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July 2022

## Box 09, Folder 12 - "The Montessori Directress: A Suggested Symposium in the Form of a Questionnaire Circulated to Experienced Directresses" (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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Mount St. Vincent  
4831 35th Ave. S.W.  
Seattle 25  
Washington .  
U.S.A.

Feb 29th ' 64

Dear Rev Mother Angela and Phyllis ,

I am hoping you will both be kind enough to help me with a certain project -----or rather I know you are both "kind enough" ----- but I hope you will be able to fit it into you schedule ( skedule as they say over here ! )

The enclosed documents are pretty well self explanatory . I think it is very important that we collect this kind of information while it is still alive in peoples memory .

I am just recovering from a second dose of flu in four weeks , and feel very weak : so I will go straight to the point .

I am sending a copy of these documents to each of you and am hoping you will manage to get together somehow - even if it is only on the phone - to discuss the matter . ( I would love to do it myself ; but I literally have such a pile of work waiting for me for the publisher - and - alas - it is stuff that no one else is in a position to do . That is why I am begging for your help in this matter ) What I should therefore suggest is that

- 1) You read through the questions and make any alterations and additions or subtractions as you think fit .and then---
- 2) Have them duplicated - I should think about thirty copies would do ) leave the decision to you . And please send the bill for making the copies to me ....then
- 3) Send them round to the appropriate persons .Here I think you would know much better than I to whom to send them , as I am out of touch with the latest developments in Europe .
- 4) But there are certain persons I think we ought to include

a) Rev Mother Isabel Eugenie ,  
Academy of the Assumption ,Ravenhill ,  
3480 West Schoolhouse Lane ,  
Germantown ,  
Philadelphia 44  
Pennsylvania . U.S.A.

Claude Claremont ,( he is called Dr. Claremont now )  
341 Anita Ave.S.  
Los Angeles 49  
California

Betty Stephenson ,  
Montessori Institute  
Cathedral Mission Centre Suite 208  
3000 Connecticut Ave. Washington D.C. U.S.A

Frau Dr Helene Helming , Gesellschaft  
c/o Deutsche Montessori Gesellschaft  
Fellnerstrasse 1  
Frankfurt/Main , Germany

( or perhaps safer c/o A.M.I. 171 Koniginneweg etc )

Marchesa Sofia Cavalletti  
34 Via degli Orsini ,  
Roma , Italy .

Signorina Paolini  
She is at the Perugia Training Centre but don't know  
the address -- could be sent c/o A.M.I.

Mrs Honneger,  
Montessori School  
Viale Vittorio Emanuele 31 -A  
Bergamo , Italy

There should be some very suitable people in Holland but I  
don't know them . could you find out .

Mario What I would think would be a good thing , would be to  
ask Mario if he would like to send in and articles or quotations  
here and there bearing on the Directress ; better still if he could  
work them into an article . But there again I am not sure--  
Mario has such a power complex on him at times that he might not  
be inclined to help on the scheme . I am quite prepared to abide  
by your judgement on this question of Mario . It would be nice to  
have him in if he did not wish to throw his weight about unne-  
cessarily .

Most important not to forget those two most able Headmistresses  
who run schools a) at Avenue Road , and b) Dallington St . F. . I

Oh , and I think we ought not to forget that  
lady in Dublin ( I forget her name for the moment ) she has an  
excellent school

As to how to deal with the replies when they come - making  
them into a unified whole - I will send you the result of a  
WQuestionnaire I got up some years ago ( Phyllis was in it if  
you remember ) But the first thing is to get the questions out .

Forgive me , good friends , for bothering you ; but I feel to have  
so much more confidence in you than any others -- and "Noblesse  
Oblige " may I remind you .

After many set backs the second edition of THE CHILD IN THE  
CHURCH is practically ready for the publisher .

With very cordial greetings , and eager requests to be  
remembered in your prayers ,

yours very sincerely in J.M. and J.

