



The Montessori OBSERVER

Proximity

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

2013 IMS Workshop Planning

The IMS workshop "Creating the New Education" is an important means for training Montessori teachers and educators because it presents highly practical 'technology' to assure the effective application of this approach. Currently, IMS workshop planning is underway in Pakistan, Australia, and India. In Pakistan, **Samina Shahzad** is coordinating efforts for a workshop in the Islamabad region. Samina is Mentor, Early Years, at *Froebel's International School - Rawalpindi Campus* Tel. 0333 5124710. Contact to support her efforts at: earlyyears.rwp@froebels.edu.pk **Saeed Shahab** (Lahore) and others are also helping to make this workshop a reality in the near future.

In Australia, IMS workshop planning is going forward in Perth, WA, and Newcastle, NSW (near Sydney). In Newcastle, **Cari Sheedy**, director of Newcastle Montessori 0-3 program, is organizing interest there due to her attendance at an IMS workshop held in Sydney in 2001. She states, "I...still credit it as one of the most inspiring workshops I have attended." To follow up with Cari, contact her at: newmon03@bigpond.com and <http://newcastlemontessori03.wordpress.com/>

In Perth, WA, Australia, **Anita Endersby**, owner and director of *Little Things Montessori School*, is leading the effort for an IMS workshop in that area.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col 2

Montessori to the Victims of War

Marie Gonzales, a Montessori teacher in Indonesia, reports some very successful experiences using the IMS technology with children. After attending the IMS workshop in Jakarta (2010), she returned to an Indonesian village to teach children in a world relief program targeted for refugee families from war in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Sudan. She reports that "...working with children who are victims of war, I found out for myself what Montessori is all about. For me, I think the greatest challenge that any teacher could face is creating something which is not there at all. From the grassroots level, this is what I had to do because, at first, there was no prepared environment, no materials. I had to create it all just from what was in the natural surroundings."

Despite the lack of physical resources, Marie used her Montessori teaching skills in some inventive way to get around this obstacle. She states, "...because I was aware of the concept and the principles involved in Montessori teaching, the lack of ordinary resources and materials didn't stop me. I used the workshop technology with children who had no experience with Montessori at all. For sensorial, we would pick different stones and classify them by 'rough' and 'smooth.' For hot and cold, I let them feel my cup of coffee, and

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col 3



Practical life "food preparation" activity with children at the Budding Babies Montessori Kindergarten (Pune, India)

Budding Babies in Pune, India

Budding Babies, a Montessori Day-care & Kindergarten, was established in Pune, India by **Anita Avinash** in 2010. Since then, Anita has become known as a leader of Montessori education in her region of India close to the major city of Mumbai. In February, 2013, *Budding Babies* became recognized by IMS as a Montessori school.

Anita grew up in Delhi, and later graduated from Mumbai University to enter a career in Human Resources and Social Responsibility in Pune. After observing the excellent development of her own daughter in a Montessori kindergarten in 2006, she decided to obtain training in the field and start her own school.

Anita located the school in her local neighborhood, converting a residential house to the particular needs of a Montessori environment for young children. The school enrolls children as young as 1 ½ years of age, focusing on positive values of respect, response, and reciprocity towards children to foster their true natural development. Due to the school's rapidly increasing enrollment, Anita hired and trained another teacher to supervise the children with her.

Anita believes in developing a close working relationship with parents. So, she holds frequent counseling sessions to show them how to conduct Montessori teaching to resolve many of their practical problems with children at home. Anita attributes the great progress of children at school to this close cooperation with parents.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col 2



Marie Gonzales with child in Indonesia.



Proximity

by Lee Havis

"The teacher must be able to make prudent observations, to assist the child by going up to, or withdrawing from him, and by speaking or keeping silent in accordance with his needs."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.150

Montessori teaching is not entirely passive in its function to "observe" rather than "teach" children. In fact, there are times you must move around children quite actively to prepare the environment to support their true normal, self-directed development.

The IMS technology provides an elegant scientific means for moving around children in a very precise, effective manner by offering a set of ten specific techniques, one of which is called *proximity*. This technique has you moving towards or away from children to either increase or reduce the impact of your physical presence in the environment. Using this technique is logically the first action you take when you move from your ordinary position as quiet spectator of the children's activity.

