



# The Montessori OBSERVER

Emphasize Main Point(s)  
-Isolate Variable

Published by the International Montessori Society web: <http://imsmontessori.org> Tel. (301) 589-1127

## New President for USA

On November 8, 2016, citizens in the United States voted to elect **Donald J. Trump** as the 45th president of the country. In a bitter, and highly polarized battle for the direction of the USA, President-elect Trump won by overcoming massive opposition from the mainstream media and entrenched "establishment" political leaders from both major political parties in the country. An "outsider" in professional politics, he appealed to many ordinary citizens for his determination to end years of corruption and drift towards a radical agenda of big-government socialism.

Donald J. Trump is well-known to Americans as a flamboyant TV personality, successful businessman and best-selling author. He is also recognized as someone independent of the influence of big money interests in politics, and therefore most likely to achieve significant reform of government as compared with those from the ordinary class of career politicians.

In his campaign, Mr. Trump advocated for an end to widespread government corruption built on years of establishment political control, and most recently, a hard-line authoritarian rule largely conducted through very many "executive orders" in pursuit of a radical socialist agenda. Trump promised to "drain the swamp" of this self-serving elite power and return the country to the normal order of laws and constitutional government. One major promise was to secure the nation's border from the massive influx of illegal aliens.

In the field of education, Trump supports greater local control, focusing on choice and competition in the private sector free-market economy. He also advocates for a simpler, more efficient, government operating with lower taxes and less regulation to protect the fundamental freedoms of all American citizens.

Lee Havis, IMS founder and executive director, was personally active in the Trump campaign, as part of his many years of fighting for freedom from government-controlled education in the United States. In the current campaign, Lee created the organization *Maryland Grassroots Republicans* (MGR) to help unify political action for the underlying Trump principles of freedom, prosperity, and security. Through this organization, Lee raised funds and coordinated volunteers in the state of

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Child working with "moveable alphabet" language materials at the Montessori Academy of Owasso

## Montessori Academy of Owasso, Oklahoma

When **Elizabeth Bradt** first moved to her new hometown of Owasso, Oklahoma, she quickly realized the glaring lack of a school with the Montessori philosophy. After speaking with community members who expressed interest in the idea of a Montessori school, she founded the *Montessori Academy of Owasso*. Beginning with an initial enrollment of 12 students, in just two years, her school grew to an enrollment of 80 students with nine teachers.

Elizabeth reports her very pleasant surprise in finding such positive community support for the school, which she credits for its explosive growth. She says, "With small class sizes, teachers and administration can have a personal relationship with each student's family. Many families list this as their favorite aspect of the school."

The school program is offered in a flexible scheduling for children from 12 months through 4th grade. For example, elementary students can take advantage of the school's part-time Homeschool Collaborative that allows them to attend only 2 or 3 days per weeks.

A key focus at the school is character development, with the inspiring motto "*Preparing Our Children to Change the World*". One way the school puts this into action is on Fridays, the elementary children go into their community to learn how the world works. In this program, Elizabeth says, "Students have helped serve food at the local café for the hungry, created art with residents at a nursing home, and visited a farm to feed animals."

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## Happy Land Nursery in Oman

The *Happy Land Nursery* is located in the city of Sumail, about one hour drive from Muscat, the capital city of Oman on the Saudi peninsula. **Dr. Eiman** and wife established this school in 2013, based on their recognition of the need for quality education and care for young children in this region of the world. Happy Land Nursery is unique in the area, being the first Montessori school ever located in their district of Al-Dakiliya Governorate.

Dr. Eiman, indicates that a major obstacle in the beginning of the school's operation was how to help the community understand about the basic idea of Montessori education. To overcome this obstacle, he conducted various seminars and lectures for parents to get acquainted with the value and purpose of Montessori teaching. He says, "Before opening this nursery, even the educated people didn't know about Montessori, but rather just applied the traditional way of education. However, once we did introduce to them the new system, they said, 'This is what we want for our kids'."

The Happy Land school was first located on the edge of the city of Sumail, due to government regulations. Now, however, Dr. Eiman says, "We are going to shift our location to the middle of the city to overcome the problem of travel and distance that many parents have with our current location. In the center of the city, the nursery will be reachable to all".

The school serves mostly families with parents working as teachers in the government schools and is funded on a fee-pay basis by those attending. Dr. Eiman is hopeful about the school's future success, noting the growing community awareness of Montessori teaching in his area. He says, "...People here are looking for the best for their kids, especially in education. They found Montessori is the best for that."

