



The Montessori

From the Shelf

OBSERVER

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Recognizing the "Montessori Certificate"

Ever since Montessori education entered into the popular culture, government and private business interests have sought to monopolize and control the hiring of teachers based on such means as recognizing some particular brand of "Montessori certificate". In the State of Maryland, for example, this issue arose when legislation (HB 1002) was recently proposed to do just that.

The legislation was prompted by a business cartel in the Montessori community, seeking government recognition for their brand of "Montessori certificate" to exclude competition from other certificates in the hiring of teachers for government-run "Montessori" schools in the state. Since this preferential hiring would exclude International Montessori Society (IMS) and other certificate-issuing entities of the Montessori community, Lee Havis, IMS executive director, testified against this bill at a hearing held in Annapolis, the state capital, on March 8, 2018. At the hearing, he stated that the law "... would be contrary to the best interests of Montessori education, as well as to the quality and progress in public education." Instead, he offered a more inclusive approach for hiring teachers that did not mention any particular brand of "Montessori certificate".

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Hiring a Montessori Teacher

Question: We are looking to hire a Montessori teacher. Do you have anyone available?

Answer: The initial problem with this question is that it overlooks the essential spiritual nature of Montessori teaching, which is not subject to ordinary hiring criteria, such as holding a "certificate" from a conventional training institution. Dr. Montessori correctly stated that a conventional teacher is unsuited for Montessori teaching, but rather must be created anew through a fundamental transformation of the spirit. While this spiritual transformation can be set in motion through the IMS distance learning course, the number of IMS certified graduates is few and unlikely to include an individual residing and available in your specific location.

In addition, even if there are some "certified" graduates from conventional Montessori training available for hire in your

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Puzzle map work at the Growing Hearts Montessori School in Jefferson City, Missouri

Growing Hearts in Jefferson City, Missouri

In Jefferson City, Missouri, the *Growing Hearts Montessori School* began in 2015 as the hopeful vision of its founders, **Jason and Diyanira Richards**, struggling at that time to find a suitable school for their own young child. Finding none, they pooled their resources and knowledge to start *Growing Hearts* in a little three room school that could hold only around 16 students. In that location, they created an atmosphere they wanted for their own child and said, "Let's see if other people like it too."

Now, in 2018, Jason says, "Almost three years later, and an expansion to our newly renovated facility, we are happy to accommodate over 60 wonderful students. And, starting next April, we are also proud to offer the only infant Montessori program in Jefferson City."

Jason credits his wife, Diyanira, for the school's incredible growth and success. Born and raised in Santa Cruz de la Cierra, Bolivia, Diyanira has over 10 years of experience in Montessori teaching, which she contributes to *Growing Hearts* with great passion, love, and energy. Under her direction, the school conducts its Montessori program which also celebrates Diyanira's native Spanish language as well. At *Growing Hearts*, Spanish is made a part of daily life, rather than just a day's formal academic lesson. The Richards

plan to continue offering their *Growing Hearts* school program for families in Jefferson City for many years to come.

For further information, contact: Jason Richards, Director, *Growing Hearts Montessori School*, 601 Scott Station Rd., Jefferson City, MO 65109, Tel. 573-298-3229, www.growing-hearts.com

Book Review

Bringing Montessori To America

S.S. McClure, Maria Montessori, and the Campaign to Publicize Montessori Education

By Gerald and Patrica Gutek, 2016, University of Alabama Press

by Lee Havis

In "Bringing Montessori to America", **Gerald and Patrica Gutek** describe the struggles of those early pioneers who first introduced Dr. Montessori's revolutionary 'new education' to America in the early 1900's. The story begins with a few key figures, such as the innovative American teacher, **Anne George**, who traveled to Italy in 1909, to personally observe and study the "new" children she heard about from a friend in Italy at that time. And then, in 1910, the American travel reporter, **Josephine Tozier**, wrote about these children, which soon

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From the Shelf

by Lee Havis

"The teacher, besides placing the child in contact with the material, also places him in contact with the order that exists in his environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 152

Creating order in the Montessori environment is the vital beginning of all that follows on the path to bringing about the child's true nature. When the physical objects closely duplicate the perfect order of nature, the young child naturally absorbs this order through his senses, which then leads to concentration and the experience of normalization.

In practice, creating this order requires displaying the materials on the shelves in a neat, complete manner for children to see. However, then you must present these materials in the same way, starting from the shelf to emphasize the basic order that each piece of work has its own definite place on the shelf in the environment.

