



The Montessori *Mistakes* OBSERVER

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Lee Havis with group of parents and educators in the Washington, DC area at a parent's workshop held in Falls Church, Virginia on February 11, 2012

Parent's Workshop in Falls Church, Virginia Following natural laws

On Saturday, February 11, 2012, Lee Havis conducted a two-hour Parent Workshop in Falls Church, Virginia, a nearby suburb of Washington, DC. The event was sponsored by *Nur Center for Art, Fitness and Enrichment*, and was coordinated by **Mary El-Khatib**, a long-time supporter of IMS Montessori teaching in the area. Mary set up this workshop as a way to help parents and educators gain important practical tools for following natural laws with children.

Attending the workshop were parents and staff involved with Mary's educational program at the Nur Center, as well as other area educators, including **Alethea Hession** (IMS '88) and several of her staff and parents at the coop children center she conducts in Annapolis, MD.

At the workshop, Lee briefly presented the use of IMS technology for following natural laws with children to bring about their true normal development. He then demonstrated several practical examples, and answered questions raised by those attending about their own particular situations with children.

Lee also demonstrated the use of IMS technology with a group of young children who were present at the workshop as well. He showed, for example, how to gather them together in a circle, applying

the protocol *be friendly, get acquainted*. Then, he conducted several body awareness activities with them before dismissing them to engage in their own individual activities.

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Montessori Workshops

Technology of Montessori Teaching
in the Scientific Approach to Normal Being

Brunei
June 2-3, 2012

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
June 9-10, 2012

The IMS workshop is a two-day weekend learning experience, featuring Lee Havis, IMS executive director, presenting the specialized technology of Montessori teaching. This IMS technology is precise practical guidance for conducting the scientific approach that leads to true natural being in children.

To register and for further information,
Contact: IMS, tel. 301-589-1127;
havis@imsmontessori.org

Vetting Candidates for Liberty in Maryland

In 2011, Lee Havis organized the *Free State Patriots*, a non-partisan civic group in the state of Maryland, to identify candidates for national public office in the state who most nearly represent the principles of liberty and limited, constitutional government. The plan is to help create a favorable political climate to elect those candidates who most completely support the free expression of true natural Montessori teaching in Maryland and elsewhere in the country.

On February 16, 2012, *Free State Patriots* conducted its first public forum to compare and evaluate candidates for a congressional district in the Baltimore area. **Vladimir De-gen** and **Larry Smith** were two candidates who attended to answer questions at that time. On February 23, 2012, another forum for US Senate candidates was conducted in Baltimore. Attending this forum were candidates, **David Jones, Corrogan Vaughn, Daniel Bongino, John Kimble, Richard Douglas, and Robert Broadus**. Other forums are scheduled in March in the lead up to the April 3 primary elections in that state. Candidates who win in these primary elections will then go on to compete in final general elections in November.

The current candidate forums are part of a larger national vetting process being coordinated through the *Patriot Vetting Committee* (PVC). Lee says, "I hope that these efforts will encourage other similar activities to support freedom for true natural Montessori teaching in the United States. In Maryland, the *Free State Patriots* will serve as a model for PVC vetting activities in other states."

The first step of the vetting process is to qualify candidates for consideration by *Free State Patriots* by having them submit a standard form application and questionnaire. Then, qualified candidates are invited to participate in public forums to answer questions on such topics as deficit spending, support for free market competition and less government control in education. Lee says, "We are preparing audio and video recording of these proceedings to inform the wider general public about the candidates and their position on various issues."

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Mistakes

by Lee Havis

"The truth is that we make mistake after mistake, and do not correct ourselves. We fail to realize our faults; we live in a state of illusion shut off from reality."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.246

Montessori teaching poses the interesting challenge of bringing about perfect results in children by following an imperfect way of being to control the environment. While this may seem oddly illogical, it actually can be done through a scientific approach that is committed to laws of nature. This is even more easily accomplished with the aid of IMS technology that helps eliminate many mistakes that otherwise commonly interfere with the practical success of this approach.

