

NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

# CHRONICLE

## *Autumn*

### **MONTESSORI MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

Elliot De Marco and Siena Farquhar participate in an international conference in New York based on the United Nations model (MMUN).

### **KINDNESS & EMPATHY**

Ways that we foster the development of empathy and empathetic responses in the classroom.

### **▶ MAXIMIZING YOUR MONTESSORI EXPERIENCE**

Looks at three ways parents can maximise their Montessori experience

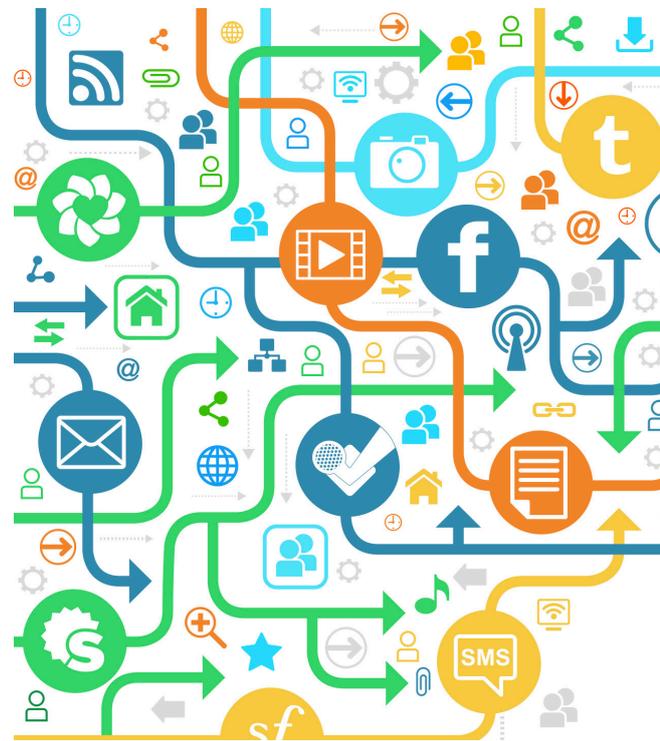


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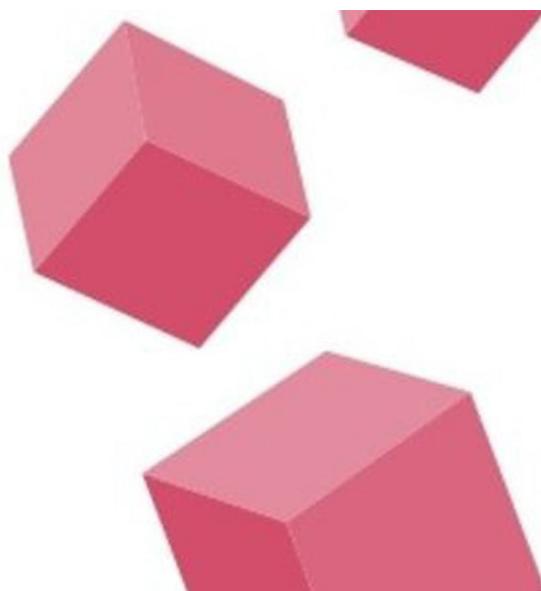
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Get the latest Northside news via the social media of your choice!



### COSMIC EDUCATION

Helping your child find their place in the universe



### MAXIMIZING YOUR MONTESSORI EXPERIENCE

Looks at three ways parents can maximise their Montessori experience

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.

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Editor

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Barbara Maxfield

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# FROM THE PRINCIPAL

BARBARA MAXFIELD



**D**

r Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He must do it himself or it will never be done. She felt, therefore, that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from pre-selected course studies, but rather to cultivate his own natural desire to learn.

At Northside we well know that children do not learn the way adults do. Our methodology is based on the fact that a child's learning passes through stages. Unconscious growth and absorption comes first, followed by conscious knowledge, creativity and imagination and then the knowledge of the universe. One of the unique and important aspects of Montessori's philosophy explains the concept of "sensitive periods". Children pass through definite periods in which they reveal psychic aptitudes and possibilities which afterwards disappear. That is why, at particular stages of their lives, they reveal an intense and extraordinary interest in certain objects and exercises. During such a period the child is endowed with a special sensibility which urges

**"I DID NOT INVENT  
A METHOD OF  
EDUCATION, I  
SIMPLY GAVE SOME  
LITTLE CHILDREN A  
CHANCE TO LIVE."  
DR MARIA  
MONTESSORI**

him to focus his attention on certain aspects of the environment to the exclusion of others. They become preoccupied by certain tasks and they may repeat them over and over. Such attention is not the result of mere curiosity, it is more like a burning passion. The Montessori classroom takes advantage of this fact by allowing the child freedom to select individual activities which correspond to his own periods of interest and we not only allow for but encourage repetition.

As the children at Northside are now very set-

tled into their routines we welcome parents to undertake an observation of the classroom from the start of Term 2. These observations are booked through our office and usually take place for half an hour. Only one parent is permitted at a given time. Having too many adults in the classrooms can be a distraction for children and we want you to have the opportunity to see children being 'normal'. Parents of children in the 3 – 6 cycle are encouraged to view the 6 – 9 or 9 – 12 classrooms too where you will see children learning and interacting in different ways to that of the Pre Primary classroom. You really have to see it for yourself to understand

You will see just how significant and integral the materials are for everyday learning in a Montessori classroom for children at all levels. Of course, in the upper primary there will be greater evidence of children applying their knowledge in more abstract ways.

The use of materials is

▶ based on the child's unique aptitude for learning that Dr Montessori identified as the "absorbent mind". In her writings she frequently compared the young mind to a sponge. It literally absorbs information from the environment. Acquiring information in this way is a natural and delightful activity for the young who uses all his senses to investigate his interesting surroundings. Dr Montessori also emphasised that the hand is the chief teacher of the child. In order to learn there must be concentration. All the equipment in the Montessori classroom allows the child to reinforce his casual impressions by inviting him to use his hands for learning.

I look forward to meeting parents following their classroom observation to discuss what they saw and for them to ask any questions about what was taking place.



## CHAIR, NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI SOCIETY

SAMANTHA BAKER



# ON BOARD

*Term 1 is always a time of both excitement and trepidation as children and families find their feet in new classes or new roles in the same class, as they forge new friendships and expand their learning.*

*Our community has come together already this year in the Welcome Event, the Pink Tower Disco, Working Bees, and our annual Harmony Day celebrations, to name a few. Thank you particularly to those who've led the organisation of these events and also to the teams of volunteers who've assisted*

*There are also many new faces around the school as our classes continue to grow. There has been a very pleasing increase in the numbers of pre-primary students continuing to Extended Day. This is a wonderful sign and we hope will translate into increasing numbers continuing into primary over the coming years. There*

are also a number of new support staff in the office and leadership team. We hope everyone settles in quickly to the rhythm at Northside.

This year has also seen the launch of the Northside Montessori Society Strategy for 2016 – 2019 after extensive consultation and review. Our strategy is underpinned by our vision 'to instil in each child a wonder in the world and a love of learning, providing opportunities to develop the full potential of the child, and the confidence to independently and collaboratively explore their environment.' We will work to deliver this through the three key pillars of learning, community and sustainability. I am pleased to report that we are well on the way with much of this work and are fortunate to have a good head start after a strong performance at the end of 2015 both financially and in enrolments.

The start to 2016 has held some very mixed emotions for us all. It is in the presence of challenging circumstances that the strength of a community comes to the fore. These times have provided an excellent opportunity to observe Northside's values of respect, independence, courage, compassion and connectedness at work. These values underpin Dr Montessori's education and help make us a dynamic and inclusive community.

We have said goodbye to one of Northside's institutions, Sue Smedley, who has been a parent, the Board Chair, a volunteer construction project manager, and most recently our Business Services Manager in her time involved with the school. We wish Sue all the very best in her next challenge and hope that she is proud of her contribution which will impact our school for many years to come.

