

Autumn Issue Mar 2015

The Northside  
*Chronicle*

**DOES HANDWRITING MATTER?**

New evidence that links handwriting to broader educational development

**JOYFUL SCHOLARS**

The benefits of continuing Montessori education into the primary years

**NATIONAL YOUNG LEADERS DAY**

Helping our students to develop great leadership skills

Northside Montessori School  
Pymble, Australia

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Principal: Barbara Maxfield  
Coordinator: Jenni Jackson  
Design: Carolyn Ballard  
Cover Photography: Jennifer Taylor ([vividty.com.au](http://vividty.com.au))

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Northside Montessori School

42 Bobbin Head Road, Pymble NSW 2073

[www.northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au](http://www.northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au)

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# Welcome

**To the new families who have joined Northside Montessori School in 2015, I welcome you to our Chronicle.** This is the first of four newsletters in 2015 which are issued to families at the end of each term. It is more than just news as you will see. Our Chronicle is more like a magazine full of great reading, reflections, celebrations, educational content, photos and some advertising for events occurring in our local community.

Recently I was speaking to prospective families about the three-year-cycle for a child in a Montessori school and I was pointing out how the progression for the child over that period builds. I explained that as the child progresses they gain a **sense of responsibility and positive self-esteem**, that the children **consolidate and share their knowledge**, often with the help from older children, and finally they emerge as **confident and independent workers**. I likened the process to the various stages we all go through in life as we transition to new experiences; like the transition to secondary school, to further training or to university, into a career and subsequently to new employment positions. Even our relationships go through multiple cycles which follow similar patterns of newness and the gradual building of confidence over time. Our partnerships, marriage, the birth of our first child and subsequent children, the loss of loved ones and the ageing process are all cycles of life that we go through with varying stages of trepidation, the occasional set-back and with an ultimate emergence of wisdom and strength.

I feel like the child who has completed their first three-year-cycle. When I commenced at Northside Montessori School in January 2012, I was drawn to the environment, I wanted to 'touch and feel' everything that the school offered. I became immersed in learning more and more, and sought Montessori training so that I understood what Dr Maria Montessori was on about. Whilst my confidence and knowledge has grown enormously I realise that the learning does not stop. In my fourth year at NMS, or perhaps the beginning of my next three-year cycle, I still want to understand more about the Montessori method of education.

Our new Stepping Stones Montessori Long Day Care Centre is allowing me to see first-hand how important it is to provide a stimulating and engaging environment for the child in their early years. **Observing the children as their curiosity, confidence and skills emerge at Stepping Stones is a joy and further substantiates Maria Montessori's findings.** The acquisition of language and the development of independence, concentration and movement are at the core of this early educational stage. I see that the environment is vital for the child's development and that at Stepping Stones we have achieved what Maria Montessori said was necessary. **That the child needs "...a place of beauty, simplicity and order. A place where they feel secure to trust their powers."** - Dr Maria Montessori

My journey in Montessori education continues alongside that of the children. As I read the various insights and reflections shared by the staff at Northside in this edition of the Chronicle, I realise that I have so much more to learn from those around me too. Enjoy our Autumn Chronicle.

*by Barbara Maxfield, Principal*

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*"One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child."*

Maria Montessori

## Physical Education and Sport at NMS: Term 1

This year Physical Education and Sport are all on the one day....for those that thought they were the same then let me explain the difference.

Physical education offers the best opportunity to provide physical activity to all children and to teach them the skills and knowledge needed to establish and sustain an active lifestyle. It is an opportunity for children to learn what they can do with all types of equipment in the different activities. Physical education helps with motor and social skills in a supportive environment; it teaches children how to be physically active in safe and healthy ways.

Sport is playing the game; it is acting on the skills attained through experience and practice of physical activity. Children learn to work in a team environment using the skills learnt from their PE lessons. Fair play, sportsmanship and learning to accept the rules of the game play a major role in sport.

This term our main focus for Extended Day to Level 2 has been gross motor skills e.g. jumping, running, hopping, galloping, leaping and sidestepping with the aid of different equipment.

Levels 3 to 6 we have concentrated on cricket skills.

At the oval, Levels 1-6 have been improving their fitness and endurance for Cross Country running. The children are all running 2km plus, which is a great achievement.

The children have been very enthusiastic so keep up the good work.

Yours in Sport!

by Mary Abolins

## Upcoming Events

**Thur 2 Apr**

Last day of term 1 for students (half day)

**Tues 21 Apr**

First day of term 2 for students

**Thur 23 Apr**

Class Journey 0-3  
6.45pm

**Tues 28 Apr**

Parent Forum - Support Program Review  
6.00pm

**Wed 29 Apr**

Parent Education - NAPLAN testing  
9.00am

**Thur 30 Apr**

Open Morning for Prospective Parents  
9.00am to 10.30am

**Fri 8 May**

Mothers Day Breakfast and  
Open Morning (6-12 classes only)  
8.00am to 10.00am

**Tues 12 May - Thur 14 May**

NAPLAN testing Levels 3 & 5  
9.00am

**Tues 12 May**

Parent Education Evening - Mathematics  
6.45pm

**Wed 20 May**

Visiting author Jan Latte

**Fri 29 May**

Tuckshop Day

**Sat 30 May**

Open Day for Prospective Parents  
9.30am to 12.00pm

**Tues 2 Jun**

Parent Education Evening  
6.45pm

**Wed 10 Jun**

Class Photos

**Thur 11 Jun**

Open Morning for Prospective Parents  
9.00am to 10.30am

**Sun 14 Jun**

Working Bee  
9.00am to 12.00pm

**Tues 16 Jun**

Parent Education Evening  
6.45pm

**Fri 19 Jun**

Soiree 6.00pm

**Thur 25 Jun**

Last day of term 2 for students  
Parent / Teacher Interviews

# Joyful Scholars: Montessori for the Primary Years

Recently I came across an article written by staff and parents from 'Joyful Scholars' a Houston Montessori school in the United States. It raised some timely and universal points on the value of continuing Montessori education into the Primary years. Please find below some thought provoking and powerful extracts. *By Margaret Kroeger, Directress 9-12*

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'As children near the end of their kindergarten year (Extended Day) in Montessori, many parents struggle with the question of whether or not to keep their children in Montessori for the primary years. On the one hand, the typical Montessori five-year-old's self confidence and love of learning makes many families ask: 'Why tamper with something that is clearly working?' For other families this is a time to consider what to do. There is sometimes an unspoken concern 'Will Montessori prepare my child for the real world?'