Quiet Spectator

"...it is the environment itself which helps to make the children continuously better...the teacher...can remain a quiet spectator of all the little mistakes that occur around her."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *The Child*, p.12-13

Ideally, you are located in a single stationary position outside the children's activity area because, from here, as a quiet spectator, you can quickly notice and respond to any situation that requires your attention. In addition, you can also interact with children to gently control the environment, such as by using the *eye contact* technique with children who look up at you from time to time. When this eye contact is inadequate, however, you must experiment with heavier types of interaction, such as by approaching a misbehavior scenario using the technique *proximity*.

Experiment

"...the teacher must not limit her actions to observation, but must proceed to experiment...the lesson corresponds with an experiment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Montessori Method*, p.107

Montessori teaching is essentially a process of conducting experiments to remove detrimental influences in the environment. In practice, this involves interacting with physical objects, other children, and the adult personality around a central 'hub' child in question. In this interaction, the technique *proximity* frequently couples quite well with other techniques to form various experiments, known as lesson presentations.

In conducting these lesson presentations, your actions must closely follow laws of nature to assure a successful final outcome. However, since these laws are too vast and intangible to follow directly, the IMS technology provides a set of 20 protocols to closely approximate them in practice to serve as their functional

equivalent. Following these protocols, therefore, will assure that your intervention with children is consistently supporting their true normal development.

Intervening

"...the teacher forms part of the environment, and in fact he intervenes by helping this natural process."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.39

The most important protocol is known as *well-being of the total environment* which teaches you to always give priority attention to resolve the most serious problem first. For example, intervene first with misbehavior that threatens physical harm to children, before dealing with low priority issues, such as quiet fantasy. The 20 protocols help moderate and control your intervention in other ways as well. In misbehavior situations, for example, your actions must control the environment around the 'hub' child by interrupting the disturbing activity involved.

Interrupt Misbehavior

"If there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him...break the flow of disturbing activity."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.254

Montessori teaching views resolving misbehavior as a process of interrupting it in a series of gradual steps. For example, experiment first with light techniques, such as *eye contact* and *patient waiting*, before using *proximity* and other heavier techniques. In these experimental interactions, your judgment must be constantly guided by the various protocols of the technology.

Judgment of Teacher

"The details must be left to the judgment of the teacher...It is for her to judge whether it is better for her to raise her voice amid the general hubbub, or to whisper to a few children."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.245

Montessori teaching is a constant process of answering the question "What do I do now?" Happily, the IMS technology provides useful tools and guidance for answering this question in the best way possible in each situation. For example, if *eye contact* and *patient waiting* are too light, try the slightly heavier technique *proximity* by approaching the misbehavior situation. If further weight is still needed, try getting the child's attention with the *distraction* technique. Here, the action is to touch or hold an object in the child's hand until the child reacts in some way to your presence.

Once you have the child's attention, apply a *clear direction* to call the child

to some positive activity elsewhere in the environment. The various protocols, such as *don't control child* and *no negative attention to misbehavior*, guide you in the practical application of conducting all these experimental interactions.

Practical Application

"Even an intelligent teacher who has understood the principles finds it very difficult to put into practice...it is her duty to distinguish between acts which should be prevented and those which should be observed."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.50-51

In 2003, the IMS technology arose to meet the long-standing need for reliable and precise guidance in the practical application of Montessori teaching. Now,

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col 2

**Look for the
May, 2013
Observer
featuring
Reflective Language**

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

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@yahogroups.com, and then follow instructions to request placement on the list.

Copyright © IMS, 2013

Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Group Fantasy

The teacher here is struggling with group fantasy, which she is not fully confronting due to fear of causing a power struggle reaction in the children. (See *Observer*, November, 2012).

In this 'moment of peril,' the teacher is struggling to control her bi-polar personality from projecting either negativity or abandonment on children. For example, she abandons children when she does nothing to interfere with their fantasy. On the other hand, she projects negativity on the children if she intervenes to stop the fantasy by controlling or repressing the children.

Analyzing this problem, the main obstacle is the adult personality, which you must carefully control by using the IMS technology in such a way that will avoid projecting either abandonment or negativity. The basic idea here is to intervene in a distracting, yet friendly way in gradual steps. For example, first come close, using just the technique *proximity*. Then, just stand close by, waiting and watching, using the technique *patient waiting*. Use the technique *eye contact* as often as possible, and, if necessary the distraction technique to get the child's attention by touching or holding some object being mishandled at the time.

