

Summer Issue Dec 2015

# The Northside *Chronicle*

## THE DYSLEXIC CHILD

How a Montessori environment can support the developmental needs of dyslexic children

## JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

A study into the history of Montessori education in Australia

## DIGITAL IMPACT

Can Montessori survive in a rapidly changing and increasingly technological world?

Northside Montessori School  
Pymble, Australia



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**Principal:** Barbara Maxfield  
**Content Coordinator:** Jenni Jackson  
**Design & Layout:** Carolyn Ballard  
**Cover Photography:** Jennifer Taylor (vividly.com.au)

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Summer Issue Dec 2015

Northside Montessori School  
 42 Bobbin Head Road, Pymble NSW 2073  
[www.northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au](http://www.northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au)

*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.*





# Welcome

The world we live in has become an increasingly complex environment. Never have I felt this as acutely as I have this year. It is hard to avoid some of what the world now faces due to the immediacy of the media. The challenge is not necessarily to ignore the tragedy and suffering experienced by so many around the world but rather to reflect on our own beliefs, values and customs compared to others.

**At Northside we can strive hard to give children skills to build relationships, to develop respect and to deepen their connections with their peers, their families and across communities. Building resilience and confidence as well as a positive outlook is vital for our children to cope in the complex world within which they live.**

While we consider what might be in the future that shouldn't lessen the opportunity to reflect on, and celebrate, our achievements in 2015. Our school is essentially a place of learning. The most obvious signs of learning are those that we associate with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the NSW Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) syllabus outcomes. That is; a child's language, literacy, numeracy and curriculum knowledge and skill acquisition, as well as their general personal development. Along with parents' and carer's own observations of their child, the Student Report will have provided families with clear insights into their child's learning in this regard. I commend our staff on their commitment to providing an exemplary forum for learning to take place. I also commend our parents for complementing our educational approach with their support and commitment to our school. Children...they naturally embrace the Montessori approach and don't realise how lucky they are. But well done, children!

**Beyond the everyday and expected learning of the EYLF and BOSTES learning, however, are the grace and courtesy and the wonderful humour, companionship and empathy we see in the children each day. These are sure signs of a caring and thoughtful educational environment.** As parents you would know that these qualities are not necessarily characteristic of all children in today's society. The principles, practices and role-modelling at our school and in your homes have provided that platform for your children to behave as they do.

**The core virtue of humanity is comprised of the character strengths of love, kindness and social intelligence. We want our children to see the connectedness of all human beings and to help and befriend others.** A gift of human beings is our ability to love. We love our families. We love our friends. We love our community, our nation, and our world. It is love that motivates us to help others, to design, to create, and serve other people.

Kindness involves doing good deeds to help other people. With kindness, we take care of other people, thinking of their comfort and needs, possibly before our own. Kindness as a strength makes us generous and compassionate towards others. People who have this personal attribute have discovered that in the long term it is more productive to be kind than right. **People with kindness as a strength have discovered that with kindness you can change the heart of an issue in a way that debating or fighting never can. It is the little kindnesses that are remembered and stored in the heart and mind. Kindness is the stuff that makes us human and defines our humanity.**

Social intelligence comes into play in the growth of our humanity. To be socially intelligent we have to be aware of our own motives and emotions, as well as knowing about the feelings and desires of others. We need to be socially flexible, by realizing what to do in different social circumstances. Being socially aware and being positively engaged with others creates a well-being in us. Positive engagement helps us express love and kindness and places value on close relations with others.

**When we can express our humanity through love, kindness and positive interaction with other people, we become happier, healthier and better humans. When we can help our children learn to turn their random acts of kindness into intentional acts of kindness, perhaps true humanity will flourish in our world.** This is what we hope to achieve at Northside Montessori School.

*By Barbara Maxfield, Principal*





# Learning and success

Kay Chida has been doing some wide reading about learning and success; Carol Dweck – inspires Kay. Have you ever wondered how much a person's attitude influences their success? Can giving things a go and perseverance really improve performance or are a person's abilities set in stone?

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American psychologist Carol Dweck has spent decades researching achievement and success and believes that people have one of two distinct mindsets. If people have a fixed mindset they believe that intelligent and talents are fixed traits and that talent alone forms the basis of success. If people have a growth mindset they believe that even the most basic abilities can be developed through perseverance and hard work.

**The implication for teachers and parents is that praise should be directed not towards a child's natural abilities but to the effort they have expended no matter what the result.**

This focuses on effort and strategies rather than intelligence and helps students to become resilient, mastery-orientated learners. That is, they enjoy challenges and do not view failure as a marker of intelligence but rather as valuable information on which to build future success.

It is important that children adopt a growth mindset in primary school. Research conducted into the progress of children with learning difficulties in high school has shown that they often attribute academic success to luck and failures to ability, thereby discouraging them from task persistence and from utilising comprehension strategies to understand complex texts.

Conversely, children labelled as 'gifted' during primary school also struggle, as they are so concerned about deserving this label that they confine themselves to tasks which they can do easily and perfectly restricting their intellectual growth.

It is the role of learning support staff to encourage and support all children to persevere in their day-to-day tasks thereby enabling them to develop a growth mindset that can set them in good stead for their future learning.

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*"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."*

Colin Powell



# What brings me to work every day?

## Upcoming Events

### Wed 9 Dec

Primary Event and Clap Out for Level 6  
Last day of term 4 for students

### Thur 10 Dec

Pupil Free Day  
Parent/Teacher Interviews

### Thur 10 Dec - Fri 18 Dec

Vacation Care available

### Fri 18 Dec

Last day for school office staff for 2015

### Mon 18 Jan

First day for school office staff for 2016

### Mon 1 Feb

First day of term 1 for students

I can't believe it's almost the end of the year! Time flies fast!

My journey at Northside Montessori School is filled with beautiful and blissful moments. What brings me to work every morning? **It is the happy environment that is created as the children enter our room each day...they provide the spark for my enthusiasm in the PPE class.**

A typical day in a Pre Primary classroom at NMS starts with educators preparing the classroom followed by a quick briefing for the day. The routine begins with us greeting the children who are buzzing with energy. While the children choose from work they have been presented and rotate between tasks, we position ourselves to observe and to aid the children when they require assistance. The day ends with a short group time when children sit down for story, songs and/or news presentations. Not everyone can sit for the entire group time. But with regular reminders and reinforcement they gradually learn to adapt to the idea of sitting on the mat.

**Of the many joyful moments that I have experienced in the class, one of the highlights was witnessing a child make a great leap from struggling to hold a pencil to writing structured words and beginning to read words in just a matter of weeks.** I believe the child had experienced 'The explosion of writing' as Maria Montessori mentioned in her book 'The Discovery of the Child' - 'Now it is true that such a child has never written, but he has potentially carried out all the acts necessary for writing.....Such preparatory actions provide a child with a mechanism that can give an impulse that should lead to an unexpected explosion of writing.' The look on the child's face was priceless. And from that day forward this child would delightfully write words with his newly discovered interest and confidence and with the same joyous expression every time. To see first-hand how the Montessori method actually applies in practice is a valuable experience.

**We at NMS believe that every child is unique and they each progress at their own pace. While some may suddenly surprise us, others will be quietly going about their work. They become increasingly independent and confident which is our focus for the children at Northside Montessori.**

As educators it is fulfilling to see how the children have transitioned and progressed over the year. They have become more responsible, self-confident, independent and self-disciplined. In my opinion, it is time and effort well spent. Like the children, I also love coming to school every day.

By Veena Shanbhag



*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*

Nelson Mandela





# Dyslexic child in the Montessori environment

An extract by Alison Awes – permission granted by Montessori Australia Foundation.

**Language, one of the greatest gifts of humanity, is central to the culture and collective intelligence of human beings.** Collaboration and communication created the language humans currently use, a language which continues to evolve each day. In the words of Maria Montessori, 'Language is the expression of agreement among a group of men, and can be understood only by those who have agreed that special sounds shall represent special ideas.'

**Rather than a particular language, children inherit the potential for language. Because the sensitivity to language is unconscious, acquisition is virtually guaranteed** (barring a developmental or auditor problem). Through exposure to speech while the vocal mechanisms develop, through communication with others, and through some knowledge of the symbols and sounds of language, all typical children, regardless of culture, will at a given moment come to speak their native language. Also, children generally take in the structure, sentence patterns, and word order of spoken language. Through observations of human development, Montessori found that the absorbent mind, sensitive periods, and human tendencies assist in this acquisition.

**In contrast, written language does not come naturally to human beings. Children will not develop writing and reading without some degree of direct experience, preparation, and instruction.** The amount and type of experience required varies among individual learners. Eventually, the child must realise that the letters she reads represent the sounds she hears in spoken language. When a child realises that a word can be broken apart into smaller pieces (sounds), she develops phonemic awareness. This is the ability to notice, identify, and put to use the individual sounds of spoken words.

## Definition of dyslexia

Children who consistently struggle with reading tasks despite being provided reading instruction need further support. **Dyslexia is a difficulty with language in which intelligence is not a problem. For learners with this difficulty, an unexpected gap exists between the potential for learning and school achievement. They may have difficulty with reading, spelling, processing auditory language, or expressing themselves clearly through speaking or writing.** Prior to 2002, definitions usually explained dyslexia by articulating what it was not rather than describing its characteristics. However, new scientific discoveries have made possible a more precise definition, such as this one from the International Dyslexia Association: **Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterised by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.** These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include

problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. To explain further, **dyslexia has a biological basis and is characterised by a variety of language difficulties. Rather than a temporary struggle in reading development, dyslexia is a chronic condition; the characteristics are unchanging.** There is not a single form of dyslexia. The struggles can be with word recognition (such as reading a single word by itself), with spelling, or with decoding or segmenting words (such as sounding words out or breaking a word into syllables). A phonological component exists, meaning the dyslexic person has difficulty with sounds.

Additionally, **the dyslexic generally has at least average or above average intelligence, and an unexpected gap occurs between the ability demonstrated and the potential.** So the child has to have some cognitive strengths, not only weak language functions. Further, a person cannot be considered dyslexic if he or she has not had adequate classroom instruction. Other consequences of impaired phonological awareness are revealed in dyslexic children.

Reading comprehension, while problematic in some cases, is generally a secondary consequence of weak phonemic ability. The result of this difficulty with comprehension can significantly impede vocabulary acquisition. The average child learns about 2,700 words per year, or about seven new words daily, and reading is a significant influence on this development of vocabulary. At the same time, a large vocabulary is an important element in reading comprehension. Books offer more complicated words than do even the most educated speakers. Good readers spend more time reading every day compared with poor readers, so they end up reading more words in a year. As a result, the consequences of poor reading extend far beyond the reading process. For the dyslexic, the weakness in the language system occurs at the basic level of phonology, with the rest of language building on this weak foundation. Semantics (vocabulary and words), syntax (the structure of grammar), and discourse (how sentences are connected and used) all rely upon the initial understanding and awareness of sounds. In dyslexics, the brain area dedicated to processing particular sound elements of language is compromised. These elements, the phonemes, are the building blocks of all spoken and written words. In different combinations these sounds produce the many words in a particular language. Before words can be identified and stored in memory, they must be isolated into their particular sounds.

Dyslexic children and adults may have a hard time selecting the particular phoneme which corresponds to a written symbol or might order phonemes incorrectly. As a result, sound-based confusions in spoken language occur. For example, a child might say emeny when she means enemy or April instead of Rachel. These learners are chal-

lenged when developing awareness that spoken and written words are composed of these specific phonemes.

