

NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL - EARLY LEARNING, PRIMARY & SECONDARY

CHRONICLE

AUTUMN

FREEDOM AND
RESPONSIBILITY
IN 9-12

THE IMPORTANCE OF
LIBERTY FOR EACH CHILD

INDEPENDENCE IN
THE YOUNG CHILD'S
DAILY ROUTINES



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NORTHSIDE CHRONICLE
AUTUMN 2022

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

WELCOME
TO 2022



After the past two years it is hard to remember what a 'normal' school year looks like. There have been so many disruptions and challenges that have occurred over these past couple of years, it is pleasing then, that our Term 1 has seemed quite normal and a very a positive start to 2022. Despite having some cases of Covid, and all needing to undertake rapid antigen testing, is so good to have children back in classes. With the restrictions easing, it is lovely to be able to do the many activities both within the school and in the wider community that really makes life at Northside Montessori School special.

The difficulties of the past years have meant that our students have been unable to explore the environments outside our school community which is so valuable. Maria Montessori wrote that "to go outside the classroom, to enter the outside world, which included everything, is obviously to open and immense door to instruction" (From Childhood to Adolescence). As a school community we are again embracing these opportunities for work outdoors and opportunities to explore the wider community. Our newly established Adolescent program (Year 7) have incorporated this into their program where students have the opportunity to incorporate visits to museums, art galleries, libraries, businesses, and many other locations into their classwork on a weekly basis. It is so good to have the ability and freedoms to do these things again as part of our regular class activities.



Harmony Day

Only a few weeks ago our school celebrated Harmony Day, and across the week enjoyed the chance to share in the many cultures and experiences of families in our community. On the Monday we had many parents assisting in the activities on the day, and we thank those parents who assisted and participated in the many wonderful things available to our students on this day.

It was wonderful to see our students dressed in their national costumes, and able to share in the joyful celebration of the diversity that exists among our students. Our day culminated in a performance from a Brazilian group of performers who mixed music, martial arts and dance in an extremely exciting and engaging presentation. Earlier in the term it would have been very difficult to hold such an event with the previous Covid restrictions, but as Term 1 has unfolded, we have leapt at the opportunity to have these experiences again for our students.

Adolescent Program

After a number of years of planning it is so exciting to have our Adolescent program up and running with our first group of Year 7 students. Drawing from the experiences, challenges and opportunities that are features of Adolescent programs both within Australia and abroad, we have developed our high school program to be authentically Montessori, and also meet the rigorous requirements of the NSW Education Standards Authority, NESA. With a rigorous and engaging program, we are confident that our Adolescent Program will be a wonderful high school experience for our students and provide pathways in Montessori education for families who are committed to this method of education beyond the primary classroom.



As a school we have sought to equip and establish our program with the facilities and resources that ensure that our students do not miss any opportunities in the classroom. More importantly we have a staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure that the curriculum which is delivered is engaging, stimulating, and meeting the specific needs of the students who are involved in the program which is so critical.

Adolescence is a time where students are looking to explore different identities and roles, looking to their peers for identity. They are searching for important answers to key questions such as 'Who am I?', 'How do I fit in?', and 'How can I be understood?'. Our Adolescent Program recognises the characteristics of these students, and seeks to provide an environment perfectly suited to the adolescent learner.



It has been such a wonderful start for our program, and it is pleasing to be able to have this available to Northside families wishing to continue their Montessori journey into high school, and also to other families who have students in other Montessori Primary schools wishing to continue for High School.

Welcome Event - Bush Dance

It was clear from the attendance that our community is again ready to embrace the wonderful aspects of community that exist at Northside. Our annual Welcome Event Bush Dance is such a terrific opportunity for the community to come together, and this year was no different. With the help of the Rosella Bush Band, our students and parents enjoyed some bush dancing and a lovely dinner together. This was also a fantastic opportunity to utilise our new hall facility which served our community well as a perfect wet weather option for this event. An event like this does not just happen by itself, so we would like to extend our thanks to Karen Sampson, Elisha Hamilton-Smith and the other parents and staff who planned and assisted to make our Bush Dance such a great event.

As we head into Term 2 we continue to look forward to the many community events that will occur at Northside, as well as the many wonderful activities that happen in our classrooms. It has certainly been a great start to 2022.

Adam Scotney
Principal









NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

by **Bronte Nielsen** (Early Childhood Teacher and Casa Room Leader,
Northside Montessori ELC)

With bright happy faces, our children returned this year - both familiar faces from last year but also new friends - all eager to explore the opportunities and possibilities that the Casa environment has to offer.

New materials and new presentations enticed engagement, building skills in areas such as: Practical Life, Sensorial, Numeracy and Language and Literacy - as well as strengthening valuable life skills such as concentration, commitment and curiosity.

Favourites have included:

- Knobbed Cylinders
- Transferring
- Play-dough
- Drawing
- Pink Tower
- Beading and Threading

These were some of the childrens' responses when asked what they enjoyed engaging with during work cycle:

"Play-dough - because you get to make things with it"

- Emelia

"Match colours - red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple" - Hugo

"Pink Tower - I didn't try it before - the big one at the bottom, I put the small one on the top gently"

- Raegan

"Roll.....balls.....play-dough....." - Hamish

"Make the words with letters" - Mona

"Water.....pouring.....carry from the sink..... in the jug....then into another jug" - Erin

"Painting.....Art.....I like to paint unicorns with pink and blue and red" - Ava







MUSICAL SCIENCE EXPLORATION IN TRANSITION CLASS

by Sandra Sin (Toddler Transition)

Toddlers loves moving and engaging with music and movement activities in our Transition class. Due to the wet weather and to ensure there is a balance of quiet and active times, we provided many music and movement opportunities for children to express their feelings and emotions, learning to work in group and develop their self-confidence and imagination.

