



The Montessori OBSERVER

Be Friendly,
Get Acquainted

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Montessori Tools and Tips

On-line group discussion

The IMS facebook discussion group, "Montessori Tools and Tips" provides a practical means for sharing experiences and working through problems in Montessori teaching. The group includes over 3,000 members worldwide who join together in an interesting and wide-ranging learning experience to help each other to use the IMS technology to bring about true natural being in children. Here are two examples of issues taken up in this group, which is free and available to all.

Bully-Victim Solutions Saying "STOP"

Issue: Our school policy is to teach the 3-6 classroom children to say "Stop" when someone invades their physical space. This approach seems to work pretty well since it empowers the young victim and is easy for the children to apply, using just one word – stop.

Response: Teaching children a formula (rule) to say "Stop" might work in some situations, but problems arise anytime you give a rule like this to children, since it violates

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Greenville Montessori School Allen, Texas

The Greenville Montessori School in Allen, Texas, grows out of the vision and hard work of its owners, **Sanjay** and **Dolly Ambekar**. Sanjay was born in Zambia, grew up in South Africa, and moved to the US in 2000. Dolly was born & raised in India and moved to the US in 1999 where they were first successfully employed in management and marketing in business in the state of Texas.

In 2014, Sanjay and Dolly decided they wanted to change their career to link more closely with their our children's interests and the local community. So, they decided to enter into the field of child care. Confident in their ability to make a positive contribution in this area, Sanjay noted, "My wife and I had several years of experience as parents with multiple pre-schools and shared the parents' high expectations of a childcare facility."

In October 2015, Sanjay and Dolly bought the Greenville Montessori School, and since then have improved the curriculum, facility, food and activities for children to a level where that school is the highest rated center in the area. As testament, their director was nominated in 2015 as one of the Top 4 finalists by

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Pictured here, Brienne is an upper elementary student who is very motivated and enthusiastic about learning. Following up a group lesson on the study of cells, she is shown here using a compound digital microscope to view various cells, including, an adipose pig cell, a stem-cork cell, a typical animal cell, and a typical plant cell. Using the computer she selected interesting segments of the cells and made picture from the microscope. Being creative, Brienne chose to make a collage of the images and include it in her interactive notebook. Folsom Montessori Learning Center (Folsom, Louisiana)

Folsom Montessori Learning Center

Dianne Arndt, founder and director of the *Folsom Montessori Learning Center* (Folsom, Louisiana) traces her interest in Montessori teaching to an experience she had in a tradition school, where she witnessed the intimidating punishment of a six year old child for failure to complete her classwork assignment. Following that experience, she began researching alternative methods of education, and found the work of Dr. Montessori, which she began to seriously study on her own.

In 2005, Dianne opened a preschool program, which she called Folsom Montessori School. Later, in June of 2014, at the request of the community, she changed the name to "Learning Center" and expanded her program to include elementary classes for homeschool students as well. Now in the second year of offering this elementary (6-12) program, Dianne has seen amazing positive results, stating, "Our students are motivated and have developed a love of learning."

The Center's normal day for elementary children begins with a large group lesson. Dianne says, however, that "Every day is a little different which makes it intriguing to the students. We offer extra activities such as 4-H, art, Spanish, study skills, and Lego tech. These activities allow the students to express their individuality and creativity."

Dianne reports that the students have been happy and engaged on various projects relating to cultural arts scrapbooks,

stamp collections, and passports. In addition, she says they have been creating masks in art, building a hot house during gardening, and performing science experiences.

Throughout the day the students join small groups for cooperative work and have the freedom to choose a small-group lesson or concentrate on individual work. Dianne says, "Our program offers the opportunity for students to learn in a stress-free environment where they work as happy, creative, and enthusiastic students engaged in activities that promote learning. Our success is accredited to the children's ability to reach far beyond their personal goals."

For further information, contact: Dianne Arndt, Director, Folsom Montessori Learning Center, 14057 Hwy 1077, Folsom, LA 70437. Diane Arndt, Director Telephone: 985-630-9558; 985-260-5882 Website: <http://folsomlearningcenter.com/>

IMS Montessori Video Training Seminar in Pakistan

On May 6, 2016, Lee Havis presented a short video teleconference seminar with a group of teachers in Narowal Public school in Narowal, Pakistan. In his talk, Lee described the basic IMS type of "true natural" Montessori teaching, and the technology now available through IMS to conduct this approach in a reliable scientific manner. After speaking, he answered several practical questions relating to the use of technology.