Research on phonological learning demonstrates that many children with reading disabilities do not perceive or manipulate individual syllables and phonemes in the same manner as their peers. Three pathways help the brain to learn information: visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic (muscle movement). Children with strong visual memory read well and will learn through most conventional forms. However, dyslexic children need systematic multisensory avenues to learn, as they have poor visual memory. All three of these avenues have no correlation to I.Q. Children with specific reading difficulties demonstrate problems summarising or making inferences from reading a text but do not have the same difficulties when listening to the text. They may misread many words or read words accurately though require much time and effort to do so. These children need additional work on phonological awareness, decoding, and fluency but generally do not need additional support in comprehension beyond regular classroom strategies for vocabulary.

## The Prevalence of Reading Difficulties

**An estimated fifteen to twenty per cent of the population has symptoms of a reading disability. Dyslexia is the most common cause of reading, writing, and spelling difficulties and affects about one of every five children,** about ten million in the United States alone. In 2001, 8.9 per cent of US students aged six through twenty-one were receiving special education services. Even if, as Sally Shaywitz of Yale University estimates, eighty per cent of these students had a reading disability, it would seem that children with reading disability in general, and dyslexia in particular, are vastly underserved. Additionally, because dyslexia exists on a continuum from mild disturbance to severe limitation, reading difficulties are often determined at an artificial cut-off point by educators and government officials.

So a child who needs help may not qualify for it within the school system. Even more disturbing is that children who read poorly in the third grade (age eight or nine) or cured, although individuals with dyslexia can learn how to learn more effectively. As previously stated, **dyslexia indicates a language problem. Visual impairments, lack of intelligence, laziness, or not caring on the part of the child all have no bearing.** Further, scientific evidence is lacking to support claims for improving the academic abilities of dyslexics with treatment based on visual training or neurological organisational training (such as balance board use). Attention problems might accompany dyslexia, but they might not. The neurobiology and effective treatments differ for specific symptoms. Dyslexia is difficulty accessing the basic sounds of language; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is difficulty with attending to an activity. Sometimes the disorders can clearly go hand



in hand. Other times, it might look like a dyslexic person is not paying attention to reading because it is so difficult for her to decode the words. Reading requires a significant amount of attention for the dyslexic, more than for the average reader.

## Indications and Evaluations

**As a result of recent research, healthcare providers are able to identify with a high degree of accuracy the children who are most at risk for dyslexia, even before they develop reading difficulties.** They can also diagnose dyslexia accurately in children, young adults, and adults, and the disorder can be managed with extremely effective and proven treatment programmes. **Early diagnosis, joined with effective treatment, can help define the strengths rather than the challenges of the child.** Particular attention should be paid to protecting the child's self-concept, as dyslexic children are especially vulnerable to weak self-esteem.

When a child is accused of a lack of motivation, not working to her full ability, being lazy, or not being smart, she begins to doubt herself. These accusations are more common than we might hope because often the potential in the child is clearer than her ability. The child needs the knowledge that she can count on her parents and teachers for unwavering support. Also notable is that **bright children with dyslexia can escape notice because they possess so many other strengths. They often learn to compensate for or cover up their difficulties.** These learners are often quite talented in predominantly right-brained skills like the visual arts, music, mechanical aptitude, and mathematical reasoning. Scientists are still trying to explain the significant amount of creativity present in many people with dyslexia. One speculation is that perhaps the brain was forced to use the right hemisphere because of problems with the left hemisphere, so the right side's connections were strengthened in unique ways. Or possibly the right hemisphere's creative connections began as dominant, leaving less room for other activities, such as reading.

Further **anecdotal evidence suggests that dyslexics appear to represent the most creative, unique thinkers of society, and one might hypothesise this is because the dyslexic cannot simply memorise but must understand the concept at a fundamental level in order to remember.** Teachers and parents may provide important observations for healthcare professionals, but teachers are usually not trained to make a diagnosis. Keeping that in mind, and recalling that dyslexia will present differently in different children, early red flags include a delay in speaking; difficulty in pronunciation; a decreased sensitivity for rhyme, alliteration, and assonance; or trouble learning nursery rhymes. Later, a child might have difficulty recalling or accessing a particular phoneme.



And as children get older, they might have difficulty understanding that words come apart, as in a compound word, and that words can be isolated further by their sounds and syllables. These children also have difficulty associating letters with sounds. Or they may make errors when reading that are not related to sound, such as substituting a familiar word for a difficult one that appears in the text. Additionally, the child may complain about how difficult the task of reading is and might avoid reading.

In one study, preschoolers' phonological aptitude predicted reading progress three years later. Children who received training based on sounds – identifying the beginning, middle, and end sound—showed the most improvement in reading and spelling, as compared with children receiving general language training which emphasised the meaning of words. The study also showed that the kinds of language experiences the child has before he goes to school influence his ability to read years later. Additionally, a variety of studies demonstrate that phonological difficulties are the most significant and consistent markers of dyslexia in childhood. In conventional kindergarten (nursery school), where letter names are taught prior to sounds, the child's ability to successfully name the letters of the alphabet is the most significant reading predictor. In the first grade (about age six), the child's knowledge of letter sounds, taught after letter names, becomes the most important indicator of successful future reading. Controversy exists over the benefit of the knowledge of the letter name for learning to read. In fact, teaching letter names can be confusing and detract from the child's ability to successfully learn the sounds of each letter or letter combination.

**I.Q. tests are not strong indicators or predictors of later reading difficulties in young children.** The dyslexic elementary-aged child might use nonspecific language, like the words stuff or things, or describe around a word rather than using the word itself. Further, she may confuse words which sound alike, like lotion for ocean. This child might have difficulty remembering isolated pieces of information which use rote memory, like dates or random lists.

Additionally, this older child may have an extremely slow progression while learning to read, with a particularly difficult time reading new or unfamiliar words which must be sounded out. The child may omit parts of words when reading, substitute or mispronounce, and read in a difficult or laboured fashion. The child may often rely on the context or pictures to understand the meaning of the passage and have a very difficult time understanding isolated single words. The child might substitute words with the same meaning for a word in the text he cannot pronounce, like rain for thunderstorm. The child becomes tired from the effort of reading and often suffers from low self-esteem in this area. Yet the child will likely exhibit strengths in the thinking process, such as a deep imagination, curiosity, and excellent auditory comprehension with a sophisticated listening vocabulary. When a story is read aloud, she shows good understanding of new concepts and takes joy in new ideas. She often excels at reasoning and abstraction and can learn best through contextual meaning rather than memorisation. Higher level components of thinking remain successful since phonological awareness is not related to I.Q.

Strengths in critical thinking, reasoning, problem solving, vocabulary, and comprehension may all surround a weakness in phonological ability, a weakness in the ability to decode. **To help children with learning delays, it is essential to observe and track their strengths as well as their weaknesses, because these characteristics can often be used to help bypass the challenges.** The strengths ensure the child's success in learning even if the learning takes place over a longer period of time. After ruling out hearing or vision problems, an adult observing a child for some of these challenges should be sure to note the frequency

of the difficulties. Most children will exhibit all of these behaviours at one time or another as they learn to read. But the concern arises when the symptoms repeat in a regular pattern over time.

When observing a child with reading challenges, one should not wait too long to seek expert assistance if there are concerns. Rather than time or the maturity of the child, it is specific reading instruction which leads to better reading. Teachers need to communicate with the child's parents and with school administrators about any concerns and ask for home observations as well. Additionally, the school should maintain a file of resources within the community for the parents and teachers and provide support in seeking further evaluation for the child. Once a struggle is suspected or observed, a psychologist or other healthcare professional makes evaluations for dyslexia. Additionally, this professional will rely on the careful observations of teachers and parents. The professional will administer a variety of language tests, including oral, written, auditory, and memory assessments. One particular test score does not signify the child is dyslexic. Rather, the healthcare provider looks for a phonological weakness affecting other components of the language system, combined with an established reading problem, according to the education and age of the child. The diagnosis would be supported by evidence of a high learning capability with some glitch in the learning process preventing the child from performing better.

Unfortunately, dyslexic children are generally in the third grade or older when they are initially identified as dyslexic by their schools. Reading difficulties diagnosed after third grade (age eight or nine) are much more difficult to remediate. One of the reasons for this is that the initial disadvantage is compounded over time. If a diagnosis is made, an adult should explain to the child her reading problem in a way that she can understand. If a child has some understanding, that can give her comfort as she is not so different from other children. Without this conversation, a child may be quick to label herself as perhaps stupid or dumb, rather than understanding that her brain functions differently from, yet just as legitimately as, her peers'.

**The child with dyslexia needs an adult who can support and champion her. This adult will believe in her strengths and efforts, understand the nature of her reading difficulties, and actively work to be sure that she gets the learning and emotional support she needs.** This advocacy might include (but not be limited to) helping her school understand her needs and perhaps directing them to her rights protected by law, such as (in the United States) the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). With proper documentation, she may be entitled to academic accommodations including extra time for specific activities, individual support, or being able to demonstrate knowledge in a variety of ways (e.g., orally instead of through writing).

## Successful intervention for the dyslexic child

**Dyslexic people do not process language in the same manner as other learners do. Specifically, the ideal curriculum for children with dyslexia is multisensory, structured, cumulative, and sequential.** This method of direct, uncluttered instruction benefits most non-dyslexic learners as well. According to the National Reading Program (NRP), the essentials of an effective early reading intervention programme include systematic, sequential, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness. In particular, the child needs the ability to notice and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. She needs explicit instruction in phonics (how the letters and groups of letters represent the sounds of spoken language), decoding, sight words (non-phonetic words), spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. Additionally, the child needs regular practice in the application of these



skills in reading (as well as writing) towards fluency. Further language experiences should include telling, listening to, and discussing stories. Systematic phonics instruction helps children increase their ability to comprehend what they read. Once the child reads words automatically and accurately, he is able to focus on the meaning of the text. Phonics instruction contributes to comprehension skills, rather than inhibiting them.

Unfortunately, traditional teacher training at the college or university level often falls short of providing future teachers with the skills they need either to effectively recognise dyslexia or to teach language skills in a structured, sequential, multisensory fashion. In fact, Dr Richardson points out that 'university-based teacher preparation programs were found to be inadequate' to prepare teachers to address reading difficulties, dyslexia, and other learning disabilities.

## The Montessori Method

Maria Montessori relied upon her training as a medical doctor and scientist for her investigations into the development of the child. She considered observation to be the integral supportive foundation of her method. Montessori's principles are based on what the children revealed to her, and through observation she found the key to the educational dilemma of her time. An essential component of the Association Montessori Internationale teacher training at every level is that of careful observation of children. Teachers study observation theory and practise specific observation techniques so that once leading their own classroom, they are prepared to consider different learners' approaches in context and devise strategies based on their knowledge of the different ways in which learning can work.

Teachers learn about the nature of the child, including her sensitive periods, psychological characteristics, and human tendencies. In this manner, **Montessori teachers already have preparation for noticing, and then meeting, the specific needs of any individual learner in their charge.** Maria Montessori began her teachings with the great success mentally challenged children experienced by using the sensorial materials. **So from the beginning, Dr Montessori observed that children with learning disabilities could be quite successful in her classroom. She also found that by isolating the difficulties of each task and by breaking the whole task down into its concrete, smaller parts, all children could work purposefully towards their own self-construction.** However, the Montessori method is not exclusively aimed at learning disabled children; rather, it is particularly suited for a variety of learners. Children with dyslexia benefit from the primary (ages three to six) Montessori environment, which meets their specific, individual needs. Dyslexic children need sequential, multisensory, and explicit experience with the sounds and symbols of their language to read fluently.