C.1

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THE MONTESSORI DIRECTRESS

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The nearer the source the purer the spring". The idea is for a number of those of us who had the privilege of being near to the Source to pool our ideas on the question of what makes the ideal Montessori Directress. Such a person is really in effect an ideal for however good a Montessori Directress you are you always feel that you have not yet reached the ideal -- and probably never would if you lived to be as old as Methuselah.

No one who has worked ~~in~~ <sup>at</sup> this vocation -- for it is a vocation would ever dream of saying that it is an easy one ~~xxxxxx~~ in which expertness is something that can be acquired automatically just with time and practice. It is something which is still so new in the sphere of education, something so little understood by those outside the Montessori Movement that it is not easy to ~~xxxx~~ envisage. And this is also to a large extent true of the hundreds and thousands of enthusiastic young devotees to-day who have never been in contact with the Source; and moreover have never had the opportunity of observing in a Montessori Class which is operating as the Dottressa would wish.

There are so many things which can be misunderstood or only half understood by the beginner, so many pitfalls into which with the best will in the world she can easily fall into, that many such would welcome the advice of those who have ~~xxx~~ worked in this field and have proved themselves successful.

~~The~~ Montessori Teaching as an art as well as a science; and for that very reason makes it hard to lay down hard and fast rules -- as Montessori herself said. "I give very few rules with regard to how to teach just because I do not want my method to become something stereotyped and petrified."

THE MONTESSORI DIRECTRESS

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A QUESTIONNAIRE

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It would help if contributors to this questionnaire would kindly attend to the following points :

1) Name and address

2) Teaching Experience

a) As a Montessori Directress or Principal of Mont. School

b) B- As an ordinary Teacher

c) Degrees or Diplomas - if any

3) Direct Contact with Montessori - if any

4) Please write on one side of the paper only

( A answers need not necessarily be typed )

5) Please leave a space of two lines between one answer and the next

6) Please write plainly the Number of each question at the beginning of the corresponding information .

7) IT WOULD GREATLY ENHANCE THE VALUE OF YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS IF YOU COULD ILLUSTRATE THEM BY PRACTICAL EXAMPLES AND PARTICULAR ANECDOTES WHICH HAVE COME UNDER YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE .

8) Any other ideas - in addition to those suggested in the accompanying questions - would be most welcome .

With the aim of helping contributors - in the way of suggestions we enclose some questions which might help to start the ball rolling. But they are only suggestions and are in no way compulsory, and would fail of their value entirely if they in any way made the contributors feel that they were cramped and limited in what they had to say, or put any sort of a break on their spontaneity.

.....

- 1) Why "Directress" and not "Teacher"?
- 2) Her relationship to the Children
- 3) Her relationship to the Environment
- 4) Her relationship to the Parents
- 5) Her relationship to the School Authorities.
- 6) The Limitations of the Environment.

What should be in it

What should not be in it.

The criteria for the admission of new Materials,

The Materials --

How they should be arranged in the Environment

The care of them.

Their replacement when lost.

Starting a Montessori Class

Best number to start with

Difficulties to be expected - and how overcome

The Giving of Freedom - when and how

What Age-groups can and should be taken together

reasons for.

The Social Life in a Montessori Class.

Exercises of Grace and Courtesy.

The Directress's manner, deportment and dress etc.

Discipline . Early stages

Discipline a growth in time and quality

Some major difficulties

the disorderly child

the stupid visitor .

any sudden crisis.

Solvitur Ambulando

Problems that solve themselves as one goes along  
examples .

Different Types of Children and their treatment .

Liberty its nature

why it is so essential

its limits

compared with license .

The Free Child's manner of Work .

The best size for a class in your experience .

Problems The child who seems only interested in one subject .

The child who is dependent on another child

The parent who wants Tommy to write his own name  
in capital letters !

Parent Groups and how the Parents can help in the home

What would you consider the most important elements in  
a good Montessori training Course , and how long should it be  
From your experience what do you think should be the all round  
attainment of a Montessori Child by the end of his sixth year.