The answer is – yes! Montessori does work! It has worked for decades and decades in thousands of Montessori schools around the world.

Montessori has enjoyed the support of some leading historic and educational figures of our time, including Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Mahatma Gandhi, Helen Keller, Sigmund Freud, Buckminster Fuller, Bertram Russell, Jean Piaget, Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson and David Elkind, just to name a few. One Elementary Directress responded to parent choice in this way:

'I have heard parents express their concerns that Montessori at the primary level may not prepare children for the 'real world'. I'm not exactly sure what that means. Is it that there is a sneaking suspicion that all this Montessori stuff is fine until kindergarten but now its time to face math tests and text books and a 'real' school?

I suppose it is a question of examining one's own values regarding education.

The reality is that the children in Montessori primary have been exposed to an extremely rich and integrated curriculum. **Real school should engender a love of learning and an acceptance of personal responsibility for intellectual growth as well as social interaction. Real schools attempt to shape long-term attitudes and concrete skills necessary not just to move up to the next grade, but to 'move up to' a successful and happy life.'**

Montessori children in Primary face new developmental challenges. A specially prepared learning environment is just as important now as it was in 3-6. More than school achievement test scores are at stake. Learning to identify, pursue and communicate deep interests in the world leads children to self-mastery and to habits of lifelong learning. **Primary Montessori students themselves are often the most compelling argument for the value of a Primary Montessori Education.**

The Primary years involve the sensitive period for the acquisition of what has recently come to be known as 'cultural literacy'. They are oriented toward intellectual investigation and discovery. They want to know 'why'. In Primary, Montessori, **students learn to think for themselves**. They are **encouraged to do their own research, analyse what they have and share their findings**. Montessori teaches students to think, not simply to memorize, feed back and forget. They literally learn how to learn, discovering that the process of learning can, and should be, as natural as breathing! **Students become fully engaged in the learning process.**

Rather than present students with all the 'right answers', Montessori Primary Directresses/Directors ask the 'right questions', and challenge children to find new solutions and discover answers. This is yet another element of the Montessori Primary program that prepares children to succeed in the real world of ideas, enterprise and challenging perspectives. Why? **While learning the right answers may get children through school, learning how to learn and to value learning will get them through life!**

Some final thoughts to 3-6 parents, in closing....

We invite you to take a close look at the kind of person your child has become today, at aged 4 or 5, and ask yourself, **'What sort of person do I want my child to become at aged 18?' What values do I want him or her to hold?** Do you hope that she/he still loves school and is excited by learning? If so, then you have laid the right foundation by sending him/her to Montessori thus far.

You've taken the first steps. Now the questions is, what's next? We invite you to observe in the 6-9 and 9-12 classrooms. Talk to 6-9 and 9-12 families about their experiences with the Montessori Primary years. Attend parent education evenings that touch on the primary years. By doing so, you will be in the best position to make the right decision for your child.

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## Does handwriting matter?

With the use of technology there is some debate about the merit of handwriting. According to some educators handwriting does not matter. They claim that teaching legible writing is only important for the very early stages of schooling around 5 and 6 years of age and that after that the emphasis should be on proficiency on the keyboard. However, psychologists and neuroscientists say it is far too soon to declare handwriting a relic of the past. New evidence suggests that the links between handwriting and broader educational development run deep. *By Barbara Maxfield, Principal*

**My own experience in education has convinced me that the process of writing, copying from other texts and even taking notes that are dictated out loud, enhance learning.** I can't claim to have the evidence of scientific knowledge and skills that modern psychologists and neuroscientist have but I am convinced that powerful learning takes place during the process of writing by hand.

Thankfully, you don't need to take my word for the merits of hand-writing!

**Children not only learn to read more quickly when they first learn to write by hand, but they also remain better able to generate ideas and retain information.** In other words, it's not just what we write that matters — but how.

"When we write, a unique neural circuit is automatically activated," said Stanislas Dehaene, a psychologist at the Collège de France in Paris. **"There is a core recognition of the gesture in the written word, a sort of recognition by mental simulation in your brain.** And it seems that this circuit is contributing in unique ways we didn't realize," he continued. **"Learning is made easier."**

A 2012 study led by Karin James, a psychologist at Indiana University, lent support to that view. Children who had not yet learned to read and write were presented with a letter or a shape on an index card and asked to reproduce it in one of three ways: trace the image on a page with a dotted outline, draw it on a blank white sheet, or type it on a computer. They were then placed in a brain scanner and shown the image again.

The researchers found that the initial duplication process mattered a great deal. When children had drawn a letter freehand, they exhibited increased activity in three areas of the brain that are activated in adults when they read and write: the left fusiform gyrus, the inferior frontal gyrus and the posterior parietal cortex. By contrast, children who typed or traced the letter or shape showed no such effect. The activation was significantly weaker.