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# Emphasize Main Point(s) - Isolate Variable

by Lee Havis

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

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

Montessori teaching recognizes the young child as uniquely sensitive to absorb his environment in every precise detail. Knowing this, we must create an environment that reflects the perfect order and harmony of nature that the child can absorb through his interaction with various physical objects you provide. You must also emphasize the specific details of this order when you introduce each piece of work.

The IMS technology therefore provides the protocol *emphasize main point(s) - isolate the variable*, to help focus the child's attention to the pertinent details you are seeking to bring out in the various materials and exercises. With sensorial materials, for example, the *emphasize* protocol guides you to isolate the specific sense that is the main point of attention in each one.

## Isolate the Senses

*"...it is necessary to isolate the senses as far as possible if some single quality is to be brought out."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of Child*, p.102

Sensorial materials aim to focus the child's attention on some one specific variable, such as size, shape, color, or dimension. This means to isolate the specific sense of touch, vision or hearing by neutralizing the other variables in the materials as much as possible. To this end, the pink tower, broad stairs and long rods are all designed to have the same uniform color, so the child can better focus on the main non-color variables you are seeking to bring out, such as volume, area, or length.

In the furniture, you must also neutralize variables that would otherwise distract the child's attention from the variable you are seeking to isolate in the particular work. For example, have the shelves, tables and chairs all with the same uniform color and design, preferable natural wood or white. With such a neutral background, the main variable of the material, such as color, shape, or size, will stand out more clearly. Focusing attention in this way, the child absorbs order from the environment, which then sets in motion the basic formative process of ordering of his mind in harmony with true natural being.

## Ordering the Mind

*"The mind of a little child is certainly not a blank...but his concept are confused. The chaos of his mind has greater need for ordering what it already knows than of gaining more knowledge."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.245

The young child forms his inner order of reality by absorbing what the order he

experiences through his senses as he interacts with the various materials you provide. Montessori teaching aids this ordering of the mind by focusing the child's attention on the main points of order in each piece of work you present. One way to emphasize these main points is to minimize any distracting factors in the environment, such as by removing any loud, confusing, or colorful decorations and displays on the furniture, walls, and floor.

## Distracting Factors

*"The perfection of the exercise consists in removing as far as possible any distracting factors."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of Child*, p.102

The *emphasize* protocol teaches you to remove confusing, complex factors in the environment that would otherwise distract the child's attention from the specific object of that work. For example, while conducting a lesson presentation, avoid scratching your nose, tapping your fingers, clearing your throat, adjusting your seating position, and any other inadvertent body and hand movements as much as possible. In this way, you minimize the distracting factors of the adult personality.

## Adult Personality

*"The lesson must be presented in such a way that the personality of the teacher shall disappear...There shall remain only the object to which she wishes to call the attention of the child."*

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

The protocol *least amount of adult involvement* works in harmony with the *emphasize* protocol to help reduce the negative impact of the adult personality with children. Following these protocols helps keep your movements brief and simple, so the child focuses attention only on the main points in the work you are presenting. In many cases, especially with sensorial materials, you can further focus attention on the main object of work by having the child's eyes closed in the process of handling the physical objects involved.

## Eyes Closed

*"...teach the child to keep his eyes closed while he is touching something...he will feel the differences better...without seeing them."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.245

With eyes closed, you remove the visual sense, which therefore isolates the sense of touch in handling the various physical objects. For example, handling the knobbed cylinders with eyes closed forces the child to rely just on his sense of touch to return these cylinders to their proper place in each block. Using a blindfold also helps in this process as well. Another way to emphasize the main point of some piece of work is by changing the intensity of the stimulus involved.

## Intensity of Stimulus

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

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.123

Increasing or exaggerating the sound or volume of a word can help to emphasize the main point of a particular piece of work. For example, use a slightly higher voice pitch or inflection when saying a key word or concept, such as "This is BLUE" (to bring out the name of the color while presenting the color tablets). Also, showing the touch tablets, you can emphasize the smooth texture of a wooden surface by saying, "This is SMOOOOOTH" (slowly draw out that word).

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Look for the  
**March, 2017**  
**Observer**  
featuring  
*Child Watching*

ISSN 0889-5643

**The Montessori Observer**  
Published by  
INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY  
Tel. (301) 589-1127  
havis@imsmontessori.org  
Worldwide Web:  
<http://imsmontessori.org>  
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

### Clean Up Issues

4 year old Nathan, doesn't clean up work he takes out, and is therefore the hub of this *moment of peril* (See *Observer*, September, 2016). Although "physical objects" here are certainly a detrimental influence, the 'adult personality' is also a prominent obstacle as well.

