



# The Montessori OBSERVER

Techniques

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Tutor showing fraction concept to child using specially designed low-tech Montessori materials for in-home tutoring through Trust Tutoring.

## Trust Tutoring Offers Child-first Alternative

Since 1992, *Trust Tutoring* (TT) has been adapting Montessori teaching technology to provide an innovative alternative to formal conventional education. It uses daily logs, special evaluation testing, low-tech Montessori materials and individualized instruction to help children of all ages learn at home according to their specific needs and interests. In 2002, this tutoring program gained approval in the state of Virginia to serve poor families under the national "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act. Unfortunately, the nearby jurisdictions of Washington, DC and Maryland rejected this unconventional tutoring approach under the same NCLB Act.

Lee Havis, TT director, believes the rejecting jurisdictions oppose any educational alternatives that differ from their curriculum-first educational philosophy. Havis says, "In Maryland, the TT program was rejected even though it met all objective criteria at the level "clear and complete" or "superior". Meeting with state officials, I realized their opposition was due to a firm philosophical commitment against children learning in a natural sequential manner."

Havis describes the curriculum-first philosophy as imposing a curriculum of predetermined subject matter on children without regard to their level of skill or ability. He says, "For example, this approach requires teachers to give a third-grade curriculum and instruction to a third-grade child who can't even do first grade level reading. Regrettably, this approach especially frustrates low-achieving students who most need help in learning. By contrast, *Trust Tutoring* has a child-first approach that first assesses each child, then directing instruction to that particular level."

The national NCLB law was designed precisely to overcome and remedy the failure of government school systems in meeting the learning needs of low-achieving students. Havis says, "It is sadly ironic that this law allows these school systems to use NCLB funds designed to overcome their failures with low-achieving students to actually promote and propagate these failures instead."

Further information about the Trust Tutoring program, contact: Lee Havis, 301-589-0733; web page: <http://trusttutoring.com>

## Eradicating Child Labor through Education

In 2005, the Society completed a study of how the United States Department of Labor (DOL) is using some \$350 million designed to eradicate abusive child labor through education. This study involved the Society submitting applications for funding its unique *Character Teaching* (CT) project for funding through an "educational initiative" grant from DOL to operate in the Philippines, Brazil, Central America and Ecuador. The CT project adapts Montessori teaching technology focusing specifically on development of positive normal character development to overcome conditions of severe poverty and abusive child labor

The study compared the scores obtained by the IMS applications that failed with those that actually won, examining especially their basic approach, format, content and philosophy. Based on this study, Lee Havis, IMS executive director, concluded that the DOL limits funding to conventional education only, viewing poverty as the essential cause of child labor.

The DOL grants generally revolve around paying poor parents to send their children to conventional formal schooling, measuring success by such criteria as how many poor children a project can move from the streets to the classroom in a certain period of time. Havis says, "Whatever short-term benefit this paid school attendance may bring about while running will likely disappear entirely after the funding is gone".

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

## Montessori Workshop

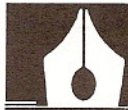
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For full cost and registration details, contact: IMS, 8115 Fenton St. #304, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127. Email to — [havis@erols.com](mailto:havis@erols.com)



# Techniques

by Lee Havis

*To think and wish is not enough. It is action which counts."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.* p. 133

In Montessori teaching, techniques are the most basic elemental units of physical action you can take with children to control the environment, not the child. The 2003 IMS technology identifies precisely 10 such techniques, which you can only use effectively in its comprehensive form involving protocols, lesson presentations and safe words. This technology is a set of precise tools for being committed to laws of nature — a way of being that you can closely approximate by following twenty specific protocols.

## Protocols

*"...contextual controls to guide the effective use of techniques in conducting lesson presentations with children."*

**Lee Havis**

from *GMT*, p.3

Protocols provide a contextual control of error for Montessori teaching, helping you moderate how to use techniques for achieving their intended results in each situation. For example, the key protocol *well-being of the total environment* directs you to set priorities for action depending on the impact it makes on the overall group situation. It is therefore best to first choose techniques that involve very little movement, such as simple basic *eye contact*.