In a study that followed children in grades two through five, Virginia Berninger, a psychologist at the University of Washington, demonstrated that printing, cursive writing, and typing on a keyboard are all associated with distinct and separate brain patterns — and each results in a distinct end product. When the children composed text by hand, they not only consistently produced more words more quickly than they did on a keyboard, but expressed more ideas.

And brain imaging in the oldest children suggested that the connection between writing and idea generation went even further. **When these children were asked to come up with ideas for a composition, the ones with better handwriting exhibited greater neural activation in areas associated with working memory — and increased overall activation in the reading and writing networks.**

It now appears that there may even be a difference between printing and cursive writing — a distinction of particular importance as the teaching of cursive disappears in some schools. In dysgraphia, a condition where the ability to write is impaired, sometimes after brain injury, the deficit can take on a curious form: In some people, cursive writ-

ing remains relatively unimpaired, while in others, printing does.

In alexia, or impaired reading ability, some individuals who are unable to process print can still read cursive, and vice versa — suggesting that the two writing modes activate separate brain networks and engage more cognitive resources than would be the case with a single approach. Dr. Berninger goes so far as to suggest that cursive writing may train self-control ability in a way that other modes of writing do not, and some researchers argue that it may even be a path to treating dyslexia.

A 2012 review suggests that cursive may be particularly effective for individuals with developmental dysgraphia — motor-control difficulties in forming letters — and that it may aid in preventing the reversal and inversion of letters. Dr. James found that when children drew a letter freehand, they exhibited increased activity in three significant areas of the brain, which didn't happen when they traced or typed the letter.

Cursive or not, the benefits of writing by hand extend beyond childhood. **For adults, typing may be a fast and efficient alternative to longhand, but that very efficiency may diminish our ability to process new information.** Not only do we learn letters better when we commit them to memory through writing, memory and learning ability in general may benefit.

**Essentially, with handwriting, the very act of putting it down forces you to focus on what's important. Dr Berninger adds that handwriting, "helps you think better."**

At Northside Montessori School we consider the teaching of handwriting to be very important and it is definitely here to stay at our school. If you are interested in reading more about handwriting and brain development there are many articles written about this.

The following link is the basis for much of this summary.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html?_r=0)

## SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

### PLAY

Harry Potter Trivia Party at Kuringai Libraries  
9-12 yrs \$5 Various dates and locations

Wizard Craft Workshops at Kuringai Libraries  
5-8 yrs \$5 Various dates and locations

Family Movie Night at Gordon Library  
All ages Free 5.30pm Thur 9 Apr

Bush Kids at Kuringai Wildflower Garden  
Activities for various ages and dates

### SEE

Lemnos 1915: Then and Now  
Combines images of contemporary Lemnos with eye-witness photographs taken in 1915 to reveal a unique perspective of WWI  
State Library of NSW  
24 Feb - 24 May 2015 Free admission

Luminous  
An exhibition of light works by Australian artists from the MCA collection  
Museum of Contemporary Art  
Until 8 Jun 2015 Free daily tours

Towers of Tomorrow: with LEGO bricks  
A world premiere exhibition of astonishing skyscrapers all made out of LEGO bricks  
Museum of Sydney  
Until 12 Jul 2015 Entry costs and timed bookings apply

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition  
Experience the power, mystique and beauty of nature through the wildlife photographer's lens  
Australian Museum  
28 Mar - 5 Oct 2015  
Entry costs apply

Jupiter: King of the Planets  
From nightly telescope tours to a Jupiter party day designed for mini-astronauts and a 3D Theatre show, come and explore this amazing planet.  
Sydney Observatory  
4 - 19 Apr 2015  
Activities for various ages and dates Costs may apply

### CREATE

Make your own Retro Cardboard Camera  
Art Gallery of NSW  
6 - 17 Apr 2015 11am -4pm  
Entrance court Free admission

# Bring on the revolution

We are hearing more and more that the traditional, one-size-fits-all, linear approach to education doesn't work. There is a groundswell happening today of educationalists worldwide working to reform educational systems. And the overwhelming view is that it is not reform that education needs, but REVOLUTION. *By Donna Brettell*

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I recently saw a news report about "The Future of Education", and though it was showing Montessori classrooms and referring to Montessori-style classrooms, it also referred to a term I keep hearing about: "The Flipped Classroom". This is one of the clearest descriptions I found. It is by EDUCAUSE - a non-profit membership association created to support those who lead, manage, and use information technology to benefit higher education:

**"The flipped classroom is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. Short video lectures are viewed by students at home before the class session, while in-class time is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions."**

"The notion of a flipped classroom draws on such concepts as **active learning, student engagement, hybrid course design**, and course podcasting. The value of a flipped class is in the repurposing of class time into a workshop where students can inquire about lecture content, test their skills in applying knowledge, and interact with one another in hands-on activities. During class sessions, instructors function as coaches or advisors, encouraging students in individual inquiry and collaborative effort."

**"The flipped classroom constitutes a role change for instructors, who give up their front-of-the-class position in favour of a more collaborative and cooperative contribution to the teaching process.** There is a concomitant change in the role of students, many of whom are used to being cast as passive participants in the education process, where instruction is served to them.

**"The flipped model puts more of the responsibility for learning on the shoulders of students while giving them greater impetus to experiment.** Activities can be student-led, and communication among students can become the determining dynamic of a session devoted to learning through hands-on work. **What the flip does particularly well is to bring about a distinctive shift in priorities— from merely covering material to working toward mastery of it.**" <https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli7081.pdf>

Does any of this sound familiar? **This is news about a revolutionary change in education and Montessori schools have been doing this with children for over 100 years.**

Traditional schools are based on a teacher-centred model, defined as follows by Teach.com:

"Teachers are the main authority figure in this model. Students are viewed as "empty vessels" whose primary role is to passively receive information (via lectures and direct instruction) with an end goal of testing and assessment. It is the primary role of teachers to pass knowledge and information onto their students. In this model, teaching and assessment are viewed as two separate entities. Student learning is measured through objectively scored tests and assessments." <http://teach.com/what/teachers-teach/teaching-methods>

**I am excited that educationalists, neurologists, researchers and scientists are now realising that Dr Maria Montessori got it right when she developed her radical education system and opened her first Casa dei Bambini in Rome in 1907.** They are advocating this type of system as a revolutionary change that will move education from the teacher-centred model, to a model where the students actively engage in their own learning and the teacher becomes a coach, an advisor or in Montessori terms a directress.

