



The Montessori OBSERVER

Power
Struggles

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Participants in the IMS "special needs" workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, December 12-13, 2009

IMS Workshops and Seminars in Malaysia

From December 1-16, 2009, Lee Havis, IMS executive director, conducted a series of workshops and seminars in Malaysia to present the basic approach and technology of true natural Montessori teaching. Sponsored in conjunction with *SuccessMarks* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia), these recent events follow up Lee's prior visit to Malaysia in May, 2009, when he participated in the International Montessori Convention held at that time.

Lee's latest visit featured two two-day workshops, December 5-6 and December 12-13, both presenting the unique IMS technology of Montessori teaching. The second one, however, focused especially on using the technology with special needs children.

At the workshops, Lee introduced special "objective observation" exercises to help participants experience the basic distinction of "being" and "adult personality". Lee says, "This distinction is critical for controlling the adult personality, which is always at the psychological core of any misbehavior situation."

Besides the workshops, Lee conducted several seminars to introduce the basic elements of true natural Montessori teaching to various groups of educators. One seminar was conducted for government pre-school teachers and trainers at the Regency Hotel in Port Dickson, Malaysia. Another was held in conjunction with the Department of Education at the *Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris* (UPS) This university plays a major role in training teachers for schools throughout the entire country.

Lee also visited several schools and centers for young children in Malaysia to discuss Montessori teaching and answer questions from parents and teachers. At times, he actively demonstrated the use of various techniques and protocols by working directly with children.

IMS and *SuccessMarks* plan to team up again for another international Montessori convention in Malaysia in August, 2010. Lee indicated the positive impact of these regular training events to the development of the "new education" throughout the entire Asian-Pacific region.

Wikipedia Revises Montessori Articles

Wikipedia, the online self-editing encyclopedia, recently accepted substantial revisions to its articles about Montessori education. Lee Havis (IMS) says that these revisions considerably clarify and improve the presentation of Montessori education to the general public.

One new article, entitled *International Montessori Society*, presents the work and purpose of IMS in support of true natural Montessori teaching. It also briefly describes the unique IMS technology for conducting this distinctive type of Montessori teaching.

Another article, entitled *Montessori in the United States*, was significantly revised to clarify the nature and history of conflicts in the development of Montessori in America. For example, the new revision

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Character Teaching gets government support in Ecuador

In November, 2009, IMS received a letter of support for its *Character Teaching* (CT) project from the Ecuador Ministry of Education. Since 2000, IMS has been sponsoring the planning of this project to overcome long-term cultural poverty throughout the world. The basic approach is to create schools and train teachers for the normal character development of poor children.

Lee Havis, project creator, views this government support in Ecuador as highly encouraging to its eventual operation in this country. He says, "Government support is vital for success of the CT project in any country. It provides a solid basis for financial participation by various private foundations and agencies."

In Ecuador, the project must now identify reliable local citizens to serve on the CT consultation board. Lee says, "The local CT board members are needed to help locate NGO's and related personnel for the project operation. Our first step is to conduct an IMS training workshop and consultation in the country to meet with key potential staff and teachers."

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Lee helps clarify lesson presentation procedures, using pink tower materials, at the Montessori technology workshop, December 5-6, 2009, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)



POWER STRUGGLES

by Lee Havis

"The struggle between the adult and the child finds its expression...in what is still called by the old name 'Education.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Peace and Education*, p. 20

Ordinary education, with its group instruction and pre-determined curriculum, invariably creates conflict in the adult-child relationship. Dominated by adult personality or culture, this conventional approach sets up a constant win-lose power struggle with children who are seeking to follow their own true natural path of self-directed learning. By contrast, Dr. Montessori's "new education" cooperates with the natural path of learning, following the guidance of a perfect teacher within the child.

Teacher Within

"...the child...has a teacher within himself and that this inner teacher also follows a program and a technique of education ... we adults, by acknowledging this unknown teacher, may enjoy the privilege and good fortune of becoming its assistants and faithful servants by helping it with our cooperation."

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

In Montessori teaching, adult and child both follow the same plan and program of nature laid down by a mysterious teacher within the child. The adult assists in this process by creating a supportive environment that allows the child to freely develop according to its own inner plan of creation. Adults and children, therefore, naturally cooperate together in a state of cosmic, spiritual harmony, even though they function in different realms of authority.

