



# The Montessori *Instinct* OBSERVER

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## SALLY'S VISIT TO MEXICO

*Sally Korte (IMS '15) reports on a recent visit to her native Mexico and progress in her Montessori teaching in Augusta, Kansas.*

I had a beautiful visit to Mexico, where I observed the preschool program of the school that my boys went to visit. Since my observation showed many violations of the IMS protocols, I prepared a report which I presented to the principal and preschool coordinator. When we went over the report, they became interested in the IMS technology. So, I am going to be mentoring them with this technology to hopefully improve their program.

During my visit, I helped them visit the IMS website to watch the videos, which provoked a great interest. In this process, I noticed that it is so hard for many to really understand that the child is a pure spiritual being. For example, the coordinator stated that she thought I was able to treat children in this spiritual way because I teach in a Catholic school. Her view changed, however, when I offered real examples of my observation in her program. I was very excited to see their favorable response.

I would like to help bring the "character teaching" project to Mexico, especially since I have family members and contacts in the state of Queretaro, and my home state of Guanajuato. One uncle was the secretary of education in the state of Queretaro, and another uncle, the principal of a middle school in Guanajuato, has shown great interest in the project.

Back in August, Kansas, we are adding another Montessori classroom to the St. James School where I teach. I am getting ready to present the IMS approach and technology to our new principal and future teacher this coming week.



Sally Korte (IMS '15)



*Child working with long division math materials at the Corpus Christi Montessori School.*

## Montessori in Corpus Christi, Texas

The *Corpus Christi Montessori School* began with four parents searching for a favorable educational option for their young children after leaving the Montessori primary (2-6) level school. In this way, they came to create the *Montessori Association of South Texas* and in August of 2005, their own Montessori elementary school.

The school's focus is to help students achieve scholastic and personal success as well as joy and confidence in the learning experience. Their program includes a wide age range at each level, from Lower Elementary (grades 1 to 3), Upper Elementary, (grades 4 to 6) and Middle School (grade 7 and 8).

Since 2005, the school has gained experience and stability as it encourages staff to explore and develop teaching skills to improve and continue their personal and professional growth. In April 2007, 16 of their staff attended an IMS workshop conducted in Corpus Christi by Lee Havis. The workshop presented the IMS technology and also offered Lee an opportunity to personally visit and consult with teachers and staff of the Corpus Christi school. Future plans for the school are to maintain and improve the campus grounds and expand their classroom facilities to enable more student body growth.

*For further information, contact: Cerise Weeks, Director, Corpus Christi Montessori School, 822 Ayers St., Corpus Christi, TX 78404, Tel. 361-852-0707, [Cerise@cc-montessori.org](mailto:Cerise@cc-montessori.org), <https://cc-montessori.com/>*

## New IMS Website

Since its beginning in 1990's, the IMS website has been substantially enlarging and revising its content, all within an original design framework and coding that is now very much out of date. For example, the original format has coding which is not very compatible with the various search engines. In addition, the pages are hard to locate due to the extensive detailed content.

In 2019, IMS has been working with a web developer to modernize coding and organization of the IMS website. Thanks to this undertaking, the homepage now has easy access to news items and IMS social media. In addition, the whole site is much user friend and easier to maintain and update content.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director says, "I think users will find the new design very much more attractive and useful than before. It should also attract a wider audience to learn about IMS programs, news, and information." Lee encourages all to visit the new site to enjoy its valuable content and access to IMS information and news. On the web, it is still located as before at: <http://imsmontessori.org>.

## Messages to IMS

Lee: One cannot help but be different and I think better after truly understanding Montessori's teachings. I believe you provide the best means for understanding Montessori and inculcating it into your soul. I put the things I learned into practice as I teach 12 year olds in Sunday School and with my grandchildren. It's also effective in understanding humans and their child like behavior. One can see where they didn't get a chance to develop in areas they needed to as a child.

I sometimes see the *Observer* and where you are working. I'm glad you are still bringing peace wherever you can.

Toni Hammond (IMS '95)  
Utah, USA

Lee: After I registered with the International Montessori Society, I watched and listened with so much admiration and appreciation for various presentations and video clips on the principles and teaching philosophy of the Society. I would be glad if there could be an opportunity for me to ensure that the philosophy of the Montessori Society is extended to millions of young Nigerians who are been deprived of such innovative and creative systems of education.

