount* protocol certainly does not restrict you from using heavy polishing interactions to prevent or control dangerous violent behavior. Sometimes, even your most energetic and severe actions may be barely enough to achieve a suitable resolution. However, be careful to distinguish between physical violence that requires your heavy involvement, and less physical social conflict situations that you must leave alone.

## Social Conflict

*"Even if two children want the same material, they should be left to settle the problem for themselves unless they call for the teacher's aid."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.110

Children develop important social skills by freely interacting with each other; even though at times it can be quite vigorous and noisy. Exaggerating the physical danger in these social conflict situations, many teachers unnecessarily interrupt this normal social activity. With materials, you can also violate the least amount protocol by not withdrawing yourself soon enough after giving some initial lesson presentation.

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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## Moment of Peril

by Wendy Lieberman

### Running out the Door

This situation involves a new group of children that is very disorderly and has a pattern of running out the door whenever the teacher calls them into a group. **See Observer, May 2006.** The teacher has been using *clear direction* and has been modeling the desired behavior, however, the children continue to misbehave and run out.

The danger of this situation is that the teacher can't ensure the children's physical safety when they are out of her sight. The adult personality is the primary detrimental influence in this scenario. The teacher is using techniques that are too light for her presence to be felt by the whole group. The children's behavior of running out the door reflects the teacher's abandonment of the children. She is abandoning them, so they run out the door and abandon her.

She is using *clear direction*, which is a good technique in this situation. However, she needs to use some more, harder polishing techniques, following the protocol *well-being of the total environment*, at this point, because what she is doing isn't sufficient. The children don't know what to do. She needs to use more *cooperative touching* to physically help them sit in the correct place and *repetition*, bringing them back to the gathering place if they get up and wander off. When the children run out of the room, she needs to immediately go and get them, using similar hard polishing as needed to bring them back.

Rather than signaling group time by just sitting where she wants the children to sit, she should stay alert to the children who usually go out the door and use the techniques *clear direction*, *cooperative touching*, and *repetition* to firmly guide them to sit in their proper place. She must also be sure to give all the children and especially the ones who usually run out lots of eye contact to keep them connected to reality. When the pattern of running out the door has been broken she can begin to call the class together in a more normal way, sitting where she wants the children to gather.

She needs to use more of this heavy polishing throughout the class time so the children will be aware of her presence whenever they start slipping into fantasy. If she continues to be positive and involved with the children, following the protocol *be friendly, get acquainted*, the children will begin to follow the class routines.

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2*

## Least Amount of Adult Involvement

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

### Withdrawing Yourself

*"A teacher, after she has shown the sensorial stimuli to the children and taught them their use, should seek to withdraw herself from the environment."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Ed. for a New World*, p.88

When showing how to use a piece of work, you must turn it over to the child as soon as possible, using a safe word phrase such as "Would you like to do the next one?" The child is then free to experiment with the materials, since you are now withdrawing yourself to a stationary position at some distance away. Distancing yourself from children also respects the protocol *enhance independence*, directing you to avoid the common tendency towards mutual dependency that comes with too much busy teaching.

### Busy Teaching

*"While the teacher is busy with one child, the others misbehave."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 246

After beginning conditions, you are no longer so involved in teaching the basic

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2*

### Publishing the Technology

Since 2004, **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, has been preparing a text to comprehensively present the technology of Montessori teaching he discovered in 2003. The new publication will include 10 chapters of text elaborating the basic techniques, protocols, lesson presentations and safe words that make up the technology. It will be supported by a number of appendices, pictures and illustrations to highlight certain features of this body of knowledge.

The text will present the technology as a set of tools that anyone can use to conduct Montessori teaching for normal being in children. Havis views these tools as vital for all serious Montessori practitioners, providing precise practical knowledge that has been missing in the field from the very beginning. He says his text will serve as the basic manual for learning and using this technology with children.

Although there is no due date set for publication, Havis indicates the text is the final stages of preparation. For now, he is seeking to make this technology available through further workshops, the *Observer* newsletter and at the IMS web site: <http://imsmontessori.org>. In addition, Havis says "The Danbury workshop audio will also soon be available, providing an excellent audio presentation of the technology in outline form. Taken together, I think these resource materials will provide a very good basis for learning and using the technology."

## Reflections

### Using IP to Resolve Repressed Feelings

#### Imagination-Previsioning (IP)—

*Technique involving teacher in quiet meditation away from children, to visualize some specific misbehavior problem, and then visualize a suitable prospective solution to resolve the problem when it next arises in real-life later. (GMT)*

By Wendy Lieberman (Boise, ID)

Excerpted from the IMS discussion list, [intmontsoc@yahoo.com](mailto:intmontsoc@yahoo.com)

I have been working hard on IP for the past few days. For a couple of days I did 1 hour long IP sessions. During that time I would start by getting relaxed. That consisted of paying attention to tension in my body and not trying to get ride of it. That has worked very well to help me relax. When I am relaxed I think back on any situations with my children that were troubling to me during the day. At first my mind would shut that off and would wander to other things. When that happened, instead of trying to get back to the problems of the day I asked myself what am I seeing and what am I feeling.