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Be Friendly, Get Acquainted

by Lee Havis

"The stimuli of the environment are not only the objects, but also the persons, with whom our relations are not merely sensorial."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.325

Just because Montessori teaching is objective and scientific in nature doesn't mean that it is entirely unfriendly or impersonal towards children. In fact, to conduct this approach properly, you must first establish an intimate, friendly relationship with each child before you can expect to have success in using such techniques as *distraction*, *proximity*, and *clear direction*. The IMS technology, therefore, includes a protocol, *be friendly, get acquainted*, to guide you in achieving this initial friendly relationship which you can find only in the spiritual field of being.

Spiritual Field

"...the relationship between child and teacher is in the spiritual field...the master whom the teacher serves in the child's spirit."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind.*, p.281

Montessori teaching functions on a spiritual plane with children, where the adult and child recognize each other in the perfect peace, harmony, and order of laws of nature. Without this common spiritual recognition, the young child will simply ignore, avoid, or oppose what you are doing as if you were a total stranger or some inanimate physical object in the environment. Therefore, following the *be friendly* protocol, approach each new child by offering a personal greeting, smile, and pleasant small talk, such as "How are you?", "Nice to see you" and "My name is ----. What is your name?" In this way, the child senses you as a rich material of goodness and warmth for his comfort and well-being.

Rich Material

"...we, too, should wait; not coldly, but rather making the child feel that we contain a rich material which is at his disposal..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.332

Shy and fearful, the ordinary new child is unlikely to approach you to get acquainted. Therefore, you must take the initiative to introduce yourself as the pathway to his discovering the rich material you are providing in the environment. In this process, a friendly hand shake, smile, and words of encouragement will project a bright and pleasant manner.

Bright and Pleasant Manner

"The teacher, in this first period...must be like the flame which heartens all by its warmth, enlivens and invites...encouraging and praising (the children) all in a bright and pleasant manner."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.253

Montessori teaching begins by projecting an outgoing, friendly presence that conveys a sense of security, warmth, and order in the environment. With a bright smile and calm,

pleasant conversation, you put the child at ease to help him overcome any initial fear or distress he may feel about meeting a strange adult for the first time. Together with your welcoming language, make sure your outward physical appearance is as attractive and inviting as possible.

The Teacher's Appearance

"The teacher's appearance is the first step to gaining the child's confidence and respect. The teacher should study her own movement to make them as gentle and graceful as possible."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.253

New children tend to pay close attention to the outward appearance of the main supervising adult personality in the environment. So, applying the *model good behavior* protocol, walk and talk in a slow, careful manner as you would like the children to imitate later in their own behavior. In addition, before speaking, make sure you have friendly eye contact with the child you are talking to at that time. Even with these efforts, however, it's still likely that some children will still respond in a negative way by acting out with considerable initial disorder.

Initial Disorder

"During the first days when a new school is opened, we may consider a certain initial disorder as characteristic..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.87

In any new group of children, there are some who test the limits of your patience with various outbursts of fantasy, social conflict and violence. Resolving this initial disorder, you must persist in your calm and positive manner, rather than reacting with words of harsh judgment and angry rebuke. Applying the *be friendly* protocol then requires your considerable patience to overcome the well-established defensive attitude of some those children who act out their mistreatment from parents or other adults at home.

Defensive Attitude

"The child of three...is a fighter on the verge of being vanquished; he has already adopted a defensive attitude which masks his deeper nature... All that remains active is a superficial personality which exhausts itself in clumsy movements, vague ideas and the effort to resist or avoid adult restraint..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.241

Applying the *be friendly* protocol with a fearful, defensive child will likely bring initial defiance and resistance. So, when you offer a warm initial greeting, a child might respond with "I don't like you" or "You're not my friend". When this happens, just ignore this negativity by continuing your friendly manner, being sure to also follow the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior*, by avoiding any disapproving or critical language, such as "No" and "Don't". In this situation, use the *distraction* and *clear direction*

techniques to interrupt and re-direct the misbehaving child to something good and positive elsewhere in the environment.

Interruption

"If there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him...interruption may take the form of...showing a special and affectionate interest in the troublesome child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.278-79

The *be friendly* protocol also helps you overcome "power struggle" situations with children who may have been in the environment for a considerable period of time. Here, use the *repetition* technique with *clear direction* or *distraction* by interrupting the child's misbehavior, and re-directing the child to do some construc-

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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.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
The International Montessori Society is sponsored by Educational Services, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized in Maryland, USA. The IMS purpose is to support the scientific approach to true natural being throughout the world.

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IMS ON THE INTERNET
An on-line IMS discussion group, "Montessori Tools and Tips" is available for anyone to join at no charge. To join this group discussion, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/montessoritoolsandtips/>

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Haviv

Using Sandpaper Letters

In her 2-6 year old class, the teacher is concerned that some of her older children are not using the sandpaper letters. See *Observer*, March, 2016. She is therefore worried that they will soon no longer be in the sensitive period for language, when learning to read is easy and natural. After age six, this important task of learning to read will then be much more difficult without the benefit of the young child's absorbent mind.