It is also with sadness that we farewelled Eric Heyde as the Chair of the Society at the recent AGM. Eric and Emma's children ended their time at Northside at the conclusion of the last school year and Eric kindly carried on in his role to March this year. Eric has served on the Board for the last 6 years, the last 4 as Chair, and has built the Board to be a group of strong and united professionals with a passion for Montessori, Northside and a commitment to managing the school's resources with vision and integrity. We will miss his leadership but know that we have a very strong team to take us forward, with most of our Board members continuing, and the addition of two new Directors, ensuring continued renewal and growth along with a smooth and effective transition.

All the best to your families over the break and we look forward to a great year ahead.  
Until next time, Sam

## NEW SCHOOL BOARD



The AGM took place in March and the new Board structure now apply:

Chair – Samantha Baker

Deputy Chair – Sharon Bowman

Executive Secretary & Director – Grant  
Le Helloco

Director – Layla Lockie

Director – Mal Hebblewhite

Director – Kashif Magbool

Director – Alejandro Sanchez-Arevalo

Director - Chandandeep Kaur

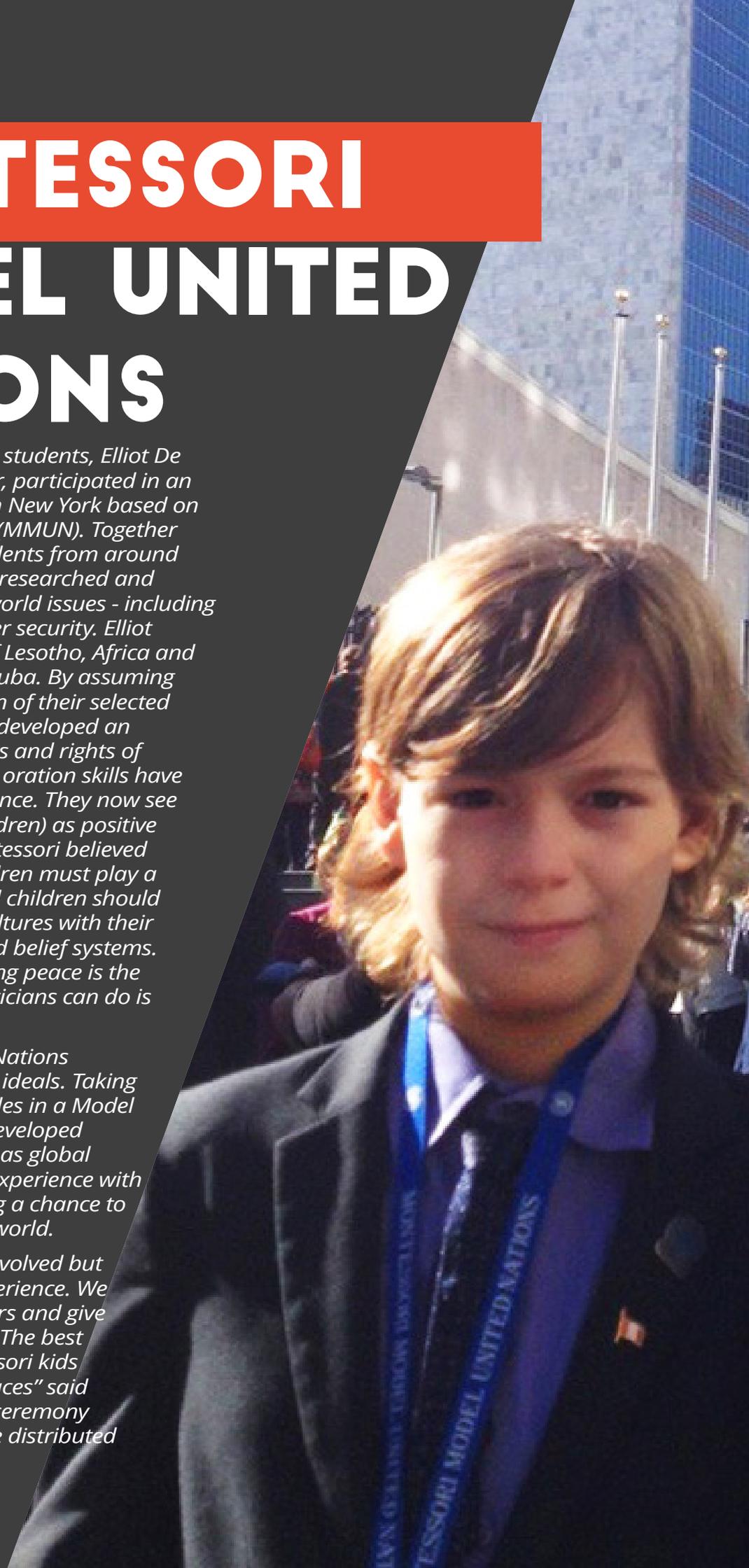
Director - Vince Scappatura

# MONTESSORI MODEL UNITED NATIONS

*Recently, two of our Year 6 students, Elliot De Marco and Siena Farquhar, participated in an international conference in New York based on the United Nations model (MMUN). Together with other Montessori students from around the world, Elliot and Siena researched and problem solved different world issues - including small arms trade and cyber security. Elliot represented the country of Lesotho, Africa and Siena spoke on behalf of Cuba. By assuming the perspectives of a citizen of their selected countries, Siena and Elliot developed an understanding of the needs and rights of others. Their research and oration skills have grown as has their confidence. They now see themselves (and other children) as positive agents of change. Dr. Montessori believed most adamantly that children must play a part in peace. She believed children should learn and respect other cultures with their differing political views and belief systems. She said 'Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politicians can do is keep us out of war.'*

*Montessori Model United Nations embodies Dr. Montessori's ideals. Taking on their ambassadorial roles in a Model UN simulation, students developed an awareness of their role as global citizens. It was also a fun experience with Montessori children getting a chance to meet from all around the world.*

*"There was a lot of work involved but it was a really exciting experience. We had to write position papers and give speeches on our research. The best thing was meeting Montessori kids from so many different places" said Elliot. During the opening ceremony over 2000 solar lights were distributed to the students.*





**SYD**

**NYC**

*"We were asked to think about all the people in the world without things we take for granted - like electricity," commented Elliot.*

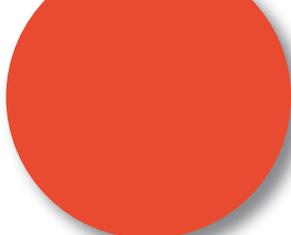
*The light also represented the possibility of the student delegates to make positive changes - to shed light on the needs of the world.*

*Student delegates formed 'think tanks' to share their imaginative ideas on how to deal with world issues. Together they worked to create resolutions. Both Siena's and Elliot's group resolutions were chosen to be presented at the U.N. by adult delegates.*

*With ambassadors like Siena and Elliot, we know our students can make a difference. We are really proud of you Siena and Elliot!*



# STEPPING STONES



## KYLIE REZABEK

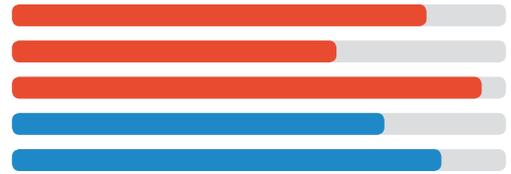
CENTRE DIRECTOR

Stepping Stones is looking great as a lot of work was done during our two week Christmas/New Year Shut down – floors sanded and polished, fence and outdoor building painted, rooms changed and the cottage set up with great resources for parent education evenings. You should come and have a look and spread the word about our fantastic Montessori Long Day Care Centre. Children have an opportunity to be introduced to Montessori Principles and Methods at a young age.