**Analysis:** On the surface, the primary issue seems to be the "physical objects" that are not being cleaned up. However, in reality, the practical problem is Nathan's "disobedience" to the teacher's clear direction to clean up. Although the teacher tells Nathan what to do many times, he doesn't follow through to actually do it on his own. So, the main problem is to resolve the teacher projecting "abandonment" on Nathan. To solve this problem, she must effectively follow up her initial direction, such as by using the technique *repetition*.

**Practical Advice:** Since obedience in children is natural and normal, the teacher must first examine the reason that Nathan is so consistently disobeying her directions. There are only two reasons for a child's disobedience: (1) doesn't know how to do what you say or (2) can't. Usually, the problem is (1), *doesn't know how*.

So, while you may think your clear direction to "clean up" is adequate, in fact, Nathan may not be fully paying attention, and therefore doesn't know how when he must do it on his own. If so, apply the technique *repetition* and the protocols *simplify complexity* and *child watching*, by slowing down your actions, to make sure that Nathan is fully watching and listening to your directions. Following the protocol *eye contact before talking*, be sure Nathan is paying attention when you tell him what to do. Then, after the lesson, point to something on the floor to put away, and give the *clear direction* again, or a suitable question, such as "Where do these go?" Finally, confirm that Nathan understands by watching to see that he does the clean up properly on his own.

It is also possible that Nathan "can't" (2) put his things away, due to prior threats, punishment, or intimidation about "clean up" issues at home. If so, you are now dealing with a classic "power struggle" scenario, which you must address more with *patient waiting*. Here, approach Nathan with a neutral, friendly facial expression, wait for eye contact, and say in a calm, friendly manner, "Come over here. Let me show you something." Then, pointing to some work left out on the floor, say "Where does this go?" Using *repetition* and *patient waiting*, do this each time he leaves something out, until he finally obeys and completes the clean up on his own without your involvement at all.

Following the protocol *don't interrupt concentration*, be sure Nathan is not concentrating on other work when you approach him to clean up. In addition, be vigilant to notice when he finishes with some piece of work, so you can call

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## Emphasize Main Point(s) *Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3*

Using the verbal techniques *clear direction* and *questioning*, can also help focus the child's attention in your lesson presentations. For example, when you say the safe word phrases "Watch" or "Which one goes next?", you focus the child's attention to the next step or point you especially want the child to notice. Non-verbally, you can also apply the *emphasize main point(s)* protocol by making some movements LARGER or slower.

### Act Slowly

*"...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

Exaggerating hand and body gestures, making them larger or slower, is another good way to emphasize the main points in your lesson presentation. For example, when showing the pink tower, exaggerate the slow, scanning movement of your head to emphasize that you are checking ALL the cubes before selecting the right

### New President in USA

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Maryland to publish and disseminate informative literature, signs, and a local "sample ballot" to help bring about a successful election outcome.

After Trump's stunning victory, elements of the losing side instigated violent demonstrations around the country to protest the election results. Lee sees this as an emotional reaction to the loss of government benefits which is likely to occur under the new Trump administration. Lee says, "This reaction is very much like a child's temper tantrum when he suddenly realizes he can't have everything he wants. Hopefully, the current wave of political unrest will subside and disappear as the goodness and value of normal reality eventually takes hold in society."

As president, Mr. Trump will enjoy the majority support of his own ruling Republican Party in both houses of congress. So, after his inauguration on January 20, 2017 in Washington, DC, he should be able to swiftly set in motion much of his bold, positive agenda for change, starting with repeal of various harmful laws and executive orders of the prior administration. Thereafter, he intends to work closely with congress to move forward his campaign pledge to "Make America Great Again".

one to place next. In addition, always act slowly in your movements to emphasize the habit of careful and thoughtful interaction with physical objects. This slow, deliberate acting also follows the protocols *same routines all the time* and *model good behavior*.

Emphasizing the main point(s) also applies when you are seeking to isolate an object that involves the complexity of many different steps and movements. Here, you must apply the *emphasize* protocol by separating the various specific difficulties into smaller distinct lessons and exercises.