The introductory phonetic approach, combined with the emphasis on context, functions of words, and analysis of sentences, particularly suits struggling readers. Among other things, this environment includes regular experience with language, activities which encourage the awareness of sounds, and vocabulary enrichment. Further, unlike a conventional kindergarten or preschool, Montessori gives the child three to four years of regular language activities in school, rather than one or two years. This further repetition can make a significant difference in the foundation for a struggling reader. The recommendations from the NRP are quite congruent with the observations made by Dr Montessori. These components benefit all children, including dyslexics. Already sequential and multisensory, the total reading path of Montessori not only includes all of the NRP-identified components but can easily be adjusted with increased repetition (as needed) to meet the needs of the individual dyslexic child. In this way, so-called remediation takes place

for at-risk readers in the regular Montessori classroom side by side with the rest of the class. Reading must begin with explicit attention to the principal characteristics of oral language. So, from the beginning, sound games are important preparation for reading and developing phonological awareness. The teacher holds an object, stating, 'This object in my hand begins with the sound /f/. What am I holding?' Additional, regular repetition is necessary for the child to gain practice with initial sounds, final sounds, middle sounds, discriminating different sounds, sounding out words, and eventually selecting the symbol to go with the spoken sound. In this way the child builds the foundation to develop an awareness of and ability to manipulate the sounds in words.

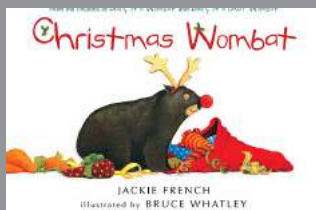
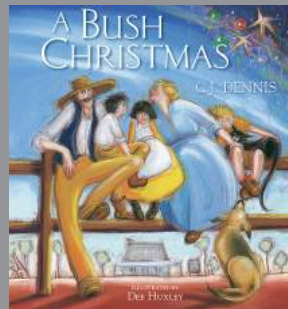
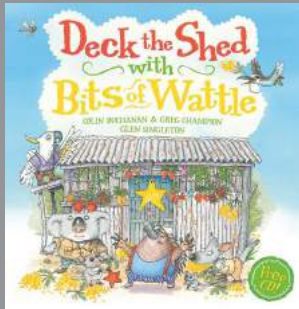
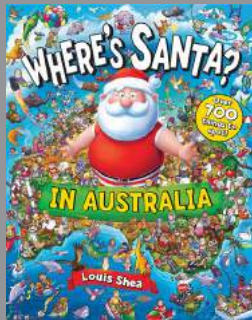
Letter sounds are introduced with the sandpaper letters: The adult says the sound and traces the symbol, and the child repeats. This multisensory exercise combines visual, auditory, and tactile learning to help the child commit to memory the sound-symbol association. This instruction in how the letters (and later, groups of letters, the phonograms) represent sounds of spoken language is essential to the success of the child's reading. The three-period lesson, in which the child gets varied, directed repetition, helps her to solidify the concept. The dyslexic child will generally need additional and more direct work with the sound games and the sandpaper letters before she can apply their concepts to word building. Further, an increased second period of repetition will be beneficial. Additionally, it may be necessary to precisely order each new presentation and repetition of the sounds, from simple to complex, based on the order of the Orton-Gillingham method or similar programme.

As the child needs more experience, separating words into syllables and clapping each syllable (like clapping three times while saying A-l-l-son) helps her to further hear and manipulate sounds. In addition, a child can place a concrete object (such as a bean) on the table for each sound heard in a word (placing two beans for eat: /ee/ + /t/). Especially for dyslexics, occasionally working in a small group of children on phonemic awareness may be more effective than individual or whole-group instruction because these children often benefit from listening to their classmates in addition to receiving individualised feedback from the teacher.

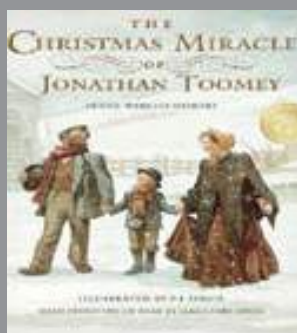
**One of Maria Montessori's greatest discoveries was that generally reading comes later than writing.** She wrote, 'experience has taught me to make a clear distinction between reading and writing, and it has shown me that the two acts need not be absolutely contemporaneous.' She found that reading typically begins six months after writing with the movable alphabet, and fairly independently. However, this will only happen because the child has been indirectly prepared in both the hand and the mind with the keys to language: the sandpaper letters and the speech sounds. Montessori education prepares the mind through spoken language (vocabulary enrichment, storytelling, poems, etc.) and prepares the hand through exercises of practical life, tracing metal insets, the art of handwriting, the movable alphabet, and other activities. The dyslexic child also requires this important, repeated indirect preparation. Rather than simply technical skill, Montessori called total reading the goal for the child, noting, 'a child does not read until he receives ideas from the written word.' The child must read for understanding, grasping the emotion, nuance, and intent of the author.

**The Montessori method prepares the children for total reading through the activities of spoken language in a linguistic environment.** Often the greater the child's exposure to culture (such as art, music, geography, poetry, etc.), the higher her reading level. Additionally, reading stories and poems aloud to children helps to stimulate awareness of aspects of language such as rhyme. Practice with grace and courtesy also deepens a child's vocabulary. In addition, teachers

## AUSSIE CHRISTMAS READS



## CLASSIC CHRISTMAS READS



*Happy reading !!*

in Montessori environments prepare the child for total reading with the mechanical skills and reading practice acquired through the phonetic object box, phonogram work, puzzle words, reading classification, and reading analysis. Here the synthesis and decoding take place. For more interpretive reading, Montessori offers function of words, word study, books, and also reading analysis. 'The child of this age learns many new words', wrote Montessori. 'He has a special sensitiveness for words; they attract his interest, and he spontaneously accumulates a very great number.' The child also repeats much of this work with interest and variety. Similarly, the NRP noted that listening to, telling, and discussing stories (vocabulary enrichment), in addition to reading comprehension, are essential for reading fluency. Further, direct instruction with sight words (also called non-phonetic or, in Montessori, puzzle words) and other vocabulary are important components for successful readers. Regular practice with all of these skills was also noted as essential.

**Dyslexic readers in Montessori follow this same logical progression as their typical peers, the simple-to-complex, parts-to-whole approach to total reading.** These learners need increased repetition and time with these activities. Coupled with regular observation, reading aloud makes important feedback from the adult possible. It is during this type of reading that further instruction in decoding can support the individual child. These times should be positive and constructive for the child. When a mistake is made, the child can alter the pronunciation verbally and store the correct neural model of the word. Repetition will reflect the exact pronunciation and spelling of the word until it becomes automatic. A child must be able accurately to perform a two-step process—reading to take the word in and coding it for storage and retrieval—before that word can be read fluently. Small decodable books can give confidence to the emerging reader, as he will be able to read on his own. Often children like to read these simple books because they can. If the child cannot read about ninety-five per cent of the words on the page correctly, the book is probably too difficult for him to read on his own. Resources are available to help accurately gauge a book's level of reading difficulty.

**Other, more general, Montessori principles are just as applicable to the dyslexic child as to the typical learner and support her individual development. The environment and lessons are sequential, the classroom is organised and logical, and multisensory didactic materials are used. The Montessori materials are designed with control of error and can be a perfect diagnostic tool.** The adult gains many indications of the child's learning abilities through observation. The materials are beautiful, giving only the necessary keys for the child's exploration, repetition, and synthesis. In some cases the materials also allow the child to self-correct her work, thus building independence, confidence, and respect.

Montessori saw the need for the children to have freedom—to choose, to repeat, and to move coupled with necessary responsibility in the environment. Often the child knows her own needs and, with freedom, will choose repetition of a skill when she needs it. Repetition is provided for in the design of the materials and activities. Further, brain imaging technology demonstrates the positive effect of practice, as the brain creates a neural circuit when expertise or skill is developed.

## Elementary reading support

**Just as with the Montessori primary environment, Cosmic Education (the plan for the elementary aged child, ages six to twelve) can be an excellent fit for the dyslexic child.** The fundamental Montessori principles continue to operate and the teacher is well prepared to observe and meet the needs of the individual, including the struggling reader. Most children who have attended the Casa dei Bambini for



three years come to the elementary environment already reading. If a child does not read, the teacher should provide daily support, combined with regular observation of the specific difficulties (e.g., 'misses end blend sounds regularly'), to correct this deficit. This does not necessarily mean that the child is dyslexic, but a plan of action which includes multisensory, repetitive, small doses of sound awareness and reading practice should be provided. There is no time to lose for this six-year-old; if children who are dyslexic get effective phonological training in kindergarten and first grade (ages five to seven), they will have significantly fewer problems learning to read at grade level than do children who were not identified or helped until third grade (age eight or nine). This is also the time to emphatically protect the child's self-esteem, as likely she would love to read, cannot, and is surrounded by those who do. Ideally, remedial lessons should be given daily to provide consistency. Further, the schedule of instruction should not hinder the other regular school activities. In this way, the teacher meets the unique pace of the child's learning and the child can further develop automaticity. The Montessori environment perfectly meets the need of this child, as smallgroup or individual lessons are regularly given, based on the children's needs, every day in the Montessori classroom.

**Remediation is possible in a mixed age environment without the potential stigma or work-cycle disruption of keeping regular appointments with a specialist.** As the child enters the elementary classroom, the teacher should assess the various components of her reading skills. Even the most careful, unbiased observer should keep in mind that cognitive phenomena cannot be directly observed. One simply cannot see into the minds of children. Facial expressions and body language can give some clues to the struggles of a child, as can listening to her reading aloud. When a child has difficulties segmenting (pulling apart a word into its sounds, usually observed while spelling) or blending (pushing sounds together to form a word while reading), and has been phonologically well prepared, further analysis should be done. Oral conversations with the child may reveal an awareness (or lack thereof) of sound comparison, segmentation, and blending. To check comparison, the teacher might have the child pronounce the individual sounds heard in a word or count them. To segment, the child breaks the word apart by sounds or syllables; to blend, she joins sounds. A child who has trouble hearing syllables can place her hand under her chin; each time she feels her jaw drop, a syllable is being spoken. For dyslexic children with blending difficulties, presenting many words with the same sound together (as a "family") can be more effective repetition. (For example, the child reads a list containing words beginning with /sl/ such as slip, slam, sled, etc., or words with the root port, such as report, portable, transport, etc.) The teacher can also periodically point out a particular word and check to see if things make sense to the child. In this way, the child decodes an unknown word and the teacher verifies that the pronunciation is correct by repeating that word. Also, this fosters the child's independence as a reader by building her confidence. For example, when she is able to articulate /d/ /o/ /g/ and can blend these sounds to form dog, the teacher may ask, 'Does dog sound right to you? Does this make sense in the story?'

Fluency will change for the child depending on what she is reading and whether she has familiarity or practice with the text. Children need practice with fluency, which is closely linked with reading comprehension. When children read passages orally multiple times and receive feedback, they become better readers. Children who read and reread text repeatedly or rely on the use of audiotapes or peer guidance for oral reading also increase their fluency. Parents can also reinforce fluency by supporting their child with reading aloud at home. Repeatedly reading the word correctly develops an increase in accurate neural representations. The Montessori adult should consult the public school curriculum for an understanding of reading requirements. For example,

in some Minnesota districts it is not until fourth grade (age nine or ten) that children are expected to read multisyllabic words easily, yet children are expected to develop into fluent readers by the end of second grade (age eight). Fluency connects the decoding skills and brings the child to comprehension.