## Eye Contact

*"...teacher and child looking at each other in eyes. Implies no negative judgmental expression"*

**Lee Havis**

from *GMT*, p.2

This technique comports quite well with such key protocols as *least amount of adult involvement* and *well-being of the total environment*. A simple *eye contact* lesson presentation is the lightest stand-alone interaction you can take with children, perhaps involving nothing more than a quick glance with a child from a remote corner of the environment. If more is needed, you can certainly combine eye contact with proximity, to achieve a slightly heavier type of interaction with children.

## Proximity

*"...teacher moving physically closer or further away in relation to location of some misbehavior scenario..."*

**Lee Havis**

from *GMT*, p.3

The technique *proximity* is usually the first physical action you take to engage in

resolving misbehavior; i.e., walking in the direction of the problem situation. Following the *least amount* protocol, you usually stop when the child you are approaching looks up for eye contact. In power struggle situations, you can use a type of *reverse proximity* by simply backing away from a child, which is sometimes necessary to control the detrimental influence of your personality. When proximity is not heavy or strong enough, you may then need to use the technique *distraction*.

## Distraction

*"If there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him...Often a question will serve, such as 'How are you, Johnny? Come with me, I have something for you to do.'"*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 254

Applying *distraction* is a matter of getting a child's attention through some type of interruption. Quite often, you can do this by holding an object that the child is mishandling in some misbehavior scenario. When the child looks up, you then let go of the object and complete the interaction by using a *clear direction* phrase; e.g., "Come over here. Let me show you something."

## Clear Direction

*"...teacher telling child to do something..."*

**Lee Havis**

from *GMT*, p 1

The *clear direction* technique is a relatively heavy tool, most often using such safe word phrases as "come over here" or "take my hand". Without these safe word phrases, it is sometimes quite difficult to effectively use this in a verbal manner without violating the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior*; e.g., "don't do that" or simply "no". Sometimes, just repeating a clear direction can bring about a very good result with children.

## Repetition

*"I know by experience that repetition is the natural way of learning"*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Voice of Dr. Montessori*, p.161

The technique *repetition* involves simply doing some other technique over again. This repetition helps to strengthen and reinforce the impact of the prior technique, hopefully to finally achieve its original desired effect. You must however moderate your use of this technique, by waiting patiently at times for some prior interaction to register or fully take effect in the situation.

## Patient Waiting

*"The teacher must be quiet and passive, waiting patiently and almost withdrawing herself from the scene, so as to efface her own personality and thus allow plenty of room for the child's spirit to expand."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p 240

*Patient waiting* combines very well with other more active techniques to resolve many types of problem situations with children. This technique activates a beneficial self-control, which at times is very important to remove the detrimental influence of your personality in a misbehavior scenario. When this type of very light technique is not sufficient, you may need a heavier technique, such as *reflective language*.

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

The *Montessori Observer* is mailed four times each year, in March, May, September and November, to Society members throughout the world. The purpose is to provide news and information about the Society's work in Montessori education, and to extend awareness of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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## Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

### Throwing Things

Five-year-old Brian is throwing things in anger, projecting a negative defiance that clearly reflects the detrimental influence of the teacher's *adult personality*. See *Observer*, November, 2005. The teacher here must certainly control both the detrimental influence of *adult personality* as well as the *physical objects*. However, she must first analyze the scenario to decide which is the primary detrimental influence and begin with that one first.

In this *moment of peril*, the teacher is keenly aware of her own detrimental presence in a power struggle relationship with Brian. However, it is usually a mistake to view the adult personality as the primary detrimental influence while there is some other element in the scenario to resolve.

The general rule of thumb is to consider the adult personality only as a secondary detrimental influence in complex scenarios involving either *other children* or *physical objects*. In these situations, the adult personality is most often dormant, reflecting a condition of abandonment. It is then easier to deal with either other children or physical objects.