### Separating Difficulties

*"Writing contains a complex set of difficulties which can be separated from each other and which can be overcome one by one through different exercises, and also at different times or periods of life."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of Child*, p. 207

In math and language work especially, the child must combine many skills and concepts together to achieve a particular object of higher learning. For example, in writing, a child must know the sounds of the letters, their right combination in sequence, and the hand coordination to make the letter shapes in a proper manner. Here, apply the *emphasize* protocol by separating out these difficulties into distinct exercises: metal insets for developing hand and finger coordination, and the sandpaper letters to recognize and sound out the specific letters themselves. This idea of separating difficulties also applies the protocol *simplify complexity*.

Done well, applying the *emphasize* protocol in various ways helps children gain accurate subject matter knowledge from the work. More importantly, it advances the higher purpose of true normal being that only comes through concentration on the work itself.

### Concentration

*"The first essential of the child's development is concentration...He must find out how to concentrate, and for this he needs things to concentrate upon."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.202

With young children, the main point of all Montessori teaching is to bring about a moment of profound concentration, which then initiates their entry into the ultimate state of true normal development. Applying the protocol *emphasize main point(s) – isolate variable*, helps bring this normalization about by focusing the child's attention that leads to a moment of deep concentration. Once normalized, the young child demonstrates his true nature in such amazing outward qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, peace, order, and harmony with others, which is the hopeful beginning of a whole new humanity in the world.

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# OBSERVER

The Montessori



## Moment of Peril

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him back quickly when he first leaves out some work to start something new.

If the situation is “clean up” at the end of the work period, make a group-game of putting work away, like saying, “Take a look around the room, and tell me if you see something out of place. When you know what it is, put it in place, and come back and tell me what you did.” Here, the game idea reduces any sense of shame or blame about not putting work away at an earlier point.

Long-term, you must also engage Nathan’s parents in a discussion about how to use Montessori teaching at home to deal with these clean-up issues in a calm, positive, “non-shaming” manner. Once Nathan gets the habit of cleaning up work under your direct supervision, he will eventually do it regularly on his own because he will have established a new habit of “order” which is consistent with his own true natural instincts.

## Engaging Fantasy

4 year old Judy loves to pretend being various imaginary characters she sees on TV. At times, she brings in action figures and engages other children in her elaborate fantasy drama. Since this activity is mostly quiet, and doesn’t interrupt the basic group order, the teacher has allowed this to proceed while she spends time giving lessons with children who are more interested in reality-based work. Now, however, she wonders if she is neglecting Judy’s academic development with math and language materials, and whether she should intervene to stop and re-direct Judy’s habitual fantasy activity. What to do?

Answer in Observer, March, 2017



Elementary children at Montessori Academy of Owasso feed animals at a nearby farm as part of the school’s community outreach program.

## Montessori of Owasso

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Elizabeth says that the 2017 school year will bring an upper elementary class to the school, more fine art classes and additional qualified teachers. She adds, “As the school prepares to expand through the purchase of a new building, the future looks bright for the Montessori Academy of Owasso.”

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## Montessori Tools and Tips

From IMS discussion group on Facebook; over 5,000 international members

by Lee Havis

## Resolving Abandonment

**Problem:** My child cries at the least provocation. We try to ignore but she follows us crying, and if eventually she will stop crying, the moment we start to have a conversation with her, she will explain, but again start crying. What to do?

**Answer:** In your situation, I see a fundamental “abandonment” of your child’s basic true natural being. Her crying is just the most visible form of her reacting to this abandonment. She is reaching out to be “heard” by someone who will listen and recognize her being. So stop walking away and ignoring your child in distress. Instead, get eye contact and listen to her without judgment. When she knows she is heard at a deep level, the crying will go away, and she will act in a normal way.

In practice, resolving “abandonment” uses such techniques as *patient waiting*, *repetition*, *eye contact*, and *reflective language*. Most likely, in your “conversation” you have been repressing her expression, like telling her to ‘stop crying’, and using moralizing lecturing-teaching, rather than simply observing in the manner of true natural Montessori teaching.

If you must “talk” in your conversation with her (rather than just listening), use the technique *questioning*. For example, when she’s crying, ask “What’s wrong?” Since your child is obviously quite verbal in her expression, listen to her words. Don’t “cut her off”, making critical remarks about her “crying”. And, when she’s crying, just observe in a silent, non-judgmental way.

When you start listening and observing more, you may find you are making other mistakes, such as showing excessive sympathy and building up a pattern of dependency. So, in your practice, you’ll have to experiment to find the right balance of involvement, knowing that ultimately, your child will be comforted most by knowing that she can solve her own problems in an independent, self-directed manner.