



# The Montessori OBSERVER

*Solving Problems*

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## Circle of Friends in North Attleboro, Massachusetts

*Circle of Friends Montessori School* is a home-based Montessori preschool in North Attleboro, MA, operated by co-founders **Roy** and **Michelle Landry**. It first began in Indiana in 1991 when Michelle began taking care of children in a home daycare setting when she and Roy were expecting their first child. After moving to North Attleboro in 1998, their home day care became "Circle of Friends Montessori School", which has now served over 100 local families from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, including all their own 10 children who have now completed the program too.

In 2002, Roy joined Michelle in the school's operation, with the intention of expanding its operation. This expansion became a reality with the addition of increased classroom space and student capacity while still retaining the home-based preschool experience.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has remained open, first serving their community's essential workers and now returning to its regular program without interruption. Michelle underlines the school's commitment to safety and service. She states, "We follow CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting every two hours. We also teach and require proper, regular handwashing. We use non-toxic cleaning liquids on our classroom materials, floors, and surfaces."

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Children work with the math spindle box materials at the Circle of Friends Montessori School in North Attleboro, Massachusetts.



On September 16, 2020, IMS launched its first webinar entitled "*Technology of Scientific Education*." This 8-session weekly webinar introduces this powerful practical knowledge that is so vital for the objective, consistent conduct of this approach to discover the child's true nature. The first session topic was "*The Function of Scientific Teaching*" and for the second, held on September 23, 2020, "*Creating a New Reality*." Parents and educators from the USA and Malaysia are participating.

Lee Havis, creator of this specialized technology, is presenting the webinar at the request and encouragement of several IMS teachers who are seeking to share this knowledge with others in their local area. **Sally Korte** (IMS '15), especially encouraged this remote learning course for parents and educators in her local Kansas area, to overcome the obstacles to normal in-person training due to the long-standing shut-down of society due to fear of covid-19 virus contagion.

## Montessori Tools and Tips

*Lee Havis answers questions raised in the IMS Facebook discussion page, "Montessori Tools and Tips" which has over 8,000 international members.*

**Question:** After our activity for today with 3 children, age 6, 4 and 2 years old, the older boy was racing around with his younger brother, when their dad suddenly came and opened the gate to pick them up. At that point, the youngest one rushed outside the compound and almost ran into an oncoming vehicle on the street. The father then scolded and spanked the older boy for not being able to protect his younger brother, as they entered their car and zoomed off. Now my question is, judging from this scenario, what IMS techniques and protocols would have been best to apply first?

**Answer:** To analyze this complex misbehavior scenario, start with the technique, "*imagination-previsioning*" (IP), by sitting in silence by yourself to think back over what you did, and what you would "*prevision*" doing now the next time to deal better with any similar situation that emerges in the future.

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Lee says that this online first IMS webinar is designed for anyone with interest in the field, regardless of background or professional experience with education or children. The presentation is a gradual, sequential learning process that builds up knowledge and understanding in a logical manner from one session to the next. After each session, participants receive a "home study report" to reinforce skills and knowledge they are learning in each one. The webinar is conducted through the popular online meeting platform, *freeconferencecall.com*.

Webinar content comes from various other IMS training resources, such as materials used in the two-day IMS workshop entitled "*creating the new education*". In addition, some of the participants have a 41-page study guide from the Danbury audio cd home study series. Lee says, "Providing this course over a full 8-week period of time, with regular study exercises to practice between each session, gives participants an excellent way to deepen their knowledge far better than is possible through only one single concentrated educational activity on the subject."

Lee has also been active in other similar remote learning seminars, such as several for teachers in Kerela, India. Recordings of these seminars are being made available through IMS social media and the IMS website. He says, "The current worldwide covid-19 gave rise to this type of online learning, which goes to prove the old adage that *necessity is the mother of invention*."

Based on the success of this first IMS webinar, Lee is planning to present it at different times to make this technology more convenient in the different time zones around the world. For more information, visit the IMS website which describes the webinar, <https://imsmontessori.org/programs/webinar>. Contact IMS to join IMS, and to be placed on the IMS email contact list to receive information about future webinar presentations.



# Solving Problems

by Lee Havis

*"The problems of education and of society will remain unsolved as long as there is no basis for their solution, that is, the normalization of the child."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.208

When Dr. Montessori discovered that young children could "normalize" to return to their true nature in her Children's House, she envisioned also an eventual solution to all the long-standing problems of evil, fear, and ignorance in the world. Sadly, this didn't unfold as she had hoped, since her ideas became confused, compromised and diluted in their actual application with children. So, many problems remained unsolved in education as Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education" was practiced in different cultures around the world.

