



The Montessori *Talking to Children* OBSERVER

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Evelyn Onyekonwu, IMS course graduate in 2022 in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

Evelyn Onyekonwu (IMS '22) *First IMS certified teacher in Nigeria*

On January 12, 2022, **Evelyn Onyekonwu** received her certificate and credential in Primary Montessori Education (2-6 age level), to acknowledge her completion of the IMS distance learning course. This series of 22 lessons provides the fundamental preparation for all scientific education, including use of the powerful, innovative IMS technology especially designed for its practice with children.

For Evelyn, completing this course began with her enrollment in October, 2019, which was made possible by a generous tuition scholarship from **Donna Curtis** (IMS '02) and parents of her unique "Mustard Seed" learning program in Petaluma, CA.

Lee Havis evaluated Evelyn's coursework throughout the whole challenging covid-19 pandemic period of economic lockdowns, masks, and social distancing. Reflecting on this experience, Lee states that "Evelyn's success in this course was only possible because of her extraordinary strong will, determination, and faith during this difficult time for interaction and international communication. However, I think this experience has given Evelyn an especially good preparation for the continuing challenges that are likely to come in her plans to create and operate a school dedicated to this "new education" in her area."

Even before she completed the course, Evelyn was conducting workshops and sharing her knowledge about IMS technology with other educators in Nigeria. In fact, she even began the building of her new school as well. In this effort, Donna Curtis and her

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Princeton Community Family Learning Center

By Lori Musa

The *Princeton Community Family Learning Center* began with my early struggle to care for my two twin children, aged 2 and 4, some 22 years ago. Back then, I was caring for them alone in a shelter home, after fleeing from their father, my then husband, who was very physically and emotionally abusive. In my anguish and fear to protect my children from the trauma of this early past abuse, I discovered the inspiring writings of Dr. Montessori, which I sensed as a healing of my own inner child, as well as a possible way to benefit my own little children as well.

Soon, I was out of the shelter home and studying to teach the Montessori method, which I began doing in a home-based program that included several other children in the neighborhood. When my student body grew, I found larger commercial space that served the children of Princeton University faculty and grad students. Here, I welcomed many varied ethnicities, customs, and languages of families connected with the internationally-attended Princeton University.

Once again, as my enrollment grew further, the school relocated to a larger space, which has been our location for nearly 12 years, and now licensed for up to 50 children. Today, our school serves a widely diverse and varied student body, spanning various socio-economic divides, multiple faiths, customs, beliefs, and languages. Our school is definitely a "global learning model", which demonstrates how this scientific education shines through in alignment with the true human spirit that transcends all eras of time to embrace all people.

For further information, contact:

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Planting seeds and growing plants at Princeton Community Family Learning Center.

The Technology Book *Progress update*

By Lee Havis

When I first consolidated the unique technology of scientific education in 2003, I eagerly looked forward to presenting this incredible practical knowledge in a single comprehensive text. However, when I started writing this text, I soon realized the need for many revisions, updates, and further research before its final publication. Happily, now, after many years in this process, the text content is complete, which leaves only the technical aspects of design, format and final printing.

Once published, the book will be widely available to the general public through a campaign and network of international marketing and outreach.

Until publication of this book, however, the IMS technology is now available through other means, such as the recently revised and updated 41-page Danbury study guide. In addition, IMS may also launch a 4th 8-session webinar on the subject later this year.

New Birth in Robbyn's "Nest"

By Robbyn German (IMS '02)

I have been the director of a small Education center in Sherman, CT for the past 20 yrs. Although I have some followers, most parents in this geographical area are dogmatic in their beliefs, philosophy, and love for public education. Lee kept saying for me to talk to the parents about Montessori as a scientific approach to education. "Don't talk about the materials you are using", he would tell me over and over again.

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Talking to Children

by Lee Havis

"The teacher...must be able...to assist the child...by speaking or keeping silent in accordance with his needs."

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

In scientific teaching, talking to children is the most difficult aspect of controlling the adult personality in the child's environment. For this reason, the IMS technology of scientific education provides a number of techniques and protocols to guide this part of your personal interaction with children.

The best way to avoid any harmful talking to children is to remain completely silent to just observe, so that your focus is on indirect teaching that allows the natural order of physical objects to speak directly to the child instead.

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 1907, Dr. Montessori applied the indirect teaching of scientific education to preschool aged children, which brought about her discovery of the child's true nature. She observed this true normal way of being emerging through the child's concentrating on objects, which eventually led to the event she described as 'normalization'.

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 *Ed. And Peace*, p.80

Dr. Montessori sought to bring about each child's normalization through their concentration on objects. So, she urged her teachers to avoid any interruption of this concentration, not even to offer a simple word of encouragement and praise, such as "good job". The IMS technology likewise underlines this important idea by providing the protocol "*Don't Interrupt Concentration*".

However, before this concentration is possible, your interaction with children must be quite active to create calm and order in the environment. And, while this requires some verbal interaction, Dr. Montessori cautioned against excessive and unnecessary talking to children, to employ instead the great power of silence to bring progress and success in this effort.