Montessori teaching is successful because it doesn't interfere with the child's own perfect inner guidance of nature. Rather, it serves as a support and assistance to the perfect teacher within the child. In this function, we just have to remove the cause of disorder and misbehavior which comes from the environment.

The Cause of Disorder

"...when her class becomes undisciplined, the teacher sees in the disorder merely an indication of some error she has made; she seeks this out and corrects it."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 285

In Montessori teaching, many mistakes arise from causes that are deeply hidden in our personality formation from childhood. These mistakes then unconsciously project outwardly on children in various ways that bring about misbehavior and disorder we must resolve. Removing the cause of disorder in children therefore first begins by noticing the form and nature of these mistakes that we are thoughtlessly making.

Noticing Mistakes

"...the surer one is of the error, the easier it is to eliminate it."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice of Montessori* p.331

Mistakes in Montessori teaching emerge as various types of abandonment and negativity we project on children. Noticing these mistakes is then often enough to correct them as well, such as by using the IMS technology to lighten or heavy your interaction with children. The process of resolving misbehavior therefore logically begins with our correctly observing the external facts of the specific problem situation we are dealing with at that time.

External Facts

"External facts, which can be fully observed, offer practical guidance which is worthwhile to pursue."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.52

Misbehavior often seems to emerge rather suddenly in a random, irrational manner. However, in fact, it actually has a precise cause and pattern of development that at times can be quite predictable and visible in outward form. Noticing these external facts therefore allows you to use the IMS technology in a sensible, rational manner to remove whatever obstacles there may be in the environment at that time. This process is most difficult when you are dealing with mistakes due to some deeply repressed unknown error in your personality.

Unknown Error

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

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

Mistakes are relatively easy to correct once they are visible in outer form. The most challenging mistakes, however, are hidden by multiple layers of self-deceptive camouflage that distort our perception of the truth. We must therefore learn to carefully watch ourselves to become aware of the outward form of these mistakes.

Watch Ourselves

"We have to watch ourselves most carefully. The real preparation for education is a study of oneself."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.120

In Montessori teaching, we can most easily see our outward mistakes with physical objects and other children; however, we don't as easily see the mistakes involved in controlling our own personality. Although watching ourselves is difficult, another person can often see mistakes that we overlook, such as tense, jerky body posturing, over-involvement with individual children, unclear language, stern voice tone, and negative facial expression. These are the types of personality projections that we can unconsciously impose on children.

Personality Projections

"An adult who loves children but unconsciously condemns them inflicts upon them a secret sorrow which is a mirror of his own mistakes."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.5

Personality projections emerge as various types of abandonment and negativity on children, which we can only fully resolve through deep self-awareness. One practical exercise for this is to stand perfectly still and quiet, exercising the technique *patient waiting* while you

look around the environment and analyze what to do in a more impersonal, objective manner. This psychological distancing from present-moment activity is especially important when you are dealing with highly emotional social conflict situations.

Social Conflict

"When adults interfere, they nearly always make mistakes...(the teacher's) solution differs from that of the children and this disturbs the harmony of the group. Apart from exceptional cases, we ought to leave such problems to the children."

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

In social conflict situations, a typical mistake is to confuse the hub child with one of the other children in the environment. This

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Look for the
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Thoughts

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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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.

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To subscribe to this list, send an email to - intmonsoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com, and then follow instructions to request placement on the list.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Emotional Meltdown

The teacher here is facing 4 year old Sally who bursts into tears at the slightest frustration. See **Observer**, November, 2011. When she discusses the problem with Sally's mother, the response is defensive denial, blaming the school instead of examining her own behavior towards Sally at home.

In this type of emotional *moment of peril*, the first thing to do is to psychologically step back from the drama, for example, by thinking of Sally as if her brain were full of cotton wadding. To help with this type of impersonal, objective observation, one exercise is to concentrate intently on a meaningless object, and then feel the space around that object. More simply, perhaps, just take a few deep breaths to regain a sense of calm and poise in the present moment.

