



# The Montessori *Virtues* OBSERVER

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## New Normal?

By Robbyn German (IMS '07)

I run an Education Center in Sherman, CT called *Robbyn's Nest*. Last summer a parent of a 6th grader asked if I would start a LEGO Club. At first it was only two children. After we got started and became acquainted, I learned about their other interests. Eventually, I gave them a sheet with different challenges such as build something with yellow tile.

With the start of the virus (covid-19 pandemic) I temporarily closed my center. However, I heard many of the schools were using google classroom or zoom. So, I thought why not...?

Last Tuesday I thought of a challenge to connect science with legoism such as by building simple or complex machines. I wanted to observe so I had a high school boy run the group. When a new student did not have legos, I had him draw it out on paper. They also made their favorite foods etc. One student made an object that floated.

As the group gelled together, I mostly observed the well-being of the total environment and kept to the background. The students concentrated the whole time and there was an electric excitement in the air. They asked about the next meeting date. The hour had flown by and all were looking forward to next month's LEGO Club.



Robbyn German (IMS '07)

## Montessori Tools and Tips

Lee Havis answers questions raised by members of the Facebook discussion page, "Montessori Tools and Tips".

Question: No one is saying you MUST homeschool and do it in any particular way. So, shouldn't parents ask "What do I need right now?" Shouldn't parents just figure out what they need and why for themselves, and then use this self-knowledge to guide them with a plan?

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Carolyn Bouchard's materials for helping her 3-year-old son learn to read and write about rocks and minerals

## A Mom's Home School Report

How I taught y 3-year-old to read

This report comes from Carolyn Bouchard, daughter of Donna Curtis (IMS '02), about her experiences teaching her young son in a home-school setting.

By Carolyn Bouchard

Quitting a job outside the home in my 30's, I decided to stay at home as a new mom to teach my two sons, ages 4 and 18 months. In this effort, I was lucky to have some guidance from my own mom, who is IMS certified, and had taught me as a child for several years in a Montessori school before entering first grade.

With my then 3-year-old son, I started with letter-sound matching exercises to make simple phonetic words. After that we advanced to word and picture card matching. For there, I let him advance further by offering language and books that followed his interest.

I used the same basic classroom format that my Mom (Donna Curtis) has in her house, which is full of interesting books and materials about the natural world for her students to look at. Watching my son's interests in learning, I have been pleasantly surprised at the variety of things he likes, collecting shells; learning the proper scientific names and classes; (finding exactly where they come from on a map), minerals (how they're formed; learning their names, vintage buttons (collecting, sorting), and planets (learning their names, order, and what they are made of).

I have also noticed that he gets extremely focused on one thing and wants to do it repeatedly, sometimes for months, and then will abruptly drop the activity. My mom assured me this was normal, and so I let the cycle run its course without interfering.

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## Studying the Danbury Study Guide

Giuliana DeFrenza, Director of Montessori Harbor-Mesa School (Costa Mesa, CA) gave each of her staff a copy of the IMS Danbury study guide, a 42-page introduction to the IMS technology. With school not in session, the accompanying audio cd was not used. Here are some comments she received back from her staff after their reading just the Study Guide by itself.

"...this guide helps you understand and goes into depth on how to help each kid. I'm really excited to put all these techniques into use in my early childhood educator career."

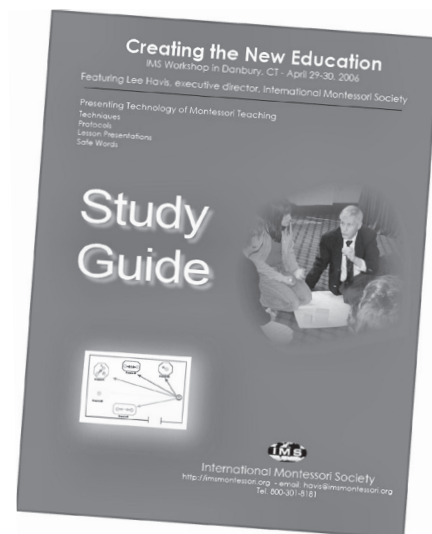
"I enjoyed reading the IMS study guide...It is a good overview of how to apply the Montessori teaching methods."

"What I learned from reading...is when talking to the children, always have eye contact..."

"It is important to constantly practice using safe words...to avoid negative attention to misbehavior, or correcting the child. An example of a safe word phrase is: 'take my hand', to ask the child to follow."