Shereen and Snehal, who is one of our new Montessori Trained (0-3) and (3-6) Directresses, have implemented fresh ideas in presenting the Montessori program. The Infant Community room now has an indoor and outdoor work space. Montessori materials are set up on shelves outside, and table and chairs are provided so the children are free to choose an activity they would like to work with. There is an opportunity to have a break from indoors and enjoy doing some relaxing work in the surroundings of our beautiful green life.

Shereen, our Montessori Directress and Educational Leader, was keen to share what her room has recently been up to.

Regards, Kylie



*March was an exciting and busy month for the children in the CASA room. We celebrated Harmony day and Easter. Children dressed in cultural clothes or in orange on the 21st and 24th of March. They were introduced to the Seven continents and their countries of origin. They enjoy learning the seven continents nuts song.*

*The children made Easter bunny ears and went on an Easter egg hunt as well. They enjoyed looking for chocolate Easter eggs in the garden. The children have also been keen participants in our Sports program.*

*Shereen  
CASA Directress &  
Educational Leader*





# BIG CHANGES

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN PPM?

MARINA RIDLEY

*This year PPM moved to a new classroom. We have now made our home in PPE's previous room. It is larger and means more friends can be together! One of the wonderful things about Montessori environments is that even when moved to a new space, there is a certain familiarity in the layout each time. We still have Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and Mathematics. The arrangements of the materials remain in the same order and it is this physical order that aids the mental order for children. There were only a few directions needed for the 'older' children to reacquaint themselves with their favourite work and off they went. Sometimes a little shift in the placement of the room can highlight a material that may have been overlooked by some in the past. This certainly happened with our chains from Mathematics. There has been renewed vigour in skip counting and linear counting by the Extended Day children.*

# GET CONNECTED!!

## MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

Support current parents by supporting their business listed here. If you want your business listed contact Iain Wallace. Meanwhile check out:

### Jennifer Taylor's Photography

at [www.vividity.com.au](http://www.vividity.com.au)  
jennifer@vividity.com.au  
0419 69 69 23

## COMMUNITY CORNER

Know of any great community events? List them here!

Such as:

- Ku-ring-gai Art Centre has art classes, from pottery, drawing and painting, to jewellery making. 3 Recreation Ave, Roseville.
- Junior Golf - Great for kids to learn the game and make new friends. Nth Turramurra Golf Course, 361a Bobbin Head Rd.



Get the latest Northside news via the social media of your choice! This term's **MUST HAVE** items are the Nothside Skoolbag App, then...check out our FACEBOOK page, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and Barbara's Blog!!!

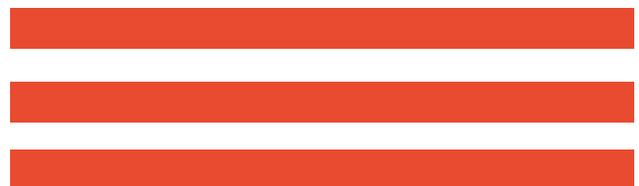
*We also have new adults in the classroom, two new assistants, Muna and Veena. This change has been not as difficult as one might imagine as the Montessori adult has a clearly defined role which helps to keep the routine for the children.*

*We welcomed ten new friends into PPM this term. Two Extended Day children and eight three year olds! We are now a group of twenty three children and three adults. Our old friends are with us including our two Guinea Pigs; Ronaldo and Jose and our ever increasing fish descending from 'Goldie' and 'Speckeldy'.*

*The new children are learning the ways of the classroom and the elder children are reinforcing their knowledge. It is a time when Grace and Courtesy lessons are at their peak. Grace and Courtesy is the way in which we help the children know the way to move and the words to use in the environment. Social behaviour is a learnt skill like counting or reading and we must explicitly role model and encourage the child to practice the acceptable ways to speak and move. Knowing these boundaries and niceties creates predictability and a sense of order for the children. The graphic of 'chaos to order' is indicative of much of the transformations that take place for all children in the Children's House, not just the very new. There is order brought*

*to impressions in their mind through the practical life, sensorial, mathematical and language works, order in their physical development through activities that match their physical, spiritual and mental needs. Our goal in all of our work in the classroom is to help the child reach a state of what Dr. Montessori termed as 'Normalisation'. This word describes the natural state of the child which is achieved when their developmental needs are being matched by their environment through engaging with self-chosen work which leads to longer and longer periods of concentration. This in turn gives the child a taste of a love of learning and a peacefulness within themselves and with other people. Then we say a child is Normalised. It is a journey that the child embarks upon and we carefully observe to find this state emerging in some of our Extended Day children.*

*There is so much in store for this year and the assistants, Muna and Veena and I are excited to work with the children. There will be more cooking, gardening and perhaps more animal friends in 3-6 to enrich our learning.*



# COSMIC EDUCATION

## HELPING THE CHILD FIND THEIR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

JANENE JOHNSON



**T**he concept of Cosmic Education is that of a purposeful, integrated, comprehensive and holistic approach to education and Montessori's philosophy is grounded in this. Cosmic Education is concerned with the interrelatedness of all things in the universe. Everything is interlinked in some way. A Montessori education therefore, is not about memorising facts or doing separate subjects. It is about instilling the wonder of the universe in the child and allowing them to explore it. We want the children to develop a sense of gratitude for all humans who have gone before us, as well as a great respect for humanity and the Earth. Montessori felt that children who were educated this way could ultimately bring about world peace as they grew into independent, caring, emotionally intelligent, well-balanced adults who felt a great sense of obligation towards humanity and the universe and who had an understanding of their role in the world, or their cosmic task.

Does this sound like an over-inflated idea of what is possible for a child? Montessori believed that this was definitely possible and so considered every aspect of the child's education to assist them on this path.

The 6-12 child has a reasoning mind. They have an insatiable desire to explore. They no longer ask, "What is the name of that?" but rather, "What does it do? How does it work? Why is it here? What is its purpose?" They also begin to look at things in relation to other things, rather than viewing them as separate entities. So they may also ask, "How will this affect this over here?" These children are looking for answers to a million questions, so they question, compare and come to conclusions until they are satisfied that they have the answer they need.

Before he was interested in things...Now he is mainly interested in the how and why. All that used to attract him sensorially now interests him from a different point of view. He is now looking for what needs to be done. That is, he

is beginning to become aware of the problem of cause and effect. (Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence). Montessori is aiming to satisfy these characteristics of the 6-12 child. Cosmic Education provides the child with a global view of the world and its parts, and we encourage the child to explore the unity of all things in the universe. By doing this the child will also acquire a sense of their own place and purpose in the world. All of the work that is done in 3-6 is wonderful preparation for the work to be done in 6-12. It lays the foundation for Montessori's philosophy of Cosmic Education, and if the foundation is strong, the 6-12 child will be able to begin their explorations of the universe in an unhindered manner. The 6-12 child will have a very powerful sensorial basis for Cosmic Education.

Very early in 6-12 the children are introduced to the greatness of the universe and the laws that govern it with the Great Lessons. The first of these is "The God With No Hands, The Beginning of the Universe." This

story helps to answer some of the children's questions about how the Earth began and how the stars and the moon appeared. It tells them how our Earth came to have volcanoes and beautiful oceans and introduces them to the states of matter. From this Great Lesson, further key lessons are given and the children can go on to explore much of this themselves. The second Great Lesson, The Timeline of Life, introduces the children to a story about how the earth may have been filled with life and what forms that life took with humans arriving right at the end of the timeline. They get to see the unfolding story of plants and animals on earth. Further Great Lessons focus on human life on Earth and the development of language and numeracy. The children can research many aspects of all of these lessons.

These Great Lessons aim to instill in the children a sense of awe and gratitude for our universe. The way the elements all came together over millions of years to form our universe and Earth, the amount of plants and animals which were here before humans arrived and the immense contribution early humans have made to our world today should foster wonder and admiration in the children. The Great Lessons also highlight the law and order of every part of our universe and how each part is essential to the development of another.

