



# The Montessori *Culture* OBSERVER

Published by the International Montessori Society web: <http://imsmontessori.org> Tel. (301) 589-1127



Child working with math materials at the Hayfield Montessori School (Louisville, KY)

## Montessori Tools and TIPS

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

### Problem Scenario

(submitted by Kathy Fuller)

I read to 2 year old children one-on-one, once a week at a nursery school through a program in Delaware called **ReadAloud**. I have a problem with one boy who doesn't want to sit next to me as I read a story. He plops down on the other side of the table and looks at me, then around the room. I am not sure how to handle this. I could go over next to him but that feels like chasing him. I explain that he can't see the pictures very well from over there, but he says nothing and looks at me. I am starting to feel angry and frustrated because I feel he is testing me to see what I will do, and is not listening to my direction. He keeps looking around the room and seems restless but looks at me again. I know to make no negative comment nor have a negative tone, so I just read the short story and when we finish, he gets his stickers and we quickly return to his classroom.

### Response:

Analyzing the environment around this "hub" child, the "adult personality" is the primary detrimental influence because neither physical objects nor other children are significantly present as issues to resolve. A clue to

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col 3

## Hayfield Montessori School in Louisville, Kentucky

The Hayfield Montessori school in Louisville, KY opened its doors in September of 1967. Founded by **Leo and Monique Denoncourt**, it began at the urging of a few parents of children who the Denoncours were teaching at another school at the time.

The Hayfield school began first as an elementary school only, just one of several such Montessori schools operating at that level in the United States at the time. Beginning with twelve students, the school's enrollment gradually reached more than 100 as parents informed others, and student alumni because parents themselves in the community.

In 1985, Lee Havis (IMS) became aware of the school when a local wood-working artist, **John Maluda**, was developing musical instruments designed on the basis of concepts suggested to Dr. Montessori herself many years ago. At that time, one of the Denoncourt children, Bernadette (photo page 3), was attending the school, and was active in using these instruments. Now, one of the other Denoncourt children, **Aline Abell**, has now become the school's current director.

At Hayfield, Aline states that, "Most of our teachers have children who attended Hayfield Montessori school. Parent involvement has also played an important role in our school through the Hayfield Montessori Parents' Association, officially chartered in 1983. It raised enough funds to build the library/office in 1986...In 2007, another building was added to the campus to better accommodate the school's growth."



Kathy Fuller (Oceanview, DE), teacher in ReadAloud program for 2 year old children in area preschool centers.

As to Leo and Monique Denoncourt, Aline reports that they are now mostly retired from teaching, although they still play a hands on role in the school. She says, "Leo can be seen teaching music to the elementary students, and Monique can often be found in the office or out in the yard hard at work."

Aline especially enjoys having visits from alumni, telling about their further interests, studies, and life activities in the world. She says, "As we celebrate our 52nd successful years, we're proud of all our students' achievements, which they have built on their initial talents. We wish to thank all parents who make it possible for their children to be a part of Hayfield Montessori School, where we 'learn for life.'"

For further information, contact: Aline Abell, Director, Hayfield Montessori school, 2000 Tyler lane, Louisville, KY 40205, Tel. (502) 931-7143, [hayfield-montessori@twc.com](mailto:hayfield-montessori@twc.com), website: [www.hayfieldmontessori.com](http://www.hayfieldmontessori.com)

## The Bi-polar Misbehavior Trap

*Is there a way out for you?*

STUCK in a bi-polar misbehavior trap, to (1) either flog (spank-punish) the child or (2) ignore, neglect or appease the misbehavior in a permissive, apathetic manner, you always wind up with a bad result. If flogging the child stops the problem for a short while, it is sure to emerge again in the future due to the fear or resentment carried by the child from that experience. On the other hand, if you neglect, bribe, or appease the misbehavior, this 'reward' will only provoke and create an incentive for further similar bad behavior as well. So is there a way out of this trap?

YES! Montessori teaching is the sure and certain way out, which is neither (1) abuse or (2) neglect. Instead, it is the way of following laws of nature in a systematic, scientific manner. Here, you are resolving the CAUSE of the misbehavior in the environment around the child. If you can imagine this third path as a possibility, you are then ready to get help from such tools and support as the IMS technology. Are you willing and ready to try? If so, contact IMS for training, tools, support and knowledge you need to free yourself from the bi-polar misbehavior trap with children.