## General support through cosmic education

Based on extensive observation of natural human development, Montessori created prepared environments to suit the characteristics of children. **Cosmic Education appeals to the psychological characteristics of the child from six to twelve. During this time, the child moves further from the concrete towards abstraction, experiencing great intellectual growth and demonstrating the capacity for great work. She concerns herself with justice, fairness, and morality and forms small societies with her peers, seeking heroes to emulate.** As a result of these characteristics, the Montessori elementary classroom offers the universe to the child and she readily accepts, using her reasoning mind and imagination to explore the how and why of everything. **These regular components of the Montessori elementary programme support the learning of the dyslexic child. Cosmic Education is an aid to life, offered for the entire human development of the child.** An important aspect of the child's success is the use of language in a constructive and productive way for the betterment of society. Language, wrote Montessori, 'must not be considered merely as a subject in schools.... It is, rather, a characteristic of civilised man.' The child discovers that language is a human creation that helps people satisfy their needs. Language transmits human culture and continues to shape and change the human world each day.

Dr Montessori referred to the integrated spoken and written language work of the elementary child as psychogrammar, created to support the characteristics of the child. Rather than teaching, the adult links the children to a variety of avenues of exploration, offering opportunities to recognise patterns. With enthusiasm, the Montessori adult brings language to life with enticing questions and exciting examples, leading the children towards discoveries made through reason. Renowned Montessori teacher trainer Margaret Stephenson said elementary teachers 'make language work a detective story adventure of the imagination.' The richly prepared elementary environment provides a plethora of language experiences for the child. Teachers convey the workings of the universe through spoken language in the Great Stories and further stories, beginning with the whole and moving to the parts. With concrete materials, the child isolates new ideas. Multisensory experiences, including regular movement, provide repetition through variety.

Further, the child explores through reading, writing, and speaking in many ways. **For a child who struggles with reading, the nature of Cosmic Education and its transmission through keys, impressions, and stories provides a meaningful and thorough experience.** In sum, the non-reader has much purposeful work to do in the Montessori elementary environment. The elementary child acquires broader social experiences through going out. 'He requires to go out into the world to make wider contacts with both nature and human society', Montessori pointed out. In this way, the child has practice in society and he can see firsthand the workings of his culture. Further, the children have a great desire to view pertinent examples of their studies in nature and the community. The dyslexic child learns through activity even more than his peers, which provides a framework for memory. In this way, going out fits the needs of this individual. He must fully understand the topic, as rote memory will not work well for him. Concepts, real life examples, and experiences provide opportunities for practice, and thus the child can make connections within and between catego-



ries. **Hands-on experiences are vital to the dyslexic. These experiences are found with the manipulative materials in the classroom and the wider society outside of the classroom.** In the prepared environment of the classroom and through the going out programme, the children develop social skills. They practise how to form a group with a leader. They collaborate, delegating tasks to each individual while jointly making a contribution to the whole. They work under the direction of each other and each has an opportunity to lead. They experience how to discuss and disagree. The children set their own guidelines for the classroom, their own small society.

**The Montessori environment provides the child the freedom to spend as much time as she needs, in an extended, uninterrupted work cycle, to complete a task.** There is no pressure to move on to another topic at a prescribed time (e.g., thirty minutes for writing, thirty minutes for history), no emphasis on rote memorisation, no test taking, nor are there regular teacher-imposed assignments. With the state school curriculum as a guide, the child is free to follow her own interests. Because the environment consists of a group of children of mixed ages, the struggling reader generally has a peer group at her level at any given time. Lessons and materials are specifically planned by the teacher to fit what each child needs, and because the children tend towards their peers, group lessons are frequent. In this way, both children benefit when a budding dyslexic reader mentors another child who needs more guidance, regardless of their ages. Cosmic Education introduces the child to the important accomplishment of human beings through the fourth Great Story, Communication in Signs.

Like many stories elementary Montessori teachers tell, this one inspires gratitude in the child to the anonymous human beings who contributed to our lives today—in this case, gratitude for the precious gift of the alphabet and other symbol systems, and the creation of written language. Because of those amazing early humans, not only do contemporary people have the possibility to think clearly, they also have the possibility to write and speak clearly. As the child works towards the mastery of sound symbol associations in English, other specific materials can reinforce those patterns and give further practice. A fluent reader can also work with a nonreader, helping or reading during that portion of the work. Building on the work of the Casa dei Bambini, the child explores single words and word meanings in the elementary. The child learns progressively how words are built, learning about suffixes, prefixes, and word families. In one case, the child uses small movable alphabets to investigate words by breaking them into parts. Different affixes added to the same root change the meaning of the word and sometimes even the part of speech. The isolation of the parts through the different alphabet colours helps the child to understand compound words and word families, which gives reading practice, strengthens vocabulary, and aids in spelling.

Deliberate word study is essential as phonological training transfers to the reading of both new and familiar words. If teachers encourage children to fully analyse written words, they can apply their knowledge to the new words encountered. Only twenty prefixes account for ninety-seven per cent of all the words with prefixes found in English-language schoolbooks, and nine of these prefixes account for seventy-five per cent of all prefixes. Because the second-plane child likes reasons, Montessori teachers give etymology in many stories and lessons. Besides just giving the meaning, the etymology often has the characteristic embedded within the word. For example, a flower with parts below the ovary is called hypogynous. The word comes from two Greek words, hypo, meaning 'under' or 'below', and gynous, meaning 'female'. Also, the child might study the origin or classification of other words, such as English surnames, for example, which can be descriptive, occupational, patronymic, or geographical. Knowing the etymology or historical origin

## SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

### PLAY

Marvellous Mummies with Dr Egypt at Hornsby Library

6-12 yrs \$10 Various dates and locations

The Lost Dinosaurs at Castle Hill Library

6-12 yrs \$15 Wed 6 Jan

Lost World Illustration Workshop at Castle Hill Library

6-12 yrs \$7.50 Wed 13 Jan

Photography Workshop: Portraits at State Library of NSW

Over 8 yrs Tues 19 Jan 9.30am to 3.00pm \$60

### SEE

Free Movies at Macquarie: "The Princess Bride" at State Library of NSW

All ages Thur 17 Dec 12.00pm Free

Trailblazers: Australia's 50 greatest explorers

This exhibition tells the stories of the pioneers who pushed beyond the boundaries to change the way we see the world. They crossed the oceans, traversed mountains, braved the poles and even explored space. In this immersive exhibition you'll get up close and personal with 50 of these extraordinary people, whose bravery, curiosity, and determination will inspire you.

Australian Museum

Fri 28 Nov 2015 to 8 Jul 2016 Entry costs apply

Cabinet of Curiosities

Touch and discover curious and terrible weapons, dress, and navigational tools related to the Golden age of piracy in this hands on discovery device in the galleries.

National Maritime Museum

All ages 27 Dec 2015 to 25 Jan 2016 Entry costs apply

Hidden Histories Workshop

Use expert tools to uncover the hidden history of Sydney Observatory. Decode maps from Sydney's past to reveal the many lives of the Observatory.

Sydney Observatory

5-12 yrs Various dates and times \$15

### DO

Zoo Adventures

Join the Zoo Adventures Summer fun for a fun-filled day at the zoo. Each day includes age appropriate and popular favourites such as, Sky Safari; Themed 'For The Wild' activities; games and craft; a public show; and an awesome photo keepsake of an action packed Zoo Adventures

Taronga Zoo

5-10 yrs Various dates 9.00am to 3.30pm \$69 per day

Sydney Festival 2016

All ages. Various events and locations around Sydney  
7 to 26 Jan 2016

of a word is an important support to reading and fluent comprehension, as it gives information about the word's pronunciation, spelling, and meaning. Also, by knowing the historical background for language, children come to better understand how many of our basic Anglo-Saxon words have evolved from their original meanings.

Additionally, older elementary children explore the history of many Latin, Greek, and French prefixes and suffixes, discovering that often affixes are not of English origin. When children move on to middle school (ages twelve to fifteen), the reading material changes from predominantly Anglo-Saxon words to a mix of words of every origin, so a strong foundation in word study helps to reinforce reading skill. In particular, towards middle and into high school, texts contain large numbers of words from Latin, French, and Greek. English is surprisingly organised and sensibly ingenious, which appeals to the second-plane child's psychology, as children enjoy the imaginative exploration and discovery of a variety of language constructions. As they develop morality, not only do they enjoy rules and putting them to use, they relish the discovery of the exceptions. Moreover, often the reasons for the structure of the language appeal to the child and can support reading comprehension by giving contextual clues. Even words which cannot be completely decoded based on sound and letter correspondence are often predictable, based on phonics. So teachers should not tell early readers that 'English is irregular', because that sends a message of negativity and is not really correct. In fact, the brain is quite skilled at determining patterns and regularities. Much of the predictability occurs in two-letter spelling units, and children should learn all of the most frequent spelling-phoneme correspondences.

Increased vocabulary supports reading, from decoding to comprehension. The interpretive reading cards, sequenced by complexity, can help the child to decode just a small amount of text and explore the meanings of words. Work with the command cards and grammar boxes, in which the child acts out the words on the cards, gives increased practice. Also, a variety of material exists in the classroom which requires the reading of only a single word or two, such as the animal story material, geography command cards, math word problems, and nomenclature cards. Many opportunities also exist for the building of vocabulary through literature. A collection of carefully chosen, limited books in the classroom of different genres (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, reference, etc.), authors, and time periods supports this development. Reading aloud daily by the adult also exposes the children to great varieties of literature. The adult can pause to explain or discuss particular words, or ask a volunteer for a definition as needed.

## The Montessori adult's role in supporting the dyslexic child

Because it is essential to identify the child's reading problem before he fails, a variety of assessment tools for phonological skills can help identify children who are at risk for reading difficulties. For the struggling reader, word and sound assessment should be systematic and regular. The error patterns in an older child's writing provide concrete guidance for the adult about sounds the child may not hear and therefore does not record. These children may have become sight readers, relying exclusively on memorisation to read words. The teacher or learning specialist is best equipped to administer this type of review when needed. Usually challenges are not initially revealed through conventional achievement tests or diagnostic tools. Rather, a regular classroom teacher who has some experience observing her children's work and habits notices these children. Based on her observations, at that point the teacher can help an individual in the learning process.

**A majority of dysfunctions can be managed successfully in the regular classroom without direct special education services,** while

the psychologists and special education teachers can serve as consultants to the classroom teacher. If a healthcare professional diagnoses the child as dyslexic, explaining the nature of the difficulty to the child can be an important step for both her understanding and her success. Her parent or teacher can let her know that 'Dys- means "problems" and -lexia means "words", so dyslexia means problems with the words you speak, the words you hear, and the words you see.' When telling history stories, the adult can point out to the child that before people learnt to read or write, dyslexics were regarded as powerful and were often the leaders of their tribes because of their strengths of observation and creativity. The groups with the dyslexic members had an increased chance of survival. Additionally, an understanding of the condition can be liberating for children, who finally know there is an actual, understood problem with learning. Children who cannot read already may know in their hearts that there is a problem prior to a diagnosis. Yet these children need to know that they are capable and bright people who learn differently from others.