Definite Place

"...every object must have a definite place where it is kept and where it stays when not in use."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.152

The young child first senses order in the physical objects by seeing them displayed neatly on the shelves, each with its own definite place when not in use. The IMS technology reinforces this order by providing the protocol *from the shelf* to be sure that you start each lesson presentation with a piece of work from that precise place. Seeing this order, the child is then able to exercise free choice to take out any piece of work to use according to his own individual interest.

Free Choice

"A child may take a piece of material only from the place where it is exposed for free choice, and when he has finished using it, he must put it back in its place in the same condition that it was when he took it out."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.152

In the Montessori environment, children freely choose work from the shelf to handle for awhile and then return to that same place when done. So, seeing where the materials belong on the shelf, the child can freely use and return them properly in harmony with the free choice of others as well. With a new group of children, you must especially emphasize this orderly use of materials, such as by starting each lesson presentation from the shelf. In this way, the children know exactly where to return them when done.

Returning Materials

"...when a child has spontaneously given up an exercise...the child puts the material back in place and everything is left in perfect order."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.155

Sadly, many children enter the Montessori environment from a condition of considerable disorder at home. So, Montessori teaching must begin by teaching the habit of returning materials when done, such as by closely following the specific protocol *from the shelf*. Learning to return materials to its right place on the shelf then helps children adapt to many other patterns of order that are distinctive in your culture. Young children spontaneously learn these patterns just by watching and modeling what you do and say with them every day.

Distinctive Patterns

"The child...absorbs from the world about him the distinctive patterns to which social life of his group conforms. Once the patterns have become established within him, they remain as fixed characteristics..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind* p.173

Before the age of six, the young child absorbs order directly into his whole being by what he sees and experiences in the environment. Just as he learns the habit of returning materials to the shelf by seeing them presented *from the shelf*, so too he learns distinctive social patterns as well by your following the protocols *model good behavior, and same routines all the time*. The protocol *from the shelf* however, aims especially to show the idea of completion that start when the child takes the materials from the shelf and ends by returning them back again to that place when done.

Completion

"A child must carry out his work by himself and he must bring it to completion."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p 197

By completing each piece of work, from the self and back again, the child develops mental order that also helps develop important character qualities, such as patience, perseverance, and integrity. Following the *from the shelf* protocol therefore teaches the habit and value of completion as the child moves through the full cycle of activity in using each piece of work.

Cycle of Activity

"...The completion of an entire cycle (of work) will exercise an influence more and far-reaching on the personality of the child...it is from the completed cycle of activity...that the child develops equilibrium, elasticity, adaptability, and the resulting power ...of obedience."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. In Education*, p.105

A lesson presentation with work doesn't aim to show every detail in its sequence of ac-

tivity, since this would influence the child to imitate the whole sequence in a robotic, rigid manner. Or, more likely, cause the child watching to simply lose interest after he sees the main idea. So, instead of showing each detail of a piece of work, keep your lesson as a brief, simple introduction, just enough to show the main points. Then, turn the work over to the child, using a question, such as, "Would you like to do the next one?"

Even with such a brief introductory lesson, however, start each one at the shelf, so the child sees its exact location to return it there as the final step in the full cycle of activity with that work. Knowing this, the child gains independence and confidence in handling work later entirely on his own in a complete and orderly way.

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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.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Haviv

Restaurant Misbehavior

In a public restaurant, the mother of 3 year old Frank doesn't know how to deal with his wild, rude behavior. (See *Observer*, November, 2017). The problem is complicated in this *moment of peril* because Frank jumps from one disruptive action to the next.

Analysis: Frank is the hub child, with detrimental influences mainly from *physical objects* and the *adult personality*. [Other children may be involved, but is not mentioned as an issue in the set-up scenario here.] In choosing between physical objects and adult personality, the preferred primary detrimental influence to resolve is "physical objects".

Practical Advice: At the table, the first disruption is probably minor, such as mishandling the eating utensils (physical objects). Here, you must control the physical objects such as by using *distraction* to get Frank's attention, and then *clear direction* to return his attention to either the eating activity or some other positive activity to occupy him while waiting for food, such as drawing on paper or talking about some point of interest. [Today, using a mobile electronic device is one option as well.] The more complicating part of the situation, however, is Frank's running wildly around the restaurant away from your own table. Here, physical objects are not likely involved, so the primary detrimental influence now is the adult personality.