THE USE OF INCIDENTS AND PARTICULAR EXAMPLES

It would add very much to the interest and value of  
any account of what you think the Montessori Directress should  
be , and of the different problems she must face , if you could  
illustrate your ideas by actual examples from your own or other  
persons' experience

THE MONTESSORI DIRECTRESS -A SUGGESTED SIMPOSIUM

"The Nearer the Source the purer the Spring "  
655

The idea here under consideration is that a number of those who have had the privilege of being "near the Source " in the Montessori Movement should pool their ideas as to what makes an ideal Montessori Directress .

No one who has worked in this vocation - for it is a vocation -would ever dream of saying that it is an easy one in which dexterity can be achieved automatically with time and practice .It is something which is still so new in the sphere of education and based on principles so little understood by the majority of lecturers in Training Colleges and by the general run of teachers that it is not easy for the enthusiastic young devotee of the younger generation to put into practice, especially if they have never had the opportunity of seeing a Montessori class operating as the Dottoressa would have desired . There are so many points about it which can be misunderstood , or only partially comprehended by the beginner that many would welcome the knowledge and counsel of those who have worked long and successfully in this field .

Montessori Directing a class is an art as well as a science ; and for this very reason it makes it hard to lay down hard and fast rules with regard to it . Montessori herself said "I give very few rules with regard to how to teach just because I do not wish my method to degenerate into something sterile and mechanical "

.....



## Some Working Suggestions

With the aim of helping contributors to this Symposium we appended some notes and questions which might help "to start the ball rolling". But they are only suggestions and would fail of their intention if they made contributors feel that they were in any way cramped in their style or limited in what they would like to say, or in any way put a break upon their spontaneity.

-----

1) Why "Directress" and not "Teacher"

2) The Directress and her relationship to the Children

3) " " " " to the Environment

4) " " " " to the Parents

5) " " " " to the School Authorities

6) The Environment

What should be in it

What should not be in it.

The question of admission and use of other materials besides "Montessori" materials.

The criteria for admission.

7) The Materials

How they should be arranged in the room

The importance of order -- and why.

Their replacement when lost.

8) Starting a Montessori Class

Difficulties to be expected - how overcome.

The passage from collective directing of the class to individual work and freedom of choice

The question of the number of children.

9) What age-groups can and should be taken together

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ reasons for.

10) Discipline

Early stages

Discipline a growth - comes gradually  
what with?

Special difficulties

the disorderly child, the stupid visitor,

II) Liberty in the Class Room

Liberty for what ?  
True and false liberty .  
Why is it so essential ?  
Its limits .

I2) Characteristics of the Free Child's manner of working

I3) The Directress - Her Appearance and Manner

I4) The Exercises of Practical Life

Arrangements for in the class  
Value of .  
The use of Meal times

I5) The importance of exactness and order  
in the environment  
in the children's work .

I5) Notes on experience with:-  
sand paper letters  
movable alphabet  
reading commands

I6) Notes on materials for spontaneous reading ( books found  
useful with publishers name and address )  
Dittoe for First step sum books which have been  
found useful .

I6) Special Problems

the child who seems to want to do just one subject .  
the child who is too dependent on another child .  
The parent who won't be happy until Tommy can write  
his name in block captials ! etc .

I7) What would you consider the most important elements in  
an ideal Montessori Training Course

I8) From your experience what would be the general allround  
attainment of a child on entering his seventh birthday .

I9) Any other suggestions .

20) Use of Incidents and Particular examples

It would add greatly to the value of your contribution if  
it could be illustrated , out of your own experience , with  
examples and incidents that have come under your won observation .

THE MONTESSORI DIRECTRESS

A Suggested Symposium <sup>Sym</sup> in the form of a Questionnaire  
circulated to experienced Directresses .

.....

"The Nearer the Source the <sup>Burere</sup> the Stream "

-----

The idea here under consideration is that a number of those who have had the privilege of being ~~N~~ear the Source " in the Montessori Movement, should be asked to pool their ideas as to what makes an ideal Montessori Directress .