Following the protocol *least amount of adult involvement*, however, use only the lightest possible techniques at all times. If verbal expression becomes necessary use only *reflective language* and *questioning*, if possible, such as asking, "What are you doing?" Before speaking, however, follow the protocol *eye contact before talking*. While speaking, follow the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior* by avoiding any judgment about their behavior, and using such negative words "No" and "Don't."

If the fantasy behavior becomes dangerous or physically harmful, you may also give a *clear direction* to put the materials away back on the shelf. In this way, using variable, friendly interaction with a group fantasy situation will gradually lead children back to present-moment reality in the environment without provoking any negative power struggle reaction in the process.

Dependency vs Interest

Three year old Alex typically provokes an older three-year-old child Sarah by taking her work, hiding it behind his back, and nudging her off the chair. When he looks up at me, I go over and, using *distraction* and *clear direction*, take him to introduce another piece of work. When I invite him to take over the work, however, he says "No" and wants me to stay to do the whole lesson. Then, when that is done, he asks me to show something else. If I don't give him

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

PROXIMITY

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

using specific techniques and protocols, anyone can conduct quite effective experiments to bring about excellent results. One important protocol, *least amount of adult involvement*, functions closely with the *well-being* protocol to keep your actions in harmony with laws of nature in virtually every situation you encounter with children.

Least Amount of Involvement

"The adult must give and do what is necessary for the child to act for himself...if he does less then is necessary, the child cannot act meaningfully, and if he does more than is necessary, he imposes himself on the child, extinguishing his active impulses."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Child in Family*, p.72

The *least amount* protocol teaches you to use only the lightest possible interaction with children. For example, suppose you are walking towards a misbehavior scenario (*proximity*), and one child looks up at you for eye contact. Following the *least amount* protocol, you must stop walking to apply only the lighter *eye contact* technique. To keep approaching in this situation would likely provoke a power struggle, leading to further disruptive behavior. Applying these various protocols, therefore, helps avoid making many common mistakes as you move around and interact with children.

Avoiding Mistakes

"When adults interfere, they nearly always make mistakes...Apart from exceptional cases; we ought to leave such problems to the children."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education for a New World*, p.88

Impatient teachers typically react to the children's rude, loud or angry social conflict by moving around and getting too involved. Unfortunately, intervening in this way is usually a serious mistake because it adds the detrimental presence of the adult personality. Avoid these mistakes of excessive movement, therefore, by staying far away from any social conflict situations. Left alone, children typically resolve these problems on their own without any serious physical harm to any child involved.

Any time your personality does become a detrimental presence with children, you must reduce its impact, such as by applying the technique *proximity* in reverse, moving back from the disturbing situation. By limiting the teacher's activity in this way, you are actually achieving greater control of the adult personality.

Teacher's Activity

"The teacher...removes the obstacle that is created by his own activity and authority."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.111

In every misbehavior scenario, the adult personality is detrimental to some extent, either through abandonment or negativity. For example, abandonment occurs by neglecting some child who is

seeking your attention. (This often occurs due to your giving too much attention to low-priority issues elsewhere in the environment) Negativity occurs by projecting any type of judgment or repression on children, such as if you show a facial expression of fear, anger, or disapproval.

Controlling the adult personality is especially difficult due to emotional reactions that come from unconscious habits of thought and repressed feelings from early childhood. The key to engaging these "inner" obstacles is to slow down your outward behavior to become more aware of your thoughts and feelings at that time. One good way to do this is by coupling your current actions with the technique *patient waiting*.

Patient Waiting

"...it is not so easy...to stand still and watch..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.272

Patient waiting is the technique of stopping all your outward physical activity so that, still and quiet, you can more objectively analyze and think through what is best to do at that moment. Sometimes, however, you can't stop your active outward behavior, such as with new, disorderly children who are not as yet prepared for the freedom of self-directed activity. Here, you must watch and direct the children using heavier techniques until they have sufficiently adjusted to the Montessori environment.

Watching and Directing

"A teacher of experience never has grave disorder in the class because before she draws aside to leave the children free, she watches and directs them for some time...eliminating their uncontrolled movements."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.245

Montessori teaching to control the environment is like a polishing process, using techniques in a variable manner, from heavy to light, as the children gradually become calm and orderly in their outward behavior.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

Montessori for War Victims

Cont'd from Page 1, Col. 1

compare it with a cup of cold water. Everyone had fun and the children took turns."