Since it has been ... necessary to give so much to the

child, let us give him a vision of the whole universe. The universe is an imposing reality, and an answer to all questions.... All things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity. The idea helps the mind of the child to become focused, to stop wandering in an aimless quest for knowledge. He is satisfied having found the universal centre of himself with all things. (Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential)

The teacher's role in delivering a cosmic view of the world to the child is to firstly present the whole, big picture, such as the first Great Lesson, then to move to the parts of that whole. Not only do successive Great Lessons look more closely at the whole of the first Great Lesson, such as furnishings on the Earth and then human beings specifically, but the children's research can lead them to very detailed explora-

tions of any aspect of these Great Lessons. Other key lessons, such as plant and animal classification and continent studies examine these in great detail. The children are then moved back to the whole and they will hopefully be able to sense the intricacy and dependency of all things in the universe including their place in it and their responsibility towards it.

If we take the child from infancy and allow him to de-



velop history, psychological powers and the potentialities within him; place him in relation with other men and make him realize what mankind has accomplished, then this will form the first step in the formation of the supraman, towards which humanity tends (Montessori, Cosmic Education). Apart from presenting the Great Lessons, Cosmic Education requires that children understand their place and their responsibilities as part of a society. For this reason, the 6-12 children get opportunities to 'practice society'. The way we present our lessons, use the materials and encourage the children to work should always keep this need in mind. Having a microcosm of the greater society within the classroom teaches the children about society, what their role might be and that it often changes, and very importantly about their responsibilities to this society.

Self-discovery

criminating between good and evil. He is no longer receptive, absorbing impressions with ease, but wants to understand for himself, not content with accepting mere facts. As moral activity develops he wants to use his own judgement, which will be often quite different to that of his teachers. (Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential)

Montessori's ultimate goal for Cosmic Education was world peace. "Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war." (Montessori, Education For A New World) She envisioned children ruling the world who understood how important each and every living thing on the planet was; not just to itself, but to each and every other living thing. The thought that wars might come to an end because children were growing up with an immense respect for the Earth and its inhabitants must surely have been a driving force for Montessori. As we educate our children we must realise that the impact we have on them and their view of the world and how they interact with it, will have enormous consequences for their future as well as humanity.

is vital at this time for the child's moral development. Six year olds are in the process of putting together their moral framework. The child's understanding of the greater issues related to humanity such as war, peace, starvation, nuclear armament and technology to name a few, are issues which the child will be making judgments on as they develop and move towards adolescence. These judgments and opinions will be made within the bounds of that child's own morality. This cannot be imposed on the child and so part of our role for Cosmic Education is to assist the child with this self-discovery by providing a safe environment which is open to questioning and opportunities for the child to find out who they are and where they fit. A second side of education at this age concerns the child's exploration of the moral field, dis-

"Education cannot be effective unless it helps a child open himself up to life" - Maria Montessori

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Montessori, M. (1976). From Childhood to Adolescence. Schocken Books: New York. Montessori, M. (2000). To Educate the Human Potential. Clio Press: Oxford. Montessori, M. (1976). Cosmic Education. Association Montessori Internationale.

# WHO'S THAT!?

## MEET SOME OF THE PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY



TARA!

What do you do at Northside?

Enrolments and Community Relations – I have the pleasure of welcoming all new families to our school and meeting prospective families.

What did you do before Northside?

I have been a Dance and PE teacher for 16 years and most recently used those skills as Project Manager in a local NGO (non-governmental organization) in Tanzania.

What do you like most about Northside?

I love the friendly environment. Everyone - staff and parents – have been so welcoming and excited to share their knowledge and experience of Montessori

What's your favourite movie and/or TV show?

Die hard fan of Seinfeld

What famous person do you admire?

Mmmm... Don't know how 'famous' he is but I am a big fan and follower of Sir Ken Robinson who is an advisor, speaker and author on creativity in education.

What's your favourite book?

The Power of Now – Eckhart Tolle

Tell us about something you've achieved?

Gained the trust of 20 teenage girls to be able to confidently perform their work on stage.

What's your favourite music / song / band at the moment?

Love love love SIA!!

Name 3 things in nature you find most beautiful?

Mountains – I lived at the base of Mt Meru, Tanzania and was always awe struck waking up to its beauty every morning.

The beach/ ocean

The bush

Which is your favourite four-legged creature and why?

Tiger – so agile and fierce.

What your favourite overseas city?

Hoi Ann – love the food, love the people, and loved bike riding around the town.

Have you ever built a snowman?

No – Im not a cold weather person



SCOTT!



What do you do at Northside?

Being the Business Manager has a wide range of responsibilities which includes finance, property, compliance, administration and general business management matters.

What did you do before Northside?

A number of management positions in the finance, government and independent school sectors.

What do you like most about Northside?

The welcoming nature of the Northside community - the location, the campus and most importantly the people.

What's your favourite movie and/or TV show?

The Blind Side and the Big Bang Theory TV series.

What famous person do you admire?

The Apollo 11 crew who flew to, and landed on, the moon. To go where no man has been before, is pretty awe inspiring!

What's your favourite book?

Am currently reading Kidnapped by Mark Tedeschi QC but also like Matthew Reilly, Will Adams, Barry Maitland, David Lynn Golemon and James Rollins.

Tell us about something you've achieved?

I think I have managed to break every New Years resolution in memory – perhaps not an 'achievement' in the strictest definition, but consistent.

What's your favourite music / song / band at the moment?

Australian artist Kate Miller-Heidke. With operatic training and fantastic vocal range she writes, sings and also performs (recently in The Rabbits production) her material.

Name 3 things in nature you find most beautiful?

I would like to see the Aurora Borealis, the Grand Canyon and seeing the sunrise from atop Kilimanjaro.

Which is your favourite four-legged creature and why?

Dogs. They are generally well suited to living with people and can be very smart!

What your favourite overseas city?

That's a tough one - include London with lots of history, Hay-on-Wye in Wales with its many bookshops, Port Isaac in Cornwall or Hanalei Bay on the north shore of Kaua'i.

Have you ever built a snowman?

No – unfortunately there are few opportunities in Australia to play in snow!

## TODDLER PROGRAM

MARGRET PALMA



## NEW BEGINNINGS

**T**he kick off of a school year is always a fresh start for educators. We get excited to prepare the environment and meet the children, greet new faces and see old ones. Our batteries have been recharged and we are ready for the challenges ahead. As for the students, attending the Toddler sessions at least once a week is a new experience for them since it is their "school" at such a young age.

We have 20 families in the Toddler program this term. There are eight new children and the rest have been attending since last year.

Riley comes in with Grandma and one of the first things they do is read books in our reading corner. Alexander much prefers to pick up a basket, go into our school's front garden and pick some flowers for our flower arrang-

ing in class. Harrison has a huge smile on his face as he enters the classroom. He certainly has his favourite activities such as putting the coins in the coin box and the sticks through the small hole in a jar. With great concentration, he is working on his fine motor skills. Eloise enjoys pouring and spooning beans. Edgar and Rhea have been taking turns in baking some muffins for morning tea during our Wednesday sessions. Each time they come, they are both keen to bake something and head straight to our food preparation area. Reed enjoys morning tea consistently since this is the moment when most of the children get together in the snack area. Julian used to pick up the triangle last term and strike it as he walked around the classroom, but since he has been more familiar with the environment this term, he has found other activities that he focuses on such as spooning chickpeas from one bowl to the next or

locking the key inside the coin box after all the coins have been fitted in through the slot. (It was a challenge to get that key out after the session!)

