



The Montessori OBSERVER

Cooperative
Touching

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Allen West Speaks for Liberty in Maryland

On October 9, 2013, **Allen West**, former US congressman from Florida and retired Lt. Col. in the US Army, spoke about the value of freedom to some 200 political activists in Bowie, MD. He said that even where government is unfriendly to individual liberty, such as in the state of Maryland, we must stand and fight against this repression.

Col. West's speech was delivered at a dinner honoring former US president, Abraham Lincoln, who is known internationally for guiding the United States through a bloody civil war and abolishing slavery in this country. This dinner event was to raise funds for a political group in Maryland committed to liberty and limited, constitutional government. Col. West spoke without fee as a contribution to this cause.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, was active in helping to organize this dinner, which featured the attendance of many prominent liberty political leaders in Maryland. Attending also was **Carol Bubani**, long-time Montessori educator and friend of IMS from Florida. Carol resides in the district that Col. West represented as the first black congressman in Florida since the time of the US civil war.

Before the dinner, Lee and Carol met personally with Col. West to discuss the connection of Montessori education with the larger cause of liberty. In this meeting, Carol pointed out the great potential contribution

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Carol Bubani and Lee Havis at the Lincoln Day Dinner in Bowie, Maryland - October 9, 2013



Children working at International Montessori Academy in Sycamore, Illinois (In foreground, child is engaged in math activity, matching counters with numerals)

Montessori Academy in Sycamore, Illinois

In June, 2008, **Kim Staffey** purchased a school with 15 students, and in just a few short years, built it up to its present enrollment of around 70. The school, *International Montessori Academy (IMA)*, now serves children aged 3 to eighth grade, with plans for an additional separate location for infants and toddlers. Kim says she took on this project because of her love for the Montessori philosophy which she acquired from prior operation of a home daycare and her own personal Montessori teaching experiences with children.

Before Kim's ownership, the school was known as *Montessori School of Dekalb* which had been in business since 1975. Soon after purchasing it, Kim re-located the school to its present facilities at 1815 Mediterranean Dr. in Sycamore, Illinois.

Kim attributes the school's rapid growth under her ownership to a strong partnership and relationship with families of the children enrolled. She says, "IMA views parents as a primary component in the education process. We are committed to working as a partner with parents in an atmosphere of respect and concern to ensure a meaningful experience. The school's motto is 'Help me to do it myself'."

Opening date for the new school for infants and toddlers is late November. This

new undertaking is designed to bridge the gap between home and the more formal social experience of a school environment.

For more information, contact Kim Staffey, International Montessori Academy, 1815 Mediterranean Dr., Sycamore, IL 60178, kstaffey@imamontessori.com, <http://www.imamontessori.com/> 815-758-6822

Bullying and Making Friends

by Lee Havis

Bullying is a common concern of many who, too often, focus on treating its symptoms, rather than the cause. Montessori teaching, however, treats the cause of the problem in the environment, pointing especially to the controlling, aggressive, or negligent behavior of the supervising adult. By removing these detrimental influences, bullying behavior disappears to reveal the children's true natural kindness and respectful attitude towards themselves and others.

In small issues of 'bullying', Montessori teaching just allows children to resolve these problems naturally on their own. For example, once I observed a child slap another child hard across the back. In response,

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Cooperative Touching

by Lee Havis

"...the child has a teacher within...we adults...may enjoy the privilege and good fortune of becoming its assistants and faithful servants by helping it with our cooperation."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p. 46

Montessori teaching collaborates with the child's true natural development by controlling the environment through a type of scientific observation. In this approach, the child's physical body is considered as part of the environment which, if necessary, you must control through such techniques as *cooperative touching*. In using this type of heavy interaction, however, you must never interfere with a child's free normal self-directed activity.

Not to Interfere

"When the child begins to show interest... the teacher must not interrupt, because this interest corresponds with natural laws...Not to interfere means not to interfere in any way. This is the moment at which the teacher most often goes wrong."