Different Realms

"The adult is master in one area, but the child is master in the other, and the two depend on each other. Both the child and the adult are kings, but they are rulers of different realms."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.195

Montessori teaching asserts authority over the environment, while the child has authority over its own free self-directed activity. In this cooperative relationship, power struggles can only emerge if there is confusion about the different realms of authority. When confusion does occur, you resolve it by looking for the cause in unknown errors that are hidden deeply in the adult personality.

Unknown Errors

"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.195

As adults, we ordinarily tend to project unknown errors and flaws on children due to our

defective personality formation in childhood. With children, this projection typically leads to power struggles in circumstances of disobedience, inattention, and disorder. For example, projecting an attitude of excessive need and dependency on children, we bring about their unnatural attachment to the adult personality.

Attachment

"...children...attach themselves to an older person who tends to substitute his own activity for theirs and they thus become extremely dependent upon him."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.161

Young children have a uniquely absorbent mind that internalizes the environment in all its details. The child therefore also absorbs the adult's projection of various personality defects as well. For example, indulgent, permissive adult behavior influences children to develop a deep attachment to the power of the adult presence. However, since adults can't completely satisfy every irrational demand for this power, a violent struggle eventually emerges between the adult and child.

Violent Struggle

"An adult, however high or low he may be, is always a powerful being in comparisons with a child...carried away by his dreams, a child begins to exploit him...there comes at last a clash and violent struggle. A child's whims become the scourge of an adult who suddenly realizes that he has been at fault."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.166

Power struggles begin within the adult as various unconscious thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about the inherent weakness, evil, or incomplete nature of children. Projected outward, this thinking often leads to giving children too much help, which eventually causes a violent struggle for power. Correcting this error begins by recognizing its outward manifestations, and then using the IMS technology of Montessori teaching to remove the pertinent detrimental influence of the adult personality.

Outward Manifestations

"We can conquer our evil tendencies...by repressing the outward manifestations..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.150

The IMS technology provides very practical tools and guidance for removing the outward manifestations of dependency and attachment with children. The basic problem-solving approach is to first

notice the superficial facts of the situation, and then analyze it at its psychological core. Finally, follow such protocols as *enhance independence* and *least amount of adult involvement* to curb any unnecessary help you may be giving to children. With disobedience, use such techniques as *patient waiting*, *eye contact*, and *clear direction*.

Disobedience

"Before the child is three, he cannot obey unless the order he receives corresponds with one of his vital urges."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 258

Power struggles commonly arise when a child disobeys your clear direction to do something. Resolve this disobedience by first analyzing the reason, which is either

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Look for the May 2010 Observer featuring *Distraction*

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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

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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@yahoo.com, and then follow instructions to request placement on the list.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Hostile Aggression

5 year-old Katy is the hub child of a repeating misbehavior pattern involving her hostile physical aggression towards other children. (See *Observer*, November, 2009). Although the teacher correctly focuses her attention to control the 'other children' around Katy, she does this by bodily removing them, instead of removing just their detrimental influences.

The teacher's mistake is not following the protocol *basis of interest* in the process of controlling the other children. Since the children are interested in resolving their social conflict, the teacher should allow them to stay together to do this, even if there is loud talking and emotional drama in the process. She only remains close by to protect the children from any physical aggression.

The teacher can also help Katy resolve her hostile aggression by using such verbal techniques as *reflective language* and *questioning*. For example, When Katy impatiently reaches out to another child, ask her "What do you want?" Again, if Katy angrily says to a child "Give me that!," say reflectively "You want her to give that to you?" In this way, Katy will develop patience and skill in using words to peacefully resolve her conflicts with others. And, Katy's pattern of hostile aggression towards others will diminish and disappear as she returns to a true natural state of order and harmony with others.