"She (Maria Montessori) recognised that if you can create, through education, confident, independent, free-thinking and creative children they will grow into confident, independent free-thinking adults and these are the people who will reform society." Video documentary on Maria Montessori <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXqeTYHnOp4>.

Here is some of what Sir Ken Robinson, educationalist, author, speaker and international advisor on education in the arts said in a TED talk on the subject of the Education Revolution. I encourage you to go to this site and listen to the whole lecture. What he has to say is very interesting and he is entertaining. [http://www.ted.com/talks/sir\\_ken\\_robinson\\_bring\\_on\\_the\\_revolution#t-1054611](http://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution#t-1054611)

"I meet all kinds of people who don't enjoy what they do. They simply go through their lives getting on with it. They get no great pleasure from what they do. They endure it rather than enjoy it and wait for the weekend. But I also meet people who love what they do and couldn't imagine doing anything else. If you said to them, "Don't do this anymore," they'd wonder what you were talking about. Because it isn't what they do, it's who they are. They say, "But this is me, you know. It would be foolish for me to abandon this, because it speaks to my most authentic self." And it's not true of enough people. In fact, on the contrary, I think it's still true of a minority of people.

I think there are many possible explanations for it. And high among them is education, because education, in a way,



dislocates very many people from their natural talents. **And human resources are like natural resources; they're often buried deep. You have to go looking for them, they're not just lying around on the surface. You have to create the circumstances where they show themselves.** And you might imagine education would be the way that happens, but too often it's not. Every education system in the world is being reformed at the moment and it's not enough. Reform is no use anymore, because that's simply improving a broken model. What we need -- and the word's been used many times during the course of the past few days -- is not evolution, but a revolution in education. This has to be transformed into something else.

Often, people are good at things they don't really care for. It's about passion, and what excites our spirit and our energy. And if you're doing the thing that you love to do, that you're good at, time takes a different course entirely. My wife's just finished writing a novel, and I think it's a great book, but she disappears for hours on end. You know this, if you're doing something you love, an hour feels like five minutes. If you're doing something that doesn't resonate with your spirit, five minutes feels like an hour. And the reason so many people are opting out of education is because it doesn't feed their spirit, it doesn't feed their energy or their passion.

So I think we have to change metaphors. We have to go from what is essentially an industrial model of education, a manufacturing model, which is based on linearity and conformity and batching people. We have to move to a model that is based more on principles of agriculture. **We have to recognize that human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it's an organic process. And you cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do, like a farmer, is create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish.**

So when we look at reforming education and transforming it, it isn't like cloning a system. It's about customizing to your circumstances and personalizing education to the people you're actually teaching. And doing that, I think, is the answer to the future because it's not about scaling a new solution; it's about creating a movement in education in which people develop their own solutions, but with external support based on a personalized curriculum."

**Montessori Education is a philosophy and methodology which when used together enables the child to become an independent learner within a prepared environment.**

In the prepared environment of Montessori classrooms children are free to move around the room and to choose whatever work they wish to do independently, as long as they have experience in that work. They are free to work alone, or in small groups, to work on the floor or at a table. The classroom environment is carefully prepared to cater to the needs of each child in the room at whatever level they are at in any area of the curriculum and each child is actively involved in pursuing their own learning.

**Montessori teachers are trained to observe each student and help them progress from the level they are at, to the next level, while helping them develop concentration, self-confidence, self-reliance, self-satisfaction and independence.**

This is what the reformist educationalists are striving for and it is here. We have it. It has been around for more than 100 years in true Montessori schools and has been available to us at Northside Montessori School for 38 years.

You made the right decision putting your child into this remarkable system of education and, if allowed to continue through the Montessori Primary program, your child will reap the benefits of this well-established, revolutionary, nurturing, spiritually exciting experience for the rest of their lives.

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*"If education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it in the bettering of man's future.*

*For what is the use of transmitting knowledge if the individual's total development lags behind?"*

Maria Montessori

# Rationale for cursive writing

3-6 parents may have noticed the transition to cursive script in the 3-6 classrooms. At our recent classroom safari, parents were keen to know about cursive script and why we have returned to using this style. Dr. Montessori began with cursive writing because it was the style of writing that adults used in her time. However, it seems that cursive writing has been around for a good deal of time and only in relatively recent years has cursive ceased to be taught in schools from the onset. The benefits of cursive writing are numerous in comparison to print style and are outlined below. *By Marina Ridley, Directress 3-6*

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## More aligned with natural hand movements

The most difficult movement for the young child's hand is to create perfect disjointed circles and straight perpendicular lines. Consider your child's early drawings. They are circular scribble patterns that flow aren't they? Dr Montessori explains this best ... "Must one begin with strokes? The logical answer is "No." These require too much effort on the part of the child to make them. If he is to begin with the stroke, it should be the easiest thing to execute. But, if we note carefully, a straight stroke is the most difficult to make. Only an accomplished writer can fill out a page with regular strokes, whereas a person who is only moderately proficient can cover a page with presentable writing."