Dr/ Stephen Alapa  
Nigeria



# Instinct

by Lee Havis

*"...instinct...is the source of true progress in civilization, for men have a natural instinct to work."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood* p.187

While Montessori teaching seeks to observe children in a truly scientific manner, its ultimate success also depends on a mysterious inner force that is founded on the integrity and truth of infinite and eternal laws of nature. Until recently, however, progress in this "new education" has had to rely more on this mysterious force of "instinct" than the pure application of objective scientific knowledge.

From its beginning in 1907, Montessori's "new education" has relied on instinctive skills with children due to a basic lack of understanding of its functional nature and conduct as a truly scientific observation. So, in practice, Montessori teaching has been limited in its application to only a relatively few who knew what to do by natural instinct alone.

In 1979, however, IMS brought a new clarity and understanding to Montessori teaching, and later a reliable technology for its objective scientific practice as well. Now, Montessori teaching can therefore be scientifically conducted in a conscious, reliable manner like never before, to bring out man's true nature of perfect love, goodness, and peaceful harmony in the world.

## Man's True Nature

*"Man's true nature lies hidden within himself. And this nature, which was given him at conception, must be recognized and allowed to grow."*

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

While Montessori teaching can indeed be practiced now in a pure, scientific manner, age-old prejudices and fears still prevent many from practicing it in this way since the IMS technology only works if you "use" it. And, using such an innovative, unconventional knowledge is fundamentally opposed by the ordinary human personality and culture which has a strong influence in the world.

To overcome these obstacles of conventional reality, you must train your mind to see the child as an "unknown entity". Only then can you effectively use IMS technology in a natural, flowing manner that allows the child's true nature to become visible, such as in the infant's first instincts towards independence.

## First Instinct

*"The child's first instinct is to carry out his actions by himself, without anyone helping him..."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.92

From birth, the child shows his natural instincts through various types of outward behavior. For example, one of the infant's first instincts is towards independence which you can perceive in his reaching out for mother's milk and later by practicing basic skills to coordinate his movements. The child also shows a natural inclination to explore the environment, which Montessori teaching must recognize and support as an important aspect of his true natural development.

## Natural Inclination

*"A child has a natural inclination to explore the environment."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.176

Natural instincts in children unfold through three fundamental tendencies: to survive, express his being, and explore the environment. For example, exploring the environment, the young child's natural inclination is to move around and touch objects with his hands. To express his being, the child gets eye contact and shows emotional affinity with others. In all this instinctive activity, the child naturally coordinates his movements to perfect such basic skills as walking and talking.

## Coordination of Movements

*"The child has an instinct to coordinate his movements and to bring them under control."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.180

Although the infant's first movements may seem random and unguided, they actually unfold in a very intelligent way of learning through experiences in the environment. For example, by exploring the environment, the child develops a natural coordination of movement that is focused on achieving specific external goals. We see this in the infant's rolling over on his stomach and lifting his head to see where he is going as he crawls around from one location to another. Through this physical activity, he not only coordinates his own body movements but also shows a powerful incentive to discover and internalize the order he finds in the environment as well.

## Powerful Incentive

*"...the little child's need for order is one of the most powerful incentives to dominate his early life."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.190

The young child's amazing absorbent mind shows a powerful purpose to incorporate order of the environment into his whole being as personality. You can observe this powerful incentive when a child becomes extremely upset by seeing an object that is not in the same place

as before. The young child's sensitivity to order also comes out in his prolonged attention to touching objects to experience their relative size, shape, weight, and dimensionality. Montessori teaching must carefully prepare an environment that allows these vital urges for touch and interaction to build up the young child's whole basic sense of truth and reality for life.

## Vital Urges

*"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

Before the age of six, powerful vital urges propel the child to intimately interact with his surrounding environment. Montessori teaching helps this self-directed interaction by

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

The Montessori Observer is mailed four times each year, in March, May, September and November, to IMS members throughout the world. The purpose is to provide news and information about the IMS work in Montessori education, and to extend awareness of Montessori teaching that brings about the child's true nature 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 IMS purpose is to support the scientific approach to true natural being throughout the world.

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## SUBSCRIPTION

Subscription to this Observer publication may be obtained by requesting IMS membership, which is open to all individuals for a \$30 annual fee. Associate schools, \$35 annual fee. IMS also recognizes Montessori schools committed to laws of nature. All members also receive a subscription to the Montessori News and other membership benefits.