Analysis: The teacher's mistake here is confusing "freedom" with "abandonment". To overcome this, she needs to take more initiative in giving introductory lessons in sandpaper letters with these older children, who are reflecting a basic fear and avoidance of learning to read. Resolving this fear, the teacher must resolve the cause, which is the detrimental influence of her own adult personality.

Practical Advice: Applying the principle of "freedom" is important at any age. So, in general, if a child is not interested in some aspect of the environment, like 'sandpaper letters', the first action to take is to wait and observe, allowing him to explore the other parts of the environment that interests him more at that time. As long as the child is working on something (not in fantasy play), this passive observation is helping his true natural development.

However, children normally show an interest and instinct for learning to read soon after they acquire spoken language at about the age of two. Older children who don't show this natural interest are therefore reflecting some type of avoidance or fear about written language and reading, which you must address by taking more initiative in this area.

Taking the initiative, therefore, look for some older child who is wandering or otherwise inattentive to present-moment work. Then, approach that child, using the technique *proximity*, get *eye contact*, and say, "Come over here. Let me show you something..." At the shelf, point to the sandpaper letter, and say "Watch" as you remove the set of letters (full set) and take it to a table where you sit down with the child. One at a time, take out the three letters, "c", "u" and "p" to give a suitable nomenclature (Seguin) three-period lesson. Finish the lesson by joining the letters "u" and "p" to make the word "up". Using the letter sounds, the right language is "Let's say them together ...faster.... smoother", until the child recognizes the meaning of the word.

A brief introductory lesson with these letters takes only a few minutes, and will

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Be Friendly, Get Acquainted

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tive, interesting work with his hands. In each interruption, your aim is to link the child with some aspect of the environment that will interest him enough to bring about a deep concentration on some particular piece of work.

The Teacher as Link

"There is a direct interchange between the child and his environment while the teacher with his...interaction constitutes primarily a link."

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

Montessori teaching serves to link each child with a specific piece of work that will deeply interest him at that time. In doing this, however, keep your words and actions as brief and objective as possible, so you don't stimulate any harmful dependency on your physical presence in the situation. Any over-friendly behavior, for example, will actually ensnare both you and the child in a net of mutual dependency, which will disturb the child's path to true normal development.

Ensnared in the same Net

"Even though child and adult seem to have a deep understanding and affection for one another, they are ensnared in the same net..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.162

The proper idea of "friendship" with a child is one of mutual respect, not a one-sided dependency on the adult's role of authority and control in the relationship. So, cultivate a sense of friendly collaboration with the child's own instincts for free, independent activity.

Sadly, some adults adopt a more superficial form of "help" and "friendship" with children, which then presents a serious obstacle to the child's growth towards independent, self-directed activity. So, when the child begins to show interest in working with some material, move away to a position of passive observation so you don't interrupt him with your physical presence.

Don't Interrupt Interest

"When the child begins to show interest...the teacher must not interrupt...this is the moment at which the teacher most often goes wrong."

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

Applying the *be friendly, get acquainted* protocol helps new children quickly adjust to the conditions of freedom you are seeking to provide in the environment. It also helps restore an effective relationship with some child who has become alienated from the environment due to some mistake you have made in the past.

Besides this *be friendly* protocol, other protocols, such as *least amount of adult involvement*, *enhance independence*, and *don't interrupt concentration*, also contribute to creating the right type of friendly rapport with children as well. Applying these protocols, children eventually come to deep concentration on work that brings about the transforming event of normalization. At this

point, the child enters into the final stage of true normal development, which shows forth in such outward qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, peace, and perfect harmony with others.

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the protocol *no rules for children*. So, in a bully-victim conflict situation, don't coach children to use a word like "stop" because it amounts to a rule, and a negative one at that. Like "No", the word "Stop" can be misused to deter ordinary social interaction among the children. For example, what happens if a child approaches another child with a normal request, and an over-sensitive child (victim) takes this as an insult and offense, and then reacts with a harsh "Stop"? Or, suppose a persistent bully doesn't "stop" when prompted by the "victim" child? Here, the child's only recourse is to appeal to the authority of teacher, which creates a dependency situation.

The best way to stop "bully" behavior is to give NO attention to the conflict itself. Instead, let the children work out the problem in their own way. If physical violence appears likely, however, you can always intervene using such techniques as *distraction* and *clear direction* (at the 3-6 level).