*(Dr. Maria Montessori, 'The Discovery of the Child', Clio Press Ltd, 193)*

Dr. Montessori observed this in the 3-6 year old children and then went about developing work to support this natural circular movement of the wrist and hand. Table scrubbing is a good exercise to demonstrate this type of action where circular motions are created with the soap suds and brush in a left to right sequence as in writing.

## Reversals are less common

In print style script, children often reverse the letters b and d and p and q. I have also seen u and n interchanged and i and j confused. In cursive script, these letters have a distinctly different shape and are not readily reversed to create the other letter. When joining the letters together in cursive style, the beginning and end point of each letter makes it feel awkward when the writer tries to reverse the letter.

## Cursive writing aids spelling

When writing in cursive style, one does not lift the pen or pencil from the paper until a word is completed. This helps to create a muscle memory and 'pattern' in the brain for the given word. This can be likened to the automatic movement of a dancer or piano player when following a flowing sequence of music.

## Children adjust to different script for reading

Concerns by people that children then may not recognise print style letters in books is unfounded. It would be like suggesting that the child's original reference to learning what the colour blue was or the original image of a square or other geometric shape could not be altered in the brain. People's brains build complex parameters around what can

or cannot be categorised as a particular letter or colour or shape. Once one has a foundation, then other fonts are just as recognisable. Consider our ability to detect the same letter in hundreds of different scripts in the real world from personal handwriting styles to the plethora of computer fonts available today.

## Writing is more legible

There is a clear distinction in cursive writing when one word ends and the next begins. For the inexperienced writer, print letters often keep on flowing without stopping to put a space in between. This does not seem to occur with cursive. Lifting the writing implement becomes automatic at the end of a word.

## Efficiency and speed

Whilst we have the computer and keyboards at our disposal, these technologies have still not been implemented into formal tests in the majority of cases. The HSC is still handwritten as are university examinations. People still require an efficient and speedy way to communicate their ideas. Four essays in three hours, still a commonplace written examination format, requires efficiency and legibility. Now this time may seem a long way off for the 3-6 year old child, but we are preparing them for life are we not?

## Flow of thoughts

Many people claim that when writing in cursive, their thought process can flow more easily and they are able to think ahead about what they are writing. How can this be explained? It may be because cursive handwriting stimulates brain synapses and synchronicity between the left and right hemispheres. This occurrence is absent from printing, typing or keyboarding. Research has also shown that the cerebellum in the brain has been found to help regulate 'limbic' or emotional responses in people calming their impulsivity, attention to a task and cognitive thinking. Scientists have seen that the cerebellum is active in brain scans when children write in cursive writing. This would explain why we have better flow of thought because we are calm, relaxed and are using our 'whole' brain to work.

## Aesthetics

If we need any more encouragement to take up cursive, this may just be the one. It looks better and this instils pride and an enticement to communicate. Let's look out for beautiful cursive writing from our 3-6's in the near future....

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# Making a difference - every little bit helps

The pressure on schools to support the abundance of charities is relentless. Every week charities flood our school with brochures seeking support for selling badges or goods, or running charity events. They are all worthy causes and all in need of money. A further need is to also promote greater awareness in our children, if only to remind them how lucky they are living in Australia. Schools are a great target for the charities and most schools respond generously. The challenge for schools is how to choose which ones to help!

At Northside Montessori School the children choose the charity they wish to support and the children do all the planning, advertising and running of the charity event. When you consider that Northside only has Pre-Primary and Primary aged children that is pretty amazing!

Recently five children from the Year 3 class approached me about raising money. One of the children had watched a program which highlighted the terrible plight of the people of Africa. In particular the documentary described how their filthy, polluted water was causing death and disease amongst the children. So affected by the images and the thought of beautiful innocent children dying in this way, the Year 3 child told her friends that she wanted to do something to 'save the African children'.

This little group of children now have their plans well underway for their charity event planned to take place in mid-May. The children have brought their plans to me for approval and they have started working through the logistics of running the event. On this occasion they will be running stalls to sell their goods. The children will be selling homemade cakes and lemonade, as well as other treats. They are also using their talents by 'busking' for entertainment. They will be selling second-hand toys that are in good condition as well as talking to people about the cause to 'save the African children'. All in all, it will be the children's efforts with minimal help from adults.

Northside Montessori School is very proud of the approach it takes towards fund-raising for worthy causes. The children's sense of social justice is heightened, they learn about collaboration and team-work, and they also learn the skills to plan and project-manage an event in the process. In this case, they hope that every little bit they do will help save the children of Africa.

*by Barbara Maxfield, Principal*



# Toddler Program

Welcome to 2015, it is a great joy to reunite with children who have grown so much over the summer holidays, and also to meet new families who have joined the toddler group. I hope you are all settling in and enjoying your time in the class.

The year has started wonderfully with a new Directress in our program. Margret is running the class from Wednesday to Friday, so the toddler program is now available 6 days a week. Margret is sharing her deep knowledge and experience as a 3-6 Directress to advance our program.

Some families have taken this opportunity to attend multiple times a week, making it possible for other family members to spend the time in Montessori environment, so you can assimilate some of the activities in your own household.

**We, as Directresses, try and provide an environment where children can pursue independent exploration to nurture confidence and concentration as much as possible. However, the time spent outside of the class is much longer, so it is essential for you to understand the philosophy and reason of the activity as well.** It is not necessary to replicate the materials. In fact we do not encourage families to buy the same toys for your playroom, but please continue the activity that will give opportunity to grow independence and increase self-esteem.