## IMS ON THE INTERNET

An on-line IMS discussion group, "Montessori Tools and Tips" is available for anyone to join at no charge. To join this group discussion, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/montessoritool-sandtips/>

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## Moment of Peril

by Lee Haviv

### Taking over a Class

Asked to take over a Montessori class of 3-6 year old children, the teacher in this “moment of peril” is faced with a considerable challenge, since the former teacher left the group with much disorder and hard feelings from the parents. (See *Observer*, May, 2019). How can this new teacher restore order and harmony in the group she is now to supervise?

**Analysis:** The new teacher is faced with the situation of a “conversion” class, which involves breaking a well-established pattern of bad teaching and misbehavior in the past class situation. So, here, you must essentially start the class again with a stage 1 “beginning condition” approach. However, you also have the added obstacles of a serious pattern of disorder from the past, and a total lack of personal knowledge of the individual children involved.

**Practical Advice:** Before the first day session, examine and prepare the physical space by eliminating any obvious physical disorder, such as missing pieces of equipment and replacing materials in need of repair. Also, clean and clear all furniture and shelves, to assure that you know and understand the use of each item in the room. However, keep as much of the old materials, format, and routines as possible so that the children will feel as comfortable as possible in their adjustment to the changes you must make otherwise. Use *imagination-provisioning* (IP) to think through what will take place at the first day’s session.

Finally, if possible, contact each parent individually and personally in advance of the first session to introduce yourself, and answer any questions they may have at this preliminary point of your supervision. This initial conversation will help anticipate any problems that may arise at the drop-off time by parents for the first session. Invite and encourage parents to stay with their child on the first day if necessary, giving instructions while in the classroom to stay quiet to one side with their child so as not to interrupt your group supervision.

At the first class session, greet each child individually when they enter the room, practicing the protocol *be friendly, get acquainted*. Allow children to interact with the materials on their own, if they wish, while you wait for all the children to arrive. [In so far as practical, follow the routines of order established with the group before.]

When the full class is present in the room, call them to sit together in a circle for a series of lively movement and rhyming exercises. During this time, observe and resolve issues involving such basic functions as sitting, standing and walking in an orderly manner. As the children lose interest in these group activities, direct the children to “close eyes” and “think” about what they would most like to do in the classroom. And, when they know, go and do it. If no child leaves the group meeting, continue with more

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## Instinct Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

removing any obstacles around the child that are detrimental to his free self-expression. You must therefore especially remove the detrimental influences of your own personality, so that the young child’s strong instinct for imitation will not copy any disorder coming from your own thoughtless words and actions.

### Instinct for Imitation

*“Nature does not merely give the instinct for imitation, but the effort in oneself to become transformed into whatever the example demonstrates.”*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Ed. For a New World*, p.45

The young child’s absorbent mind instinctively tends to imitate everything you say and do, not only the good, natural ones you want him to model, but also those that are thoughtless and disorderly as well. So, unless you are instinctively calm and orderly by nature, you must learn to consciously cultivate these positive qualities by regular practice and discipline. For this, the IMS technology offers a number of useful protocols to follow, such as, *same routines all the time, model good behavior, and least amount of adult involvement*. The technology also provides a series of “safe words” to help you avoid using such negative words as “No” and “Don’t,” replacing these with such phrases as, “Come over here. Let me show you something.”

For resolving misbehavior, the IMS technology offers such protocols as *no negative attention to misbehavior and don’t correct child*. In addition, the protocol *don’t interrupt concentration* reminds you to leave a child alone while he is working on some work of his own. Even with this specific guidance, however, you must still learn to exercise sound judgment at times to distinguish and interpret the child’s actions, to decide whether they represent pure impulse to random activity, rather than instinctive, normal work, which you must not interrupt.

### Pure Impulse

*“...recognize the difference tween pure im-pulse, and the spontaneous energies which spring to life in a tranquilized spirit...the teacher’s efficiency consists in being able to distinguish between two types of activities, each which has the appearance of spontaneity....”*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.232

In Montessori teaching, you are essentially observing the environment around each child, to determine and resolve whatever detrimental influence it may have on the child’s free, self-directed activity at that time. In each new situation, you

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## Donna’s Continuing Mission

Since graduating from IMS training in 2002, Donna Curtis (IMS ‘02) has been very active in here continuing study to gain more knowledge and skill in Montessori teaching. For example, she has attended several IMS workshops and consistently pursued further study to maintain her certified status as a recognized IMS Montessori teacher. In addition, she has been operating a small Montessori “mission” environment for children and families in her northern California community of Petaluma.