# Culture

by Lee Havis

*"Our goal in the education of a young child should be to help him develop, and not to furnish him with a kind of culture."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child* p.170

Around each one of us, there is an invisible network of widely-accepted thoughts, values, habits, customs, and beliefs in society that define our particular culture. In early childhood, this "culture" has a powerful influence to effect our whole later life. In our modern age, governments have added weight to this influence by setting up a system of public education and compulsory attendance laws that promote dominant political and cultural values and subject matter, which is delivered by teachers and schools through a prescribed curriculum.

In the early 1900's, Dr. Montessori stepped away from this cultural indoctrination, to observe children given freedom and independence to learn through materials in a self-directed manner. Instead of conventional culture, her unique learning environment closely duplicated the perfect order of eternal cosmic laws. And, in this way, she observed an amazing and unexpected change in children, which she later concluded was the child's true nature.

## Cosmic Laws

*"The problems of education must be solved on the basis of the cosmic order...Respect for these cosmic laws is fundamental... Only when we hold to these 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.14

In her unique environment, Dr. Montessori discovered that following cosmic laws of nature changed the child's ordinary behavior from the cultural norm of inattention, fantasy, and disorder, to a totally new way of being, showing such outward qualities as precocious intelligence, spontaneous self-discipline, concentration, order, and harmony with the entire environment. Dr. Montessori reasoned that the young child was somehow absorbing the order of cosmic laws through the materials, and thereby returning to a state of true normal being.

## Absorbing the Environment

*"...the child absorbs his environment, takes everything from it, and incarnates it in himself."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.66

Dr. Montessori's study of the young child led her to conclude that the young child has a unique "absorbent mind" that

allows him to effortlessly acquire a great quantity of knowledge just by freely interacting with the surrounding environment. In fact, besides absorbing concepts of reading, writing, and math from the materials, the children also absorbed the order of those concepts, which then became deeply imprinted on the child's whole mind, being and personality. Beyond that, Dr. Montessori also found the young child absorbing culture just by watching and imitating the ordinary words and actions of the adults around him in the environment each day as well.

## Absorbing Culture

*"Only with repeated experiments did we conclude with certainty that all children are endowed with the capacity to absorb culture...The child absorbs the customs and habits of the land in which he lives until he has formed the typical individual of his place and time."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.7, 58

Montessori teaching primarily seeks to return the child to true normal being, by keeping focus on the order of physical objects, rather than the distracting and unnecessary "teaching" of the adult personality. So, ideally, the adult's standard position is as a quiet, passive observer in a remote corner of the environment. In ordinary education, however, the teacher is especially busy with her "teaching" and curriculum that invariably involves many deviations from the perfect order of nature. So, here, child absorbs these qualities of ordinary culture to make him into the typical weak, dependent individual in adult society.

## A Weak Individual

*The child who is not properly cared for takes vengeance on society by forming a weak individual, an obstacle to the progress of civilization."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Education for a New World*, p.32

While each tribe, nation, and region has its own distinctive cultural style and language, they all function to present obstacles to true natural being, making the child into a weak, dependent slave to external control that comes through prisons, police, soldiers, and guns. Montessori teaching, however, brings about the child's true nature just as Dr. Montessori observed and reported in her first Children's House in Rome, Italy in 1907.

## First Children's House

*"The environments in which the first Children's House had their origins must have been extremely favorable, since the surprising results obtained during those first years have never been equaled."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.37

Although Dr. Montessori's first Children's House was ideal for true natural being, later efforts could not exactly duplicate

these conditions, so that results were only partial and limited at best. Lacking a clear understanding of how to create these ideal conditions, practitioners did not have sufficient practical guidance for its effective practice. So, Montessori teaching became diluted, warped and deviated according to each teacher's own personal experiences or surrounding culture. In America, for example, the true nature of the American child was taken to be different from Italian children, more playful and fanciful.

In response to such cultural deviations, Dr. Montessori established an "official" organization in 1929 to assert personal control and authority over her work. Known as the "Association Montessori Internationale" (AMI), this organization functioned under Dr. Montessori's personal control until her death in 1952,

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col 2

Look for the  
March, 2020  
**Observer**  
featuring  
**Apathy**

ISSN 0889-5643

## The Montessori Observer

Published by

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

Tel. (301) 589-1127

havis@imsmontessori.org

Worldwide Web:

<https://imsmontessori.org>

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.

