



The Montessori OBSERVER

Child Watching

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Sally Korte (IMS teacher - back row) and her class of children at the St. James Montessori School in Augusta, Kansas. In front row, Linda Liu, visiting educator from Beijing, China.

Linda Liu from China observes Montessori in USA

Linda Liu, Chinese educator, reports on her experience of observing IMS Montessori teacher, Sally Korte, in Augusta, Kansas for several months on visit to USA in from December, 2016 – February, 2017.

By Linda Liu

My Chinese name is Chunhong but in English, I use Linda. My first encounter with Montessori came in connection with my professional career teaching Italian for 10 years in the Beijing Language and Cultural University. Preparing for this position, I lived in Italy to obtain my Ph.D. degree, majoring in teaching philosophy and technology. In this way, I came to know Montessori just as a kind of philosophy.

Three years ago, however, I met Lee Havis and became amazed at his practical experiments and outstanding results with the International Montessori Society. At that time, we talked about IMS technology for “true natural” Montessori teaching, and he gave me an audio cd and study guide to learn about this. In China, after studying this material, I promised Lee I would return to the USA for a more thorough practical learning experience. Finally, in 2016, I was able to realize this dream, and called Lee to help make arrangements.

In planning my trip, Lee wanted me to observe Sally Korte, a recent IMS course graduate, whom he said was “top notch” in Montessori teaching and using IMS technology with children. He wanted me to watch her closely and follow her guidance

and advice when I got a chance to interact with children. In Kansas, after just one week with Sally, I could see she was indeed highly skilled in the IMS technology and beyond this, she had great enthusiasm and love for her work with the children.

In Sally’s classroom, I could see the kids love to learn, to read, to think, and resolve their problems on their own. I was especially amazed to see a two year old who knew how to set the lunch table, cut the bread, serve himself the meal, clear the table and wash dishes, even put back the chair and place mat. One step by one step, no rush. Not only this, but also other activities like dusting the plants, cutting the apple with cutter, matching the lock with the key, and so on.

Thanks to Sally, I was able to meet so many other good, kind people at the St. James School where she taught. The school director, Richard Guy, even organized opportunities for me to speak to all the teachers about education in China. So, in this way, I made many good friends, as did my eight year old son who was with me as well.

On return to China, I now carry warm feelings and great thanks for the kindness and friendship my son and I experienced in the USA. And, I have no doubt in the true nature of children and their unconditional and pure love which I saw so clearly with Sally. So, I am now looking forward to working with Lee to bring this “new education” to parents and teachers of China as well.

All is meant to be!!

Jessica’s Dream in Aruba Nos Fortalesa Montessori School

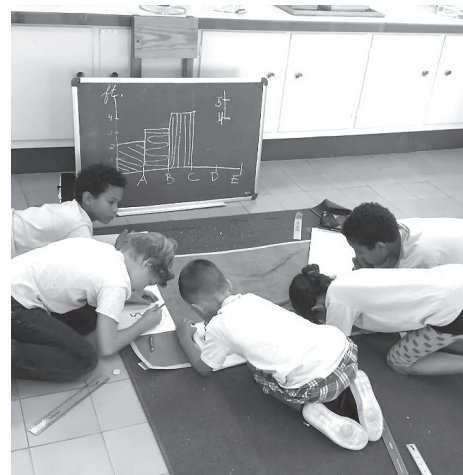
In 2008, Jessica Piña’s dream was to place her young daughter in an ideal environment for her perfect, true natural development. Although she found a Montessori school in her native Caribbean island of Aruba, she gradually learned more about Montessori teaching, and realized the need for a deeper, more authentic representation of this approach. So, she studied the method and became an assistant and then finally a lead teacher in one of the local area schools.

Propelled by a deep interest for more authentic representation of Montessori teaching, Jessica’s dream shifted to establishing a school where her vision could be fully realized in practice. So, in 2013, she began educating the community about Montessori teaching, writing articles, organizing education nights, and raising money for materials to open her own school. In August 2014, she accomplished this by establishing the *Nos Fortalesa Montessori School*, which she started with an enrollment of 13 students between the ages of 6 and 8.

Now, after just a short while in operation, she states that, “Currently we have 35 students between the ages of 6 and 11 with two full time teachers and two part-time assistants, one of whom (Joanne Piña) is enrolled at the IMS distance learning course.”