Power of Silence

"...a new type of mistress has been evolved; instead of facility in speech, she has to acquire the power of silence."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p. 128

The IMS technology includes the protocol, "*least amount of adult involvement*", which helps to keep your talking to the bare essential. Scientific teaching emphasizes using instead the power of silence that allows children to better resolve many problems on their own, without any interaction by the teacher at all. This *least amount* protocol also keeps you away from using negative reactive words such as "No" and "Don't" in your interaction to resolve misbehavior.

Negative Language

"Any form of violence, in speech or action, does irreparable harm to the child...beware of this tendency...to say "Don't do this", "You mustn't do that."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p.36-37

Conventional teaching typically endorses the use of punitive, judgmental language with children under the guise of moral instruction and discipline. By contrast, scientific teaching avoids this negative language due to its repressive effect on the child's free, self-directed development. IMS technology therefore provides the protocol "*No negative attention to misbehavior*" to restrain all repressive language, including even some apparently positive type when it serves as a form of betrayal of a child's free, independent activity.

Forms of Betrayal

"To tell a person he is clever or clumsy, bright, stupid, good or bad is a form of betrayal. The child must see for himself what he can do..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.250

While words of praise and approval are sometimes good and necessary, their excessive, unsolicited use with children can set up an unhealthy habit of fear and dependency on the adult presence. The IMS technology therefore provides the protocol "*enhance independence*" to avoid this type of personal commentary with children. Following this protocol, your view of the child is as an active learner, rather than as a purely receptive being bound to the verbal instruction and curriculum of conventional education.

A Receptive Being

"The commonest prejudice in ordinary education is that everything can be accomplished by talking...The child is usually considered a receptive being instead of an active being."

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

In scientific education, talking to children is primarily to introduce the child to work on his own with materials, rather than to follow the

teacher's prescribed external curriculum. So, after a brief introduction to show some particular apparatus, quickly turn over the work to the child, such as by using the safe word questioning phrase, "Would you like to do it now?"

The IMS technology provides a number of these "safe words" to keep you away from conventional language that so often results in false or misleading understanding.

Understanding

"...children do not understand us...they accept whatever we tell them...feel guilty whenever we blame them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.151

The young child instinctively comes to understand life, reality, and culture through his
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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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 scientific education to extend awareness of Dr. Montessori vision of a "new education" to bring about this reality of the child's true nature in the world.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Unknown Error

When 4-year old Glen acts in a playful, indifferent attitude in his communication with the teacher, she senses some “unknown error” she is making, which she must find and correct. (See *Observer*, November, 2021). *What to do?*

Analysis: In any situation of “disobedience”, the obstacle is your adult personality, which is projecting either “abandonment” or “negativity” in the environment around the child. When your language and behavior is clearly kind and friendly, the mistake must be “abandonment”, which often involves excessive identification with the child’s personality. Resolving this issue, use the technique *imagination-provisioning* (IP) to locate the unknown error within yourself.

Practical Advice: Using IP, you are quiet and by yourself, away from the children, to think about how your behavior with Glen in the real-life situation may be a problem. For example, is your behavior reflecting “abandonment” of the child’s true nature, by projecting a too-casual, vague, and familiar relationship with this child? If so, the child’s playful, fantasy behavior is reflecting this harmful projection of your personality.

Resolving this problem, consciously disengage from any personal interaction with Glen, especially whenever he looks at you. Avoiding eye contact in this way will then begin to remove the old pattern of unconscious identification and abandonment, allowing you to restore a more objective, scientific way of being with Glen.

Use eye contact with Glen only when absolutely necessary, and then only for a few brief, clear words. Soon, this more “detached” personality way of being with Glen will restore your proper role and function with him.

In the future, apply this same conscious detachment you applied with Glen with any other child who enters into this same type of playful, fantasy reaction and interaction with you. Recognize especially that the technique *eye contact* is a powerful type of interaction with a child, which you must use with great care and discretion at all times.

Danger on the Streets

The teacher takes her preschool class of 12 children to a nearby park on a regular basis. During the walk along a busy street, one or two of the children sometimes become separated from the group and distracted by other events happening on the way. One day, for example, several children left the group and ran out into the street to chase a ball, so that one child was almost hit by a car. *What to do?* Answer in *Observer*, May, 2022

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own direct experiences with others and physical objects in the environment. Even so, however, there are times when the teacher’s verbal communication can be useful and necessary to enlarge the child’s understanding. In such times, however, keep your words clear and accurate, since the child is absorbing this language that will have a profound impact on his own life.

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

Before the age of six, the child has a uniquely absorbent mind that allows him to learn many concepts from the culture just by listening and repeating what he hears from the teacher each day. For this reason, use only objective and factual words when you apply the verbal techniques of *reflective language*, *questioning* and *clear direction* with children.

In addition, when talking, be sure you have the child’s full attention by following the protocol “*eye contact before talking*”. Applying this protocol is especially important when using strong, earnest words to convey some basic aspect of order in the environment.