Self-control

As a new, somewhat insecure Montessori teacher, Karen often finds herself unable to fully control her personality. With misbehavior, for example, she tends to impulsively frown and show her disapproval, sometimes even angrily grabbing and lecturing children in a very negative and stern manner. Although she quickly corrects her outbursts of temper, she continues to feel guilty, distracted and frustrated by her lack of self-control. This distracted thinking then leads her to make more mistakes due to inattention to the present-moment situation. What to do? *Answer in Observer, May, 2010*

Marketplace

Montessori teachers: Palm Harbor Montessori Academy (Palm Harbor, FL). 250 students, ages 1-year to 8th grade. Competitive salary with benefits. Fax or e-mail resume and letter of interest: Christine Varkas, Palm Harbor Montessori Academy, 2355 Nebraska Ave., Palm Harbor, FL 34683, (727) 786-1854; Fax. (727) 786-5160; www.floridamontessori.com, cvarkas@gate

POWER STRUGGLES

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that the child (1) doesn't know how or (2) can't, follow the instruction given. If the child "doesn't know how", use the techniques *clear direction* and *repetition* to give the direction again in a simpler, more specific manner than before. If the reason is "can't," use the techniques *patient waiting* and *eye contact* to reduce the negative influence of your personality.

Patient Waiting

"The teacher must be quiet and passive, waiting patiently and almost withdrawing herself from the scene, so as to efface her own personality and thus allow plenty of room for the child's spirit to expand."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.240

Children can't normally obey a direction that is given in a harsh, demanding, or unfriendly tone because, to do so, would risk the child's life as a free, spiritual being. Resolve this disobedience by allowing a brief moment of *patient waiting*, during which time you are noticing any feelings of tension, fear, or anger you may have. Notice also any negative behavior, such as hostile facial expression or quick body movements.

Once you are composed and neutral in outward behavior, give your direction again; except this time, use eye contact with a calmer, more objective, and friendlier manner. *Patient waiting* also helps you become aware of negative thoughts which cause many power struggles as well.

Thoughts

"Thought begins to construct works by means of which the external world becomes transformed; almost as if the thought of man had assumed a marvelous power; the power to create."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.241

Unconscious negative thinking and judging is the automatic mental noise that goes on within us all the time. Unnoticed, these negative thoughts create various types of reactive, controlling behavior, which then usually triggers a serious power struggle with children.

Observing these negative thoughts allows them to disappear naturally; however, you must then quickly return to the positive thinking and action of Montessori teaching. Keep your focus on *controlling the environment, not the child*, by constantly looking at children in an objective, non-judgmental manner.

Constantly Looking

"...the Montessori teacher is constantly looking for a child who is not yet there...The teacher...must have a kind of faith...The many different types of children (meaning they are more or less deviated) must not worry her. In her imagination, she sees that single normalized type which lives in the world of the spirit."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 252

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Reflections

By Wendy Lieberman

Wendy is director of New Way Montessori School (Meridian, ID). She reports here on her experiments in using IMS technology with children.

Out of Body

On Thursday (November 12, 2009) I had an interesting experience in class. For about ten or fifteen minutes, I had what felt like an out-of-body experience. I felt as if I was watching myself in the classroom with the children and I wasn't really there. I was able to control what I was doing but I wasn't attached to the situation personally. I thought, "Is this what the children feel like all the time?" I didn't have enough of an experience with it to see how it affected my interactions with the children. I'll see if I can allow that to happen again today.

Objective State

On Thursday (November 19, 2009) I spent most of the afternoon in an objective state where I was feeling like an observer of myself and the environment rather than feeling as if I was really in it. I noticed that I was able to be more alert to what was going on in the environment and I was able to allow myself to follow technology with children and the thoughts of what to do just came to me. When I was interacting with the children, I wasn't really able to hold on to the feelings, but I was able to get it back when I went back to observation. I think my mental state helped me to catch problems earlier and things ended up going very well in the classroom.

I would like to describe how I get into this objective state, but I'm not sure how it happens. It first started by accident. I think I'll just continue experiencing it for a while until I am better able to understand it.

Character Teaching

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In other news, **Sulaimon Olufunke Rashidah**, CT board member in Nigeria, met with Lee in Malaysia to discuss plans for developing the project in her country. Sulaiman is owner and director of *Ar-Rahman Montessori School* in Lagos, Nigeria, which is now an IMS recognized Montessori school. In addition, she is enrolling into the IMS training course by correspondence to learn even more about true natural Montessori teaching. Lee sees Nigeria as a highly favorable venue for the CT project in view of the considerable interest in Montessori education there.