If this scenario were a typical power struggle scenario, you would consider the adult personality as the primary detrimental influence. The best approach then would involve controlling your presence by practicing the techniques *patient waiting* and *eye contact*, making sure to avoid any provocative negative language, facial expression or proximity movement towards the child.

The current situation however, involves the adult personality as secondary. You must therefore consider the physical objects as the primary detrimental influence, resolving first this element in the environment.

The first step in controlling the physical objects is to move quickly towards Brian, to protect the physical objects around him from further harm. In the process, you must also control your personality as much as possible as well; e.g., holding your hands up if necessary to protect yourself from physical harm if Brian throws something at you; using no negative language or facial expression.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

## Techniques

Cont'd from Page 2, Col. 3

### Reflective Language

"...the teacher repeating back the same language given initially by the child..."

Lee Havis  
from GMT, p 3

This technique is most often a verbal expression, repeating the same words back to help children independently resolve the matter at issue for themselves. It is less dangerous than other verbal techniques because it adds nothing to the child's own expression; e.g., (child) "Where is my book?" (teacher) "Where is your book?". This can be particularly effective in resolving social conflict between children, keeping you strictly neutral and detached from the positions taken by each child in the argument. A still heavier type of verbal interaction is *questioning*, which you may need when other lighter techniques don't work or are not available.

### Questioning

"...teacher asking the child something ...often used to resolve fantasy misbehavior..."

Lee Havis  
from GMT, p.3

Asking a question e.g., "What are you doing?", can often stimulate constructive thinking in children, perhaps initiating some useful or necessary interaction to resolve some fantasy misbehavior. Usually, this questioning begins a verbal dialogue, which you can follow up with further questions, *reflective language* and *clear direction*, to gently return children to present-moment reality. When verbal conversation is still not sufficient, you may then have to interact physically with children using the heavy polishing tool of *cooperative touching*.

### Cooperative Touching

"...teacher doing something with child that requires some element of physical contact with child..."

Lee Havis  
from GMT, p.1

This technique usually involves the teacher holding some object with the child, to achieve a more precise movement than is likely to occur with the child's independent handling alone. This is particularly useful with very young children who lack coordination, control and precise skill in their hand and finger movements. It generally combines well with such clear direction safe word phrases as "take my hand" or "Let's..." as in "Let's do this together". When you can't find a suitable solution to some continuing problem through conscious effort in the present moment, you have the technique *Imagination-Previsioning (IP)*

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

## Messages to IMS

Jan. 1 2006  
Houston, TX

Lee:

I was at the 2005 Houston Workshop in September...The Directresses use proximity, eye contact, safe words, cooperative touching, and the others you mentioned at the workshop every day...I have very much worked on not using the word 'no' and to not correct the child. That was a hard one, but is becoming part of my personality now...I try to use the technology every day, and feel that I do. I of course make mistakes, and will use IP most nights when I have had a difficult situation...We work in the classroom for three hours or more at a time. Because the teachers use the technology, the work time is good. I see the normalized child often in our school. It is awesome..

Amber Stevenson

Participant in Houston, TX workshop (Sept., 2005)

Jan. 4 2006  
Burlington, WI

Listers,

...I noticed myself and made some changes. One thing I have changed that needed changing is 'giving clear direction'. I always said, would you...or could you...or why don't you...Now I make eye contact and say exactly what I want them to do in an even tone of voice. It has worked wonderfully. My assistant...has picked up on it because she saw it working...I have been direct and the children have been more confident in what they are doing.

Andrea Baas

Participant on IMS list

## Reflections

By Wendy Lieberman

Wendy is a student in the IMS course, practicing Montessori teaching and frequent participant on the IMS list. She reflects here on insights and experiments in controlling her personality by using the IMS technology

### Getting Eye Contact

My boys...avoid eye contact...I went over some videotape of me handling fantasy situations...and I felt sick. I wasn't looking at their eyes. I was looking at the objects they were working with. I guessed correctly that they weren't looking at me so I thought they wouldn't notice if I wasn't looking at them. I also felt rejected by their lack of eye contact when I look at them. It hurt to look at them and want them to look back and they didn't.