Earnest Words

“If a teacher sees that material is being used in a way that will not attain its goal...if he shows a tendency to misbehavior, she will check him with earnest words.”

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.153

In any misbehavior scenario, talking to a child is especially delicate due to the high level of stress and frustration you are likely to be feeling at the time. Therefore, before speaking, make sure you have eye contact and that your facial expression and voice tone is neutral or friendly. Then, your earnest words will most effectively combine with other techniques you are using at the time, such as *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

The technique *distraction* is to get the child’s attention, which is most necessary when you first seek to interrupt misbehavior. Using this technique, for example, simply touch or hold an object he is mishandling at the time, which will then cause him to look up for eye contact with you. Then, use the technique *clear*

direction to say, “Come over here. Let me show you something.” If, after that, the child disobeys or talks back, you can still continue the dialogue, however using also the *patient waiting* technique to stop and think before you speak.

Patient Waiting

“the teacher must be quiet and passive, waiting patiently...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

In any stressful conversation, apply the *patient waiting* technique to avoid making mistakes in the words you use in the process. If you do make a mistake, however, you still have the technique *imagination-provisioning* (IP) to quietly study how to resolve the problem on your own when you are alone and away from the children. In this technique, you imagine what you might do or say differently the next time the problem arises in the real-life situation.

Happily, the IMS technology of scientific education gives you a full range of tools to keep your language in close harmony with the perfect order of nature. In this way, talking to children will be a positive help for each child to return to his true normal nature, just as Dr. Montessori discovered and described in her original experiment with scientific education in 1907.

Magical Moments

By Cheryl McGowen (IMS ‘16)

I have been a Montessori teacher for 30 years and have witnessed many magical moments in the classroom since applying the Technology that I have gained from my training with Lee Havis which I completed in 2016. The most magical thing is to see the true nature of the children emerging and I attribute that to the *Safe words*, *Techniques* and *Protocols*. They provide guidance and control of me wanting to interact too much with the children and taking control of their individual progress.

I have witnessed in the past the environment being chaotic and a lot aimlessly wandering around as well as misuse of the material. Applying simple safe words such as “watch”, “Let me show you something”, as well as utilizing the Protocols such as *don’t correct the child*, *enhance independence* and *don’t interrupt concentration* creates magical moments.

By establishing patterns and following *well being of the total environment*, I find that the classroom just seems to function beautifully and the children are so content and eager to manipulate the materials on their own. That to me is the true nature of a child’s emergence.

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OBSERVER
The Montessori IMS



Magical Moments

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I can recall a few times when I would want to control the children by talking and doing the work for them in the past. I remember when a child once told me, "I want to do it myself" or put a piece of material back that I would manipulate for them out of frustration. That in my opinion is a clear indication of how important the Technology is for allowing the child's true nature to emerge on their own and in their own time, not yours. To sit back and witness these magical moments in the Montessori environment is something I will be forever grateful for.



The joyful "no mask" experience of child at Princeton Community Family Learning Center (Princeton, NJ)



Building design of Evelyn's new school in Nigeria.

Evelyn Onyekonwu

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Mustard Seed parents are providing further financial support for Evelyn's school, which has just recently gained official approval of its plans by her local government.

Lee is hopeful that this beginning of Evelyn's school will continue to unfold and grow strong as a beacon for the "new education" in Nigeria, bringing support for other committed educators in the region, such as Evelyn Onyekonwu.

New Birth in Robbyn's "Nest"

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

So, I took some classes with Lee and learned about the principles and protocols. Believe me, it took a while to put these into practice or apply them. It was a whole new different way at looking at child development and education. My adult personality wanted me to get in on all of the action. Lee taught me to patiently wait and observe the entire environment to see things more in the present moment.

If a family is new, I take the time to get acquainted. If a child is having a tantrum I don't automatically rush in unless he is hurting himself or another. I teach my parents about their overuse in utilizing the word "no". Parents see how we are different from other places because of our actions. I am always learning. It has helped being able to discuss things with Lee.

Just this week a new three year old girl started to pull the CD player off the shelf. I over reacted a little bit and said, "That is Miss Robbyn's!". When I called Lee for advice he suggested that I should have used the scenario as a learning experience, showing the child how to use it.

I am happy to report that we are now up to 3 days a week at the center. Both students and parents are growing and learning. It makes me feel special when children leave happy and cannot wait to return.

Peace and Calmness

By Evelyn Onyekonwu IMS ('22)

In my weekly home church meeting, the children usually conduct their singing and other activities on their own, as I supervise them, using the protocols "least amount of adult involvement" and "well-being of the total environment". Last Saturday, however, I was shocked when two children suddenly began fighting over a chair, and one of them hit and pushed the other child who fell hard into the table in the middle of the meeting. As I felt a strong urge to hit that child to teach him a lesson, I heard a small voice inside, "patient waiting".

Watching as the crying and chaos became more intense, I was struggling hard to control my anger, when I finally got eye contact with one of the children, and calmly said, "Please continue with the praise and everyone please be quiet". With that, attention was again focused on the singing and everything gradually returned to peace and calmness.

