



The Montessori OBSERVER

Verbal
Techniques

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



Partially deaf and blind child building pink tower at the Baity Society School in Cairo, Egypt

Baity Society for Special Needs Montessori Teaching in Cairo, Egypt

The *Baity Society for Special Needs* was founded several years ago in Cairo, Egypt to provide a Montessori environment for at-risk children suffering from a wide range of physical, emotional, and mental problems, such as Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Autism, and other congenital anomalies. Directed by **Nabila Rafaat Wadie**, this new IMS recognized school serves about 25 special needs children, providing such activities as individual and group speech therapy, physical and self-help therapy, motor education, music and art.

The Baity Society believes strongly in the role of parents as part of an integrated support for helping each child overcome his unique social, physical, and mental limitations. The classroom approach emphasizes a very proactive process of adult step-wise involvement and support for the children according to their own particular needs and abilities. Baity speech therapist, **Sahar Mawardy**, states, "We have to introduce the world to them because they couldn't reach out for it by themselves."

With materials, a proactive presentation means to offer them in stages, moving from simple to more difficult, under close adult supervision. All instruction is given in the children's native Arabic language.

Presenting the pink tower, for example, the teacher begins with only 3-5 cubes of the entire 10-cube set, placing these on the

mat where the child starts to build the tower. Then, the teacher places the cubes on a small chair next to the mat, handing them to the child, one at a time. Next, the teacher places the cubes on the chair, allowing the child to get them by himself. Finally, the teacher places the cubes away from the mat, so that the child has to take them from that remote location to the mat.

For further information about the Baity Society Montessori for Children with Special Needs, contact: Nabila Rafaat Waide, Director, Baity Society, 17 Aboul Mahasen St. Roxy, Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt, Tel. 0105029281, nabila63@hotmail.com
www.baityrehab.com.

Montessori Workshops

Technology of Montessori Teaching for the Scientific Approach to Normal Being

The IMS workshop is a two-day weekend learning experience, featuring Lee Havis, IMS executive director, presenting the unique 2003 technology of Montessori teaching. This technology is precise practical knowledge for conducting the scientific approach with children that leads to true normal being as discovered by Dr. Montessori in 1907.

Workshops are scheduled according to local interest. Contact: IMS, tel. 301-589-1127; havis@imsmontessori.org

IMS Technology Field-testing Continues in Idaho

During summer, 2008, **Lee Havis** continued his consultation at *New Way Montessori School* (Meridian, ID), to study and improve the use of IMS technology being field-tested there. In June, he focused especially on slowing down adult movement to respect the *least amount* and *well-being* protocols. In addition, he examined the "talking over" disorder tactic as a heavy polishing application of the *distraction* technique in group fantasy situations. From August 11-23, Lee studied the practical problems of following such protocols as *basis of interest*, *no negative attention to misbehavior* and *least amount of adult involvement*.

Basis of Interest

The August consultation brought out how the *basis of interest* protocol guides you to search for the child's true interests, which may be well-hidden behind various types of dramatic outward behavior. Lee said, "Although a child always has some genuine interest at hand, you often have to look very hard to find evidence of it in small, seemingly unimportant details of outward behavior. For example, what the child is holding or touching is more important than what else he may be saying or doing in the situation. Also, sometimes a child's true interest may be more about what other children are doing, rather than the exercise or activity before him at the time."

"No Negative" Protocol

The August consultation also revealed that the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior* is often violated by talking about some off-topic fantasy issue, interest or emotional drama of children, rather than present moment reality. Lee said, "You can also violate this protocol by just remaining silent while interacting with children in a misbehavior situation. Then, your silence makes what you are doing with your hands more prominent and noticeable than necessary."

"Least Amount" Protocol

At the August consultation, Lee noticed that you can easily violate the protocol *least amount of adult involvement* by "hovering" around children after giving some misbehavior lesson presentation. He said, "Following the *least amount* protocol means to

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3



VERBAL TECHNIQUES

by Lee Havis

"Since children are so eager to learn and so burning with love, an adult should carefully weigh all the words he speaks before them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.2

Talking to children is a necessary part of Montessori teaching, which presents many problems due to our built-in habits of conventional language usage from childhood. The IMS technology, however, provides several useful verbal techniques to help you resolve these problems in harmony with laws of nature. Controlling your language is especially important with young children who are absorbing their basic structure of language by listening to what you say to them.