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The Montessori



Messages to IMS

December, 2009
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Lee Havis

Thank you, Lee, for coming to Malaysia again this year to give us an insight to using the technology in the area of special needs. ...I will start to observe my thoughts and adult personality as I implement the technology from now onwards. Previously, I just knew of the "adult personality" as a phrase and term you used in understanding misbehaviors, but did not really get into observing my thoughts. It will be a totally new experience for me.

Edward Chen

December, 2009
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Dear Mr. Havis:

Thank you for sending the certificate of IMS Montessori school recognition. All of us are excited about it and we are practicing what we have learned from you....I am very proud to be aboard the new education express...Thank you for visiting the centre and opening the doors for new education to us...

Elahe Norman

Tasputra Perkim Centre

January, 2010
Indiana, USA

Hello All (IMS list)

I think it takes great courage to maintain a point of view that is often counter-culture. I am thankful for my involvement in IMS through 4 workshops, and the IMS course, and this list, because I am a better mother and teacher than I was. I judge that by the reaction of children around me. Lee has always said, "Try it for yourself," in regards to the techniques, and it's helpful to report back here with the results....WE are the International Montessori Society. The way we perceive and represent our organization will have an effect on how other schools, professionals, and parents view us in the future. I hope you will join with me in bringing the Montessori conversation back to that all-important (and yet often overlooked) concept of the normalized child.

Esther Rupert

December, 2009
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

To IMS list:

...thank you for the rather insightful teaching of Mr. Lee Havis about the laws of nature when handling children. The first convention in May has made me reconsider my approach to difficult children. But, this time round (December, 2009) has deepened my understanding and widened my perception.

Lydia Teo

January, 2010
Connecticut, USA

To IMS list:

Tonight, I taught two adults about the Montessori technology, etc. It opened up their eyes to a new way of handling behavior. Everything became crystal clear to me....A cohesive whole...This stuff really works. ...Most of all, it changes how adults interact with children. Change the environment, not the child, should resonate within every classroom. I urge every Montessori teacher, parent, and assistant to get involved. Have a Montessori conference even for an hour and a half like we did. Discuss what goes on in the classroom. Get insights. Don't go it alone. Get together for the new education for the welfare of "OUR CHILDREN."

Robbyn German

Wikipedia Revises Montessori

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specifically points out the 1967 legal decision that held "Montessori" to be a generic term for public use, which cannot be reserved for the exclusive use of any one organization.

The main Montessori article, entitled *Montessori method* was also significantly revised. Now, it points out the three main philosophies in the field, "personality", "culture", and "true natural," and describes the significant differences between each. Lee believes that these new revisions in Wikipedia will greatly contribute to better understanding and communicating about Montessori education. He says, "Hopefully, it will draw more attention to Dr. Montessori's original scientific experiment that brought about the child's true nature in 1907, instead of just the method which has often evolved to substantially deviate from its seminal beginnings as a scientific discovery." The link references are:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Montessori_Society
[Montessori_in_the_United_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_in_the_United_States);
[Montessori_method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_method)

POWER STRUGGLES

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In Montessori teaching, you are constantly looking at children as unknown spiritual beings with their own perfect inner guidance. From this perspective, there is no room for lingering negative thinking because the human mind can't hold more than one idea at the same time. However, you must have considerable faith to keep the new, unconventional idea of true natural being always in your mind.

Faith

"It is therefore not enough to see in order to believe; we must believe in order to see. It is faith which leads to sight, not sight which produces faith...It is not enough that an object should be before our eyes to make us see it...it is not evidence but faith which opens the mind to truth."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from Spontaneous Act. In Ed., p.232-33

Montessori teaching is creating a new, as yet unseen, reality for true natural being in the world. In this creative activity, you must disregard the distracting thoughts and perceptions of reality based on personality or culture. Focus instead on following laws of nature.

Since Montessori teaching doesn't end misbehavior right away, you must cultivate a constant faith in the new reality you are creating. In the end, this faith will successfully lead you through all power struggles with children, leaving behind only the perfect order, self-discipline, peace, and harmony of the child's true nature.