## Problems of Education

*"The problems of education must be solved on the basis of the cosmic order..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p.14

Dr. Montessori began her work with the idea of scientific education as a way of observing children in their free, self-directed activity. While she recognized the validity of this basic approach, the more fundamental problem remained to bring this general idea fully under the control and authority of cosmic laws of nature. Only then would her ideal of a normalized orderly society fully emerge.

## Orderly Society

*"Children unaided can construct an orderly society. For us adults, prisons, police, soldiers, and guns are necessary...Children solve their problems peacefully."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.285

While Dr. Montessori helped many educators and schools bring out better order and good manners with children, extending this more widely in society was severely opposed by many negative forces, including the violent interference of two world wars during her life. Opposition proved deeply embedded in the ordinary adult who was blinded by many false beliefs and prejudices towards the normalized child and her idealistic dream of a new peaceful order and harmony in the world. Since these problems are ultimately spiritual in nature, Dr. Montessori came to recognize the need for greater self-knowledge among those educators seeking to practice her "new education" with children.

## Self-Knowledge

*"...adults...are confronted with the problem of self-knowledge, that is of knowledge of the hidden laws that direct the psychic development of man."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.208

Although Dr. Montessori didn't invent scientific education, she made a significant addition to its originator, the French medical doctor, **Eduard Seguin** who laid the groundwork for this approach many years before. Both Seguin and Montessori realized that scientific education would only work as intended if teachers could acquire a much deeper level of self-knowledge than is possible within the conventional bounds of personality and culture. In fact, this inner preparation implies also the reconstruction of a whole new reality based on absolute and eternal laws of nature.

## Reconstruction

*"To let the pupils do what they like....to lead them back to an almost wild state, does not solve the problems. The question is not to deliver man from some bonds, but to reconstruct."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p.19

The world's current reality is basically one that views the ordinary young child as having a built-in natural tendency towards inattention, fantasy, disorder, and rebellion to adult authority. Scientific practitioners must therefore reconstruct reality in harmony with cosmic laws that support the emergence of true natural being. Creating such a reality involves essentially removing the obstacles around each individual child.

## Removing the Obstacles

*"The teacher's happy task is...removing the obstacles, beginning with those which she herself is likely to present (for the teacher can be the greatest obstacle of all)."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Spont. Act. In Ed.*, p.264

While Dr. Montessori's method had the right general idea of "observation" and "freedom", practitioners need more precise scientific guidance. Happily, in 1979, I discovered the specific analytical framework to consciously understand and conduct scientific education.

My discovery was to focus on a SPECIFIC child and his SPECIFIC environment, rather than the global concepts of observation and freedom alone. In this new analytical framework, scientific teaching becomes a process removing the obstacles in the environment around a single "hub" child, where the child is an unknown spiritual being, and the environment is everything around that child, consisting of three specific elements: other children, physical objects, and the adult personality.

Many years later, in 2003, my further research led to a comprehensive "technology" for practicing this approach with even greater certainty and precision. Now, with this technology, practitioners have the practical tools for

solving each problem with children in an objective, reliable manner that was never possible before. One technique, "distraction" illustrates how these tools are employed in actual practice with children.

## Distraction

*"If there is some child who persistently annoys the others, the most practical thing to do is to interrupt him..."*

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

In the IMS technology, "distraction" is a specific technique for getting a child's attention, to then divert the child away from his harmful interaction with the environment at that time. For example, if a child is mishandling an object, approach and hold the object in his hand until he looks up at

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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

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/imsmontessori/> 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

### Back to School

The “moment of peril” here involves restoring order to a classroom of young children after their return from a long time away from the positive influence of a normalizing environment. (See *Observer*, May, 2020). *What to do?*

**Analysis:** There is no single misbehavior scenario to address first since all the children are involved in the misbehavior to one extent or another. Following the protocol *well-being of the total environment*, apply the various techniques and protocols in the way you would with a new group of children at the “beginning conditions” of stage 1 polishing.

**Practical Advice:** The first stage of scientific teaching, “beginning conditions”, requires your very active presence to establish a basic order in the entire environment. Since the children here are acting with the same disorder as a completely new group of children, apply the IMS technology just as if you were starting a whole new group.