Absorbing Language

"It is the child who 'absorbs' language. The reality of this absorption is something deep and puzzling."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.110

From birth to about age six, children are absorbing language from others in a spontaneous, effortless manner. By the age of two, this process has already brought about basic speaking language, which, by age six, becomes fixed and permanent in the child's personality for life. Before age six, however, the child is still absorbing language in a very fluid manner, which can change according to the particular conditions of the environment. For example, children entering the Montessori environment will change their conventional language and thoughts to reflect the distinctive qualities of true normal being.

Thoughts

"...thoughts...have been taken...and fixed ...in a new language."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice of Montessori*, p.271-72

In a conventional context, children acquire language that reflects the thoughts and prejudices of their surrounding popular culture. In the Montessori environment, however, children acquire a new language of thoughts and meaning that follow the perfect inner guidance of nature. Creating the conditions for this to occur requires a careful restraint of your ordinary language expression through a type of indirect teaching.

Indirect Teaching

"However much you speak and speak and speak, you accomplish nothing, because the child cannot take directly, but only indirectly."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Reconstruction in Ed.*, p.10

In Montessori teaching, your verbal interaction with children aims to distract their attention away from your imperfect verbal expression, focusing them instead on the consistent order of objects in the environment. This type of indirect teaching frees children to explore the well-ordered objects you provide for their self-directed activity. Concentrating on these objects, young children then become normalized to ultimately reflect such normal outward qualities as self-discipline, independence, love of order, and perfect harmony with others.

Concentrating on Objects

"Children find it very hard to concentrate on spoken words, but they have no difficulty concentrating on objects..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Reconstruction in Ed.*, p.10

Using the verbal techniques of IMS technology, you can effectively reduce the distracting influence of what you say to children, allowing them to normalize by concentrating on objects. Once normalized, the children function on their own so well that you won't need to use the verbal techniques so carefully as before. Then, you can mostly just observe the children from a distance as a silent, passive nobody.

Before normalization, however, you will most often be using verbal techniques to resolve misbehavior in your various interactions with children. In addition, you will need to use verbal techniques for giving lesson presentations with materials to achieve the best instruction possible with each piece of work.

Best Instruction

"The best instruction is that which uses the least words sufficient for the task. The fewer the words, the more perfect will be the lesson."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.106

Following the protocols *least amount of adult involvement* and *emphasize main point* — isolate variable, you must still occasionally talk to children while showing them what to do with the various self-teaching materials. However, the aim of this talking is to focus the child's attention on what you are doing with your hands, not on what you are actually saying at the time. The best instruction, therefore, emphasizes just a few key words, such as "Watch" and "Would you like to do it?" Unfortunately, this brief verbal prompting is not always possible, for example, when children are asking for your specific help.

Asking for Help

"Some children ask an adult for help...What seems to be an eager curiosity is in reality a means of keeping a person whom they need for support near at hand."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 161-62

Children asking for help usually require a verbal reply, which you must give as briefly and directly as possible. While talking, try to keep eye contact with the child, following the protocol *talk only after eye contact*. Also, follow the protocol enhance independence by directing your remarks to help children achieve their own self-directed solution to the problem at hand. Quite often, the best response is then to repeat back the child's own statement or question, applying the verbal technique *reflective language*.

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
November
2008 Observer
featuring
Scientific Education

ISSN 0889-5643

The Montessori Observer

Published by
INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
Tel. (301) 589-1127
havis@imsmontessori.org

Worldwide Web:
<http://imsmontessori.org>

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.

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.

IMS ADVISORY BOARD

Elizabeth Hainstock, Educator, Author
John Bradshaw, Author, Public Speaker
Donald E. Seymour, Author, businessman

SUBSCRIPTION

Subscription to this Observer publication may be obtained by requesting Society membership, which is open to all individuals for a \$30 annual fee. Associate schools, \$35 annual fee. Society members also receive a subscription to the Montessori News and other membership benefits.

IMS ON THE INTERNET

An on-line IMS discussion group, intmonsoc (International Montessori Society) is available for anyone to join at no charge.

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

Copyright © IMS, 2008

Moment of Peril

by Wendy Lieberman

Talking Over Disorder

The teacher has been seeking to solve misbehavior during group transition times by 'talking over' the children's disorder. (See *Observer*, May, 2008). However, she thinks she is making some mistakes with this tactic, since the children continue in fantasy and inattention.

In this *moment of peril*, the teacher aims to use the 'talking over' tactic to keep children focused on the present moment order of the environment. However, she is not using it correctly, because her talking is either too soft for all to hear, and/or off-topic from the present moment situation, violating the protocol *basis of interest*. Correcting these mistakes, she will find that this tactic is very effective for creating order during such transition times as classroom clean-up, gathering together in a group, lining-up to come inside, lunch, and settling down for naptime.