In some cases, a dyslexic child may benefit from tutoring after school. These types of services outside the classroom require careful communication between the classroom teacher, the tutor, and the parents. Ideally, additional practice or tutoring should reinforce the skills the child has learnt in school, rather than introduce new ones or take the place of the child's classroom teacher. In middle school and beyond (about ages twelve and up), the use of a computer for note taking may be of benefit to the child. Also, as the child progresses to conventional school systems which use textbooks, organisations such as Learning Ally in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, can provide audio book support. In this way the child can participate in courses at his level of understanding rather than be held back by slow reading. This can allow the child to read more actively by underlining or taking notes while listening, thereby reinforcing the content, which may not have been possible previously when he was totally focused on deciphering the words on the page.

## Conclusion

Dyslexia is a language disorder with a biological basis which is characterised by difficulty with reading and other language processing. Typically, the challenges result from poor phonological awareness and are unexpected as compared with the other abilities of the child. Dyslexic children require specific intervention and support and can be highly successful throughout school and in a multitude of careers. These are, in Jane Healy's words, 'youngsters who might be academic stars in a culture with a different set of intellectual priorities.' For most children, reading difficulties can be addressed very successfully, thus eradicating reading failure as a public health problem. Both identifying children before they fall behind and providing the help that they need are important components necessary for the strength of our youth. The cycle of failure can be avoided because educators now know how to identify children at risk for reading failure before they begin to experience that type of difficulty.

**The Montessori classroom, in both the Casa dei Bambini and the elementary (ages six to twelve) environment, is designed to meet the needs of every individual child, including the dyslexic learner. The trained Montessori adult observes the child and provides her with what she needs for success not only in language but for the blossoming of all of her human potentials.** As a literate member of society, the child feels empowered to contribute to others, pursue her cosmic task, and support the building of a peaceful world. The 'human teachers can only help the great work that is being done as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be the victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.'

*Note - Anyone wishing to get a full copy of this article including the references should contact the Principal.*



# My Montessori Journey

My Montessori journey began just over 18 months ago when I joined Northside Montessori as a classroom learning support assistant. I did not expect that my new part time job would take me where it has. After only a term at Northside I was sold. Not only could I no longer face working at traditional schools, I could no longer send my child to a traditional school; hence my daughter Amber's enrolment at Northside. This year I enrolled at MWEI to study a Diploma of Early Education & Primary Education (Montessori). Following is my first essay which was on the history of Montessori in Australia. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. *By Sharon Geyer*

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The Montessori Method of Education has been in Australia for just over a Century. While the method has not been embraced by mainstream schools it stands strong with hundreds of schools, preschools and day-care centres in operation today. **Had it not been for Montessori's presence in Australia we may have a very different educational setting.** Many traditional schools and preschools of today have taken aspects of Montessori education and incorporated them into their traditional classrooms. These include copying physical attributes like child sized furniture and indoor outdoor work areas, curriculum similarities and teaching techniques (Clarkson, 2006; Feez, 2013; Standing, 1998).

**The Australian Montessori journey had its beginnings at Blackfriars School in Sydney 1912, just over a century ago.** Martha Simpson, who introduced the Montessori Method into Blackfriars, travelled to Rome in 1913 with three other Australians to attend the first ever Montessori training which was taught by Dr Montessori herself. In addition to giving numerous interviews and lectures, Simpson submitted a report to the Minister for Education, A.C. Carmichael. This prompted Carmichael to travel to Rome presenting Simpson's report to Maria Montessori herself (Feez 2013).

**Blackfriars went on to become a demonstration class attached to the Sydney Teachers College, a College where teachers from all over Australia came to observe.** Upon completion of training, these teachers joined existing Montessori schools, converted traditional schools, opened schools of their own or went on to become Montessori trainers themselves hence furthering the advancement of Montessori education in Australia. In the early 1900's, particularly in Victoria a number of Australian teachers who were not officially trained in the Montessori Method incorporated some Montessori methods into their traditional teaching (Feez 2013).

Simpson left Blackfriars to become the inspector of infant schools a post which she held for 13 years. She took with her valuable knowledge and conviction of Montessori education which she introduced into bush schools, one teacher schools and new schools in Sydney. In 1922 and 1925, she played a pivotal role in the Montessori principles being written into the NSW Primary School Syllabus (Feez p75). **Martha Simpson introduced healthy lunches, milk as well as outdoor activity into Blackfriars. This was considered to be one of two of the best health efforts in the world and continues today** (Feez 2013).

A similar story was beginning in South Australia with Lydia Longmore appointed inspector of Infant Schools in South Australia a position she held for 17 years. Prior to this post, Longmore had been sent to Blackfriars for training by the South Australian Minister for Education, Crawford Vaughn. In her 17 years as Inspector of Infant Schools, Longmore, like Simpson, promoted the Montessori Method to schools in South Australia (Feez 2013).

Carmichael the NSW Minister for Education requested that Maria Montessori come to Australia to further Simpson's work at Blackfriars. Montessori replied stating that while she was unable to attend now, she hoped that she would be able to do so in the not so distant future. **Sadly Montessori never did make it to Australia. Had she visited, Montessori education may have become a significantly more favoured method of education.** Australia's considerable distance from Europe may have compromised both Montessori and other teachers reaching Australia. It may well have deterred those Australians who wished to study abroad. In the early 1900's it would have taken many months by boat for students to reach Europe. Similarly Montessori materials took many months to arrive by sea from Europe, they were and remain costly, yet another deterrent (Feez 2013).

In the 1960's and 70's many Australian parents with a passion for Montessori education began raising funds for teachers and premises to open schools in their local areas. Often teachers had to be imported from outside of Australia. Many of these schools were later forced to close when existing leases expired as they were unable to find suitable premises. **Many of the long standing Montessori Schools that remain today owe their longevity purely for the fact that they own their premises** (Feez 2013).

By the early 1920's Australia had suffered the effects of war and an influenza epidemic as well as the Great Depression. While Montessori was Catholic she remained a scientist who felt that the theory of evolution should be taught at her schools. This may impede a number of religious families from choosing a Montessori education (Feez, 2013; Rohrs, 1994; Standing, 1998).

Some Montessori schools had closed and Kindergarten Union who had been implementing various Montessori methods into their pre-schools was now beginning to do otherwise. A woman named Harriet Dumolo was adverse to the Montessori Method, went about doing as



much damage to the method as possible. Some teachers who were committed to the method and had been implementing its practice for years now seemed to be impacted by Dumolo and sadly made alterations to Montessori's method as a consequence. Similarly Martha Simpson did not 100% adhere to Montessori's methods while applying them at Blackfriars. She argued that teachers in Rome only took the teaching so far and then waited for Montessori's instruction as to what to do next. Simpson stated that in order to reach students effectively in Australia the Montessori Method would have to be adapted to our own curriculum, what we as teachers of today are required to do. Rodha and Norma Self however disapproved of this. The pair briefly worked at Blackfriars. However they did not approve of Simpson's adjustments. The Self sisters opened their own Montessori school in Newtown which while successful, was only in operation for 6 years. Norma Self went on to work in a home for orphaned children where she taught the Montessori Method again with success. Today we see similarities as there are schools and preschools that will only 100% adhere to the method while other schools will allow "alterations". The Number of Montessori schools in Australia have fluctuated over time (Feez 2013).

Perhaps it was the strength that women such as Simpson and Lillian de Lissa had when they wrote, lectured and taught the Montessori Method that sabotaged Montessori education in the early 1900's in Australia. Men of this era may have found this confidence a threat, and thus not taken the method seriously for fear that it was creating confident and outspoken women (Feez 2013).

The majority of Australian parents were not educated in a Montessori setting. As Montessori education is so foreign to their own experiences they may not initially appreciate its value. Today as was the case since the beginning of Montessori education many have opinions that stem from a lack of knowledge (Feez 2013).

**The impact of Montessori education on Australia remains undeniable. Montessori was the first to introduce the concept of isolation of difficulty. This technique is promoted in many teaching courses in Australia today. Montessori Primary curriculum encourages independence, cross over between subjects, peer teaching, working to a child's strengths and building up of a child's knowledge of their own learning profile. These aspects are now promoted in Board of Studies, syllabus outcomes. Montessori's sensorial materials were well ahead of her time. Today's Early Years Learning Framework places importance on the sensorial development of the child. To see a child painting without a paint brush is a common occurrence. Montessori thought that in order to educate the child one must first change their living environment this is not unlike what "social services" has in place today with various early intervention programs** (BOSTES, 2012; Clarkson, 2006; ELYF, 2010; Else-Quest & Lillard, 2009; Rohrs 1994; Standing, 1998).

There were both positive and negative opinions in regards to Montessori education however the fact that Montessori's ideas differed so vastly from that of other educators made these educators stand up and take notice of what she was doing. **Montessori was the first to observe the child. Having a background in special needs I was taught early – observe the behaviour – why is the behaviour happening.** Mainstream schools of today use materials that allow students to have a "hands on" method of learning, just as Montessori developed concrete materials that allow students to manipulate in order to learn independently (Feez, 2013; Rohrs, 1994).

**Montessori was the first to promote the importance of early childhood education.** Nowadays early childhood education is so

common that many suburbs of my hometown Sydney have numerous early childhood education centres in the same suburb. One hundred years ago if parents worked children were left to wander the streets or work themselves. **Early education centres of today have an environment already prepared for the child, another of concept of Montessori's** (Feez, 2013; Rohrs, 1994; Standing, 1998).

**While it remains to the majority as an "alternative" form of education it has played a momentous role in the shaping and changing of education as we find it today. Montessori was certainly well before her time in multiple aspects of her teaching method.** When Montessori education first reached Australian shores in the early 19th century, not all Australian children were privy to an education as they are today. While Montessori has not been embraced by all for the education of their children it has however remained consistent. It has never died out as other methods of education did. It still exists to this day. The materials that Montessori demonstrated over a century ago are still being used by the Montessori students of today. **The legacy of Dr. Montessori remains a powerful and influential force that has shaped, and continues to influence education in Australia** (Feez, 2013; Standing, 1998).

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# “Isn't there an App for that?”

In our rapidly changing world, can Montessori really go digital? *By Marina Ridley, Directress 3-6*

There is a plethora of applications or apps made to meet the 'educational needs' of children and a very large proportion of these are targeting pre-schoolers, or rather pre-schooler's parents. I have noticed and I am sure that you have too that there are applications that seem to have transformed the Montessori Children's House into 'the digital age'. The examples I have seen often look quite legitimate and tempting but what would stop me from handing over the money and downloading an application for my child to build the Pink Tower or to Build the Montessori Number rods?

**A good 'yard stick' to measure the pros and cons of a given application may be through going back to the key stones of Montessori philosophy.** What do we already know about the 0-6 child and how they naturally learn best?

## Sensorial Learners

**Children of 0-6 use each of their five senses to learn.** As parents, we know that it is very difficult to prevent little people from using their sense of touch to find out about something new. Dr Montessori did not call the hand the instrument of the mind for no reason! 0-6 children are hardwired to learn this way. In Montessori jargon, we call this drive the Sensitive Period for the Refinement of Sensory Perception. They want to learn about their world through all of their senses.