Some things that can be done at home are:

- Pouring their own drink into a glass cup. Please prepare child size jug and glass cup, so they can see and control the amount of fluid being poured.
- Setting the table for the family. Placemats and cutlery should be kept in the lowest drawer or in a container where your child can have easy access.
- Helping with household chores such as hanging or sorting washing, sweeping the floor or washing the window. Many of these activities are popular in the class, so please let them continue at home.
- Hanging coats and bags when they return home. A low hanging rail or a hook on the wall is ideal, but if it is difficult, preparing a basket to put their belongings away is a start.
- Have a step stool so children can see what you are doing. Children love to watch and participate while you cook. You can give them simple tasks like shelling peas, peeling onion skins or hulling cherry tomatoes.

The time you spend in the toddler class is an opportunity to observe your child and discover where their sensitive periods

are. We often receive questions and comments such as “My child only pushes trolleys outside” or “My child cannot pack things away”. There are times where children need to develop gross motor skills and spacial awareness, and they do so by moving heavy or large objects in an open space. Also, when there is a worry about your child not being able to pack away or clean up after an activity, please check what their rooms are like at home. Are there places to pack everything away? Do you encourage cleaning at home by showing examples? **Children are absorbing everything you do, and spending two hours at toddler program is not enough to acquire the good habit. It is necessary to continue them at home and family members are asked to show good examples.**

We hope the time you spend in the class is a starting point of a Montessori journey. The children are absorbing from the materials and their peers. Even though they may not be engaging with every material (which is often not possible because the class is prepared to provide a variety of activities for different developmental stages), they are aware of what the others are doing, and waiting for their own special moment to try it. Please give children the time to be ready, so that they can challenge with confidence.

There will be an information evening at the beginning of Term 2 where we will introduce and explain all of the materials inside the class. It would be an opportunity to experience the environment from your child's perspective, and know how to modify the use of material to suit your child's development.

If you have any questions about the materials or the program, please ask any of the Directresses during the class as well. We hope this year will be full of great discoveries and joy for your child and your family.

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*by Kaoru Takusagawa, Directress 0-3*

## 0-3 Class Journey



**Date:** Thursday 23 April 2015  
**Time:** 6:45pm for 7:00pm start - 8:00pm  
**RSVP:** by 1 April 2015 (limit of 20 people)  
admin@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au  
or phone 9144 2835

**Note:** One Parent and Carer, per enrolled child, is required to attend at least one Parent Information evening each term, as per Toddler enrolment conditions

In this workshop you will:

- ☞ Deepen your understanding of the Toddler Prepared Environment
- ☞ Learn the aims and objectives of each of the materials placed in the classroom.
- ☞ Come to understand what skills your child is gaining so that you are able to, more confidently, support your child's independence.
- ☞ Learn ways to modify the materials to suit the individual needs of your child.



Please arrange for child care  
as this event is for  
**adults only.**

## The Pink Tower - Invitations for Learning

by Sandra Sin

The Pink Tower, the symbol of Montessori around the world, includes 10 pink wooden cubes ranging from  $1\text{cm}^3$  to  $10\text{cm}^3$ , differing in 3 dimensions. The cubes increase progressively in the algebraic series of the third power i.e. 1000 smallest cubes make the largest 10th cube. 8 of the smallest cube make the second cube, 27 of the smallest cube make the third cube, 64 of the smallest cubes make the fourth cube, 124 cubes make the fifth cube, and so on. Young children like to put things together in relationship to each other, to connect things to other things and to use building and construction materials to represent many aspects of their ideas and understandings. Through carefully placing the cubes randomly over the floor mat and building a tower starting with the largest cube, children develop:

- Visual and small muscular perception of dimensions
- This awareness of dimensions leads to observation of the child's environment
- Helps to make smoother and more coordinated movement
- Math readiness by introducing concepts of smaller, larger, prepares for the decimal and number system. This helps to prepare for the cube root.

# Zoo Snooze

Imagine waking up by the trumpet of an elephant. You roll over and are almost face to face with a mischievous troupe of Brazilian Squirrel Monkeys – even if there was a thin pane of glass between you. That’s what happened to our 9–12 students on our recent Zoo Snooze trip to Taronga Zoo. *By Margaret Kroeger, Directress 9-12*

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The excursion was a big success that has inspired wonderful creative writing and research on our return. Thank you to Peter Ballard, Hugh Lim and Michelle Langer for volunteering their time to accompany us on excursion.

We plan this trip each year to help prepare students for camp life and time away from family and familiar routines. It also provides students with a chance to bond ever more closely as a community. The older, more experienced campers, take our new Level 4 students under their wings. The younger students feel more enmeshed in 9 – 12 life. We look forward to our main camp in Term 4.

The students themselves would like to share the following highlights of camp life:

- My favourite thing about camp is the food or maybe it was the animals. It was great being up close to so many animals we could touch including spotted pythons, long neck turtles and quokas. (Year 6 student)
  - I liked seeing the Tasmanian Devils up close before the zoo had opened. They are having a really hard time with facial growths but people are working hard to keep them alive. (Year 5 student)
  - I enjoyed sleeping near the monkeys because I was sleeping near my own kind. It was so funny to see them jumping from branch to branch. (Year 6 student)
  - I like seeing the Sun Bear in the hammock during our night walk. She had been rescued from a restaurant. Now she has a safe and happy life. They even clean her teeth with an electric toothbrush. (Year 5 student)
  - I loved the Zoo Snooze but we didn’t get much sleep. There was too much to look at – it was awesome. (Year 4 student)
  - Very early in the morning a 4 cm bull ant climbed through a thin gap from the monkey enclosure and seemed to think he wouldn’t mind sharing my sleeping bag. He was quickly moved outside so his mission was not successful. (Year 6 student)
  - I loved being next to the monkey enclosure for the night. It was funny seeing them clambering and chasing around like playful children. I wonder what they thought of us? (Year 6 student)
  - I liked learning about the animals. The long necked turtle was cool but they were stinky in the morning. (Year 4 student)
  - I like going on the bus and singing and chatting with my friends. (Year 6 student)
  - My favourite bit was the night walk. We got to see a Sumatran Tiger up really close. It yawned and we saw all its teeth through the glass. It was only about 2 metres away from us. He got up and started stalking something. It turned out he wanted to jump on his brother in the grass while he slept. But his brother was only pretending and jumped on him first. My cats play like that at home. (Year 6 student)
  - It was really fun to see the behind the scenes tour at the Tasmanian Devil Sanctuary. We met two of the resident Tassie Devils. I think that once people learn more about this amazing creature and the fatal disease that threatens them, they will be more understanding and willing to help. (Year 6 student).
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# Primary update