"I thought the booklet was perfect in length and guidance. ... Each part was easy to follow and understand...Once we return to school, implementing the techniques...will come much easier."

"In short, I found the Study Guide to be highly informative...the usage of Safe Words is a more natural way of explaining, teaching, and helping the children...It has its own simplicity...to help and guide the children to a natural and safe learning."



42-page Danbury study guide. An introduction to IMS technology. \$12.95 ea/ With audio CD, whole set is \$49.95.



# Virtues

by Lee Havis

*"The teacher...not words, but virtues, are her main qualifications."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.150

The IMS technology is indeed effective, practical knowledge for observing children to bring about their true natural being. However, to actually use it properly with children, you also need the right inner virtues, such as will, spirit and character directed to that purpose. For example, while you may know the technique "patient waiting", you won't use it properly unless you have enough self-control when you are facing a misbehaving child. Other virtues are vital as well, such as humility.

## Humility

*"...a new type of mistress has been evolved; instead of facility in speech, she has to acquire the power of silence; instead of teaching, she has to observe; instead of the proud dignity of one who claims to be infallible, she assumes the vestige of humility."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Spon. Act. In Ed.*, p.128

In Montessori teaching, "observing" is a total sensory awareness of each situation you encounter, which is far more than just recognizing what you perceive from the ordinary perspective of personality or culture. So, instead of blaming the child for misbehavior, for example, you must humbly recognize and correct your own cause of the problem to change what you are doing in the environment. Only by such humble self-effacing control of your own personality will you see the true normalized type of child emerge as Dr. Montessori discovered in her first observations of young children in 1907.

## The Normalized Type

*"The teacher...sees that single normalized type, which lives in a world of the spirit...so what must she look out for? That one child or another will begin to concentrate."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.252

Although your role is "indirect" with the child, what you do is still vital for the normalized child to come out in a moment of profound concentration on some piece of work in the environment. And since this normalization takes time to actually occur, you must cultivate the virtues of faith and patience as you create and maintain the right conditions over time. In this creative task, the value of your own action is foremost to eventually allow this amazing new child to fully emerge.

## Value of Truth

*"It is not the truth itself that has value, but the man who is capable of appreciating it and bringing it into relation with action."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Spon. Act. In Ed.*, p.223

Visiting a normalized classroom, it's easy to undervalue the teacher's role as she just stands and watches the children. However, this normalized state only comes about from the teacher's long period of skillful action to control the environment by engaging and resolving many problem scenarios of fantasy, inattention, disorder, and misbehavior.

The new teacher doesn't fully understand this delicate work of scientific observation, which involves such a deep level of inner preparation of the spirit. And likewise, in our modern civilized world, the vast majority of humanity also undervalues and disregards this specialized type of indirect approach with children.

## The Civilized World

*"The civilized world becomes an enormous concentration camp to which all men are banished and where they are enslaved, undervalued and annihilated in their creative impulses."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Formation of Man*, p.70

After an initial burst of hopeful enthusiasm, Dr. Montessori's discovery of the child's true nature soon provoked widespread denial, opposition, and then finally indifference from the civilized world of her day. And, despite some 40 years of validating this discovery all over the world, humanity chose instead the path of conflict and violence through two great world wars, and the horrors of concentration camps in Europe.

Today, this evil in the civilized world still persists with the organized abuse and neglect of children through their control and political indoctrination by government under the guise of "public education". And in adult society also we have a small taste of this same repression and control in the widespread lock-down of all normal economic and social life due to the fear of a great unknown virus pandemic.

In this current pandemic, as in public education, government experts, political and news media repress, deny, and undervalue the real solution and treatment of this plague such as by using hydroxychloroquine. Powerful forces oppose the use of this simple, effective, treatment to promote their own cause and benefit. So, we see these forces amplifying the fear of death from the covid-19 plague by broadcasting distorted data, testing, mask-wearing, stay-at-home lock-down orders, and a far-off cure-all "vaccine" in the future. Behind all this fear and ignorance lies the lust and greed for economic treasures, leaving aside the virtues of true science, natural health and reason that would lead to an enduring peace, well-being, and prosperity for all humanity.

## Economic Treasures

*"Economic treasures have no value...if I can attain to the full measure of my powers the economic problem solves itself..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.285

The evil of civilized society comes in many forms to repress the free, natural progress of the human spirit in the world. In education, this corruption seeks after economic treasures through monopoly and censorship control of opposition through preferential government laws and actions in the licensing of schools and the hiring of teachers. In addition, under compulsory school attendance laws, parents are forced to send their children to only government approved schools that effectively prohibit any freedom for Dr. Montessori's true vision of a new education.