Donna’s mission is unique in that it is completely free to parents who she trains to supervise her environment when she is not available. She also provides guidance and support to educators outside her local area, to help them learn about the IMS technology. For example, she is a frequent regular contributor to a social media network for educators in Nigeria. On a recent topic, she stated, “How do we discover our own biases and prejudices?...Are we inadvertently repressing children or abandoning children? This takes deep work! The IMS teacher training course guided me through this process and I find I use the technology all the time and continue to find errors that I can continue to refine.”

In a recent study visit, Donna observed the IMS recognized *Montessori Harbor-Mesa School* in Cost Mesa, CA. Following the visit, she submitted a detailed report, focusing on the use of IMS technology by teachers she observed at that time.

Donna is a mentor consultant for students in the IMS teacher education course. For further information about her consultation services and support, contact: Donna Curtis, [donna.mcurtis@hotmail.com](mailto:donna.mcurtis@hotmail.com), Tel. 707-762-6524.



Donna Curtis (IMS ‘02) with children she supervises in her “mission” environment (Petaluma, CA)

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must interpret the child's outward behavior to decide whether it is something to allow or interrupt.

To the ordinary observer, for example, a child's peaceful, quiet fantasy behavior may be confused with spontaneous true natural behavior. To resolve this confusion, use the technique "questioning" by asking, "What are you doing?" If the child responds with some fantasy words or action, you can conclude that this is an escape from reality which you must interrupt. To help interpret each situation correctly, look to Dr. Montessori's description of qualities of the single normalized type of child.

**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 the world of the spirit."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
*from Absorbent Mind p.58-59*

Dr. Montessori described the "normalized" child as showing such outward qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, order, peaceful harmony with others, and attachment to reality. So, when a child acts differently from these model qualities of the single normalized type, find the detrimental influence at cause in the environment to resolve. However, even with the help of this model to follow, you still need to notice and control the evil tendencies hidden in your personality that can emerge whenever you feel tense and frustrated with a child's misbehavior.

**Evil Tendencies**

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

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

Controlling the "adult personality" is essentially a matter of restraining any outward projection of abandonment or negativity with children. Happily, the IMS technology provides various means to control these evil tendencies, such as by using the protocol, *eye contact before talking*. Knowing these scientific techniques is therefore a great benefit, especially for those who lack the instinctive Montessori teaching skills of others.

**Scientific Techniques**

*"The pupil can show his surprising achievements only if the teacher applied the scientific techniques of 'indirect intervention' while helping the natural development of the child."*

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

It is the sad legacy of Montessori's work that her discovery of the child's true nature in 1907 did not also reveal the practical way for observing children to bring this about as well. Happily, however, IMS has now solved this problem by providing a new understanding along with the necessary scientific techniques for this purpose that had been missing for so long. Today, anyone can therefore now practice the "new education" in a conscious, scientific manner, including even those who lack the natural instincts for this "science of the human spirit."

*Moment of Peril*

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group activities, which can now include presenting some piece of work from the shelf to demonstrate the routine you want to establish for removing and using materials for the child's own individual work activity.

As children leave the meeting to engage in work or watch others, follow the protocol *well-being of the total environment*, to intervene as needed to resolve misbehavior scenarios on the basis of priority issues first. For children unable to find suitable orderly activity, call them back to the meeting area to "close eyes" and "think" about what they most want to do. [ Don't allow unsettled children to just wander randomly, but call them back repeatedly until they show steady eye contact and attention to your direction. ]

When the individual work time is over, call the children back to the meeting area for a closing session to transition to the next event, such as outside recreation, lunch, or dismissal to go home.

For each new session, follow the same routine as the first day, reducing the time for the initial meeting according to the ability and need of the children for this group ordering activity. Eventually, transition this "Beginning Condition" routine to stage 2 "Scanning and Supervision", so the children all begin individual work on their own from the first moment they enter the room.

**Training Teachers**

An experienced, skilled Montessori school director is frustrated in her hiring of teachers from the popular training institute in the area, because they later show a very poor quality of Montessori teaching. Since she is confident in her own knowledge and skill for training teachers, she would like to train teachers in her own training center. However, she wonders if prospective teachers would enroll into her program since the certificate she would offer would not be as accepted or recognized as that of other well-recognized training institutions in the area. What to do? *Answer in Observer, November, 2019.*