Jessica’s dream now is to keep growing as a Montessori school, expanding the number of teachers and students. She

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Children work on a group science project at the Nos Fortalesa Montessori School (Aruba)



Child Watching

by Lee Havis

"The child watches the adult working methodically and carefully and repeats his actions methodically and carefully."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education and Peace* p.79

Observing the young child, Maria Montessori discovered his unique ability to effortlessly absorb and instinctively learn much just by watching what is happening around him every day. The IMS technology, therefore, provides the protocol *child watching* to keep your attention on this important aspect of helping children move towards the ideal state of true natural development.

New children in the environment are especially keen to watch and imitate your every word and action, even when you are not aware this is happening. So, applying the *child watching* protocol, always act and speak with precision and clarity, even when you think no one is paying attention at all. Another protocol, *model good behavior*, speaks even more directly to this point.

Model Good Behavior

"...an adult...must always be calm and act slowly so that the child who is watching him can clearly see his actions in all their particulars."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.93

Modeling good behavior is important with young children who are instinctively keen to watch and imitate everything you do. However, since no one is perfect, Montessori teaching functions more to direct the child's attention to self-teaching materials that much better model the perfect order of nature. Interacting with these materials, the young child will therefore ultimately come to reflect the perfect humanity of true normal being that is the larger goal of all Montessori teaching.

Perfect Humanity

"We wanted a perfect humanity. We thought that humanity had to be perfect by imitating us; but we were imperfect, so there is a hopeless impasse."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p.56

The protocol *least amount of adult involvement*, teaches you to diminish the negative effect of your various flaws and defects in the environment by removing your outward presence as much as possible. Following this protocol, for example, your primary function is passive observation from a remote corner of the environment. And, when you must be active with children, such as presenting the materials, keep your interactions brief and clear. In this presentation, follow the *child watching* protocol to focus

the child's attention on just the main points you want to bring out in each piece of work.

Presenting the Materials

"The assistance which a teacher should give a child in presenting the materials to him consists in showing him how to use it."

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

In Montessori teaching, you only present materials when the child shows definite evidence of interest in this type of interaction with you. Following the protocol *basis of interest*, therefore, wait until the child gives you a 'green light' signal of interest for this, such as by asking for your help in words, or indirectly, by touching a piece of work while looking at you at the same time.

In your presentation, apply the *child watching* protocol by making sure the child is actually paying attention to exactly what you are showing in that work. So, for example, if during your demonstration, the child momentarily looks away, stop and wait for him to resume watching before you continue. For emphasis, to re-establish attention, you may get eye contact, and then use the safe word "Watch".

Violating this *child watching* protocol, such as by doing some key movement when the child is NOT watching, has a negative effect, bringing confusion and disorder, and forcing you to give the lesson again at another time in the future. So, while making the presentation, make sure the child is watching your specific hand movement, rather than some other aspect of your personality presence.

Teacher's Personality

"The lesson must be presented in such a way that the personality of the teacher shall disappear."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Montessori Method*, p.108

Focusing the child's attention, you must also avoid making inadvertent and unnecessary gestures and movements that are not part of the demonstration, such as tapping your finger, adjusting your clothing, or scratching your head. Minimize this distracting activity by keeping your personality as neutral and natural as possible. The aim and focus here is then to stimulate the child's keen interest to watch only what is necessary and basic in the work itself.

Keen Interest

"The teacher...should explain the use of the materials...She must be able to choose an object suitable for a particular child and place it before him in such a way that he understands it and takes a keen interest in it."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.240

With each piece of work, the child is keen to know exactly how to use it in a thoughtful and intelligent manner. So, after a brief presentation, he instinctively seeks to experiment with the materials on his own, to learn through his direct activity with that work itself. Before he seeks to handle this work, therefore, the child often

seeks out your instruction, using specific words and behavior to show his interest. All this outward show of interest points to the child's mysterious internal activities for learning that are guided by his true natural "teacher within."

Internal Activities

"...internal activities act as cause; they do not react and exist as the effect of external factors. Our attention is not arrested on all things indifferently, but by those which are congenial to our tastes."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. in Ed.*, p.160

In conventional teaching, the child is compelled to focus his interest and attention on the adult's prescribed curriculum and academic subject matter. By contrast, Montessori teaching follows the child's own inner guidance for interest. So, when this

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havis@imsmontessori.org

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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 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

Engaging Fantasy

The teacher's problem is whether to allow 4 year old Judy play out her quiet fantasy, or interrupt it to bring her back to real work in the environment. How to resolve the conflict between "freedom" and "abandonment"? (See *Observer*, November, 2016). She worries that Judy is losing time to develop her intellectual faculties for language and other academic subjects during the critical "absorbent mind" period of early childhood.

