

# **Fostering Independence, Self-Discipline, and Confidence**



Heather Downing

[hdowning@foundationsacademies.com](mailto:hdowning@foundationsacademies.com)

[www.foundationsacademies.com/resources](http://www.foundationsacademies.com/resources)

# Fostering Independence

- Little children, from the moment they are weaned, are making their way toward independence.
- It should be a rule of thumb, never to do for children that which they have learned or are trying to learn to do for themselves.
- This requires great forbearance, patience, planning, and preparing.

# **A Child-Centered Community**





- A child-centered community consists of multi-aged children.
- In a multi-aged setting, the children learn from each other, and they learn because of each other.
- Younger children get a chance to look ahead and see what is coming next by watching the older children
- Older children have the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge by sharing it with the younger children

- Because of their constant interaction, the children learn to take responsibility for themselves and for each other.
- They learn to get along with children of different ages and abilities
- They learn to respect each other's work and work space
- They learn to treat each other with courtesy

- They learn to excuse themselves, greet each other, and phrase requests politely
- They learn to take an active role in maintaining their classroom, by putting materials away in their proper places, ready for the next child to use
- The classroom becomes a thriving community where children are treated with respect, dignity, and want to treat others with the same respect and dignity

# **A Prepared Environment**





# A Prepared Environment

- In addition to being a child-centered community, the classroom must also be a prepared environment.
- A prepared environment is designed to facilitate maximum independent learning and exploration by the child.
- We rename the classroom, a “living room” for children or a “child’s home” or the “child’s world.”



# A Prepared Environment

- All the furniture is child-sized
- All the materials are scaled to fit the physical dimensions
- There is a variety of activity as well as a great deal of movement
- The prepared environment respects and protects the child's rhythm of life
- It is calm and orderly
- Here, the child experiences a blend of freedom and discipline in a place especially designed for the child's development.

**Materials  
Promote  
Independence**



- All materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves
- Materials are arranged as individual lessons, thus reducing competition in the classroom. Each child relates to his own previous work and his progress is not compared to the achievement of other children
- Lessons are designed with a built-in control of error to develop independence with our fear of failure

*Never let a child risk failure until he has a reasonable chance of success.” – Maria Montessori*

- Lessons promote independence, concentration, self-control, and self-esteem.



# Practical Life Exercises

Materials and Lessons



*“A child’s work is to create the man he will become.” – Maria Montessori*

## “Two Shoveling Sand”

Two people are shoveling sand on a beach on a hot summer day. One man, who is trying to fill a large barrel of sand; the other, a little boy, who is filling a pail with sand, dumping it out, and then filling it again. If anyone offers to help the man he readily hands over the shovel; but any efforts to help the little boy are resisted. He clings to his shovel because the work he is doing can be done only by himself. By constant repetition of motions he is strengthening his muscles, perfecting his coordination and gaining confidence in a particular skill. No one tells him that he has to shovel the sand, he is guided by the direction deep within his own nature.

# Practical Life Exercises

- Practical Life Exercise encompass the skills of daily living
- Although Practical Life Exercises may seem simple, the tasks help a child perfect coordination, increase concentration and attention
- Practical Life Exercises use familiar objects – buttons, brushes, dishes, pitchers, water, trays, mats



- Practical Life Exercises excite and engage the child because they allow him to imitate adults.
- Practical Life Exercises promote independence, self-discipline, and confidence by promoting:
  - Care of Self
  - Care of Environment
  - Graces and Courtesies
  - Control of Movement

- *“Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity, which is derived from a sense of independence.” Maria Montessori*

A closer look at Practical Life  
Materials and Exercises

# **Band-aids and Bubbles**





- With freedom comes independence but this does not mean that we must foolishly indulge every whim or allow children to be disorderly, disruptive, destructive, or inconsiderate
- Children need to be taught to respect the rights of others just as their own rights are respected
- But just as our Practical Life Exercises have a built-in control of error for “self-check” and “self-correction”

- But just as our Practical Life Exercises have a built-in control of error for “self-check” and “self-correction” discipline should be guided not controlled.
- Expected behaviors should also be presented very clearly and should be consistently and gently enforced, NOT bribed or coaxed.
- Expected behaviors should first be modeled and then guided.

- Children's behavior must come from within, not from the control of the outer environment.
- Children must learn to resolve their own conflict
- We must create an environment that is not overly indulgent and permissive, or stultifying and rigid.

- The Steps:
  - Create Child-Centered Community
  - Prepare the Environment
  - Use Meaningful and Intentional Materials and Exercises
  - Guide Children to appropriate behaviors by modeling and gentle enforcement
- The Goal:
  - Spontaneous Self-Discipline
  - Independence and Initiative
  - Confidence and Self-Esteem



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