Once self-aware, you can more easily see the child's emotional melt-down drama as really a psychological reflection of your own personality turmoil of thoughts and feelings at that time. Unfortunately, arriving at this state of inner peace and clarity is quite difficult if you have well-entrenched habits of distorted thinking from early childhood conditioning.

In outward behavior, resolving this *moment of peril* involves slowing down or stopping your outward movement. For example, replace your fast, nervous talking with such non-verbal techniques as *eye contact* and *patient waiting* only. In addition, neutralize any angry-fearful-distressed expression on your face.

In a calm, poised state, you are now better prepared to focus the child's attention on some simple physical activity, like a practical life dressing frame. If necessary, set aside any pre-planned group activity when the meltdown occurs so you can give all your attention to Sally's re-engagement with present moment reality.

If the child instead recoils into a full-blown temper tantrum, screaming and rolling on the floor, for example, just practice *eye contact* and *patient waiting* from a respectful physical distance. In this way, Sally will experience and gradually complete whatever deep pain from the past that is being released at that time.

Long-term, you can only help Sally fully regain normal being by resolving the mother's hyper-active projection of her

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usually leads to an angry power struggle between you and the hub child.

The best way to avoid mistakes of this sort is to stay far away from these situations altogether. When you must approach, act as if each child is the "hub" until one child signals his non-hub status by giving you eye contact or some other evidence of attachment to present-moment reality. With this child, you can then safely interact by using such verbal techniques as *reflective language*, *clear direction*, or *questioning*.

The child-other children mistake is only one example of confusing the hub child with some element of his environment. Other types of perceptual mistakes can also arise, such as confusing the hub child with the adult personality.

Perceptual Mistakes

"...recognize the difference between pure impulse and the spontaneous energies which spring to life in a tranquilized spirit...the teacher's efficiency consists in being able to distinguish between two kinds of activities, each of which has the appearance of spontaneity..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind* p.241

The child-personality mistake confuses the child's true natural expression with misbehavior which is really a detrimental projection of the adult personality. This particular perceptual mistake typically involves abandonment, such as by allowing a child to act out fantasy as if this were really some type of natural creative expression. To correct this mistake, just use heavier polishing, such as *questioning*, until you have sufficiently extinguished the fantasy activity involved.

Messages to IMS

November, 2011
Skopje, Macedonia

Hi Lee,

Thank you very much for making our parents and staff proud. We are proud members of IMS family! Macedonian students are sending you hugs and best wishes! It is a honor for me to be part of CT (Character Teaching project) !!!

Elena de Duran, principal
Izvorche Montessori

November, 2011
Amarillo, Texas

Lee,

I am so glad I emailed you last night and look forward to any and all discussions. I will also look to see if I can add the Audio and CD to my Christmas list!!!!

Thank you so much for being here for us. You and your website came to me when I was in the dark and your words and the website opened my eyes to what I have been wanting and needing to hear!!!! Thank you Thank you!!!!

Mary Anne Vance

Correcting any child-environment perceptual mistake focuses your attention on the distinction between the child as a wholly spiritual being you must not disturb, and the environment around that child you must control. Since we so easily personalize the child with his behavior, it is often useful to check our behavior with a more objective type of control of error.

Control of Error

"...we come to a scientific principle which is also a path to perfection. We call it 'control of error'...if this principle is realized...then it does not matter whether teachers and mothers are perfect or not."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.226

Montessori teaching, committed to infinite and eternal laws of nature, would ideally use these laws directly as our control of error; however, they are too vast and undefinable for any practical use. Fortunately, the technology's 20 protocols serve as an excellent functional equivalent. Taken together, these protocols align quite well with laws of nature. In addition, they are sufficiently clear and precise for good practical use. For example, any behavior that violates the protocol *well-being of the total environment* almost certainly points to some mistake you need to correct. The protocol *least amount of adult involvement* is important to follow as well since it applies so uniformly in all situations. Another protocol, *don't interrupt concentration*, is also very useful as control of error in many situations.