Analysis: In allowing fantasy, the teacher is actually abandoning Judy by projecting her own false perspective of 'freedom' on her. The primary detrimental influence here is therefore the teacher's adult personality which she must control.

Practical Advice: The teacher must control her "personality" by actively engaging the fantasy, rather than just passively permitting it to continue unaddressed. Following the protocol *least amount of adult involvement*, first try interrupting the fantasy with the lightest possible polishing, using such techniques as *eye contact* and *proximity*. For example, when Judy is in fantasy, walk in her direction, applying *proximity*, until she looks up for eye contact. Then, applying the *least amount* protocol, stop and engage only with *eye contact* and *patient waiting*. If Judy stops the fantasy and engages with some real work, the problem is solved and you can return again to your stationary position for scanning the total environment.

If, however, after Judy stops the fantasy, she starts into the fantasy again, you must repeat the *proximity* and *eye contact* techniques as before. Using *repetition*, apply this action as often as necessary until Judy eventually focuses more regularly on work in present-moment reality.

Now, suppose Judy doesn't look up when you walk over, and just continues the fantasy. Here, use slightly heavier polishing by continuing your *proximity* until you are close enough to Judy to use the *distraction* technique to get her attention by touching or holding an object she is holding at the time. When she looks up for eye contact with you, use the *questioning* technique, such as by asking, "what are you doing?" to open up a dialogue about her fantasy behavior.

In discussing fantasy drama with Judy, notice and follow up words about her feelings by using more *questioning* and *reflective language* based on what she says. For example, if she says, "I'm building a castle for my kingdom", apply *reflective language* by repeating that back to her. Or, ask a question, focusing on feelings, such as "What do you like about your castle?" or "Why are you doing that?" When Judy starts talking about feelings, she is beginning to address and resolve her fantasy, which then allows it to diminish and disappear.

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Child Watching *Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3*

true natural interest leads the child to seek out your instruction, you must isolate his attention to the specific part of the work that interests him at that time.

Isolate Attention

"...the child's attention must be isolated from everything but the object of the lesson."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.153

Montessori materials are designed to reflect the order of nature, showing this quality in certain features that you must bring out in your presentation. So, following the *child watching* protocol, isolate the child's attention to only those essential elements you want him to see. Another protocol, *emphasize main point(s) – Isolate variable*, also helps you isolate the child's attention to just the key points of your presentation. One way to do this is by exerting some extra intensity of stimulus to bring out his natural interest in the work.

Healing a Soldier's Son

By Sally Korte

Sally is an IMS Montessori teacher in Augusta, Kansas, reporting here on an enlightening experience with the soldier father of a son in her early childhood class.

Eamon, a quiet, happy child in my class, is the son of a soldier who had been deployed overseas for nine months; so long that he barely knew him at all. When his father recently returned home, however, Eamon's normal calm, concentrating, and peaceful behavior soon changed to violence and fear, destroying materials, hitting, hiding under the table, and no eye contact to even speak to him.

I knew I could not help Eamon if I didn't help his parents. So, I scheduled a meeting with his soldier father who, at the meeting explained his sense of responsibility to constantly correct and punish Eamon's every mistake. Face to face with such an imposing figure of authority, I nonetheless counseled him to respond by Montessori teaching, such as always being friendly with Eamon, and, with misbehavior, using *distraction* instead of rebuke and punishment.

Although I had many experiences meeting with parents, this one was different because the soldier father took my advice without question, stating "That sounds like a plan. Will do." And, he did! I marveled at such faith which

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Intensity of Stimulus

"...to fix the attention, a certain extension, and a certain intensity of the stimulus are necessary."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spont. Ac. In Ed.*, p.232

In presenting materials, you can help focus the child's attention by intensifying the stimulus that is the main point in each piece of work. So, while the material itself stimulates the child's interest with attractive color, order and design, you can further intensify this stimulus by making your hand motions larger or slower, or by speaking some key word with a different tone or volume.

However, while intensifying the stimulus in this way, you must also minimize all other distracting aspects of your involvement as well. For this reason, keep your presentations brief and simple, offering just a hint to get the child started with the work on his own.