Sandro is one of the children who we have had since the beginning of last year. He has become more focused in each activity he chooses, he finds success in cutting paper with a pair of scissors, he serves his friends during morning tea and he completes a cycle of activity. Sophie is drawn to the art and craft area. She usually begins her morning pouring, spooning and later on, works on her gluing or stamping activities. Minka on the other hand always brings a flower and starts her session in the flower arranging area. Afterwards, she happily saunters off to continue working on other activities. Lily enjoys challenging herself each session, repeating activities such as washing clothes or table scrubbing. The need for repetition is apparent in her work, especially when she executes each step, after an initial presentation, without any reminder from an adult. Lachlan has been drawn to the farm since day one. He enhances his vocabulary as he sits in front of the farm or works with the objects in a basket. Noah is one of our newest toddlers in the class. He is fascinated by the water activities such as pouring and washing clothes. Recently, after learning how to bake the muffins in class, he has been involved in food preparation for morning tea. London enters the class with such an exuberant attitude that he dives straight into working with different activities on the shelf. He has been particularly fond of hammering the pegs on the board and repeatedly does it. Aadhi on the other hand prefers to paint on the easel or draw on the chalkboard each time he attends a session.

Edward used to head straight for the farm last year, or sweep and mop the floor, and afterwards work with the balls and ramp. This year, he has ventured into different activities such as food preparation and baking with his dad and grandma. Nathan used to search for our red wooden push trolley outside, or the

wheelbarrow, every session last year. Since the routine has changed this year, he has been more focused on our nomenclature cards and objects on the shelf, or art and craft projects as well. Amelia is new this term. When one observes her, it may appear as if she has been coming all year last year. She busily works on activities and when we ring the bell for group time, which signals the approaching end of our session, she protests just like a few children on other days, do. She continues to choose work and the singing does not even faze her concentration. Oliver explores the materials on the shelves with enthusiasm. He has his favourites such as making planets out of play dough, building blocks, sorting the discs on dowels, or posting letters in the post box. Each time I see Oliver around the Northside campus, he asks if he could visit my "house."

From the child's perspective, if you view the toddler room from afar, it appears to be a house. It is the toddler's house. It is their space. All these children who have worked out their routine each time they attend a session in the Toddler Program have been developing their personalities. I have illustrated only a miniscule part of their day as they reveal themselves through their work, yet they have demonstrated their capabilities as they build their characters through the opportunities they are offered. We forget sometimes that these children are as young as eighteen months old to nearly three years old. The choices they make on each activity or material to be worked on in the environment, the movements involved, and the concentration of completing the cycle of the activity all stem from our "little people." It is not something they do to receive praise or to please the adult. It is an inner need that they have the urge to accomplish on their own. It is through this loving and gentle space where we would like to continue their education and hone their potential from your home to our environment where the child reveals the person they are to become.



## SCHOOL SUPPORT HOURS PROGRAMME

SANDRA SIN

SCHOOL

SUPPORT

SUCCESS

**T**he School Support Hours Programme was first launched at the beginning of 2015 to promote parent participation and involvement within Northside Montessori. Among the parents from about 100 families, nearly 2,600 support hours were successfully completed before the end of the year. The School Support Hours Programme offers a great variety of choices including tasks that require whole year commitment (e.g. School Board member, Class Parents, Tuckshop Organisation, IT support, Bin Duty), social projects (e.g. Welcome event, Mother's Day Breakfast, Father's Day Breakfast and Trivia Night), weekend tasks (e.g. high pressure cleaning, painting, gardening) as well as tasks that parents can make their contributions at home (e.g. bookcovering, sew-

ing, event co-ordination, Facebook page).

Out of the 2,600 hours, around 88% of our families have put together more than 760 hours in premises-related tasks including working bees, high pressure cleaning and gardening/weeding. To our School, working bees are a cost-effective way for parents to help maintain the beauty and amenity of our School ground while building a sense of community and keeping school fees down. Some of the positive feedbacks we received from parents include "the best working bee ever", "so much work was done - it was great to see so many people so productive". The value of parents' contribution in premises-related tasks in 2015 is worth more than \$38,000.

The School Support Hours programme helps the School recognise the many, varied skill sets and enormous contributions



of our parent volunteers. In 2016, through the introduction of the School APP, we are trying to make it easier for parents to find suitable jobs. Parents' active and positive engagement in their child's education not only provides a huge resource and support base for the running of our School but also greatly benefits their own children. Many researches confirm that children are more likely to make better grades, have good attendance, show proper behavior, and exhibit better social skills when their parents are actively involved in the school community.

If you believe you have a skill set that may be of use to the School but is not listed on the task list, please don't hesitate to contact me at [sandra.sin@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au](mailto:sandra.sin@northsidemontessori.nsw.edu.au). Thank you in advance for your generous support to the School Support Hours Programme in 2016!

Sandra



# SPORT

by  
*Mary Abolins*

This term we have been fortunate to have the NRL visit our school and deliver 3 complimentary clinics.

The NRL promote and encourage physical activity through fun and the children have learnt fundamental movement skills such as catching, dodging, kicking, running and passing.

These clinics give the children a better understanding of the game of rugby league.

This was followed by an informative talk and video on the benefits of a good diet, exercise and wellbeing.

BY NATASHA WILLIAMS - PPN DIRECTRESS



# KINDNESS & EMPATHY

*Children in the 3-6 environment are developing their ability to not only recognise, name and self-regulate their own emotions but also to become aware that others have needs and wants and feelings that may be in contrast to their own. This is important as it is closely linked with the development of empathy. Empathy is our ability to recognise and respond to the needs and suffering of others. When we see someone in pain and feel that response in our own gut, that's empathy. When we see someone crying tears of joy at an important reunion and notice ourselves choking up, that's empathy. When we see someone struggling with a problem and feel an emotional pull to help, that's empathy. It's a core skill for what psychologists call "pro-social" behaviour – the actions that are involved in building close relationships, maintaining friendships, and developing strong communities. Children are naturally empathetic but they do need some help in how to respond to those feelings and act upon them in helpful ways.*

*How do we help children to become kind and empathetic to others around them? We start by giving the children opportunities to care for each other and their environment every day of the year. There is no one lesson that we give the children but through their interaction with the prepared environment there are daily opportunities for your child to be kind and empathetic to others. While kindness might seem pretty straightforward to learn, it's a bit more complex than meets the eye. We don't make children kind when we simply enable them to be receivers of kindness. We escalate their feelings of happiness, improve their well-being, reduce bullying, enrich their friendships, and build peace by giving them opportunities to be givers of kindness. Opposite are some examples of daily interactions with the prepared environment in our 3-6 classroom that promote kindness, community and empathy.*



*Care of the environment. Children are given lots of opportunities to care for their physical environment and the things that live within it such as animals and plants. Here while the children care for the chickens, they come to understand how to hold and pet the chicken in a respectful way that does not distress the animal, they develop an understanding of the needs of a chicken and provide for those needs (food, water and shelter). They also begin to think of the chickens and often children bring in food scraps from home to feed them.*

*Children are invited to complete flower arranging as a way to add beauty to the classroom and to 'give' a flower to another child's table. This act of kindness connects the children in a positive way as one gives, one receives, and they both feel good about this social experience.*

*Children are asked to work together to achieve a common task. In this moment they need to take turns, organise their work together and share ideas about how to divide the work. During this you will often hear things like "you get the mat and I'll get the materials" or "I'll lay out all the picture cards and you lay out the labels" or "you put in the flag and then I'll have a turn." You can see children working together on the flags of the world material and two making juice that will be frozen into icy poles for sharing at communal lunch.*

*As there are no fixed timetables in our class we are able to follow the children's ideas as they come. There are two 4 year old girls spontaneously completed a*

*language task that had real meaning and purpose. The children noticed that one of our goldfish was sick. Without prompting from the adults, two children decided to make a sign to place on the tank that read, "Goldie is sick. Please watch quietly." This then led to others making items such as sewing cards, drawings, messages and bracelets to 'give' to Goldie. Goldie died and the children have continued to make items for Goldie. This act of kindness and compassion continues.*

*Children are asked to contribute to their environment by helping with classroom jobs. This act of kindness gives the children a sense of responsibility, they feel connected to and a part of their community and they feel good about helping their class. Here two children take great care to fold the drying cloths that we use daily in the classroom. Opportunities to give to the community are fostered in our communal lunch that is cooked by 4 children. Our table is laid by 2 other children. The children that receive the food thank those that helped prepare the table and the lunch and they develop gratitude for the small acts of kindness that come their way throughout the day.*