Don't interrupt concentration

"When a child begins to show interest...the teacher must not interrupt...This is the moment at which the teacher most often goes wrong."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.255

Montessori teaching with young children aims to lead them to a moment of profound concentration on some particular piece of work. In this moment, a *normalization* occurs to return children to their state of true normal being. Since this normalization usually only occurs after a long period of misbehavior, a typical mistake is to interrupt the child's concentration with a word of praise. Unfortunately, even a brief "good work" remark may be enough to break the child's concentration and return him to even worse misbehavior then before.

The protocol *don't interrupt concentration* therefore helps prevent you from making this critical mistake. Other protocols, like *don't correct child*, also keep you from making other common mistakes with children.

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Mistakes

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Don't Correct Child

"Our method actually does not encourage respect for defects or superficiality...We must help the child to liberate himself from his defects without making him feel his weakness."

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

The protocols *don't correct child* and *enhance independence* help you overcome the common tendency to blame and criticize children when they make mistakes. Other protocols, such as *simplify complexity* – *hint, confirm accuracy* – *clarify/expand*, and *emphasize main point* – *exaggerate* also help you resolve children's mistakes in a positive, indirect manner.

For example, applying the protocol *simplify complexity* – *hint*, suppose you are conducting a nomenclature three-period lesson to show letter-sound knowledge. If the child points to the wrong letter among the three you offer, remove that letter and offer another opportunity to choose ("show me.") between the two remaining. The idea here is to *bury the mistake, mix the two remaining, go to the one that was not part of the mistake*.

Using all these protocols gradually eliminates your mistakes so that the children begin peacefully working as if you don't exist. Then, as a quiet spectator, you are just watching the children's free, self-directed true natural development.

Quiet Spectator

"...it is the environment 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

With children in the final stage 3 of true normal development, you are a quiet spectator, just standing and watching them from a stationary position outside their activity area. Now, your attention shifts to the wider environment to help parents and other adults improve and develop their Montessori teaching skills with children. In this role, you become an even more powerful force of nature for making the reality of a new education in the world.

Moment of Peril

Con't. from Page 3, Col. 1

own fear-judgment-worry on her daughter. So, when you do consult with the parent, don't spend much time talking about the child's problem, since that will likely provoke only defensive posturing or angry denials. Instead, focus on listening to the mother's present-moment situation in a calm, non-judgmental manner. When possible, help the mother slow down to achieve a more self-aware, calm way of being. When the parent is projecting a non-judgmental state of calm objectivity with Sally at home, Sally's pattern of obsessive 'emotional meltdown' behavior at school will gradually diminish and finally disappear as well.

Fantasy or Work

5 year old Michael seems to be busy at work at very simple practical life activity. The teacher does notice, however, that what he is doing seems very simple and repetitive for his age, involving the pieces as if they were living creatures. Although she thinks this is natural and creative use of imagination, she is concerned that Michael is missing out on more age-appropriate academic activity. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, May, 2012

Vetting Liberty Candidates

Con't. from Page 1, Col. 3

Further FSP vetting will attempt to reach consensus on endorsement of a single candidate for each office. Lee says, "endorsing candidates is important to guide ordinary voters who are often led astray by deceptive campaign advertising and biased new media coverage. We are seeking to obtain a wide consensus in our vetting activities by including the participation of all similar committed patriot groups in the state." *Free State Patriots* is affiliated with the *Patriot Vetting Committee* (PVC), website: <http://patriotvoting.com>.

For further information, contact: lee@patriotvoting.com, *Free State Patriots*, <http://meetup.com/Free-State-Patriots>.



Parent's Workshop

Con't. from Page 1, Col. 2

Lee emphasized that follow-up practice with the technology is necessary to achieve effective results in the real-life situation. He said, "Using the technology challenges deep habits of behavior with children which work against their true natural development. We have to keep learning and practicing with the technology until it becomes natural and automatic." Lee expressed his hope that this brief parent's workshop would soon lead to other more substantial learning experiences in the practice of Montessori teaching.