At the elementary level (6-12), if the "victim" child approaches you for help, here is an ideal opportunity to raise the issue in a total group meeting. After presenting the problem in an objective, factual manner, let the children talk and reason the problem out to a solution they can all accept. In the meeting, you can use the technique *questioning* to aid the discussion, such as by asking, "Do you think that would help?" and "How do you think the other child would respond if you did that?" By contrast, the teacher's "solution" to offer rules and procedures, such as saying "Stop", hardly ever improves the situation for long; and instead, just creates more victimhood and dependence on external adult authority.

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Messages to IMS

May 2016
Albuquerque, NM

Hi. I met you in Albuquerque when I worked at Sandia Montessori a long time ago. So, all these years I've been working at different Montessori schools for brief periods of time. I just never fit in and wondered what in the world was wrong with me. Then just yesterday, I went to your website; and my problem is solved! I am an IMS Montessorian. I'll be taking your training later this year, if all goes well. Thank you.

Suzette Layman

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The Montessori



Moment of Peril

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easily convey the idea that “letters make sounds, and sounds together make words”. In giving this lesson, you do not unduly disturb the child’s freedom because, after all, you didn’t approach while the child was concentrating on some other work. However, if the child does object, follow the *basis of interest* protocol by asking, “What do you want to do now?” If the child says “I don’t know” or “nothing” or “not this”, give him a clear direction to close his eyes, and think about what he would most like to do, and when he knows what it is, go and do it.

If the child rejects the lesson at that time, just repeat the same lesson each day, until the child finally pays attention. As long as the child is watching and doesn’t object, give the same exact simple presentation with “c”, “u” and “p” each time. However, Following the *basis of interest* protocol, change what you are doing in the lesson, such as by offering different letters or words, if the child indicates his preference for that. Once the child gets the idea that “letters make sounds; and sounds together make words”, he will then likely proceed soon on his own to phonetic reading books and other self-directed exercises in reading and writing with other children.

Child Doesn’t Talk

After several months with 6 year old Valerie, the teacher suddenly realizes that she has never heard her say a single word, either to her or anyone else. Although Valerie seems to listen well, since she readily follows verbal instructions, the teacher is concerned that her muteness must in some way be a mental defective or retardation in her verbal communication skills. What to do? Answer in *Observer*, September, 2016.



Older elementary children doing map work at the Folsom Learning Center (Folsom, Louisiana)

IMS Video Training in Pakistan

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The Seminar was part of a full-day workshop training conducted by *Montessori Peace Association* (**Saeed Shahab**, Director). At the workshop, Saeed showed several videos from IMS, relating it specifically to the Character teaching (CT) project that Lee and Saeed have been planning to start up in Pakistan. This CT project aims to train teachers for Montessori teaching with poor children to overcome the surrounding conditions of cultural poverty.

Greenville Montessori School

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the Texas Licensed Child Care Association (TLCCA) in the state of Texas! Along with another school they own in Murphy, Texas, Sanjy and Dolly take honor and pride in providing care and education for children and managing their schools as their full time profession.

The Greenville school is conducted in a beautiful and modern facility with well-equipped classrooms, indoor gym, library and computer room, commercial kitchen and an aquarium. Spanish language and music enrichment programs are included, along with a dedicated infant/pre-toddler wing having two infant rooms and a pre-toddler room.

For further information, contact: Jay Blench, Director, Greenville Montessori School, 550 Trinity Drive, Allen, TX 75002 Website: <http://www.greenvillemontessorischool.com/> Tel. 214-383-5093 jayashree.b@greenvillemontessorischool.com

Montessori Tools and Tips

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Getting up in the Morning Victory is Harmony!

Problem: Any advice on how to get my teen organized in the morning? She gets clothes ready the night before and sets the alarm clock early. However, she takes forever getting up, getting dressed, and getting going. She goes to bed early. Not sure what else to do.

Analysis: In this scenario, your “adult personality” is the primary detrimental influence, which is projecting “abandonment”. You mistakenly assume that because she is a “teen” she should know how to do simple things, like getting dressed and out of bed. The truth is that she gets distracted, and you are abandoning her — because you are not there watching and supervising.

Solution: Be physically in the room with your daughter when she gets up; get eye contact, give specific, clear direction; use questioning, like “What are you doing?” “What are you going to put on?” If the response is stony silence, or a terse “Shut up” or “Leave me alone”, just allow a brief moment of *patient waiting*, and then return with more questioning, applying the technique *repetition*, as often as necessary until you get a satisfactory response. Doing this for a few days, she will eventually get the idea, and start carrying out the basic functions to get up and going on her own. But if not, just stay with her until she does. OK?

Follow up: Lee, I did what you said and it took about two weeks and she is now getting up and doing everything on the first request. And, she asked me to please tell her when it’s time for her to walk out the door so she doesn’t miss her bus! Victory is harmony!