Then, the image and the feelings would go away and I would go back to trying to look at the day again. Then my mind would wander again. My mind kept going back to scenes of running water and I felt tension in my hands and I cried. My mom told me about a time when I was about three when I fell in my grandma's creek. The water was running very fast and I held on to a tree branch to keep from being swept away by the water. I held on like that for a while until my mom found me. I think that was what my mind was going back to.

I wasn't able to get into the events of the day for about two days. I spent a whole hour each time just looking at distractions because they kept blocking my memory. Finally, I was able to see events from the day. I saw my mistake and how to fix it. Now, I was able to look at things in a more objective way, without judging myself and beating myself up about it. I just solved the problems.

Each day after that it got easier and easier and took less and less time to see the problem. I have also been seeing the situations with better clarity and more detail. Now I don't worry that the problems are going to continue on and on because I see that I will be able to find them and solve them. That is a very good feeling. It makes time with my children much more fun and less stressful. I am enjoying it much more.



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## Least Amount of Adult Involvement

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order of the environment. Then, you must approach children only if there is a "green light" basis of interest for a specific piece of work. Respecting the *least amount* protocol, you avoid busy teaching, allowing more time for priority needs elsewhere in the environment. Being less busy with children also helps remove the hypnotic influence of your presence in the environment.

### Hypnotic Influence

*"Even though child and adult seem to have a deep understanding and affection for one another, they are ensnared in the same net... an adult with his useless assistance and hypnotic influence has substituted himself for a child and impeded his psychic growth."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

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

Young children are especially keen to watch and imitate the language and behavior of adults. Limiting your involvement therefore helps reduce this hypnotic influence on children. Becoming more inactive and quiet, you are also following the well-known law of minimum effort.

### Minimum Effort

*"...the law of minimum effort...to attain the maximum productivity with the least expenditure of energy. This is a law of utmost importance."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 191

Supervising children in a group situation gives you many choices for involvement with them. The basic law of minimum effort teaches you to use the least amount of involvement possible to achieve the greatest value for all. This law is well reflected by the protocol *least amount of adult involvement*, which always guides you to interact with children in the most effective way possible for their true normal development.

## Moment of Peril

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### Kicking the Teacher

The teacher is having a problem with six-year-old Scott who has a pattern of blocking her path when she is walking between his seat and the shelves. He puts his legs in the way and looks up at her with a playful smile on his face. The teacher smiles back and says, "Excuse me." Scott leaves his legs where they are. After a little *patient waiting* and *eye contact* the teacher uses *cooperative touching* to move his legs out of the way and says, "Excuse me" again as she passes by. After she has passed by, Scott kicks her and if other children are around they sometimes kick her too. She puts her hands in the way to block the kicks and walks away. *What to do?*

## Danbury Workshop 5-hour Audio CD

The IMS workshop held in Danbury, CT, April 29-30, 2006 will soon be available in a 4-cd audio set. It will feature Lee Havis presenting the technology he consolidated from some 30 years of research and more than 100 workshops since 1986. The five hour audio includes many key elements of the total Danbury workshop, which itself extended over two full days, offering many visual demonstrations and examples as well.

With the audio CD, there will be a separate study guide, providing the technology in written outline form. This guide will provide space for making notes while listening to the audio, to help listeners reinforce learning of the various key elements.

## Character Teaching

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

could be implemented more widely in the future. He says "The national governments of the region must fully support the CT concept if it is to establish a full-scale operation as intended. We already have a favorable letter of support from the neighboring country of Nicaragua and we are hopeful to gain similar support from the government of Honduras as well."

The project's model school component for young children will demonstrate Montessori teaching technology applied in its ideal circumstances, closely approximating the first Children's House in Rome, Italy in 1907. Havis says "The informal tutoring component will employ an innovative time-money exchange concept, providing the basis for brief Montessori teaching encounters with poor working children in the streets. I believe this regular Montessori street tutoring will directly address the root causes of poverty and child labor, gradually reducing crime and gang violence so closely associated with large numbers of abandoned and neglected children in the streets."

## International Montessori Congress

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Our approach to children's rights, therefore, is not materials, is not the physical environment, is not the culture of a population or the language; it is the deep sense of dignity we hold for the child as a human being, allowing the child to follow the Laws of Nature. Each and every one of us must recognize where we are on our journey and continue toward the sun, always striving to be angels leaving behind footprints of love wherever we go.