The first step to restoring basic order in the environment is to call the children together in a group meeting. Typically, the form of this meeting is seated on the floor with legs crossed and hands folded in laps. Forming this meeting, you will mostly be applying the techniques, *proximity*, *distraction*, *repetition*, and *clear direction*. Since the children here are already familiar with the physical setting, you will need to separate the children from the activity they have already started with each other and the materials.

Begin by approaching each child individually, using the technique *proximity*. Establish *eye contact* and give a *clear direction*, such as “Let’s make a circle” and “Come and sit here” (pointing). When the children are seated in the circle, continue with clear directions to “cross legs” and “fold hands”. For this, the techniques *repetition* and *cooperative touching* are most useful.

Once the children are seated in an orderly circle, introduce several unifying, familiar songs with hand gestures or body coordination activities, using language such as “stand up” and “sit down”. At a convenient point in this process, instruct the children to “close eyes” and think about something they would most like to do in the classroom, and when they know what it is, go and do it.

If the children get up and go to work in an orderly manner, position yourself for observation from a position outside the children’s activity area. Any child who becomes disorderly, call back to the meeting area, and repeat the “close eyes” exercise.

On the next day, start with a group meeting, several songs or exercises, and then use the “close eyes” exercise again. Repeat this routine each day until you are confident that the children are in order enough for self-directed activity in the environment.

### Home Alone

The mother of 4-year-old Michael is frustrated with his inability to leave home due to covid-19 shut-down of all school and social activity outside the home. Since this single mom has to spend most of

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## Solving Problems *Cont’d. from Page 2, Col. 3*

you. Then, remove your hand, and apply other techniques, such as “*eye contact*” or “*clear direction*”, to re-direct the child’s attention to some aspect of reality in the present moment.

Using this technology, you can now conduct your experimental interactions with the environment to eventually remove its detrimental influence from around the “hub” child you are observing at that moment. In each scenario, the “adult personality” is always problematic due to the complex adaptations that have been built up in your own early childhood experiences.

### Complex Adaptations

*“...the secret of an adult’s subconscious is something that he represses within himself. To assist an adult we must help him untangle a skein of complex adaptations that have been made over a long period of time.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Secret of Childhood, p.10*

Removing the obstacle of your own “adult personality” involves controlling projections of abandonment and negativity which automatically emerge from inner flaws acquired during your own early childhood years. Finding and resolving these inner flaws is difficult because they are hidden by a web of complex adaptations that now have the appearance of a fixed truth and reality in your life. Controlling the “adult personality” in a misbehavior scenario, therefore, requires finding and correcting some unknown error within yourself that is at the core of the problem you are seeking to solve with children.

### Unknown Error

*“The adult must find within himself the still unknown error that prevents him from seeing the child as he is. If such a preparation is not made...he can go no further”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Secret of Childhood, p.15*

IMS technology provides the technique, *patient waiting* to gain a greater self-awareness to restrain the automatic acting-out drama that occurs in the face of some misbehaving child. Patient waiting is to stand still and quiet, to watch and listen, which is often sufficient to find the key unknown inner error. If this doesn’t work, then the technique “*imagination-previsioning*” (IP) is available. With this technique, you are alone and quiet, away from the children, first visualizing the problem, and then previsioning some corrective action you can take to later try out in the real life situation.

Another good way to discover “unknown error,” is to have some skilled practitioner observe what you are doing with children. However, since this is not

always possible, the IMS technology is designed to help you solve each ‘moment of peril’ with children entirely on your own through step-by-step scientific experimentation.

### Moment of Peril

*“It is primarily necessary to depend on oneself because in the moment of peril we are alone.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Spon. Act. In Ed., p.183*

In a typical class of children, the “moment of peril” is when you are forced to solve a problem on your own, using whatever limited knowledge and skill you have at the time. When multiple scenarios emerge at once, knowing what to do is especially difficult. Here, the IMS technology provides the protocol “*well-being of the total environment*” which directs you to first address the most serious problem, and then work your way through the others in logical order of priority. With practice, using all these various techniques and protocols can become such an established habit that you easily solve problems that before you thought were insoluble.

### Insoluble Problems

*“...spirit and intelligence...when these shall have reached the level of development which is proper to them, then all our ‘insoluble problems’ will have been solved.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Absorbent Mind, p.285*

In conventional teaching, issues of misbehavior, attention, fantasy and disorder are often seen as insoluble unless you resort to rewards, punishment and other forms of manipulative adult behavior. By contrast, the IMS technology gives you the tools for solving these “insoluble” problems in a non-violent, logical manner. As this knowledge becomes more widespread and common in education, even the greatest problems of humanity will become subject to our effective control and resolution.