With Frank running wildly around the restaurant, the first task now is to approach him physically, using the technique *proximity*. Then, when he senses your presence and looks up at you, stop and practice the technique *eye contact*. Finally, use a hand gesture *clear direction* technique to motion "come". [The 'stopping' is important to follow the protocol *least amount of adult involvement*.] In this process, if Frank looks away and starts running as before, use the *repetition* technique, doing the *proximity*, *eye contact*, *patient waiting*, and *clear direction* techniques in sequence as often as necessary until Frank either stops, or returns in compliance with your *clear direction*. When close to Frank, offer the safe word "Take my hand", and return to the table in a calm, orderly manner.

Long-term, you must also analyze why and how this restaurant misbehavior first began, since the problem is a repeating pattern. For this, use the technique *imagination-previsioning (IP)*, by entering into quiet meditation on the matter when you are completely alone. In this meditative state, visualize yourself in the problem situation, to see yourself in the first moment you realize that something is wrong. For example, does Frank first become agitated at the table, reacting to something you say or do at that time?

Using IP, you may find that some small, apparently insignificant error in touching or talking with Frank is the trigger to his misbehavior. For example, suppose you sense you be avoiding confronting Frank (abandonment) when he first stands up in his seat and throws some food on

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Independence

"If teaching is to be effective with young children, it must assist them on the way to independence."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 57

The order you create in a Montessori environment ultimately becomes outwardly visible in the child's independence in his handling of the work you provide. For example, returning each piece of work to its proper place, the child learns to successfully use all the work on his own so that eventually you can retire to a position of passive observation from a stationary position outside the children's activity area.

Before reaching this final stage of complete independence, however, you must first assure that children can use the materials in an orderly manner. In the beginning, therefore, you must interrupt their use of materials whenever necessary to resolve any disorder or misbehavior there may be. Especially with new children, Montessori teaching must be quite active, using the protocol *from the shelf* in conjunction with such other protocols as *basis of interest*.

Interest

"When a child shows interest, the teacher must not...interfere in any way. This is the moment at which teachers most often go wrong."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.255

The protocol *basis of interest* functions with *from the shelf* and other protocols to regulate your orderly manner of presenting materials. For example, following the *interest* protocol, don't approach a child to show some work unless and until you have a 'green light' for this type of instruction, such as the child coming to you to ask how to use a particular piece of work. If the child is

holding some piece of that work in his hand at the time, the ordinary next step is then to follow the *from the shelf* protocol by telling him to first "put it here" (pointing to shelf) before you began.

However, suppose the child already knows how to return work to the shelf, and is only asking a brief question about the work at hand. Then, respecting the protocols *basis of interest* and *least amount of adult involvement*, the better action is to give a brief word of explanation instead of doing a complete presentation from the shelf.

In each situation, therefore, you must measure the value of applying each protocol at that time. For example, don't apply the *from the shelf* protocol if this would interrupt the child's concentration on some other work he is doing at that time.

Concentration

"Before concentration occurs, the directress may do more or less what she thinks best; she can interfere with the children's activity as much as she deems necessary."

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

Since the protocol *don't interrupt concentration* is more important than *from the shelf*, don't interfere with a child's concentrated work just to return some other work to the shelf. Rather, following the protocol *eye contact before talking*, wait until you have the child's attention and only then direct him to return that work to its proper place in the environment.

In beginning conditions, however, since children are less likely to concentrate, apply the *from the shelf* protocol on a more frequent, priority basis whenever you are presenting materials. In this way, your Montessori teaching will create a successful foundation of order in the physical environment.

Environment

"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

Before concentration, Montessori teaching must employ a wide range of techniques and protocols to bring about order in each situation you encounter. However, always apply the key protocol *well-being of the total environment* to combine all the protocols in an effective, flexible manner, leaving aside the child's little mistakes to first resolve serious misbehavior scenarios. And, in using the IMS technology, apply the protocol *from the shelf* as a priority only whenever creating order in the physical objects is foremost. Then, in time, you will come to see the children return to their perfect state of true normal being in complete harmony with infinite and eternal laws of nature.

"Montessori Certificate"

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In his testimony, Lee also stated his opposition to the bill because it "sets up special interest benefits to only certain private entities in the field, namely 'MACTE' and 'AMI', while excluding other training facilities and means in the Montessori community, such as IMS. The MACTE and AMI entities represent philosophies in Montessori teaching which are in fact contrary to and incompatible with that represented by IMS."