Just a Hint

"The instruction of the teacher consists merely in a hint, a touch – enough to give a start to the child. The rest develops of itself."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Dr. Montessori's Own Hand*, p.58-59

The protocol *least amount of adult involvement* teaches you to avoid any lengthy or excessive presentation with materials. Following this *least amount* protocol, give "just a hint" to assure the child's basic understanding of the work and no more. In fact, if you give too much instruction, the child may imitate your actions too closely, and lose interest to later experiment with the work on his own. A brief, simple lesson, therefore, is best to interest the child in using the work on his own, which leads to concentration and normalization to enter the child's ultimate state of perfect true normal being.

In your demonstrations, therefore, once you have shown the key movements in the work, move away with a phrase such as "Would you like to do the next one?" Done well, following the *child watching* protocol in this process helps the child get the basic idea of the work in such a way that he will successfully use the work on his own after that.

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Moment of Peril

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Since the fantasy is not violent or harmful in a physical sense, use light polishing, and, applying the *least amount* protocol, walk away from Judy after you have engaged her for a brief time. (There is no need to completely resolve the whole fantasy in one single interaction.) In this way, using such techniques as *proximity, eye contact, repetition, and patient waiting*, Judy will gradually end her fantasy activity and return to the path of true normal behavior.

Finally, for a long-term solution, speak to Judy's parents about what you are doing, to help them conduct similar Montessori teaching at home. Working together with the parents, Judy's dependency on fantasy will diminish and disappear as she finds peace and harmony in present-moment reality.

No Support

Regina is a skilled and gifted Montessori teacher, who is struggling with no support from her school director and parents. Although the director appreciates the results of her quiet and well-manner children, he doesn't really respect or understand how Regina achieves this result. So, for example, he interrupts her classroom with no advance warning about school-wide events and scheduling requirements that disturb the delicate order she is creating in her environment. He also allows parents and the classroom assistant to make special demands on classroom order, such as by conducting special group projects, academic curriculum, and activities, which violate good Montessori teaching practice. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer*, May, 2017



Left to right, Linda Liu, Patty Brophy, Lee Havis together with children at Patty's Montessori school in Lynchburg, Virginia

Montessori Tools and Tips

On-line group discussion

To IMS group:

Thank you for having me in your group. I've been in day care teaching for 35 years, and right now running our own early childhood center. I am also a founder of an early childhood organization. But, I'm still looking forward to learn more, on new techniques and latest trend in handling the MONTESSORI approach. I'm positive that with your tools and tips, children and my group will benefit from this.

Mendy Yraola Castle
February 15, 2017
Philippines

To IMS group:

I was so honored to be visited by such excellent people - Lee Havis from Maryland and Linda Liu from China. Lee's words of wisdom lured Linda all the way from China to know more about Montessori Teaching. Linda, so lured, studied with IMS practioners as she visited IMS Schools in the USA. As the excellent student she is, she so humbly observed the children and the teachers and learned much. Her own story as a first-born daughter born in China, is one of endless determination to prove her value as a woman growing up there. Such excellent people! Lee of course observed me and gave me such valuable tips on how to better "BE" with children using the Montessori Technology that he has developed.

Patricia Brophy (IMS student)
February 9, 2017
Lynchburg, VA

Healing a Soldier's Son

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reminded me of the story of the Centurion with Jesus in the Bible. (see *NOTE below)

One week later, Eamon started showing signs of normalization, and, little by little, he became again the boy that loves to come and couldn't get enough of our program. I was reminded again that parents are the solution, not the problem.

I could have used other tactics to restore order in the class, such as asking his parents not to bring him any more, but I chose instead to have faith in the Montessori technology. I know that I did right because there is nothing else that could have given me the same positive results.

*NOTE: Mathew 8: 5-13

5When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6 "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly." Jesus said to him, "Shall I come and heal him?"

8 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.

Jessica's Dream in Aruba

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says, "Our mission is to keep educating the community about Montessori, keep the Montessori method of education authentic, while at the same time, keep educating ourselves about any new ideas and developments in the Montessori world. We love being part of the IMS and are looking forward to the future."

Jessica has also expressed interest in helping to bring about the two-day IMS workshop "Creating the New Education" in Aruba, to spread knowledge of "true natural" Montessori teaching and the IMS technology for the local island community and the larger Caribbean region as well.

For further information, contact: Jessica Piña, Nos Fortalesa Montessori School, Papiilon 8q-a 12345 ARUBA email: nosfortalesa@gmail.com Tel: 297-731-2413