The teacher can easily correct the "too soft" mistake by simply raising her voice enough to drown out the distracting noise. However, she must also correct the off-topic problem as well by focusing her talking more specifically on the issues at hand. For example, when a child approaches her during transition to tell his story about 'worms', she must ignore this completely, giving full attention to the present moment situation. She might, therefore, give a *clear direction* to the distracting child to sit down, stand in line, or otherwise fit into the needful activity of the moment.

The classroom clean-up transition is a logical time for 'talking over' disorder. Usually, this transition begins by giving one child a clear direction to start putting things away to clean up the room. Then, the teacher reinforces this activity by 'talking over' any disorder that may arise in the process. For example, using a loud voice, she says, "Bill is pushing in chairs. He is doing a really good job getting all the chairs pushed in."

'Talking over' helps all children stay involved in the present-moment clean-up activity, even though some may be waiting and watching others. The teacher may be near these waiting children while she is still talking about what the active children are doing. If the waiting children become disorderly, she can then easily touch them gently while still talking about the ongoing work of others. In this way, she keeps all the children engaged and attentive to the present-moment activity.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

Verbal Techniques

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Reflective Language

"Technique involving the teacher repeating back the same language initiated by the child; e.g., (child) 'Where is my book?' (teacher) 'Where is your book?'"

Lee Havis

Glossary of Montessori Terms (GMT)

Reflective language especially helps avoid dependency with children by keeping your comments as objective and impersonal as possible. The idea here is to simply repeat the child's question back without giving any unnecessary answer, advice, or other personal opinion in the process. This type of reflective response allows children to see the problem from a new perspective, which, many times, is enough to help them solve the problem on their own without further involvement from you. However, if this light-polishing reflective language is not enough, you may wish to use the verbal technique, *clear direction*.

Clear Direction

"Technique involving telling child to do something; e.g., 'Take my hand'."

Lee Havis

Glossary of Montessori Terms (GMT)

Clear direction draws the child's attention to the order of present-moment reality by gently guiding the child to do what is suitable at that particular time. This technique is especially important for young children who can easily become confused or frustrated by questions or lengthy explanations. Clear direction also combines quite well with various non-verbal techniques, such as *distraction*, *eye contact*, and *patient waiting* to resolve many common types of misbehavior in a very effective manner. If clear direction is too light or impractical, you can still use the technique *questioning* as well.

Questioning

"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 to show you to do.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori

From *Absorbent Mind*, p.254

Questioning is especially effective in resolving deep or complex issues of fantasy attachment in children. It also helps resolve confusion or uncertainty about whether a child's particular activity is fantasy or real work. In this situation, for example, you simply approach the child to politely ask, "What are you doing?". If the child responds with some fantasy statement or hostile defensiveness, you can question further, or simply repeat the child's answer back, using *reflective language*. If the child's activity is clearly fantasy in nature, you can then use the *clear direction* technique to offer some reality-based present-moment activity.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

Reflections

By Valerie James

Valerie is assistant to Wendy Lieberman, program director at New Way Montessori School (Meridian, ID). Her comments are a reprint of an entry she recently made on the IMS discussion list, *intmontsoc*.

Tia's Testing

When I arrived on Monday, Tia was the only student...I told Wendy that I felt confident enough to stay alone while she ran errands...Tia watched Wendy walk through the doorway, looked at me and then walked over to the sandbox and climbed into the water sitting there and started to stomp as she looked at me again. I took it as a testing of my control of the environment, so I told Tia to stand on the grass – she continued to stomp and splash. I told her to climb out. Still, she stomped in the water. I consciously listened to myself, ensuring I sounded calm, firm, but gentle.

Tia didn't respond, but looked at me again while standing in the water. I placed my hand around her back and guided her out of the sandbox while talking to her about keeping

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

Messages to IMS

August, 2008
Knoxville, TN

Dear Mr. Havis,

I am working my way through your CD and workbook set on creating the new education. (Danbury, CT workshop, 2006) It is fascinating and certainly an answer to every Montessori teacher's questions about the integrity of their classroom...I have already been able to use the information in talking to parents who almost always ask, upon visiting the school, 'How do you handle discipline?' Your carefully articulated methods are an answer to a long time dilemma of exactly how to respond to this question.