Let's take the example of the Pink Tower. Those who may not be familiar with this material can learn that it consists of 10 pink wooden cubes ranging from 1cm<sup>3</sup> to 10cm<sup>3</sup>, differing in 3 dimensions. The cubes increase progressively in the algebraic series of the third power. Therefore, the second cube equals 8 of the first; the third cube equals 27 of the first and so on. The Application maker of the Pink Tower for the iPad has understood that the visual sense is being targeted in this work. However, the child is not able to feel the increasing or decreasing weight of the cubes, they cannot feel the smooth planes and sharp corners of a cube. I wonder if the child perceives the cube as a square when it is on the screen? Do we really know what sense the child is using to build the cube? Is it the weight of each cube they are testing to know which one to place next in the tower?

**When watching children do this activity, they do not sit in a static position. They often stand, they get different views of the tower as they build such as a birds eye view. Do they see the repeating consistent ledge that appears around each cube? I've seen a child trace this with a finger. An application does not allow this kind of rich sensorial learning to occur.**

## Creativity

**One of the beautiful aspects of the materials in the Montessori environment is that there is a world of wonder and creativity just waiting to be explored.** What if I, a child took the largest Pink Tower cube and the largest Brown Stair prism and tested to see if they matched end to end? What if a child wanted to build the Pink Tower laying down or with one side flush to the back of the other cubes and run the smallest Pink Tower cube along the 1cm ledge it creates? I'm not sure that these lovely activities that we call variations in Montessori could be carried out on a screen.



## Silence is Golden

**If you have observed in the 3-6 classroom and seen a presentation given to a child by the Directress, you may have noticed that she doesn't say anything whilst her hands are moving. We want the focus to be on the material.** We have carefully chosen words and prompts. We say only what is necessary and no more. Consider the amount of voice over instruction, music, sound affects like bells dinging and crowd applause that is often heard in applications. Does it startle the child? Does it take away from their learning experience and importantly does it protect the precious concentration of that child while it is unfolding?

## Repetition

**Perfection, persistence, knowledge, perseverance are all built when a child repeats work.** Applications will do this very well, you can repeat the work until the batteries run out! However, I ask the question; what is the child able to repeat? I will explain this question with a story.

I had a little boy in my group who loved to do handwashing in Practical Life. Every day he would choose this work. He would fetch the water in the jug, pour it into the basin, place his hands in the basin, pick up the soap and lather, rinse and lather up again, rinse and lather again. It was the wonderful feel of the soap that drew him to the work or maybe it was the movement his hands made or the sound of the soap as it moved. Either way, he was concentrating and meeting a need. Would an application allow him to begin but create his own 'loop' of lathering until he was satisfied? He didn't often finish the rest of the activity and now if he chooses hand washing, he completes it from start to finish. His needs are met. Undoubtedly, handwashing would probably not be the choice of work when creating an application, but these same scenarios of repetition and fixation on one aspect occur throughout the curriculum. It is often about a movement of muscle that is being perfected in the body that drives this repetition of one action. Could he have got that same result using an application on a screen?

## Movement

**Movement is synonymous with learning. Dr Montessori understood this and scientists today have proven her observations as fact. Using an application on a screen only really allows the hand to move. Whole body movement is important.** A 0-6 person is refining their muscles and growing. They are also in the Sensitive Period for Movement. Sitting still is not easy for them! They have an inner drive to move! We play lots of games in the 3-6 environment called 'memory distance games'. We place one part of a material on a mat, for example, the Number Rods and ask the child to place a mat on the other side of the room far away. The child then begins to build the series of ten rods moving from mat to mat. They have to remember the last rod's size to select the next correct rod to build the series in correct sequence. This is tricky work and skilful work. You need to know those materials well to do this activity.

This is an example of Montessori materials being utilised to give depth of learning rather than linear learning which is simply building upon knowledge with the next material and the next and so on. **We want to explore everything we can about one material and movement helps us to do this. This is not possible on an app and screen.**

## Grace and Courtesy

**Care of materials and their treatment is a big part of the 0-6 environment.** A child who throws the Brown Stair prisms quickly gets auditory feedback that this is loud. Other children stop to look and perhaps let them know that this is not the way to work with the material. They see the scratched or dented brown surface. They get the idea that this is not OK and they want to avoid their community's disharmony. A

natural consequence. So, they learn to refine their movement, control their will to throw and find different ways to manage their feelings.

**With real materials, there is the responsibility to return it to the shelf ready for the next person. This instils care and thoughtfulness, these are important traits to acquire. These are not available on a screen app.**

## A Present for You?

Did you know that the Directress views each presentation as a 'present' to your child? We are giving them the gift of understanding how to use a material. The child patiently waits for their turn to use a long awaited material. Perhaps after a lesson, it is taken by another child to use. The child wanting the material waits in anticipation for the work to come back to the shelf. There is only one of each material in the classroom. They are precious and we want this feeling to be with the children. When there is only one of something and you've waited a long time to use it, it is special and you relish your time with it. When something is free to use any time and all the time, the attention and devotion you pay is not the same. It encourages concentration and mindfulness. An application takes away this beautiful gift.

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There is no app to replace your lap!



*"The hands are the instruments  
of man's intelligence."*

Maria Montessori





# Montessori inspired age appropriate toys

Most commercial toy manufacturers would have us believe that the best toys for 3-6 year olds are based on cartoon characters or interactive computer and TV programs. But what do they really need? *By Natasha Williams*

Most commercial toy manufacturers would have us believe that the best toys for 3-6 year olds are based on cartoon characters or interactive computer and TV programs. However, **we know that 3-6 year old children need large muscle movement with increasing refinement of smaller muscles – legs, arms, hands – all the way down to the pincer grip of holding crayons and pencils.**

We also know that during these crucial years is an impressionistic time for sensorial development. Children are experiencing their environment using all of their senses. **Toys should help lay the foundation for the child to think and act creatively.**

We know that spending too much time in front of the TV and computer turns children in to passive learners, ones who would rather have information handed to them rather than questioning and exploring the answers for themselves. They become expectant of extrinsic motivation and rewards, rather than becoming internally motivated.

So if you are thinking about the summer holidays and possibly Christmas presents then here are a few suggestions.

## Gross motor including purposeful work: practical life

**These 'toys' have many benefits as they not only allow your child the chance to contribute to their home in a positive way but they also give them valuable gross motor opportunities that assist with their coordination.** So during the holidays please encourage your child to participate in caring and maintaining your household by including them in your daily tasks such as sweeping leaves, cooking, gardening and washing the clothes and dishes. If you leave some dishes out of the dishwasher for your child to clean by hand, they will love to do this task! Other 'toys' are:

- Tri- and Bicycles
- Swings
- Balance Beam
- Child-size brooms and mops
- Aprons for cooking, painting, and crafts
- Jump ropes
- Hula Hoops
- Child-size watering can and gardening tools
- Sand and water trays
- Butterfly net
- Trampoline
- Different sized balls for catching and kicking



## Fine motor and creativity: pre-writing activities that strengthen the hand

- Tangrams
- Hammer and cork board
- Lacing activities and cards
- Bead stringing
- Modeling clay and tools
- Colored pencils and sketchbooks
- Peg looms
- Knitting needles and yarn
- Sidewalk chalk
- Flower press

## Construction and board games

- Lego
- Wooden blocks
- Magnet building sets
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Memory games
- Traditional games such as Checkers, Chinese Checkers, Chess, Marbles, Tiddlywinks, Pick Up Sticks

## Real world role play

- Dolls
- Toy cars and trucks
- Plastic animal and dinosaur models
- Compass
- Magnifying glass

Whatever toys we choose, we must remember that the most important element is to be certain that they engage the child mentally for long periods of time, combining both hand/muscle movement with brain activity.

Also over the summer break give your child lots of experiences by taking them out and about. Visit the city to see the different landmarks, the Sydney Harbour, the various transport assets. Visit museums and art galleries. Go out for dinner/lunch and try different cuisines. Go to the beach and look in a rockpool or go on a bush walk with them. Go to the theatre and watch a performance or listen to an Orchestra. This will not only show them the beauty of their world and begin an appreciation of human endeavour but will provide them with a rich vocabulary and strong experience base to link new information to as they explore the Montessori classroom.

Enjoy your summer break together!

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*We have to understand that the world can only be grasped by action, not by contemplation. The hand is more important than the eye. It is the hand that drives the subsequent evolution of the brain....the hand is the cutting edge of the mind."*

Jacob Bronowski, The Ascent of Man





# Primary Update

## 9-12

Well we have come the end of another very productive year. So much has happened recently in 9-12 that I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the term that was.

### 9-12 Camp

This year we headed into The Rocks for our 3 day camp. We packed in a huge amount including Hyde Park Barracks, The Opera House, the Maritime Museum and a trip to Parramatta where the students 'stepped back in time' and enrolled in an 1800's school. We also did a wonderful tour of the Rocks' Archaeological Dig where the children worked a grid and unearthed artefacts. Our guide was excellent and the whole experience really brought history alive. It was a fantastic camp. **We would like to thank Michelle Langer, Peter Ballard and David Coules who bravely accompanied us. They were a great help and lots of fun.**

### 9-12 Play Shrek

Our production of 'Shrek' was a fantastic experience. The students helped to write the script, choreograph the dances, choose the music and make the props. **It was an absolute credit to them and they performed with confidence, humour and joy.** It was so wonderful to witness students who initially lacked confidence, throw themselves into their roles and embrace the challenge so bravely. **Thank you to our students and to the adult helpers for all their contributions. It was indeed a collaborative and empowering experience.**

### 9-12 Class Move

We are now happily settled into our new home. The move went very smoothly and the students were a great help. **We would like to thank Sue Smedley and the parent volunteers who came in to assist.** It was greatly appreciated.

### Graduation and End of Year Concert

The Level 6 Graduation Ceremony and End of Year Concert was held on Monday 7th December at Turramurra High School. This was a very special celebration where we all said good bye and good luck to our Level 6 students as they head into the big, wide world of High School. The other students also performed various musical numbers. We really hope you enjoyed the evening.

### Sally Faerber Leaving

It is with great sadness that we bid farewell to Sally Faerber. Sally has long had a connection with Northside. Her roles have included parent, class parent and assistant in both 6-9 and 9-12 classes. **Sally has been instrumental in providing such a rich learning environment for the students.** While we will miss her, we wish her much happiness as she starts a new phase in her life. Sally has agreed to come back in a casual position in the future so we will be able to stay in touch.

### Last Day of School

On Wednesday 9th December, the students will finish school. We will be having an afternoon tea for all the students and parents in Primary from 2pm. At 2.40pm the primary students will be forming a guard of honour to clap out the Level 6 students. This is a very moving afternoon and we look forward to seeing you there.

**Thank you to our class parents who have done an exceptional job keeping communication flowing and assisting us in class all year. A big thanks also to all of the parent volunteers who helped make 2015 so special.**

I would finally like to thank our assistants Sally Faerber and Kay... for going above and beyond at all times. Their dedication is amazing.

*Congratulations and well done to our Year 6 graduates !! We wish you every success and much happiness for the next exciting phase of your lives.*





Charlotte



Imogen



Abbey-Rose



Zoe



End of Year Concert and  
Graduation Ceremony  
7 Dec 2015



Eliza



Rian



Didi



Hannah

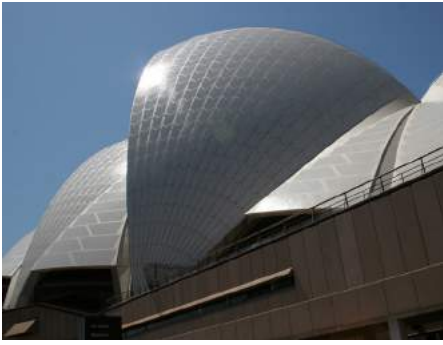


Katy



Aya





# 9-12 School Camp

Oct 2015



Mrs Macquarie's Chair



Hyde Park Barracks



Sydney Opera House



National Maritime Museum



## 'The Big Dig' - Rocks Discovery Centre



Experiment Farm Cottage



Old Government House



Our Camp Dads

## The Rocks History Tour





# Sporting moments at Northside

When people speak about sporting moments they may think of Cathy Freeman at the 2000 Olympics.