## IMS ADVISORY BOARD

Elizabeth Hainstock, Educator, Author  
John Bradshaw, Author, Public Speaker

## 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

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/>

Copyright © IMS, 2019

## Moment of Peril

by Lee Haviv

### Training Teachers

The school director here thinks she can train teachers for her school better than the nearby well-known training center. (See *Observer*, September 2019). However, since she is uncertain about competing successfully with that center, she wonders if this will be accepted in the community. What to do?

**Analysis:** In this scenario, the director's "adult personality" is the only detrimental influence in the situation. Her fear and lack of confidence to set up her own training of teachers amounts to an "abandonment" of her duty to assure an effective environment for her children, a surrender to the authority of outside conventional forces in society.

**Practical Advice:** The director first must ask if she has adequate knowledge, interest, and skill to take on the task of organizing a formal teacher education center. If not, she will still need to fulfill her duty to the school to retrain the poorly trained teachers from the current inferior center.

In this situation, the director begins teacher education with those staff she hires for her OWN school. For this, avoid hiring candidates from the existing center, but rather find UNTRAINED (un-certified) candidates from the general public. Choose those with a calm, patient manner, and a clear interest and love for children and learning. Once hired, set up an informal on-the-job training, having the new hires passively observe you or another skilled teacher working with children. In addition, give them brief after-class lessons in how to show materials and use the IMS technology. [IMS has tools and support for learning the IMS technology, such as individualized distance learning, audio cd, and published study guide materials.]

After success with training one or more new hires in her own school, the director can take what she learned in this informal staff training to create a more organized format of curriculum and schedule of activities for a group, or individually. Develop also some promotional material to advertise the new program to the general public. At first, candidates will enroll based on observing the quality of her own school operation. But later, course graduates will testify from their own experience as to the credibility and value of the new training center.

### Parent Problems

The teacher here is having parent problems when she initially introduces them to the Montessori environment. While she tries to demonstrate Montessori teaching with their child, the parents either talk on the phone or with each other, rather than watching. Or, they hover over their child, interfering and teaching instead of observing. When she directs them to quietly observe, they either get angry and leave, or simply continue to disregard your direction. What to do? Answer in *Observer*, March, 2020

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

when her son and heir, Mario, was assigned to take over control. Now however, educators outside of Mario's personal circle of friends and associates sought to represent Montessori education in their own way, following the guidance of social customs compatible with their own time and place.

### Social Customs

*"Parents today...abandon their children to social customs as if they were inevitable. No voice is raised in their defense..."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.216

Dissatisfied with Mario's "personality" type AMI organization, parents and teachers in America eventually formed the "American Montessori Society" (AMS), to follow the criteria, customs, beliefs, and values popular in America at that time. In this "culture" type organization, government agencies and recognized state education institutions become the authority for "official" criteria and requirements in the field. Teacher qualifications and school regulations are established around specific materials, training, and curriculum. And, in the classrooms, teachers are expected to set up rules for children in harmony with their particular culture, even though it is contrary to Dr. Montessori's original philosophy, format, and purpose.

### Rules

*"...lack of rules...furnished a basic nothing, and because of that nothingness, the soul was able to expand."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Ed. For a New World*, p.55

In the typical "culture" type Montessori philosophy, the teacher is required to follow the specified rules of their own culture. AMS, for example, favors giving a set of "rules" (sometimes called "ground rules") for children to follow, such as "no hitting", "inside voices", "no bothering other children's work", and "walk, don't run". In addition, official AMS teacher training standards require study of conventional child psychology and a bachelor's degree from a state approved institution.

The AMS curriculum also set out a routine order and schedule for group instruction and a body of prescribed academic lessons and materials. For managing misbehavior, AMS criteria favor such cultural controls as "time-out" or "quiet tables" along with the use of such negative words as "No" and "Don't".

### "No" and "Don't"

*"Any form of violence in speech or action does irreparable harm to the child...beware of this tendency to say "Don't do this", "You mustn't do that"."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Formation of Man*, p.36

In conventional education, teachers commonly use such negative words as "No" and "Don't" to control misbehavior in children. In Dr. Montessori's approach, however, teachers

must avoid such words since they impose the "adult personality" on children, bringing about a pattern of fear and dependency in the adult-child relationship.

In 1979, the International Montessori Society (IMS) arose to challenge all these deviations of "personality" or "culture" from the ideal approach in Dr. Montessori's first Children's House. And, in time, IMS offered a "technology" to practice this type of "true natural" Montessori teaching in a scientific manner that was never possible before. Now, anyone can conduct the same exact new path of scientific observation that Dr. Montessori employed in her original Children's House experiment, except now in a conscious, intentional manner.

