



Reason, Individualism, Freedom Institute

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Active Listening is a valuable skill for *anyone*, but a must for a good teacher: we'll discuss its importance in this issue, as well as introduce our new advisor Joel Franck.

• Joel Franck, M.D. Joins Advisory Board

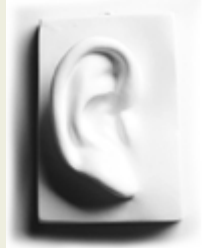
We are pleased to welcome noted neurosurgeon Joel Franck to our advisory board. A polymath, Dr. Franck is known not only as a neurosurgeon, but as a researcher and inventor of the [STarFix](#) stereotactic functional neurosurgery system. STarFix received the National Gold Medal Medical Design Excellence Award from the *Medical Device and Diagnostic Industry Journal*.



In addition to his private practice, Dr. Franck is Assistant Clinical Professor of Neurosurgery at Tufts University School of Medicine.

Highly knowledgeable in Austrian economics, Dr. Franck organized one of the earliest conferences against socialized medicine, "Regulating Doctors' Fees" at the [American Enterprise Institute](#). Dr. Franck brings expertise in the life sciences along with considerable knowledge in the humanities to our Advisory Board. This is a wonderful combination for our school, since we will be emphasizing the integration of knowledge across domains.

Active Listening



Last month we talked about inspiration as the fundamental mission of the teacher, because of motivations' deep importance to learning. This month, we'll examine [Active Listening](#) as a powerful teaching tool which promotes an inspiring relationship between teacher and student.

Respect for the Individual

Be "careful not to ask [your] questions of the [students]. Only when [students] seek to answer

questions which they themselves ask, do they commit themselves to the hard work of finding answers that are meaningful to them give only as much guidance and encouragement as is necessary to elicit the [students'] interest." Maria Montessori

As previously mentioned, [Shared Inquiry](#) or what is called Socratic Practice will be basic to the new College's teaching repertoire. Some of you may have been to classes which mimic this style of teaching. In these, a teacher might ask a questions like "What is justice?" - and then proceed to tell students they're wrong when they give an answer the teacher doesn't want. Well, that's wrong; Socratic questioning is meant to develop the student's ability to think about a subject, not to give the 'right' answer.

Teachers looking for the 'right' answer encourage students to focus on pleasing the teacher, not on thinking for themselves. The excellent teacher aims at helping students learn the facts and best theories available while learning to think well.

"It is a sign of crudity and indigestion to throw up what we have eaten in the same condition it was swallowed down to the fragments borrowed from others he will transform and bend together to make a work that shall be absolutely his own; that is to say, his judgment. His education, labor, and study aim only at forming that," Michael Montaigne.

Active Listening and Independent Judgment

[Active listening](#) is a key skill enabling teachers to nurture independent judgment. The active

• Arizona Objectivists

On
Saturday
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September
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Marsha



Familaro Enright gave a presentation on the new college to the Arizona Objectivists club in Tempe, AZ. Members with a wide variety of backgrounds, from programmers, engineers and medical device executives to professors and psychology graduate students engaged in a lively discussion about the purpose, curriculum, and organization of the new college. Even better, Arizona Objectivist members pledged future donations!

Thank you to Jackie Hazelton, head of the club, for funding and hosting this event.

• Active Listening continued

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this belief cripples students' minds by encouraging them to think that any opinion is acceptable, regardless of foundation - as long as it is theirs. While stoking their egos by making them feel whatever they think is important, such beliefs stop them from learning that true, valuable opinion must be grounded in facts and good reasoning - independent judgment being the well-spring of real choice and true individuality. Postmodernist ideology further deforms a student's concept of self by equating 'diversity' with group membership; one's 'diversity' depends on race or ethnic background or sexual preference rather than considered,

listener authentically tries to understand what the other means, empathizing with the other's point of view, his or her full context. Used in teaching, this means asking clarifying questions about the student's terms, respectfully allowing the student time to finish what he or she is saying before responding and, importantly, conveying an attitude of alert interest in what the student says. The active listener must try to leave aside any personal feelings about the subject and squash the desire to assert and forcefully drive home the rightness of his own opinion. Further, the active listener tries to sense any motives in the student's statements beyond the informational. For example, if a student in a class on Freud asks "What if a son is extremely fond and affectionate towards his mother – does that mean he has an Oedipus complex?" the teacher needs to be aware that the student may feel anxiety about his love for his mother.

[Active Listening](#) promotes the spread of truth. Only by active listening do we end up having a full idea of what the other person means, and thereby gain the opportunity to respond with appropriate facts and reasoning.

These days, teachers sometimes find it difficult to conduct good discussions because students have been led to believe all opinions are equal in value, and everyone should open their mouths to babble whatever they wish, no matter how inaccurate or trivial. Resulting from the reign of the [Post Modernist](#) attack on objectivity,

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ideological judgment. It promotes a concept of tribal or social 'diversity' rather than true ideological difference.

In contrast, Active Listening in the classroom conveys a deep respect for the independence of the other person's mind: the Active Listener takes the student's ideological point of view seriously, and tries to carefully respond to it. The aim is full understanding of what the other is saying in the service of arriving at truth. Just imagine the kind of productive political discussions we all might have if we used these principles! Some people have a rare, natural ability or tendency to listen like this, but, for the rest of us, there is hope, since it can be learned. It is also typical of the Montessori teacher, because of his or her deep training in careful observation of students.

Teachers and Observation To be a good listener, a teacher must be a careful observer. Maria Montessori, the quintessential scientist, incorporated the scientific method into her teacher training program. She urged her teachers to spend time every day sitting back and watching the students work, interact with each other and deal with problems. In this way, teachers learn a great deal about each student, their interests, abilities and difficulties, enabling the teacher to guide him or her well. Observe, empathize, respect – these are the basics of good teaching. "Our care of the [student] should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence." Maria Montessori

The only way teachers can learn these methods is by intensive questioning and self-reflective experience. Guidance by mentors of great experience, knowledge and skill especially helps. Such training will be a key component of a special two month teacher training course and apprenticeship for every teacher at the new College.

In this course the teacher will both study and practice the College's specific methods, as well as experience the breadth of the ideas and the excitement and challenge of examining the great works used in our curriculum.

of the young and our use of scientific discoveries and methods to maximize student ability to succeed.

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