Adam Scott becoming the first Australian to win the US Masters, one of the four major golf tournaments in 2013.

Wheel chair racer Louise Sauvage winning four gold medals at the Atlanta Paralympics in 1996

Socceroos defeating South Korea 2-1 to win the Asian Cup for the first time this year.

In 2011 Cadel Evans becoming the first Australian to win the Tour de France

Michelle Payne gave horse racing headlines for all the right reasons being the first female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup

Sporting moments are different for everyone. For me at Northside Montessori School it is when I walk through the gate and the children ask, "Are we going to the oval today? What are we doing in our lesson? Can we play packman? Can we play octopus? Are we having cricket clinics? I missed my lesson as I was away last week". The children at Northside are full of sporting moments in their own way.

**Full of enthusiasm, always willing to give their best, always interested in every sport they participate in and wanting more.**

We have had a full year of different activities, cricket clinics, NRL clinics, gymnastics and a visit from the Sydney Kings and lots of different sports in our lessons.

The beep test is also a sporting moment highlight as it measures the children's fitness. We did our last test this term and I am pleased to say the majority of the children improved on their last score.

As we are approaching summer, to finish off the year we are having a visit from Royal Lifesaving to speak on water safety, and having a practical session at Aqua bliss. This will prepare the children for their summer holiday and give them awareness of different lifesaving skills around water and pools.

**Sport is such an integral part of everyday life and also of the school curriculum, the benefits are endless.** The children are always full of stories about their outside of school sporting activities, whether it be ballet, horse riding, parkour, gymnastics, soccer and many more.

I am sure their sporting moments are full of rewards. Looking forward to an active and healthy 2016!

By Mary Abolins, PDHPE/Sport Coordinator



## ARTICLE

Recently I came across a headline from 'The Guardian' that caught my attention. It read '*Research shows benefits of Montessori education*'. Please find below an extract from this interesting article. *By Margaret Kroeger*

A method of schooling that focuses on personal development rather than exams produces more mature, creative and socially adept children, scientists have found. Psychologists in the US found that across a range of abilities, children at Montessori schools outperformed those given a traditional education.

Five-year-old Montessori pupils were better prepared for reading and maths, and 12-year-olds wrote "significantly more creative" essays using more sophisticated sentence structures.

Some of the biggest differences were seen in social skills and behaviour. Montessori children displayed a greater sense of "justice and fairness", interacted in an "emotionally positive" way, and were less likely to engage in "rough play" during break times.

The method discourages traditional competitive measurements of achievement, such as grades and tests, and instead focuses on the individual progress and development of each child. Children of different ages share the same classes, and are encouraged to collaborate and help each other.

The researchers, who reported their findings in the journal 'Science', compared children aged three to 12 at a Montessori school in Milwaukee with those at other schools in the same area. Children were tested for mental performance, academic abilities, and social and behavioural skills.

Angeline Lillard, from the University of Virginia, who co-led the study, said: "We found significant advantages for the Montessori students in these tests for both age groups. Particularly remarkable are the positive social effects of Montessori education."

Not only were five-year-old primary school children better prepared for the "three Rs" at primary level, they also had higher scores in tests of "executive function". This is the ability to adapt to changing and complex problems, and is seen as an indicator of future school and life success.

Although the Montessori children were not regularly tested or graded, they did just as well in spelling, punctuation and grammar exams as those given conventional lessons.

Older Montessori pupils were more likely to choose "positive assertive responses" when dealing with unpleasant social situations, said the researchers. They also displayed a "greater sense of community" at school.

The scientists concluded: "Montessori education fosters social and academic skills that are equal or superior to those fostered by a pool of other types of schools."

Dr Lillard plans to continue the research by tracking students from both groups over a longer period of time. She also hopes to repeat the study at other Montessori and traditional schools, and assess specific Montessori techniques.

## CLASSES AND ASSISTANTS 2016

The school has experienced a growth in demand for places in both our Pre-Primary and Primary classes. At present the following is planned for the new year. Please note that some minor tweaking to Assistant's specific hours and days may take place prior to the new school year once final enrolments are confirmed.

### Pre Primary

PPM (Marina's class – capacity 30 children) – Main Assistants will be Muna and Veena

PPE (Edna's class – capacity 20 children) – Main Assistant will be Sirisha

PPN (Natasha's class – capacity 30 children) – Main Assistants will be Sandra and Kalpana

We are expecting to commence a fourth Pre Primary class from Term 3, 2016 due to confirmed enrolments in the second half of the year.

### Primary

PJ (Janene's 6 – 9 class) Main Assistants and Support – Sharon, Kay and Kim

PM (Margaret's 9 – 12 class) Main Assistants and Support – Kim and Kay

### Sport and Music

In 2016 both Sport (Extended Day – Level 6) and Music (for all children in our Pre-Primary and Primary classes) will take place on a weekly basis each Tuesday morning. An additional afternoon sport program will take place fortnightly for Level 1 – 6.

### Languages

Mandarin, French and Japanese will take place once a week. These are optional lessons.

### Other Co-Curricular Activities

At present, apart from Languages, we expect that Tae Kwon Do, Origami, Choir, Orchestra and Dance will take place. We may have a specialist Art Program as well in 2016.



# Primary Update

## 6-9

It has been an incredibly busy and productive term and I cannot believe how fast it has flown. I know everyone is looking forward to a well-deserved break.

**I would firstly like to congratulate the children on their amazing performance in the 6-9 Production of The Land of Make Believe. They wrote the story, made the costumes and props and did a wonderful job narrating and performing on the night.** I am sure that everyone of you who saw it loved it.

This term our study of different texts and media including fantasy has culminated in a visit to IMAX to see The Polar Express. The children had a wonderful day and it tied in beautifully with our other work.

The Graduation Ceremony and End of Year Concert was on Monday 7th December at Turramurra High School and we hope you enjoyed the evening and saying farewell to our level 6 children. All the children performed on the night as well.

On Wednesday 9th we invite you all to attend afternoon tea from 2pm. The clap-out of the Level 6 children will occur at 2.40pm.

Interviews are being held on the evening of Tuesday 8th December and Thursday 9th December. Sign-up is online and I look forward to seeing you all there.

**You may have noticed the beautiful mural that is evolving on the wall near the basketball court. Well that is the work of one of our very talented parents, Val Jouravlev. A huge thanks to her for the art she has done with the children this term.** You will eventually see their finished products on the wall as well.

**A big thank you also to the Tuckshop mums.** The children look forward to this day so much! You'd think they'd never seen sushi or popcorn before! **Finally, thank you to Christine Murrell for doing the book club for the children.**

You may have known that we have moved classrooms as well. The children did a fantastic job assisting with the move. It was done in record time. **Thank you to Sue Smedley, Michelle Parker, Fiona Martin and Barbara McDermott for their assistance with the move.**

**All of us in 6-9 would like to wish our departing level 3's a wonderful time in 9-12.** We will miss Ella, Amber, Chris, Isabel, Jim, Emma, Max, Jamie, Isabella, and Anthony. **We also wish Ruairi bon voyage and good luck** as he leaves for Ireland and starts at a new school. **It has also been lovely to have Julian with us from England for a term and we wish him well for his return.**

**As the old depart the new enter so welcome to all of our new Level 1 children for 2016.** We look forward to having you in our class.

I hope you have a safe and restful break and I look forward to seeing you all in the new year.

*By Janene Johnson, Directress 6-9*

*"It is the supreme art of the teacher  
to awaken joy in creative expression  
and knowledge."*

Albert Einstein





# Pre-Primary Update

Where did the time go? The school year is almost over and the summer holiday is just around the corner.

**In term 4, our class was joined by two new students, Orsen Gavagna and Cleo Fayad but we bid adieu to Sakura and Charlotte who both relocated to other cities.** We will miss these two friends of ours. Many things transpired during the term, our 4 Extended Day children visited the 6-9 class for three days and came back brimming with stories about the work and friendships made. Meanwhile, the four-year olds also had a taste of what it felt like to be in Extended Day as they were provided the chance to sit in and join a couple of Extended Day activities in the afternoon.

There were lots of sunny days as well as rainy days but we usually started our days with a run around the playground. Slop and Slap was religiously repeated with the children-slop on sunscreen and slap on a hat as protection against the harsh rays of the sun. The children, we are happy to report, have internalised this and know what they have to do. Exceptions were children who have sensory issues and didn't want the feel of a hat on their heads.

As the days became warmer, we have added more activities that the children could do outside like plant watering, cloth washing, hammering, soap grating and bubble making. Extending the work space to include the outdoor environment has many positives, one being it decongests the classroom and offers more opportunities for children to do more concentrated work. They pursue activities according to their own free choice. There are limits to the freedom though and this is that the playground is not available during the work period.

We continued with other activities like Music and Library every Monday, art and craft every Thursday and cooking every Friday. The children have been busy practising their song for the presentation night. On the 7th of December, our 3 to 6 year olds will be dancing and grooving to the Gloria Estefan classic "The Rhythm's Gonna Get You". The four and five year olds are "veterans" with performing on stage but it will be the first time for our three-year olds and new students. **There is no pressure to perform though and we will all be there just to have fun and celebrate the end of a fruitful school year.**

**We would like to take this opportunity to give thanks to the parents who came to help us with craft, do the laundry, tend to our veggie garden and help with the market day. Ditto for parents who let their children bring a fruit to share every day, flowers for our flower arranging, cartons for construction and eggshells for egg crushing.**

Let us end our article by wishing our four Extended Day children-Jace, Leo, Christopher and Natalia all the best as they leave the pre-primary nest to spread their wings and explore their new environment, the 6-9 Primary class. We will miss them and want to thank them for being good role models to their younger friends. Some of our younger students are also leaving to go to other schools and we also want to wish them well. Despite not completing the three year cycle as we would have wished,

we know that the seeds of good work habits have been planted and will serve them well as they transition to a new school.

We wish everyone a season of gladness, a season of cheer and to top it all off - a wonderful year.

*By Edna, Sirisha and Veena*



*"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."*

Emilie Buchwald



# Office Update

Another year-end looms and reflecting on 2015 is a great source of encouragement for your Admin team.

An energetic group of parents got in an early working bee to prep the grounds for the return of the children at the start of term 1 after a long summer break. This enthusiasm at **working bees** continued throughout the year and for this we are very grateful. Staff undertook their **fire training and professional development** before classes recommenced.

The **renovation works in PPE** were extensive and a little delayed but you were understanding – thank you. The removal of walls, new flooring and lighting, new paint job and new toilets made a big difference to the sense of spaciousness and light in the classroom. A tender process led to a **new cleaning contract** commencing in January too.

**Annual billing and monthly direct debit** has continued to be an effective and attractive method for payment of school fees. We renewed a **reduced loan** with NAB for another three years, locking in some attractive interest rates. The School, and Lisa particularly, received a big tick from our Auditors.