## All the news from the 6-9 class

It has been a great start to 2015 and I have loved working with all of your children in 6-9. I will miss them next term, but I know they are all looking forward to having Craig back. The new Level 1's look right at home now, and the older children, including the 9-12's, have taken them under their wing and helped the transition to be smooth and trauma free.

I would like to thank Janine for organising our cooking roster, and especially thank our wonderful parents who have been in to cook this term. The children have really enjoyed it and they love to see their parents at school.

I have been informed (by your children) of many talents in the class parent body and I would encourage any of you who would like to come in to share those talents, to contact me this term, or Craig next term.

As you know, sport is now every fortnight, with some skill work such as eye-hand skills and gross motor skills taking place at school in the morning. This has then been followed by time at Bannockburn Oval. This term the children have been doing cross-country skills. They have had the option to run the course or walk the course and most of them have loved the challenge of running. They have done a great job, and it is often the youngest students outlasting and overtaking the older ones. Please ensure that your child wears suitable sports shoes, a hat and brings a drink bottle on sport days.

I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of you already to discuss how your child has settled this year. Please contact us if you would like to discuss any issues or concerns. Often something that you may be worrying about, is actually nothing major once you come and talk to us.

So thank you again to all who have contributed to making this such a lovely term, none more than your children, and I know I will see you around the school next term. Welcome back Craig!

*from Janene*

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## Montessori's Great Lessons

I have had the great pleasure of being in Craig's class for this term and it has been wonderful to be able to work with your children. They have made me very welcome and my term has flown past in a flurry of activity. It has been really enjoyable but I am sure they will all be looking forward to having Craig back!

Our new children have settled so well and have taken all of the new work and the environment in their stride.

This term has introduced the first three of Maria Montessori's Great Lessons.

**The first Great Lesson, "The God With No Hands", is a story about how the universe may have begun from a very simplistic scientific view.** It highlights order in the universe, states of matter and the very long process involved in the earth cooling and the oceans filling. Some of the theories about how water came to be on earth are explored and the children come up with some wonderfully creative ideas about this.

Many of the concepts are demonstrated with experiments, which help the children to gain a deeper level of understanding of some of these concepts.

**The second Great Lesson, the "Timeline of Life", introduces the story related to the beginning of life on earth.** The Timeline of Life is used as a visual for this story and shows life appearing in the water and the abundant variety of creatures that emerge, including the mighty trilobites which were to become extinct. Great dialogue about why this may have occurred takes place at this point and the children come up with many theories for why this happened. This then opens discussion about what is happening on earth today and why so many species are endangered or already extinct.

The Timeline then moves through the appearance of other groups of animals such as modern fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, as well as some of the plant life on earth. Of course, a favourite on the timeline is the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods and the appearance and demise of the dinosaurs.

**The third Great Lesson, "The Black Strip", is literally a 30 meter black strip, which we take outside and unroll.** We re-tell the stories beginning with the hot, fiery ball of gases, the cooling of the earth, formation of the crust and the rain filling the oceans. This takes up the first 10 metres of the black strip.

The next 15 metres of the strip is used up with the appearance of life in the water and the Age of Invertebrates.



The last 5 metres of the strip is unrolled and covers the appearance of amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. It emphasises the explosion of life which took place.

At the very end of the Black Strip, is a thin strip (1cm wide) of red tape. This represents how long humans have been on earth. It is a very powerful thing to see this tiny red strip on the enormous black strip. All the way through this lesson we are saying to the children, "Look how far we have come." It is a wonderful way to represent the passing of time.

The last two Great Lessons focus on the development of human communication both verbal and written, and numeration systems. These will be presented later this year.

**Montessori's Great Lessons form the foundation for the work we do across all of the Key Learning Areas.** They show the 'big picture'. Over the coming years in Primary, we take this 'big picture' and break it down into small parts, examining the parts as we go in greater detail. Eventually the parts are all pieced back together and we look at the interrelatedness of everything in the universe and where we, as individuals and communities, fit.

**The children develop a sense of wonder, awe and gratitude for our earth and the life within it.** This has been the beginning of our year. Here's to a wonderful year ahead!

*from Janene*

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## Nihongo to Origami (Japanese class and Origami club)

Minasan Konnichiwa (Hello, everyone)

All children settled down in Japanese lessons very well. Especially, level 1 children are working very well with the level 2 children.

This term they've learnt Japanese greeting words: e.g. Ohayogozaimasu (good morning), Konnichiwa (hello/good afternoon), Sayonara (good bye), Ja, Matane (see you later) and many more.

Also they've learnt numbers (for level 1 & level 2 : 1 to 30) and also animals in Japanese (i.e. Zo - elephant, Uma - horse, Kirin - giraffe, Neko - cat, Inu - dog, etc).

We celebrated "Hina Matsuri" (girls festival) making a Prince and Princess with Origami.

In Japan, people who have daughter/s celebrate their health and happiness no matter how old they are. The longer they live means a lot to them each year.

### Level 3 to Level 6

All children at this level are carefully revising what they learnt last year as well as adding new materials on top.

This coming Wednesday, all children will cook Japanese green tea pancakes.