Mary K. Smith

Director, Nature's Way Montessori School

August, 2008
Arcadia, CA

IMS list:

I've been using the clean up technique (IMS technology, focusing on clear direction and distraction) with my almost 4 year old from the day I learned about it. Now I claim victory!!!! He has started to clean up after playing by himself with a little motivation from my side...Previously, I had to literally force or even threaten him to clean up. With the technique up in my sleeves, I have much more calm and cool attitude towards the issue and my son has 'got' the enthusiasm now to do it and put back everything in its OWN place. He loves doing that now and corrects his sister when she is not putting things in its place. He has been doing this for the past 2 weeks but it was too good to be true for me to claim victory. But, now I think looking at his enthusiasm, I can say I've passed that test.

Suja Saikumar

Student, IMS Montessori course

Return Service Requested

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

OBSERVER

The Montessori



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 3875
Silver Spring, MD

Verbal Techniques

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

Although the IMS technology does guide you in using the techniques in many situations, it is not a rigid formula to use without making suitable judgments to fit the unique conditions of present-moment reality. Fortunately, the technology includes a series of 'safe words' to help guide your judgment in this process as well.

Safe Words

"Beware of the tendency to say, 'Don't do this' 'You mustn't do that.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori

From *Ed. For a New World.*, p.36-37

The safe words of IMS technology provide positive alternatives to negative language which is so common and automatic in dealing with misbehavior. Using safe words, therefore, helps you follow more closely the important protocol no negative attention to misbehavior. For example, instead of impulsively shouting 'no' and 'don't' to a child acting in an aggressive or violent manner, use a clear direction safe word phrase instead, such as "Come over here. Let me show you something."

Closely following the protocols and safe words while using the verbal techniques clear direction, reflective language, and questioning will control your language quite well, especially as you regularly practice them with children. Then, they can become an unconscious, automatic part of your whole way of being that ultimately allows the child's true nature to fully emerge in reality.

Moment of Peril

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1

During naptime, your 'talking over' must be with a quiet voice, following the protocol model good behavior. However, you may still need to be very active with children, approaching and withdrawing from them as needed to give clear direction for calm and quiet behavior. In this process, you are using repetition, eye contact, and gentle touching to keep the children's attention on being quiet and still.

Over time, all the children will come to understand and cooperate in the purpose of the transitions to bring about order in the environment. Properly done, 'talking over' disorder can be an important part of this process.

Talking to Parents

4-year-old Clancy consistently hits, pushes, and scratches other children, even though the teacher has attempted to keep him in reality and protect the other children for many months. She now believes that Clancy's home environment is contributing to his destructive behavior, since his mother, Kim, recently said she punishes Clancy at home on a regular basis. The teacher wants to help Kim change her behavior with Clancy at home to follow more closely such protocols as no negative attention to misbehavior. However, she is unsure how to approach Kim to achieve a positive result. What to do? *Answer in Observer, November, 2008*

Marketplace

Positions and Placements

Montessori teachers: Palm Harbor Montessori Academy (Palm Harbor, FL). 250 students, ages 1-year to 8th grade. Competitive salary with benefits. Fax or e-mail resume and letter of interest: Christine Varkas, Palm Harbor Montessori Academy, 2355 Nebraska Ave., Palm Harbor, FL 34683, (727) 786-1854; Fax: (727) 786-5160; www.floridamontessori.com, cvarkas@gate.net

Reflections

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

her shoes dry. I showed her a bucket and shovel she could use and a spot outside of the sand-box where she could kneel. I knelt next to her and filled a different bucket. She tried a few more times to climb into the watery sandbox, but I blocked her access and used distraction and repetition to keep her focused on filling her bucket with sand.

It may sound like a small issue, but it was a tremendous learning situation for me. I had assumed when Wendy left that Tia would continue filling her bucket and so I was surprised, at the time, that she tested me. I kept my interaction positive and had to try several different techniques, putting into practice what I have learned, observed, and discussed with both Lee and Wendy. I infrequently engage with the children, unless there's a potential for physical injury or a child gives me a lot of eye contact. This experience gives me more confidence to interact with the children.

IMS Technology in Idaho

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

move in and out quickly with children, backing away as soon as possible to study the results of your specific interaction. 'Hovering' conveys a lack of trust and clarity about what you are doing with children, and often brings about unnecessary power struggles and dependency in children."

Lee plans to conduct further consultation in Fall, 2008, to continue his study of the practical use of IMS technology with children. He is using this research to refine his presentation of this technology in a forthcoming book on the subject.