I worked on this yesterday. I tried to keep looking at my boys' eyes while they were in fantasy. The thing that I see is that they know when I am looking at them even when they aren't looking at me...There were no miraculous turning points yesterday with my new experiments. It is something that I am going to have to work on and coordinate with everything else that I am doing....



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## OBSERVER

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## Eradicating Child Labor

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Havis also notes that the DOL research into alternative education considers only changing the means of delivery of the same conventional education. He says, "This so-called 'research' misunderstands or totally denies the spiritual plane of development, the possibility that children may have their own perfect inborn guidance for positive character development. Instead, it either views the cause of child labor as 'poverty' or completely unknown."

By contrast, the CT project approach, which DOL rejects, views poverty and abusive child labor as both having the same essential cause; i.e., the defective psychological conditions of conventional education. Havis says, "The real solution to poverty and child labor is therefore to create new conditions for proper normal development of character as described by Dr. Montessori. Using the concept of "exchange of value" even poor working children can benefit from Character teaching through street tutoring alone. This approach closely follows Dr. Montessori's original experiments with poor children in the slums of Rome, Italy — circumstances especially favorable to discovery of the child's true nature."

Havis claims the CT project will bring about even more favorable results than Dr. Montessori's original experiments because the project will train and equip large numbers of teachers in a reliable comprehensive technology that was never available before. He says, "The CT project is receiving interest and support from the governments of several poor countries, which I hope will eventually lead to its successful operation."

For more information on Character Teaching, contact the Society at 301-589-1127 or email to [havis@erols.com](mailto:havis@erols.com).

## Moment of Peril

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1

As you approach closely, Brian will probably react by moving away at some point, stopping the throwing behavior to pay more attention to you. At this point, direct your attention elsewhere in the environment, looking to control other children who might have become involved by watching the action in this violent and dramatic scenario.

Moving away from Brian also helps further reduce the negative effects of your presence around Brian. Most likely, Brian will soon stop throwing things, eventually taking his attention off the teacher as well, allowing him to gradually return to more normal interaction in the environment.

## Resolving Fantasy

Six-year-old Gordon seems deeply absorbed into fantasy, drawing cartoon action figures, talking make-believe with other children and only lightly engaged with the most superficial types of physical life activity. When the teacher approaches with the question "What are you doing?", Gordon curtly avoids eye contact. He refuses any distraction to work, at times shouting 'no', often moving away to engage in further fantasy elsewhere. The teacher senses a power struggle she wishes to avoid, but also wants to avoid abandoning Gordon in the process.

What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, May, 2006

## Techniques

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

### Imagination-Previsioning (IP)

"...an intending Montessori teacher ...must keep her imagination alive...In her imagination she sees that single normalized type"

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.252

Dr. Montessori recognized the power and value of imagination, faith and inner preparation in applying her approach with children. The IP technique activates these ideas by having you imagine a problem situation with children, and then previsioning a solution using an alternative to what you did before. Later, you experiment with the new idea in the real-life situation with children, studying its practical effect to finally resolve the problem.

### Combining the Techniques

In practice, you must apply the techniques by combining them together in definable units of experimental interactions known as lesson presentations. At times, these interactions can be quite complex, involving a whole sequence of techniques over a considerable period of time. You will certainly refine and develop your skills as you work out the particular details of each situation through practical experience. Applying the related protocols, safe words and lesson presentations, you can use the techniques as part of a comprehensive technology to ultimately create the conditions that allow the child's true normalized nature to fully emerge.

**GMT** — *Glossary of Montessori Terms*, by Lee Havis, publ. IMS 2005. It provides a detailed definition of terms unique to the technical language of Montessori teaching. It will be included in the new Havis text entitled *Technology of Montessori Teaching*.