Jenni welcomed new children into pre-primary and primary classes with some possibly getting to school a little late so they could pop in and see her smiling face. Donna and Barbara conducted many **School Tours** which took place during the year leading to **strong enrolments** into 2016 at pre-primary entry and students from both traditional schools and other Montessori pre-schools choosing to move to Northside in our primary classes. Our **school video** continues to play at Hornsby event cinemas.

Fiona started a series of **capital works** for the year with the re-development of the unsightly area between the Toddler room and the Office with the installation of artificial grass and concrete to make the area more open and useful. We applied a capital grant to the new concrete ramp entry to the pre-primary classes of PPE and PPM. The OOSH kitchen and hallway received a much needed paint job.

The introduction of the **School Support Hours** program was very successful in matching parents to tasks that needed volunteers. Sandra coordinated many opportunities for parents to be involved and we met with parents twice through the year to receive feedback on how the program could be improved. We have taken that feedback on board and are trialing an easier online method of finding and signing up to various jobs on offer for 2016.

We commenced an **Information and Computer technology strategic review** with the assistance of a grant from the AIS and followed this up with an ICT site audit, an upgrade to our wireless network and to our internet service. Tom introduced an **online ticketing system** for maintenance and IT support requests and electronic site visitor logins (iPad). We commenced design work on an **upgrade to our School website** and the introduction of a **school App for 2016**. We continued to offer parents **online access to school reports and parent teacher interview bookings** and are implementing **online enrolment** for new

children at Stepping Stones.

The long day care at **Stepping Stones** continued to grow throughout the year with Gill moving to full time in the Reception and Admin Support role, Ipshita heading up a new 3-5yrs classroom and Kylie commencing as the new Centre Director. Works to the interior and grounds at Stepping Stones started in August and will continue into the coming January holidays with floor sanding, exterior painting and accessible ramp construction planned. Our normal scheduled tree work will take place at both Northside and Stepping Stones in the January holidays.

We moved **PJ into BER2 and PM into BER1 with the Staff Room moving in the January holidays** to a more central location in the lower section of the previous 9-12 classroom just behind OOSH. **Major capital works to enlarge the Music room to include the current staff room will also take place in the December – January holidays**. This will provide us with a more spacious and attractive facility for Soirees, incursions, social events, parent education evenings and School Tours. We look forward to sharing this new facility with you in the new year.

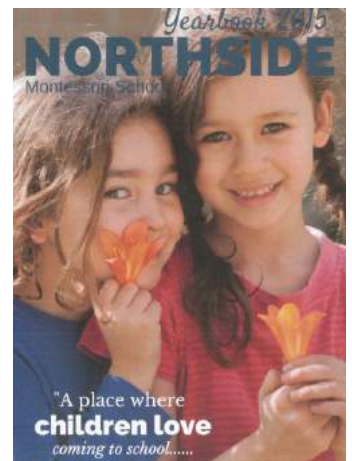
Meanwhile the office staff wishes you a joyous Christmas and a restful and safe holidays.

*By Sue Smedley, Director of Business Services*

## School Support Hours

Every family with a child enrolled at Northside has been involved in our Support Hours Program in 2015. The **efforts of all parents are greatly appreciated** and no matter what the task is, they all certainly make a difference to our school. Some tasks go seemingly unnoticed whilst others are more obvious. All are highly valued and appreciated.

Clearly, the Mural and 2015 Yearbook are two of the more obvious outcomes of the efforts of parents at our school. Alexandra Prieto –Rodriguez took carriage of the **Yearbook** and the result is a very high-quality magazine which will serve as a wonderful record of the 2015 School Year. If you missed out on purchasing a Yearbook in 2015 perhaps you will reconsider for the 2016 edition.



## Timeline of Life Mural Wall

The excitement has certainly grown over the last few weeks as the Timeline of Life has emerged on the wall adjacent to the basketball court. Val Jouravlev (mother of Jane) has worked with the primary children researching monumental art-works, researching techniques and compiling sketches to tie in with the theme of the Timeline of Life. **The end result is stunning! Apart from leaving a tremendous legacy as a family Val has enhanced the learning of the children.**



## STAFF NEWS

### Farewells

As 2015 draws to a close we say goodbye to Sally Faerber and to Fiona Redner. We will also be farewelling Sue Smedley early in the new year.

Sally has been part of Northside for many years, commencing as a parent initially. She has touched the lives of many people at the school – children, staff and parents. Most recently Sally has worked as Assistant in the 9 – 12 classroom. Her beautifully calm and patient manner coupled with her skills and knowledge as a trained English and History teacher has provided great benefits to the Primary children. We hope that in due course Sally will return and she has agreed to work casually with us from time to time when she can. We certainly wish her well as she focuses her attention on family matters for now.

Fiona, whilst having been with us for just a short while, has made a wonderful contribution in her role as Facilities Officer. This role is essentially focused on managing building and maintenance projects at both campuses and ensuring that our Working Bees are well planned. Fiona is relocating with her family to America. We appreciate her contributions to Northside.

We will ensure that we give Sue an appropriate send-off in the new year. Sue will be staying on to ensure that various building projects over the summer break are completed and the start of the new school year runs smoothly. She will also be doing a hand-over with the newly appointed Business Manager in early February 2016. I know I am going to miss Sue's friendship, knowledge and skills, as well as her incredible capacity for working over and above expectations. As mentioned, we will give Sue a fitting send-off in due course.

### New Staff for 2016

#### Business Manager – Scott Hipwell

Scott is an experienced school business manager with vast experience in finance both in the education and business sector. He joins the school on a full time basis on 1st February 2016.

#### School Operations Officer – Iain Wallace

Iain has a teaching background as well as leadership and administration experience in schools. He brings additional skills to NMS in marketing and IT as well. Iain will work closely with the Principal and also with the educational staff. He commences on 18th January 2016 and will be working part-time at the school.

#### Facilities Officer – Kerrie Newcombe

Kerrie has been serving on our School Board and brings vast experience in schools and the university sector particularly in relation to managing projects. Kerrie will also be working on a part-time basis commencing on 19th January 2016. You will see Kerrie at the Working Bees.

#### New Assistant – Muna Hasan

Muna is an experienced Montessori educator who joins us as full-time classroom assistant in the PPM class in the new year. Muna has worked in 3 – 6 Montessori classes at Hills Montessori.





# Making memories

The year has come to an end. 2015 seems so fleeting. I remember starting my first week as an educator in the Toddler Program. Out of that first week, I have seven children who I have witnessed develop their milestones in the Montessori environment this whole year, even though I see them once a week. As for the other children, some have moved on and a couple I get to say hello to in the 3-6 classes. I am always amazed by some of those who give me a hug and those who seem to be oblivious to my identity. It fills my heart to receive such affection and amuses me when there is no recognition at all. **What can a toddler remember anyway? I ask myself the same question each time I enter our classroom and end a session. What do I want them to remember?**

They form imprints in their mind, just as we all do. **The first thing they will learn is their physical environment.** It is the same room and contains the same furniture, although the lay out has been altered from time to time. The changes have been small and the children adjust to the space given to them.

I observe the new children who in the course of one term have normalised very quickly. They remember to walk in the classroom. They recall how to pick up a mat and place their tray or basket of activity on it. They may be reminded once in a while to put away their activity or tuck their chairs under the table, yet there is no resistance given (usually!). These experiences have been stamped in their memories as they go through the motions of constant repetition of movement. These are the impressions formed in their minds. This is just a part of the whole experience.

I can recall the children who needed the step stool to access the taps in the sink. Now, I watch the same children turn the tap on without even having to tip toe to reach it. Then there are those children who used to point at things with one word and suddenly they are stringing sentences now. **The explosion of language at this stage is the most exciting thing that the children realise when they are expressing themselves.** There are those who refused to shake my hand or give me a morning greeting. Today, there's that slap on the hand, if not a proper handshake, and even an acknowledgement by simply having that eye contact or verbal greeting in the morning.

**These are milestones in my eyes. Not just seeing their physical growth, but watching the tasks that they can do and are allowed to do in the classroom.** The weekly routine that they have familiarised themselves with throughout our sessions: from the greetings they make and the interactions they have with the directress, the other adults and with their peers inside their classroom, to the activities that they engage in – all of these aid them to getting closer to forming their independence with the opportunities they have been given.

**We share a community meal together. Each session, a child is invited to help prepare the meal in the morning. These are skills that they will remember as they go through the same actions at home as they grow older.**

**We sing songs together. I see the children's reactions when the bell is rung for group time. The delight in their faces is priceless when the bee comes out and we sing each of their names. Our hello song to greet each other, the variety of nursery rhymes and songs, the books we read together, these are all stored in their memory banks as we do them over and over again each session.**

**What is most impressive is the responsiveness of the parents and carers of each child in the classroom.** Everything seems reflexive of the child's action and reaction. Whether it is a statement of praise or reprimand, a simple act of "helping" him with the activity, or a word of encouragement to let them have a go at anything, all of these things add up. It is the fact that for the two hour work cycle during our sessions, each adult is there to support the child's learning.

**What memories would you like your toddler to have? Would he or she even remember these experiences years from now? How should we give them the proper tools to remember all these? Photographs? Videos? How I would like them to remember their experiences is to provide them with all the chances they can get in our prepared environment. Practical Life and Language, these are essential in the Toddler Program.** When a parent asks me where the "maths" area is, I explain that numbers and counting happen naturally in the toddler environment. They can count objects in the object baskets that build their vocabulary, or the beans and chickpeas that they transfer from one vessel to another, or the pieces of crockery they have to wash after morning tea. There are such opportunities that present themselves in our setting when the toddler is ready to count. We focus on life skills that build over time through practice and recurrence. There are only a few activities on the shelves to give order in their minds as soon as they come in. If there are too many things for them to choose from, it overstimulates their minds. Therefore, it is with great care and thought that the class is set up the way it is. The activities allow them to master their coordination, to gain concentration in the tasks they set out to do and eventually, to liberate them from the aid of an adult. **If we maintain consistency at home and in school, then the children will have more chances of the independence that they want and need as they continue to develop into the persons they are meant to be.**

**These will arm the child with experiences that will be engrained in their memories. It seems so simple...because it is. Experiences make lasting memories.** As Maria Montessori said: "A man is not what he is because of the teachers he has had, but because of what he has done."

By Margaret Palma



Edwina and Maddie Burns working on a sewing card together. After I gave Maddie the first presentation, she wanted to do it again. I took a step back and Edwina assisted Maddie when she needed assistance. Maddie did the activity thrice during the session.



I invited Leo Massa to use the apple slinky-maker to prepare morning tea for the children. Mum Emma had to step out for a brief moment. This gave us an opportunity to allow Leo to work by himself without mum. He set his own place, spread his own jam on his cracker and poured his own drink. I took a step back and observed his independent nature take over, only aiding him when required.



# The Flying Flag

Like the shining Southern Cross,  
This flag represents all our loss.  
Created in the dark of night,  
Our movements made by candlelight.  
Our fingers pricked while sewing seams,  
The flag was blue, the stars were cream.  
T'was made of dress material blue,  
Used was a petticoat, too.  
The flag was finished by the morn,  
By then we were all tired and worn.  
The flag was for the miners' strike,  
Against the tax they didn't like.  
After that a battle began,  
The battle raged, man against man.  
Once it was done we raised the flag,  
We did not stray, we did not lag.  
And with that flag, our spirits flew,  
In the gentle breeze that blew.

By Katy Prins and Charlotte Ballard (Level 6, 2015)