The following week (last lesson in this term), they will create something to do with "Easter" using Origami paper.

### Origami club (after school 3:00pm to 4:30pm)

All children are always working very well and are so keen to create some object every Wednesday. We create many different 3D geometric shapes, animals, flowers, many kinds of airplanes and many more.

We will start to work with Origami papers creating "Easter" toward the end of term.

The children will follow each season's environment, learning to sense these gentle and beautiful days of our lives through Japanese language lessons and Origami work they do once a week on Wednesday and at the same time learning how important it is to work with the others in harmony.

Arigato gozaimasu. (Thank you very much)

*by Kay Chida*



# Young Leaders Day

Recently Year 6 travelled to Darling Harbour to attend a special workshop, which explored and promoted communication, civic awareness and leadership. Thank you to our wonderful parent volunteers, Jennifer, Michelle and Roshan, who helped make the day such a success. Below is an account of the workshop as seen through the eyes of our Year 6 students.

“The **National Young Leaders Day** (an initiative of The Halogen Foundation) was an exciting and inspiring experience. We got to hear famous people talk about their lives. Our first speaker was Mike Martin. He talked about science and how leadership means influence. Next was Premier Mike Baird, who explained how everyone was equal and how we need to believe in ourselves. After that, Bindi Irwin spoke passionately about her love of animals and conservation and how her Dad had inspired her to do as much as she can to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Rachel Leahcar spoke next and retold her musical journey from the start to coming third on the television show ‘The Voice’, despite being almost 90% blind. She came onto the stage with her guide dog, Ella, who lay down obediently at her feet as she spoke.

The last two speakers came on together. They were James Norton and Dylan Parker, who were the inspiration for the Australian movie ‘Paper Planes’. Everyone started making paper planes and some students were called upon to have a paper plane throwing contest from the stage. Soon paper planes were flying everywhere!

Overall it was a brilliant experience and I would definitely do it again.”

And from others....

- ‘My favourite part was when we were told we don’t need a title or a badge to be a leader. You can be a leader in your school, in your home – everywhere.’
- ‘This is something you should do every year. I liked Dylan Parker and James Norton. They made over 5000 paper planes for their movie alone. You have to be persistent to be a success. This was the best excursion ever.’
- ‘I learnt you had to be strong, passionate, honourable and caring to be a true leader.’
- ‘I liked Bindi Irwin’s speech. She told us to always follow our hearts and to learn as much as we could from the people around us. That makes a lot of sense to me.’



The Halogen Foundation exists to inspire and influence a generation of young people to lead themselves and others well.

**Keynote speakers:**

Mike Martin, Executive Director of The Halogen Foundation

Mike Baird, NSW Premier

Bindi Irwin, Wildlife and conservation activist

Rachel Leahcar, Musician and finalist on *The Voice*

Dylan Parker & James Norton, *Paper Planes* movie



## Singing

Perhaps you'd like to join our local choir!

Challis Singers is a non-auditioning community choir.

Can you sing in tune? Find yourself tapping your feet to songs on the radio? Got a little bit of X, Y or Z factor?

Perhaps you'd like to join our local choir!

Challis Singers is a non-auditioning community choir.

We perform one or two concerts per year. This year our first concert (in June) features music with Celtic origins, ranging from traditional folk tunes to current pop songs.

We rehearse on Monday nights in Turrumurra from 7.30 - 9.30 pm. We welcome any new members, men or women.

We will also be looking for children to join us for our June concert. Children will need to attend (probably) three Sunday afternoon rehearsals and one dress rehearsal – details of rehearsals are yet to be developed.

Contact Isabel Palethorpe on 0408 217 187 or register your interest via our website: [www.challissingers.org.au](http://www.challissingers.org.au)



*“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”*

John F Kennedy



*“Keep your fears to yourself, but share your courage with others.”*

Robert Louis Stevenson



## Our Staff...Our Children

Since Stepping Stones opened its doors in Nov 2014, we have had a splendid mix of staff and children from diverse backgrounds and cultures caring and working together at the centre. When I take a moment to reflect on our staff and our children I see a microcosm of our world. As we celebrate Harmony Day it is wonderful to see how varied and multicultural our organisation and indeed our country truly is.

In our Nido room we have educators from India and South Korea sharing a common passion for food, music and sports looking after the youngest members of our community.

Our Infant Community room carers hail from countries as far flung as Canada, Bangladesh and Japan. Among themselves their interests range from gardening, travelling, tennis and music. Though their backgrounds, cultures and mother tongues are varied they share a common passion to nurture and care for our infant community members.

In our Casa room we have educators and carers who have made Australia home from England and Greece. They love celebrating the everyday achievements and milestones of our toddler children.

In our admin team we have staff who came to Australia as a 9 year old from England, and though they now love all things Aussie, an abiding love for tea often overshadows that for coffee!

Like our staff our children come from various cultures as well: Persian, Chinese, Indian, Australian, Columbian, Russian, Vietnamese, Indonesian, English, Italian and Sri Lankan to name a few. It is a rich and diverse community who avail of the long daycare services at Stepping Stones every day.

Though we come from different countries and cultures the endeavour of our staff everyday is to demonstrate, our core organisational values of Commitment, Competence, Community, Care & Respect so that they can guide our children into becoming Curious, Confident and Collaborative learners.

*by Ipshita Nair, Directress*

At Northside Montessori, we work with your child's natural drive to grow and learn.

Their individualised and independent learning occurs with choice of activities, peer-learning, and hands-on experiences, based on their development and facilitated by their directress/director.

Our school offers an experience that fosters your child's desire to discover and create, both in the classroom and in life.

A love of learning for their future and for our future.



**Northside Montessori School**  
[northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au](http://northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au)