### Problems of Humanity

*“If you can interpret correctly the behavior of the child, the problem of humanity will have been solved.”*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**

*from Voice of Dr. Montessori, 5 Dec. 1941*

Dr. Montessori created the essential vision of a revolutionary “new education” when she recognized the child’s true nature in 1907. This led her to see a time when the problems of humanity, such as war, poverty, and social disorder, would also come to an end as well. The IMS technology now offers the practical means for solving all these problems to finally realize the promise of scientific education to bring about a true natural peace, order, and harmony in the world.

## Montessori Tools and Tips *Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2*

Looking back, the young child running into the street and the father's spanking the older child points to an "out-of-control" (disorderly) environment with either the youngest child or the oldest child being the 'hub,' depending on which moment you choose to analyze the scenario. That said, the problem really first arose from the children engaged in a fantasy, running attitude in the beginning, reflecting a detrimental projection of "abandonment" from your own adult personality. So, let's look at that...

When the two older children started 'racing' it doesn't really matter which child is 'hub', because you are going to approach them both (*proximity*), and get attention (*distraction*) with the child who first looks up at you (the "other child" in the environment). If the younger child looks up at you, you will simply ignore the older child who is the "hub" at that particular moment.

With eye contact, give the child a *clear direction* (technique) to "take my hand" and "come" to where you are waiting at the gate. Call the older child over to you as well, if he doesn't come by himself. Give further directions to bring order to all three children as needed, such as "sit down" and "fold hands" together.

If that alone doesn't calm the children, use the technique *questioning* to focus on present moment reality, such as by asking, "Do you have everything you need from school?" "Who will be picking you up today?" or "What are your plans when you get home?" Also, the technique *clear direction*, such as "Let's check your backpack". If there is no "basis of interest" in this type of verbal discussion, try singing a

song together with hand gestures, like "open-shut them". If a child shows interest in "running", set up some specific goals and space, such as measuring time to cover a certain distance. With order and attention to present moment reality, the children will most likely leave with their dad in that same way when he comes as well.

Long-term, help the father learn from this problem situation as well. For example, contact him when the children are not listening to begin a conversation like this: "I'm sorry I didn't have good order with the children when you came to pick them up the other day. With good order, no child is likely to suddenly run away in a dangerous manner. One protocol we follow to have good order is "*model good behavior*", which is how children learn by watching and imitating what we do. Do you ever see your children imitating your behavior at home? Do you see how giving directions and modeling good order will work to avoid the urge to use extreme physical measures with your children? At our school, we try to follow such ideas as "model good behavior" so children will learn good skills for managing themselves in their own in later life. Would you like to work on that idea with your children at home? Let's talk about some specific ideas at our next parent conference."

## Moment of Peril

*Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1*

her time on computer networking from home, Michael is left alone to play with cars, legos and video games on his ipod tablet. When they are together, Michael is sullen and bitter with lack of normal interaction with other children. What to do? *Answer in Observer, November, 2020.*

## Circle of Friends

*Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1*

The school engages with children year-round, offering 3 full-day and 5 full-day programs for ages 15 months to 6 years old. There are designated classrooms for toddlers and primary level (2-6) aged children, each equipped with suitable hands-on materials to support their normal self-directed development. Michelle also indicates that learning takes place outside as well. She says, "The outdoor classroom includes a raking garden, nautilus, living dome, butterfly gardens, vegetable garden, fruit trees and blackberry bushes, large open space, and a playground with swings, slides, and other large gross motor skill activities for the children to enjoy. The summer months offer additional experiences in nature and our outdoor classroom, including extra field trips and water games."

Michelle emphasizes her commitment to practice mindful conflict resolution that guides students to interact with their peers with compassion, empathy, and peace. She states, "We promote diligence in caring for the classroom space, activities, and animals (our bird and frog!). We have an integrative, inclusive classroom, and our program has demonstrated success with students with physical and cognitive disabilities and other learning challenges."

For more information about the Circle of Friends School, contact: Michelle Landry, 508-761-5151, website: <https://circleoffriendsmontessorischool.com> email: [circleoffriendsmontessori@gmail.com](mailto:circleoffriendsmontessori@gmail.com)