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

Montessori teaching is foremost the method of non-intervention to observe rather than "teach" children. So, even if a child is imperfectly struggling with some difficult piece of work, leave him alone as long as he doesn't ask for your assistance. Eventually, this type of alert non-intervention will lead the child to enter into an attitude of deep seclusion with some particular piece of work. Then, in a moment of profound concentration, there occurs a *normalization*, which is the child's fundamental shift to true normal development.

Deep Seclusion

"The child adopts with simplicity an attitude of deep seclusion, and there forms in him also a strong and calm character radiating love to those about him."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.249

Montessori teaching helps children concentrate by creating the necessary conditions of calm and order in the environment. Only in this way can children fully enter into deep seclusion with some piece of work to bring about the transforming event of normalization.

Creating calm and peace in the environment, however, requires removing many obstacles, such as the distracting disorder of other children. Here, *cooperative touching* is often useful to re-direct a misbehaving child back to some activity in present-moment reality. In this way, each child eventually has the freedom to fully explore his own interests in working with the self-teaching materials you provide.

Freedom

"If freedom is understood as letting the children do as they like, using or more likely misusing the things available, it is clear that only their 'deviations' are free to develop, their abnormalities will increase."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.206

Montessori teaching gives children freedom for self-directed activity that is consistent with their true natural development. Offering this type of freedom, however, is not passive inaction in the face of misbehavior. Rather, it can be quite active at times, perhaps using cooperative touching to offer a misbehaving child your strong and friendly hand.

Strong and Friendly Hand

"The child who having lost control of himself momentarily, needs a strong support to which he can cling. The work of assistance at such a time means extending a strong and friendly hand towards one who is weak."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.153-54

Cooperative touching serves well to redirect children who are in a momentary state of fantasy or emotional distress. Here, for example, you might approach the disturbed child and say, "Take my hand" to then walk along together to find something interesting for him to do elsewhere in the environment. In offering your strong and friendly hand, however, follow the *basis of interest* protocol by having the child, not you, initiate the actual hand-hold contact.

The *cooperative touching* technique may also function to control the child's whole body at times, such as by assisting a child to safely climb down from a high place, stand up on wobbly legs, or move around some dangerous physical obstacle. More common, however, is using this technique to guide the child's hands and fingers through some difficult coordination activity. This occurs most often with young children due to their irresistible urge to touch everything.

Irresistible Urge to Touch

"...the child shows an irresistible urge to touch everything...His intelligence needs a world of things which provide him with motives for his activity."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.104

Touching objects is the natural way that young children learn. However, infants and toddlers especially need guidance in this process due to their lack of skill and experience. For example, it is common for these youngest children to misuse objects by placing them in their mouth. *Cooperative touching* is therefore often quite useful and necessary to help overcome these coordination difficulties.

A typical *cooperative touching* interaction begins with your verbal invitation, such as by saying "Let me show you this", or "Let's do it together". If a child refuses, which some-

times occurs in a misbehavior scenario, simply use other techniques instead, such as *distraction* and *clear direction*. Here, your action is typically to touch or hold the mishandled object just long enough to get the child's eye contact attention (*distraction*). Then, re-direct the child away from the misbehavior activity altogether, saying, "Come over here. Let me show you something" (*clear direction*).

If the child shows interest to stay with the activity instead, instruct him further in using the object in a proper manner, such as by telling him to, "Put it here" (pointing)

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Look for the
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 featuring
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Lee Havis, Executive Director

The Montessori Observer is mailed four times each year, in March, May, September and November, to Society members throughout the world. The purpose is to provide news and information about the Society's work in Montessori education, and to extend awareness of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

Uninvited Help

Although six-year-old Michael sincerely wants to help younger children in their learning activities, too often, he attempts to do this in a rude and negative manner. **See *Observer*, September, 2013.** The teacher's problem, therefore, is to help Michael change his behavior without discouraging his good intentions as well.

Analysis: Michael is the "hub" child in this scenario which has "other children" as the primary detrimental influence. As always, the "adult personality" is also detrimental here to some extent, and must be controlled as well. However, in this situation, controlling the "other children" involves your interacting with them as a first priority.