No one who has worked at this vocation - for it is a vocation - would dream of saying that it is an easy one , in which proficiency can be achieved automatically merely with time and practice . It is an <sup>ap</sup>proach which is still so new in the sphere of education , and based on <sup>pr</sup>inciples and practice as yet so little understood by the majority of lecturers on Education and by the general run of teachers , that it is not easy for the eager devotee of this new generation to put into practice , especially if she has never had the opportunity of observing in a really good Montessori class . There are ~~also~~ many points on which it can be misunderstood , or only partially <sup>com</sup>prehended , that most <sup>be</sup>ginners would eagerly welcome the counsel of those who have worked <sup>su</sup>ccessfully in this field.

Directing a Montessori class is an art as well as a science; and for this very reason it makes it hard to lay down ~~many~~ hard and fast rules . Montessori herself said "I give very few rules with regard to how to teach , because I do not wish my method to degenerate into something stereotyped and mechanical "

.....

Contributors to this symposium are requested to observe the following points :-

1. Name~~s~~ and address and phone number .
- 2) Teaching Experience
  - a) in ordinary schools
  - b) Montessori school
  - c) Degree ,diploma<sup>s</sup> etc
- 3) Direct contact with Dr Montessori , if any .
- 4) Please write on one side of the paper only ,
- 5) Please <sup>leave</sup> a space ~~of~~ at least two lines between the answers to each question .
- 6) Please write the number of each question at the beginning of the answer to it .
- 7) It would greatly enhance the value of your contribution if you could illustrate it anecdotes and practical examples
- 8) ANY OTHER IDEAS ( in addition to those suggested ) WOULD BE MOST WELCOME .

## QUESTIONS

1) Why did Montessori use the word Directress rather than Teacher ?

2) The Environment

What would you say was its function ?

What kind of things should be placed in it

What sort of things should not be allowed in it .

What about the use of other materials besides "Montessori materials .

What would you say were the criteria for their admission

( Examples on this point would be a help )

What would you say about the limits of the environment and the number of things in it .

3) The Exercises of Practical Life

What are their main purpose?

Any suggestions on their lay-out in the room .

The use that can be made of meal times.

Their re-action on Parents .

~~4)~~ The ages when most valuable - and why.

4) The Montessori Materials

Best manner of arranging them in the room .

The importance of order -- why ?

Arrangements found useful for stationery etc .

5) On starting a Montessori Class

Preliminary preparations ,

The number of children .

The passage from the collective direction of a class to individual choice of work and freedom . *how + when .*

How parents can help or hinder at this stage .

6) The question of Discipline

Two kinds of discipline --

a) enforced from without - early stages ?

b) Self discipline

c) Discipline a growth - a path .

d) Special difficulties ...e.g. the disorderly new-comer : the stupid visitor : the sudden crisis

(Tommy upsets a pail of water !

7) The question of Liberty in the class room

True and false ideas on liberty

What is your idea of liberty ?

Why is it so essential ?

The child has liberty to ---do what ?

8) What would you say are some of the main characteristics of the free child's manner of work ( it could be compared with the way a child works under the system of collective teaching .)

9) The Directress -- her appearance and manner , voice ~~etc~~, movement etc

10) What age-groups do you think ~~can~~ <sup>can</sup> and should be taken together -- and why.

II) The value and importance of exactness and order .

a) in the environment

b) in the children's work .

12 ) How the Directress acts as the "CONTROL OF ERROR "

13) With children all working <sup>K</sup> individually how do you manage to know how far each ~~child~~ child has gone in his work . Any practical suggestions for keeping a check on <sup>(individual)</sup> their progress ?

14) From your experience, what would you think should be the child's general all round attainment by his seventh birthday. ( this includes character as well as work )

15) Any Special Problems . ?

e.g. The child who seems to want to work at only one subject .

2 9 The child who does n't show any inclination to work at all .

( and <sup>any</sup> others )

16) What would you consider the most important elements in an ideal Montessori training Course for teachers .

17) Are there any elementary Arithmetic books , or Stories for Reading , or History or Geography books which you have found useful : and how do you use them .

18) Have you ever taught a <sup>(it)</sup> foreign language in a Montessori Class --  
If so how?