"I showed them how to pick up objects to develop fine motor skills in their tiny hands. Jumping and moving under my supervision, there was gross motor development, so that I could eventually just watch the children. Finally, I was giving less adult supervision as the children participated more on their own.

...Everyone came to love the experience as I continued to follow the technology I learned in the workshop. These are just some of the simple things I experienced with these children, which became an endless joy as we moved from one event to the next."

Return Service Requested

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



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

Proximity

Con't. from Page 3, Col. 3

During the initial stage 1, Beginning Conditions, of this polishing process, you are typically using heavy polishing actions by combining *proximity* with such techniques as *clear direction*, *distraction*, and *cooperative touching*.

During stage 2, Scanning and Supervision, your polishing becomes lighter as the children show more peaceful, orderly behavior. Now, you can more safely limit your watching and directing from a remote stationary position in the environment. From here, you will typically be using light polishing means, such as *proximity* with the techniques *patient waiting* and *eye contact*. However, you will also be using *proximity* to approach children to show them the proper use of materials from the shelf.

Approaching the Child

"A teacher makes an almost timid attempt to approach the child whom she believes is ready to learn the lesson."

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

As misbehavior becomes gradually less and less, children naturally show more interest in working with materials in a serious, concentrated manner. Now, they sometimes ask you for a lesson presentation to show them exactly how to use a particular piece of work. For these lessons with materials, either *Sensorial Introduction* or *Nomenclature*, you will be using the technique *proximity* to approach the child to show each particular piece of work.

Ultimately, even these occasional lesson presentations with materials become less frequent as the children learn directly from each other and the materials themselves. Then, the *proximity* technique will become virtually unnecessary at all since the children are now functioning in the final stage 3 state of true normal development.

Budding Babies

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Anita is expanding the outreach of her school through teacher training among parents and educators in the area. She has also recently expressed interest to support the scheduling of an IMS workshop training, 'Creating the New Education,' in Pune in the future.

For further information, contact: Anita Avinash, Director/Owner, Budding Babies Montessori Kindergarten, D-45 Ozone Villas Nr. Wagheshwar Temple Wagholi, Pune MH 412207 India +91-9766550178 <http://www.budding-babies.co.in/>

Moment of Peril

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1

another lesson, he eventually returns to Sarah to begin annoying her as before. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, May, 2013

2013 WORKSHOPS

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

Contact her at: Tel. 08 9445 7755
www.littlethingsmontessori.com.au

In Chennai, India, **Ishita B.**, director of the *Disneykidz Play School*, is coordinating interest for an IMS workshop in this area of south India. Contact Ishita: disneykidz@yahoo.com, Tel: 09962672761.

Messages to IMS

January, 2013
Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Lee,

... i already feel that IMS guidance would be very helpful in practicing the TRUE MONTESSORI method. I have reviewed many Montessori associations ... IMS is the only one i can appreciate on the basis of simplicity and practicality in my region. I hope we can work on the same lines.

Regards,
Nida Jamal.

January 2013
Indonesia

Lee:

...Your technology for scientific Montessori teaching is an inspiration I do need to listen to your CDs again to refresh myself.

Darin Bicknell

January 2013
Aurora, OH

Dear Montessori News,

I was given your newsletter and was so impressed with the story "Hope and Change in the USA". I could not agree more with the notion that education rights need to be in the control of the parents hands and that these rights are under serious threat! Thank you for your enlightening article - it is so good to see that others see what is happening and are working to restore our educational freedoms!

Rita Scott

February 2013
Lynchburg, VA

To Lee,

Listening to your (Danbury audio) CDs on repeat in my car. Brilliant!

Angela Edgerton, parent

February 2013
Massachusetts

Dear Lee,

I carefully read every post of yours, and I'm in awe of your knowledge. I live in a "special needs world" as one of the moderators of the largest parental network for children on the autistic spectrum in our state. So many of these children are horribly mistreated and ostracized by the public school system, and regularly put in isolation. I am so fortunate to have my son in Montessori system, where he is fully integrated with typical peers throughout the day as he works on his individualized and self-paced curriculum.

Vera Alexander