For further information on this legislation and this general issue, contact: IMS, 9525 Georgia Ave., #200, Silver Spring, MD 20910 301-589-1127. lee@imsmontessori.org

Bringing Montessori to America

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led to magazine editor, **S.S. McClure** printing a series of articles in his popular American journey of the day, known as *McClure's Magazine*.

The story then unfolds during the period 1910-1915, when McClure and Dr. Montessori developed a relationship that led to a series of highly successful lectures, and an American Montessori support organization, which included members of the family of **Alexander Graham Bell** and **President Woodrow Wilson**.

This hopeful beginning, however, soon turned into bitter personality disputes about money, control, and philosophy between Dr. Montessori and her various American associates. For example, Dr. Montessori viewed Anne George as unreliable to represent her work in America due to her comments about adapting Montessori to the American "culture" rather than giving full authority and control to Dr. Montessori herself.

Later, Dr. Montessori sought out another American, **Helen Parkhurst** to represent her work in the USA. But, as an independent spirit, she soon withdrew from this duty to pursue her own separate interests in education. So, by 1915, Montessori in America came to a virtual end, not to emerge again until others entered the field much later after Dr. Montessori's death in 1952.

The Guteks leave the story of Montessori in America in 1915. Although a new emergence of Montessori came in the 1950's, the same old conflicts of "personality" and "culture" arose as well, now playing out between Dr. Montessori's son and heir, Mario, and those various American educators who sought to adapt Montessori to the American "culture."

A further chapter of Montessori in America later began later in 1979 with the emergence of the International Montessori Society (IMS), and the discovery of 'true natural' Montessori teaching. By then, however, conventional Montessori education had become deeply rooted to either "personality" or "culture." Now, IMS stands virtually alone to represent Dr. Montessori's original vision of a 'new education' in the world.

As a personal observation, I wonder how today's story of Montessori education will be viewed by future generations. Will it become lost and abandoned amid the disputes of the past? If so, will it revive again, perhaps under a new name by others? And, will people in the future still look back at Dr. Montessori's amazing 1907 discovery of the child's true nature with wonder, hope, and appreciation for the new education she envisioned to bring about mankind's true nature of perfect, peace, harmony and order in the world?

Hiring a Montessori Teacher

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area, they are suitably prepared for "true natural" Montessori teaching. So if you hired such a "certified" teacher, you would still need to re-train that person to remove whatever prejudicial ideas and habits she had acquired from her conventional Montessori training.

The best practical answer for hiring a Montessori teacher, therefore, is to find a local person who is interested and available for employment at your school; and, who has a humble, gentle, and open spirit of love, interest and patience towards children. Then, use the IMS training resources along with personal supervision and observation experience at the school to develop the practical skills in using the tools and knowledge of IMS technology with children.

The IMS website also has a number of resources for learning the IMS technology, to train your current and new staff. Besides the IMS distance learning course, you can purchase the Danbury audio CD and Study Guide, which gives an excellent introduction to the IMS technology. In addition, IMS conducts occasional workshop training seminars over a two-day weekend period. Other publications from IMS are also available to help and guide in the preparation for Montessori teaching. For further information, contact: havis@imsmontessori.org; <http://imsmontessori.org>, Tel 301-589-1127.

Moment of Peril

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the floor. If so, you are projecting "abandonment", which, continued, will only bring more severe disorder. In IP, you must therefore pre-vision yourself using suitable technology to correct the problem, such as by applying the techniques, *distraction*, *clear direction*, or *questioning*.

Most likely, one main error with Frank at the table is your negative language and action, such as saying "No" or "Don't" to something Frank is doing to mishandle objects. If so, this violates the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior*, and will provoke further disruptive activity. So, the solution is to use alternative safe words, such as "Where does this go?" or "Let's do it this way", using the technique *cooperative touching* to handle the spoon or fork in a more careful manner.

Analyzing your specific behavior in these small events in the beginning with Frank will then avoid his later "wild acting out." Resolving these small initial errors, therefore, is the key to solving the larger problem of any type of restaurant misbehavior.

Monster Talk

4 year old Andrew said something rude (not sure what) to two boys (3 and 4 years old). Upon further reflection, Andrew was scared because the two boys were talking about monsters and making loud noises. Should I instruct Andrew to say, "That scares me. Please stop." How would a teacher handle this in a Montessori room? What to do? *Answer in Observer, May, 2018*