Practical Advice: The "moment of peril" emerges whenever Michael attempts to help children, which usually becomes too rough, physical, and judgmental. For example, Michael approaches a young child, without invitation, to help him draw a circle with a pencil. His first action is to roughly snatch the pencil from the child's hands saying rudely, "That's all wrong. You can't do it that way."

Resolving this misbehavior, you must approach and intervene in a firm, yet positive manner. For example, first touch the pencil that Michael is now holding to get his attention (*distraction*) and then, while he is looking at you, say, "Put the pencil down here. Watch." If Michael objects, saying, for example, "I know how to do it", "Go away", or "I'm giving the lesson", use *repetition* and *patient waiting*, to get him to comply. In the process, follow such IMS protocols as *eye contact before talking* and *basis of interest*.

If Michael tries to snatch the pencil from your hand, ask him, "Would you like to have the pencil now?" When he says "Yes", give him a practical life lesson on exchanging objects, such as by saying, in a calm and pleasant manner, "Hold out your hand, and say 'May I have that please?'" Then, slowly and carefully, place the pencil in his hand.

Continue interacting with Michael and the other children in this manner to model peaceful, positive behavior. For example, if Michael speaks rudely about the other child, saying, "David is so dumb, he can't even keep his fingers around the pencil", use the technique *reflective language* to engage him further, such as by saying, "You see that David needs help in holding the pencil right. So, show him exactly how to do it. Make sure he's watching, (protocol, *child watching*) and then do it very slowly (protocol: *emphasize main point - isolate variable*). Try to hold his hand more gently as you draw the circle together." (technique: *cooperative touching*).

In all your actions with Michael, practice the protocol *model good behavior*, to show

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Cooperative Touching

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and "Watch". Then, show him what to do with your own hands alone. Finally, invite him to do it on his own. In all these sensorial interactions, whether using *cooperative touching* or not, the child is experiencing an education of the hand as part of his basic mental development.

Education of the Hand

"The education of the hand is particularly important since the hand is an organ of the mind, the means by which the human intelligence uses to express itself."

Dr. Maria Montessori

*from **Discovery of the Child**, p.284*

Montessori teaching provides an orderly arrangement of materials for children to explore and experiment with on their own in many useful ways. At times, however, *cooperative touching* is necessary for this education of the hand, especially when the movement is very delicate, such as using a writing instrument for drawing or writing. Here, *cooperative touching* involves holding your hand over the child's as you carefully guide the pencil to make the particular shape. This same type of close cooperation is also effective in presenting many other materials as well.

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*

Montessori teaching presents materials to children on low shelves so they can freely choose them as they wish. However, when a child asks for your help, you may need to provide a more specific type of interactive lesson presentation.

Before offering any such presentation with materials, make sure you have a specific "green light" signal of interest, such as the child asking in words or giving you eye contact while touching some particular piece of work. Only then, give a brief demonstration, and then turn the exercise over to the child with a phrase such as, "Would you like to do it now?" If, in the process, the child asks for more specific help or shows an awkward or harmful movement with the materials, you might then offer further help through *cooperative touching*, such as by saying, "Let's do it together".

With infants and toddlers, cooperative touching is especially important at times due to their relative lack of body and hand control. For example, if a child is struggling to put on his shoes or attach a button on his shirt, cooperative touching can help him complete this simple practical life activity in a very effective manner. During this process, however, do only what is necessary and no more.

What is Necessary

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

Dr. Maria Montessori

*from **Child in the Family**, p.72*

The *least amount, basis of interest and enhance independence* protocols all teach you to conclude your cooperative touching as soon as the child begins handling the activity on his own; or is no longer interested in your cooperation. At this point, therefore, end your cooperative touching with a phrase such as, "Would you like to do it now?" In this way, your brief, simple interaction reduces the likelihood of imposing your personality, such as by creating undue dependency or provoking a hostile power struggle.

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Messages to IMS

October, 2013
Prague, Czech Republic

To IMS

... a BIG THANK YOU to you Mr. Havis,

We bought your book *Teaching Montessori in the home - the preschool years* (Elizabeth Hainstock) and we are using it with great success. I cannot thank you enough... I have and will continue to recommend your book as it is a common sense approach on how to raise a child.. Thank you very much as you have helped my family and many others....