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Look for the

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featuring

## Solving Problems

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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

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### IMS ON THE INTERNET

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/imsmontessori/> 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/montessoritoolsandtips/>

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## Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

### Parenting in the Pandemic

In this 2020 virus pandemic, the school owner has no students on site, but still wants to help the parents at home with their children. (See *Observer*, March, 2020). *What to do?*

**Analysis:** The problem here is all about controlling the “adult personality”, because there are no specific issues of “other children” or “physical objects” that are detrimental around any specific child.

**Practical Advice:** The main issue here is to treat the parents at home as your ‘off-site’ staff in your remote school environment. The first practical issue to solve is how to communicate with parents outside the typical face-to-face personal meeting situation.

Begin by setting up your basic “remote” consultation with parents by sending out basic written information, such as newsletter with pictures and instructions on the some practical resources and ideas to interest and involve their children at home. IMS has its various publications and commentary available for members, and a website of learning resources that is free for anyone to gain knowledge of the basics of scientific observation. In addition, the Danbury audio cd and study guide is excellent as a learning tool with parents. On the web, there are also many other useful resources for parent to set up simple, interesting exercises and activities at home that are suitable for children of all ages.

For more direct interaction with parents, set up your computer and connected camera for using such applications as face-time, zoom, gotomeeting, or freeconferencecall. Start your on-line learning sessions by notifying parents of a time to attend your live session by using a special call-in phone number and website location.

In your on-line seminar, refer to the written materials you provided, and go over the various practical technology that any staff member at your school would follow. For example, introducing the IMS technology, describe several simple examples for managing a typical problem, applying such techniques as *distraction*, *eye contact*, and *patient waiting* to resolve some simple everyday problems with children. Also, point out some key protocols, such as “*eye contact before talking*”, which will dissipate many common problems made by unskilled practitioners.

In your remote “seminars”, after your introductory comments, allow time for questioning, as you control each participant through the web controls in your specific application. You can also ‘record’ your sessions, so that parents not on the call can review your session at their convenience.

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

Anyone who seeks to follow this new education, therefore, must be prepared to face the fear and repression of censorship by powerful economic forces that promote their own self again over the higher ideal of service to the good, natural learning of children. In this toxic social climate, many well-meaning teachers also fall victim to their own pride, lust, and vanity to receive the approval and recognition of others, rather than the deeper spiritual rewards of bringing about a new and better humanity.

### Vanity

*“...desire for the admiration of others, this pretense at dignity, the demands for gratitude from the child, all these are the tenets of vanity on the other side of human psychology, all these will vanish.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Voice of Dr. Montessori, p.21 Jan.. '42, p.8*

While new teachers start out with the idea of serving humanity, vanity and pride easily take hold to divert your attention towards more transitory worldly pleasures. Even skilled, mature teachers, become discouraged by lack of progress, money, and appreciation from others, and so become captive to the praise and recognition of others for their successful results with children.

So, besides learning the technical skills of scientific observation, you must also learn to discipline your mind and spirit with such virtues as courage and persistence to this highly spiritual purpose. For this,

### A Mom's Home School Report

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As an example, he became very interested in rocks and minerals. So, we went to the library and found a pretty advanced book about rocks, minerals, and gems. Looking through the book, he desperately wanted to read the proper names and worked for weeks on sounding them out. And then, out of nowhere, he began to write the names. Since he filled up one whole notebook with this writing, we bought him his own sketchbook to expand his research and experience with each mineral. In his sketchbook, he wrote the names of each mineral, painted them, and labelled the paintings.

About halfway through this learning process with rocks, my not-quite 4-year-old surprised me one day by picking up a fairly difficult book and fluidly reading it, even the large words. I thought that he had somehow memorized it, but I tested him on some things he couldn't have possibly memorized, and sure enough, he was reading! Now my son, who just turned 4 last week, has started to read full story books on his own, complete with long words. A big part of his success has been using IMS Montessori techniques and protocols.

teachers must learn the habit of perfecting oneself through a process of continual inner self-examination.

### Perfecting Oneself

*“There is educational value in ... perfecting oneself before going on.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Montessori Method, p.292*

Besides learning the specialized technology of scientific observation, students in IMS teacher training receive guidance in deep inner self-examination as well. In this way, they are set on a path of perfecting oneself throughout their whole life and career with children.