### New Path

*"Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentialities."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Education for a New World* p.2

Using IMS technology, your new path of scientific observation employs an analytical framework that has a single "hub" child as the one you are observing at that moment as an unknown spiritual being. And, his "environment" is everything around that child, consisting of (1) physical objects, (2) other children, and (3) adult personality. Within this framework, the Montessori teacher conducts experiments to remove whatever detrimental influences there may be coming from one or more of these components of the environment. For this, the IMS technology provides a set of specific techniques and protocols to conduct your experiments in a completely objective, conscious manner.

To remove detrimental influences from the "adult personality," for example, the technology includes specific protocols, such as "No rules for

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1*



Bernadette Denoncourt, using the Maluda (Montessori) Harp at Hayfield Montessori School, circa 1985

Return Service Requested

9525 Georgia Ave. #200 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA



## Culture Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

children” to avoid projecting the ordinary rule-making pattern of “culture” Montessori teaching. Another protocol, “No negative attention to misbehavior” helps you avoid the common habits of punishing or shaming a child involved in a misbehavior situation. In addition, there are a set of “safe words” to replace negative words such as “No” and “Don’t”.

While this new path of “true natural” Montessori teaching is now open and available to all, many well-intentioned parents and teachers still won’t even try this approach because it is so alien to the common view of child as known and seen through lens of ordinary culture. And so humanity remains largely condemned to a concentration camp of ignorance, fear, and evil as related to our own true nature.

### Concentration Camp

*“The civilized world becomes an immense 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.97

In the 1940’s, Dr. Montessori and her son were both interned in India during World War II as Italian enemy aliens. They also lived through years of war-time Europe, dominated by cruel Nazi concentration camps that so reminded her of the similar treatment of children under the influence of ordinary culture.

Despite this gloomy picture of modern civilization, however, Dr. Montessori still believed in the inherent creative operation of the human spirit to eventually overcome this pervasive evil to bring about the reality of man’s true natural being in a new and better humanity.

### Creative Operation

*“The continuity of anything that nature has not fixed, but which evolves gradually as a social pattern, must do is only possible if the new individuals born into it have a creative power...it is a creative operation which may come under our control.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind* p.174

Dr. Montessori recognized the creative operation of the child’s spirit to overcome evil, to ultimately bring victory for man’s true nature. While the young child naturally creates life during the formative period, the adult also has the inherent creative ability to create outside the surrounding culture through the exercise of faith and will. For example, with the IMS technology, we now have the tools for creating Dr. Montessori’s “new education” that frees the child to create a new culture of true natural peace, order, unity, and harmony in the world.

### Creating a New Culture

*“A new education must be built up. Education must be reconstructed and based on the laws of nature and not on the preconceived notions and prejudices of adult men.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man* p.70

Whereas the young child creates culture in a spontaneous, effortless manner, adults too can act creatively also, such as by following laws of nature to provide the right conditions for true natural being to emerge. As a practical matter, therefore, creating Dr. Montessori’s ideal new culture requires a joint effort of adult and child working together.

For the adult, this work begins first by imagining the new culture as a real possibility. Then, you must act on it with faith by doing and saying what is consistent with this new reality. Happily, the IMS technology gives us the means to do this when you are ready to be an active part of this great creative work.

## Messages to IMS

To: Lee Havis

I have reread the introduction penned by you in the EM Standing book. Thank you for that. I have been following your work for years and am happy to continue. Thank you.

Althea Cutting, Zurich, Switzerland

**NOTE:** Althea is in a Montessori book club, studying the book, “*Montessori: Her Life and Work*” by EM Standing, Introduction by Lee Havis, 1986 ed.

## Montessori Tools and Tips

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

the teacher’s problem is her angry, frustrated feelings, which seem to be propelling mistakes, such as pushing to read the book and talking without eye contact attention, rather than following the technology. Here, for example, she needs to apply more “patient waiting” (technique) and “present moment” (protocol). That is, wait and watch the child, as you become more aware of your own feelings at that moment.

Most likely also, her feelings are causing her to speak to the child without eye contact, thus violating the protocol “eye contact before talking”. Also, in the rush to read the book, she is not watching what the child is doing. This violates the “child watching” and “basis of interest” protocols.

So, refining her use of IMS technology, she must pay closer attention to use the various techniques and protocols indicated here, to restore a friendly, natural relationship with the child. For example, just waiting for the child’s attention to return to the book, she will likely get the child’s attention, even if he chooses to sit on the other side of the table during that time.