Best Regards,

Kinota Braithwaite
Upper Elem. Teacher

October 2013
Augusta, Kansas

Lee:

I loved this lesson. (IMS course, lesson #3 "Normalization"). I have already changed the routine for the children so that they start to work as soon as they enter the room. At first, it was difficult, however, now I see that they are learning more. Five children have already started to work on addition in math! (translation from Spanish)

Sally Korte (IMS student)

October 2013
Lynchburg, VA

Hey Lee,

My home school is going great. Maya has started to show interest in letters, numbers, shapes, and colors. So we are working on these. I feel like I have total freedom in using the techniques and protocols....I have really started to live into the role as a quiet, calm Montessori directress...to help children develop naturally to normalcy...I feel like I am being totally transformed as an individual as a result of all my training.

Patty Brophy (IMS student)

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Personality of the Teacher

"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

In any lesson presentation, reduce your personal presence as much as possible, such as by avoiding even friendly, yet distracting, comments such as, "Isn't this fun?", or "Do you do this at home with your mommy?" In addition, follow the protocol *no negative attention to misbehavior* to avoid any mention of a child's defects or weaknesses you notice in the process.

Defects and Weaknesses

"...we must help the child to liberate himself from his defects without making him feel his weakness."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Child in the Family*, p.66-67

Using *cooperative touching* naturally brings out the great difference of skill between you and child in handling some piece of work. So, if the child notices this difference and becomes discouraged, saying, for example, "You do it", "I can't do it" or "It's too hard", respond with some encouraging words, such as, "Look! You're doing it!" and "That's the way!" Eventually, your encouraging attitude, coupled with the child's own growing self-awareness of success, will lead him along the way to independence to solve many new problems more on his own in the future.

Way to Independence

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

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.89

Montessori teaching is a polishing process of removing obstacles in the child's

environment, beginning first with very strong types of interaction, such as *cooperative touching*. Gradually, however, children require less and less direct physical contact support as they gain confidence to instinctively move along the way to independence. Following such protocols as *enhance independence* keeps your physical actions with children consistent with laws of nature, so that eventually you become a virtual "nobody" observing the children's normal development without any physical involvement or interaction at all.

Moment of Peril

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him how to help other children in a positive, respectful manner. Using this and other protocols will teach Michael in an experiential way just how to properly use IMS technology when he later gives lessons to the younger children on his own.

Talking too much

The teacher complains that although her young elementary children do not have major behavior problems, they are talking way too much. This excessive fantasy talking occurs during transitions, during lessons and during individual work time. To solve the problem, she has tried not smiling, raising her voice, and using a color-system to reward for good attention. However, this only seems to draw even more negative attention to the excessive talking. Now, she feels she is losing control, since the children pay so little attention to her. What to do?

Answer in Observer, March, 2014.

Allen West

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that former military officers could make in the field of Montessori teaching. She noted that their proven discipline, commitment to duty and character were most needed in this work of creating freedom for the 'new education'.

Congressman West is a well-known leader in the liberty movement in the United States, appearing frequently on national news and conference events. He continues this work through a political action committee (PAC), the *Guardian Fund*, which he created to raise funds for candidates who especially support the basic constitutional principles of individual liberty and free market enterprise in the United States.

Bullying

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

the child just shrugged a bit and continued his work. When this happened again to the same boy, he simply shrugged it off again. After that, the bullying child just walked away, and everything was peace and harmony as if nothing had happened at all.

The main idea in dealing with bullying is therefore like this, to remain detached and objective when it occurs, acting as if it never happened at all. Now, for adults, this doesn't mean to run and hide from bullying patterns when they do surface. Rather, stay close to the situation to protect any child from physical violence. If necessary, you may also help the children resolve their conflict through *reflective language* and other indirect means. More actively, also, you could lead the offending bully to some work that will interest him somewhere else in the environment.

Finally, if bullying continues as a serious pattern with some particular child, contact the child's parents to obtain their closer cooperation with Montessori teaching at home.