In addition, the technology itself includes a technique for practical self-examination called “*imagination-previsioning*” (IP). This technique is a meditative exercise, away from the children, to imagine what may be the mistake you made in some situation, and then provision a solution to try out later in the real-life situation. Using this technique, you can then eventually correct even deep unknown inner errors to return to the path of following the infinite and eternal cosmic laws of nature.

### Cosmic Laws

*“Respect for the cosmic laws is fundamental. Only when we hold to these as a basis can we judge and modify the multitude of human laws which deal with the passing moments of external social construction.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Formation of Man, p.4*

While Dr. Montessori recognized her work and research as based on cosmic laws of nature, she offered only instinct and suggestions to guide practitioners in following these laws in practice. Happily, however, the IMS technology emerged in 2003, so this is now possible in an objective, scientific manner that was never possible before. Beyond that, you will still need to cultivate the virtues that allow you to actually use this technology to resolve the invariable conflicts that arise in association with others.

### Association

*“The realization of one's own value is just the thing that urges association.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from From Childhood to Adolescence p.99*

Any practical experiment with the new education necessarily involves your association with others, such as parents, staff, and administrators in the typical school situation. And since you can't guarantee their support and cooperation in this situation, you must be brave and thoughtful to stand up to opposing forces and conflicts as they arise. For this, you will need the virtues of wisdom and perseverance, which can only come through practice and experience in using the IMS technology with children.

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### Montessori Tools and Tips *Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1*

**Answer:** Montessori teaching is not just for a specific “school” classroom, but takes place anywhere, anytime, with children. When fate hands you children in an unusual situation, such as at home for a long period of time, make do with what you have, and certainly self-knowledge and judgment are a part of the answer. However, following laws of nature can still be basis of your actions and judgments, now that we have the IMS technology.

For example, if you look around, you’ll notice that the young child is always interested in something, just by watching what he looks at and touches. The protocol “Basis of interest” then guides you to give a lesson on that part of the environment, assuming the child calls your attention, such as by looking at you while he is touching the object (green light).

Of course, if the child is touching an electric stove, or some dangerous or disordered part of the environment, you intervene here to conduct a “resolving misbehavior” lesson, which may require your using the techniques ‘distraction’ and “clear direction” – perhaps with the safe word: “Come over here. Let me show you...”

Even a home, as disorderly and adult-centered as it may be, is a fountain of interesting objects for a young child to explore. And, you will find your child watching you and what you do a lot. (Parents are often not aware this is happening - so remember that the child is watching and imitating you - so you need to be more alert to what YOU are doing when the child is around).

Cleaning and putting things in order, as well as food preparation, are common household chores that children will love to participate in as well. So, use these opportunities in a positive way, rather than abandoning your child to the fantasy of TV or computer playing fantasy games.

To parents in these lock-down pandemic days at home with children: good luck and enjoy the unique learning opportunity with your children. You will later realize that they grow up too soon, and this rare opportunity for extended time with your children will soon disappear. So, enjoy and appreciate them while they are real and present!

## Virtues

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

### Practice

*“Even an intelligent teacher who has understood the principles finds it very difficult to put into practice.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
*from Formation of Man p.50-51*

While a Montessori school typically has a set of self-teaching materials, a mixed age group of children, and tuition support from parents, the essential ingredient is still your own commitment to the underlying vision of true natural being. To put this vision into practice, using the IMS technology, you must overcome many corrupting influences in society. For this reason, IMS teacher education provides a three-year teaching credential that is renewed through further IMS-approved training each time. Only with this continuing support and accountability with others can you successfully maintain your underlying mission with the right virtues of spirit that allow you to maintain the committed path that is creating this new education in the world.

### Moment of Peril

*Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1*

If you keep your regular seminar sessions short and specific, such as about 15 minutes each, you can assure good attendance and interest by many of your parents. However, set up longer sessions for parents who want more personal attention or in small groups on specific topics. In this way, when the school reopens, you will have developed a better relationship with the parents, that will strengthen and improve the operation of your school thereafter as well.

### Back to School

After a long summer break, the children returned to school in a wild, disorderly manner, that was very different from their calm and orderly behavior when they left several months ago. Surprised and disappointed with her classroom now, the teacher wonders how to restore the good conditions of before. What to do? *Answer in Observer, September, 2020*



*Children enjoy springtime planting at the Corpus Christi Montessori School (Texas), before the pandemic shut-down. Even at home, parents can help their children learn to enjoy and participate in these same outdoor nature activities.*