*Others ways that we as the adult guides foster the development of empathy and empathetic responses in the classroom are:*

- We help your kids put words to their emotions. Feelings are complex bio-chemical realities that take place in our whole bodies, but not necessarily involving our logical brain! Naming them can be trickier than we sometimes realise. Helping our kids find the right words that express what they're feeling is a great way for them to come to understand the feelings of others.*
- We feel out loud. Modeling the behaviour you want your kids to emulate is one of the best strategies around. Kids are watching us all the time and what we do influences them as much or more than what we say. We share our thoughts and feelings about situations and verbalise what the other person may be feeling or going through and we talk about what helps us when we feel like that.*
- We recognise empathy. When we notice your kids are responding out of empathy, reaching out to help, changing their behaviour out of concern for another we let them know that we value and support what they're doing by saying "that was very kind of you..."*
- We are patient. We are not perfectly empathetic all the time, even as adults. To ask kids to put others first or even to be able to have the emotional energy to notice what someone else is feeling when they are upset is asking a lot. As with all things human, progress is slow and accumulates over time as skills (and brains!) develop. We just keep pointing these moments out and modeling the skills the best we can.*

*"If you light a lamp for someone else  
it will also brighten your path"  
- Buddha.*

# MAXIMIZING YOUR MONTESSORI EXPERIENCE

BY MARGARET KROEGER AND CHRISTINE O'LEARY

**C**hoosing a Montessori education for your family can be an empowering and life-changing gift. Although established over 100 years ago, Dr. Montessori's insight and deep understanding into the nature and needs of children and her ability to crystalize the essence of a concept into sensorial experiences and hands on materials, remains progressive today. Dr. Montessori's approach, based on her scientific observation all those years ago, is supported by modern neuroscience. Current research on the way individuals learn and the changes that occur in the brain through childhood and adolescence are very compatible with Montessori methods and materials.

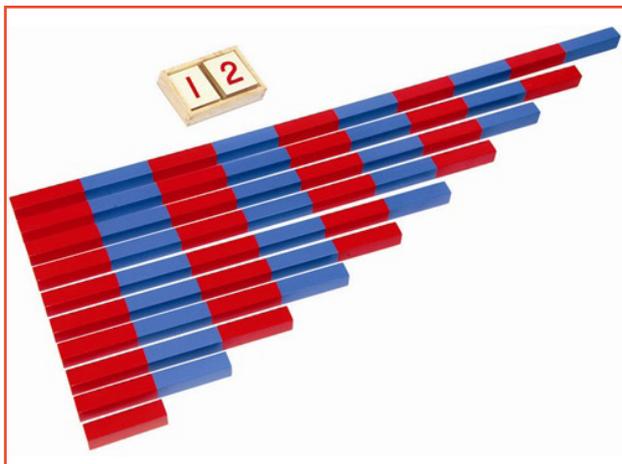
However, the decision to send your child to a Montessori school is not an easy one. Parents need to come to terms with an education that is often very different to that of their own. This non-traditional method can be misunderstood by neighbours and friends and it can prove challenging to explain to others. Over the years I have been asked three key questions by parents:

Is Montessori the right decision?

What can I do to understand my child's Montessori education better?

How can I maximize my child's experience at Northside?

Recently I came across a wonderful article by



Christine O'Leary, a Montessori parent from Queensland. It answers these important questions beautifully. Below is an adapted extract from her article.

It's Friday afternoon and Sarah is a few minutes late to pick up her children from Montessori school. It's been a long week. When she finally drives out of the school car park, she's feeling tired and stressed and is thinking about all the things she needs to do this weekend.

"How was your day?" she asks her two children in the backseat.

"Good" they answer in unison.

"So, what did you do today," she then asks, but only half-listening to the answer.

"The thousand chain," answers her youngest son, Brock. Brock is in his second year of the 3-6 environment at school and by all accounts, seems to be doing well.

"Great," she answers, not sure where to go next. She doesn't really know what the thousand chain is, or what her son is supposed to learn by using it, so she doesn't ask any more questions. She is a little bit glad though that his answer wasn't 'washing tables' again. She's really not sure why he seems to be washing so many tables five days a week!

Pulling in to the driveway, she resolves to spend some time this weekend researching Montessori. She knows she really should know a lot more about it. Not only does she have two children going there, but her in-laws are constantly questioning the decision made by Sarah and her husband Greg, to send the children there in the first place. It would be good to have some convincing answers for them, for a change, especially since they will all be meeting for Greg's birthday tomorrow.

Thinking of all she has to do, she really should get the children to make the cake tomorrow. Then she thinks of the time and mess. She decides not to worry about it – she can do it herself much faster. Maybe next year the children can do it.

Walking inside, she steps over school bags and

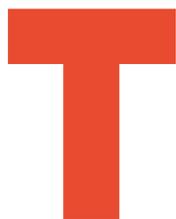
lunchboxes dumped in the doorway. With a sigh, she bends over to pick them up. She knows she should get the children to come and move them, but it's just quicker to do it herself.

Where do you think Sarah went wrong? She's really no different from the rest of us Montessori parents. There were three main things Sarah could do differently to maximize her family's Montessori experience.

I learned about the ways to optimize our Montessori experiences in recent years and it has changed my life. With a passion for learning myself, and inspired by the Montessori philosophy, I've spent time researching this teaching method. Since then, I've been able to have amazing, insightful conversations with my children about their activities in the classroom, I've gained confidence in my decision to choose a Montessori school for my children and I can articulate this to anyone who will listen! And I've spent hours talking to other Montessori parents, giving them some of the critical information I've learned along the way. I was a keen student and was open to change. It has changed the way we parent and it has changed my husband and I as human beings.

I am lucky that my background is perfectly suited to the task. Not only am I a Montessori parent just like you – but I've taught communication and public relations at University. I am passionate about research and about providing the right information to the right audience via the right medium. It is in this spirit that this advice.

### Three Ways Parents Can Maximise Their Montessori Experience



#### Suggestion 1 – Don't Operate on Blind Faith

If you're anything like me, you love Montessori - the beautiful classrooms and the child-centred philosophy. But do you really understand the science behind it? EVERYTHING the children do – from the toddler community right through to Year 6 – serves a purpose. But often, we don't know what that purpose is. And the danger of operating on BLIND faith – is that it's just that – it's blind. It's not really based on anything. And that means, seeds of doubt are not far away. It's just such a different way of learning than most of us were used to when we were at school. If you're not informed, the reasons why your children are doing specific activities – can seem, well, a little strange.



For example, let's talk about washing tables.

Now, this is a regular activity in the 3-6 environment. You can't go past those classrooms without seeing lots of children in their little aprons with their buckets and sponges, washing tables. I've heard parents comment on how much table washing their children are doing – sometimes with a slight sense of alarm. Why are they washing tables so much?

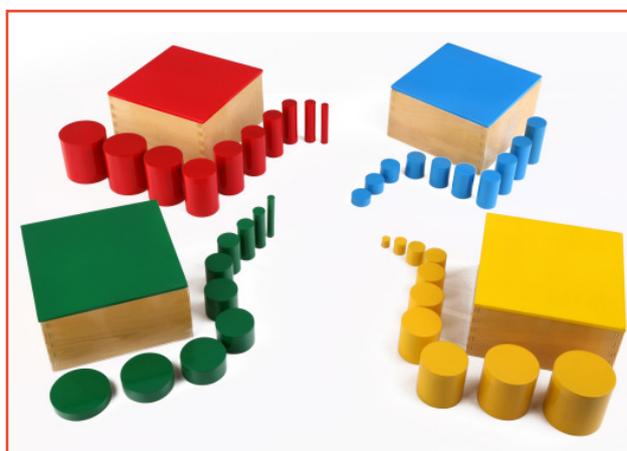
Now, you'd think this is a practical life activity, right? I guess children need to learn how to wash tables, wash dishes, peel carrots and sew on buttons. They're all really important life skills and our children are taught them at Montessori. Fantastic! You can picture them in a few years' time, cooking meals, cleaning the house, actively contributing to family life.

Brilliant.

But guess what?

It's not just about practical life. It's about **READING** and **WRITING**!

That's right. Washing tables is indirect preparation for reading and writing in western cultures.



So many Montessori activities in those early years are taught in a VERY specific way – left to right, top to bottom. Whether it's cleaning tables, sorting cylinder blocks by size, or moving objects from one container to another – they all teach a left to right progression. It's also about sequencing, controlled fine and gross motor skills and executive functioning to plan and complete a series of steps.

Who knew?!

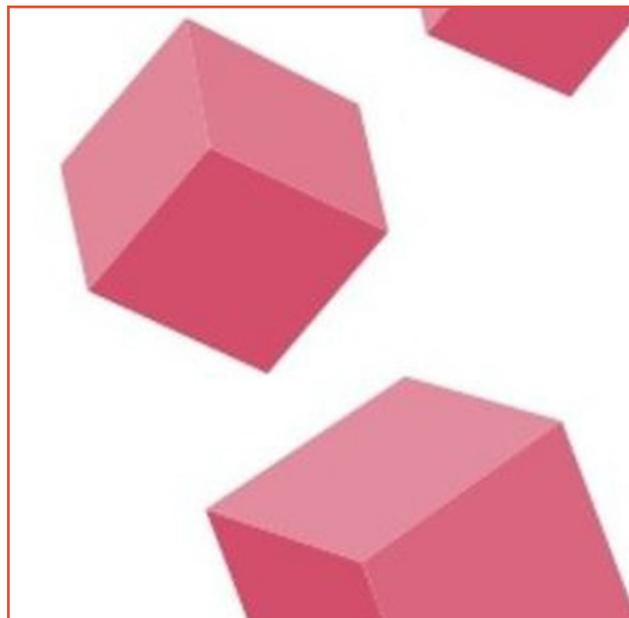
It really does help when you understand the science behind the activity. Otherwise before you know it, a mild concern can turn into a real worry and that's when our confidence starts to wane.

So educate yourself! It really is one of the best things you can do for your child's future. Read Montessori books, watch YouTube clips, observe, attend Parent Education evenings and talk to the directresses. The more you know about Montessori, the more confident you will be, and in particular, the more confident you will be to bring the philosophy home and make it work in your household. Which brings us to my second suggestion.

#### Suggestion 2 – Bring It Home

Our children are immersed in the wonderful Montessori environment. What an amazing opportunity they have! They are encouraged to think for themselves and to do for themselves. They learn about control of error and the link between the hand and mind – doing and understanding. They learn about natural consequences. They learn how to concentrate for long periods of time without interruption and to understand themselves as individuals. They learn to be part of a community and to value others as part of the learning environment. And then they come home!

If you're anything like me, you often catch your-



self doing for your child what they could do for themselves. We're busy. We're in a hurry. They have to get to school and we have to get to work. Everyone's hungry and it will just take TOO LONG to let them cook dinner. We interrupt them while they're in the middle of a Lego construction because we just need to get them to do something RIGHT NOW. We encourage. We direct. We 'suggest' what they should do next. We impose consequences when a natural consequence would have done the job.

Does any of this sound familiar?

I am a 'Going Out' Chaperone at our Montessori school with the 9 – 12 students. A 'Going Out' is a small group child initiated and child planned excursion. I can't recommend it enough. If you're not a going out chaperone – put your name down and do it! I have to say though, as a new millennium mum, at first I was pretty surprised. While I was there to keep the children safe – it was their excursion and they took the leadership role.

I remember my first going out experience. I was taking my son and three other children to the local library. They had organised the whole thing themselves. I reminded myself that my key role was to observe. Just observe. That's it. No directing the children to go this way or that. Don't interfere.

What a revelation!

Until that day, I had no idea how much I direct my son in his day-to-day – actually probably more like minute-by-minute – activities. It was SO hard to just watch and not get involved. And you know what? He was fine! They were all fine. And they



were very proud of themselves.

And this is just one of the things we need to do more of at home. Hang back. Observe. Don't constantly direct your children. Put your Montessori hat on as much as you can and let them do for themselves. They're doing it at school. They can do it at home, too. When you start to really see how much your children can do for themselves, you'll understand the lifelong benefits of this wonderful teaching method. You'll feel more confident and less likely to listen to others who don't understand it. Which leads us into my third suggestion.

### Suggestion 3 – Don't Get Scared

Seeds of doubt can start to grow and little worries can get bigger. We might consider taking our kids out of a wonderful Montessori environment and enrolling them in a traditional school. Like we went to. Like our friends' kids go to. Like OUR parents went to.

Before you act, gather as much information as you can to make the best decision. Talk to Montessori parents of older children and to the Upper Grade Directresses. Observe in the classrooms and attend Parent Evenings aimed at the older students so you can make an informed choice.

So there are my three suggestions to improve your experience as a Montessori parent. Be informed, live Montessori in your home and get involved with the school.

To conclude, let's go back to the story about Sarah.

It's Friday afternoon and Sarah is a few minutes late to pick up her children from the Montessori school. It's been a long week. When she finally drives out of the school car park, she's feeling tired and is thinking about the weekend ahead.

"How was your day?" she asks her two children in the backseat.

"Good" they answer in unison.

"So, what did you do today," she then asks.

"The thousand chain," answers her youngest son, Brock.

"What number did you get up to?" asks Sarah, knowing how the thousand chain works.

"480. We had to do it on the verandah because it was too long for the classroom! Then we had to pull it inside for the weekend, but it's still there, ready for Monday," says Brock.

"Who did you do it with?" asks Sarah, knowing this activity is almost always done with a partner.

"Gabe," he answers. "He's my new best friend."

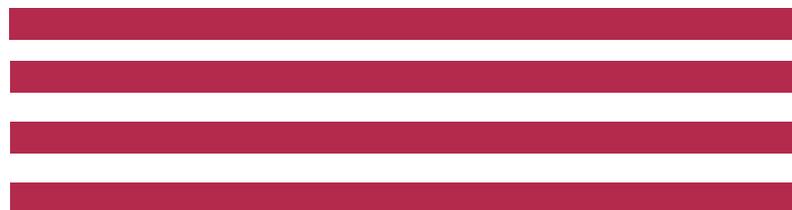
"Really? He's your new best friend is he? Maybe we should ask Gabe over for a playdate then? I've got his mum's number here somewhere."

Pulling into the driveway, Sarah remembers it's her husband's birthday this weekend. She's looking forward to spending time with his family and doesn't feel so defensive since the last time they came over and she was able to cite some pretty compelling research about the effectiveness of Montessori, not to mention name some well-known alumni that even her father-in-law couldn't help but be impressed with.

Stepping into the hallway, she was happy to see the children had already put their bags away and were unpacking lunchboxes in the kitchen. Asking who wanted to make Dad's birthday cake tomorrow, her eldest son was already reaching for the recipe folder where all of their favourite family recipes had been adapted for ease-of-use for the children.

"I'll write a list of what we need and walk to the shop in the morning to get the ingredients while Dad's out at golf," he said. "I'm going to make the triple choc cake that we made last time. Dad loves that one."

Putting the kettle on, Sarah decides to relax. It's Friday night, no need to rush. She was feeling happy and relaxed - looking forward to the weekend.



BY EDNA SALVADOR

PPE DIRECTORESS



# THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD IN THE MONTESSORI 3-6 ENVIRONMENT

**A**t the pre-primary, many of the children stay on for an extended day. For these children, they bring their own lunches and eat in a communal setting with their friends. Lunch is a relaxing time where they can share stories whilst enjoying their food and practising the grace and courtesy lessons they have been shown since the beginning of the year.

Before they eat, the children lay the tables using place mats. Some classrooms use place mats that the children have made themselves. During autumn, they may collect a variety of leaves from the garden and press them. Once pressed, each child could choose a combination of leaves and mount them on a piece of cardboard. The finished collages could then be laminated (for durability purposes) by an adult. During the spring months, flowers are pressed and mounted in the same way. Occasionally, a tablecloth may also be used and flowers that the children have arranged may adorn the tables.

Grace and courtesy is part and parcel of eating. In the pre-primary, everyone is encouraged to develop a graceful and courteous demeanour during mealtimes and the children in the 3-6 are willing and able to unselfconscious-

ly practise these. The following Grace and Courtesy lessons are presented to the children:

- Setting a Table
- Food Preparation
- Serving/passing food/offering food
- Taking one item from a platter
- Eating with proper utensils
- Chewing with mouth closed
- Swallowing before speaking
- Making conversation
- How to avoid spilling crumbs from your lips
- Excusing oneself
- Cleaning up before and afterwards

Children in this age group like to imitate what they see adults doing in their environment and they often see their parents preparing food so they have a strong desire to



copy them. In the Montessori-prepared environment for the 3-6, there are food preparation activities that are attractively set up on the shelves. Children have the opportunity to make their own juice, cut a banana, apple or any fruit in season, grate cheese, etc. In the classroom, there is always a space for them to prepare snack at anytime of the day, and lessons on how to do the work and how to clean up in preparation for use by the next child are given to give them opportunities to do the work independently.

Gardening and planting are also part of the Care of the Environment area of Practical Life. The children help in the garden by planting seeds that they can later harvest and include as ingredients in their food preparation. For young children, there is something fascinating about going out to the garden and bringing in a basket of lettuce, spring onions, herbs and tomatoes that they helped to grow. Getting children to eat vegetables is rarely a problem when they have planted these themselves. They also get to know that vegetables are grown and not just bought from the supermarket.

Lunch time is a time for the children to chat. The directress who sits with them might instigate a conversation at her table, but this is not a formal teaching situation. Topics include something that happened in class that morning, or something that was in the news, the origin of food being eaten, favourite things, recycling and so on.

Our classrooms are very multicultural and once in a while, parents may be invited to share a part of their culture by cooking with the children. It is a good opportunity for them to be exposed to different kinds of food from all over the world - tabouleh, dumplings, pizza, sushi, rice cakes. It is a known fact that children prefer foods that they are familiar with versus foods they've never tasted however by the end of the year, they are usually willing to try eating unfamiliar tastes because they have participated in preparing the food and they have seen their friends (and teachers) eating it.

All children, with preparation and practice, can become happy and healthy eaters.



# TOO MUCH FUN!

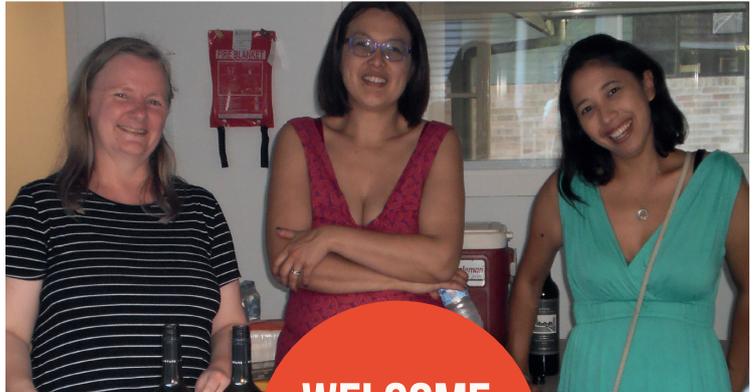
@ NORTHSIDE!

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NRL SPORTS CLINIC!

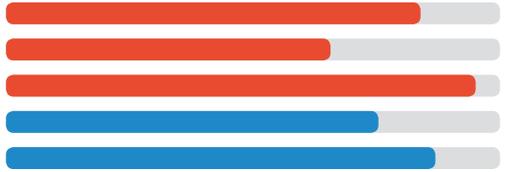


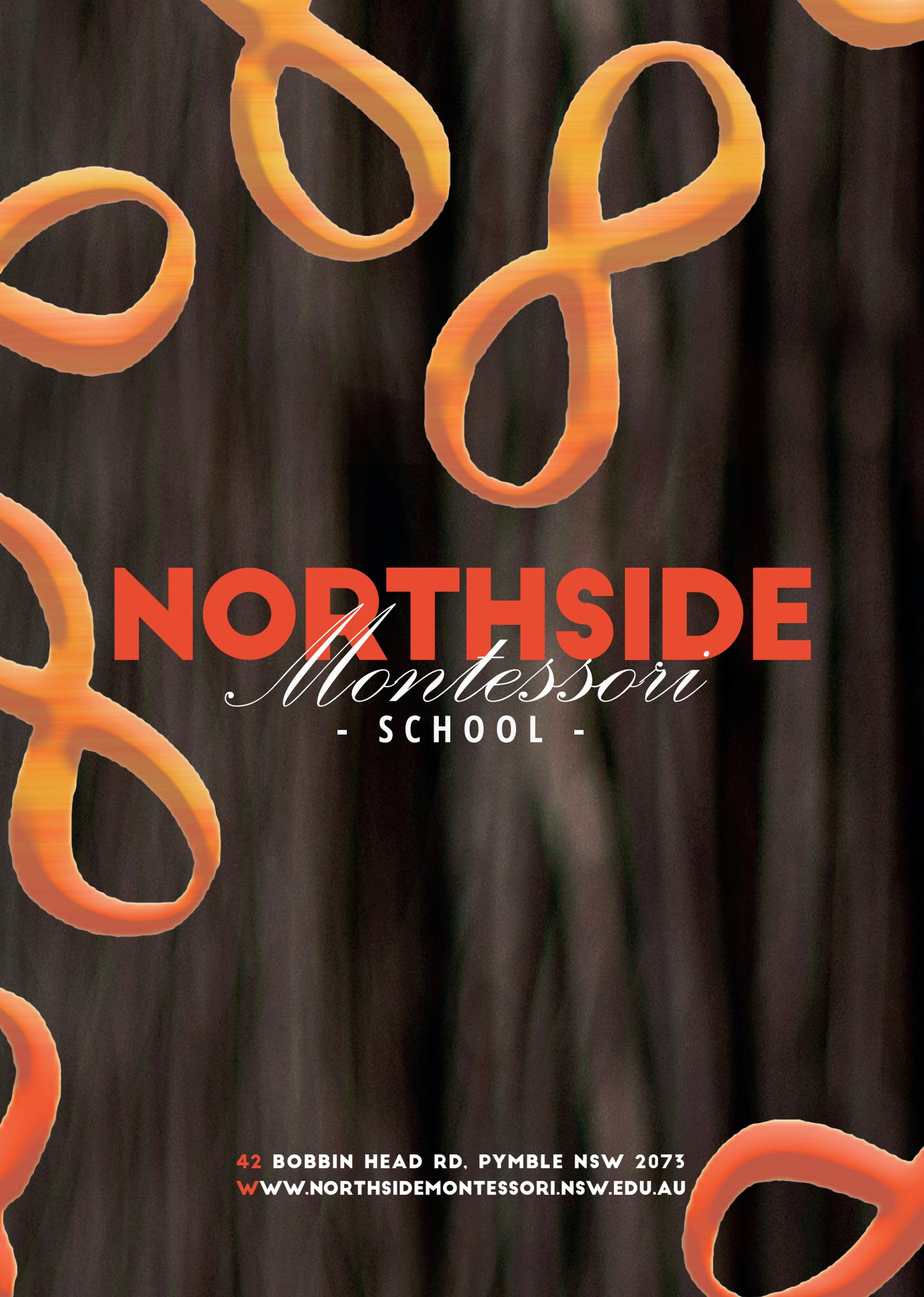


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