When some children expressed their fascination and/or fears about thunderstorm, their learning was extended by singing some songs about weather, making sounds of thunder with tapping sticks and feeling "lightnings" with their hands.

Children were fascinated when they pressed their hands against the glass lighting ball and watched the power and beauty of lightning jumps to their fingertips. They could even feel the electricity as their hands were gently warmed up and tingled. Of course, they could not wait to turn off the room light and dance with torches to create the effect of lightnings in our room. It was wonderful to observe their joy on their face when they used their whole body to embark on the journey of science and musical exploration.

"How touching it is that man has this instinct, this joy and sentiment for music. Through the little children these things, art and music, remain forever with humanity - over time music has been recombined and developed throughout humanity."

- Maria Montessori, the 1946
London Lectures, p.103







INDEPENDENCE IN THE YOUNG CHILD'S DAILY ROUTINES

by Margret Ranada Palma (Brolga Directress)

The year 2022 begins with the immediate hustle and bustle of a routine that everyone craves. Children are able to return to schools and continue with daily activities and parents can return to work and provide some form of normalcy after two years of uncertainty.

We started the term welcoming the children at the entrance of our school. We walked the young three-year olds to their respective classrooms, while some four- and five-year-old children confidently stride along. As weeks went by, we would greet them at the gate and slowly let go to watch them walk on their own or with their friends to their classes.

As an observer it is always astounding to see the child's independence unfold when they are given the opportunities to do things on their own. Simply walking by themselves into school, carrying their own belongings will be that first step to recognising that this is their space when they walk into their prepared environments. If adults have their own work spaces, the children have the same as well, carefully curated by the guides in class. We provide all the possibilities for ownership of their work areas as they begin their day coming into school.

Presentations are made to the children as they are invited to work with the materials. The directress initially shows the child with movement rather than words,

depending on the activity or the material, especially in Practical Life activities and Sensorial materials. This is when we, as adults, slow down our actions and hold back with our words because the young child in the 3-6 environment can only focus on one thing. Notice how children mimic our actions even at an early age. Do you remember those days? It does not stop at toddlerhood, it is a continuous experience for them. Therefore, we model the behaviour we expect of the children.

When the young child selects activities in the classroom or a material to work with, we take a step back to observe how they are engaged with the materials to respect their own cycle of activity. Without the adult's intervention or engagement, this gives way to their concentration as they work with their given skills to develop their sense of order and coordination. As guides, we only intervene if the children are misusing the materials or ask for help. Children help each other too as they have the tendency to know what is happening around them, all the time. They hear and listen to conversations and are aware somehow. This is when peer learning and social interactions occur. Often, we hear the child who may appear like he needs assistance to be very persistent in telling his friend: "I do not need help. I can do it myself."

Praise, verbal or non-verbal, is uncommonly heard from the trained guide. We acknowledge the child's efforts to encourage intrinsic motivation, without trying to please the adult as an end goal. Each time a child asks for reassurance, whether it is of her artwork or completion of her work, we comment on their strengths and arduous work.



"Respect all the reasonable forms of activity in which the child engages and try to understand them."

- Dr Marie Montessori



As the child's day progresses, they listen to their bodies and know their routines when it is morning teatime or lunch time. They prepare their own fruit mid-morning or unpack their lunchboxes at noontime. The kitchen implements for food preparation are carefully selected to suit the child's needs, from the size of the tongs to the trays they carry and jugs they use. The children use child-safe knives or instruments to slice their fruits and glass jugs, cups or glasses, and plates and cutlery that we normally use at home. We use natural materials and avoid plastic as much as possible to give the children the responsibility of caring for the materials in school. The weight of each object also allows them to control their movements more as they navigate around the work areas, from the shelves to their tables.

Outdoor play provides the children time for unstructured play. We watch them with their social interactions and their movements as well - from skipping, jumping, running, or hopping, you can see how they copy each other or create a game, whether it is reality-based play-acting as mums, dads and babies, or a fantasy-based superhero game. We listen to their conversations with each other, the language they use and how they manage any form of conflict. Once again, we only intervene when necessary. Trust in the children's abilities to resolve conflict on their own unless

someone is about to get hurt in the process, which is the time to step in, sometimes through anticipation. We try to provide the children strategies that they can use to help them with their friendships with each other.

As the day ends, whether it is at the conclusion of the morning or afternoon work cycle, the children tidy up their areas, pack away their materials and choose a 'job' to help care for their environment so that it is ready for them upon their return. From wiping the tables to sweeping the floors, putting the chairs up and rolling the mats, the children are eager to help.

The young child is capable of all these, when given the opportunities to do things by themselves. Their souls are yearning for doing things on their own, to gain independence from the adult. It would be easier to help the child, would it not? To save time, to get somewhere quicker, or to accomplish a task in a timely manner. Is this for the adult's sake or for the child? Whose needs are being met in this process? Consistency in routines provided in school and at home is what we can do together. Any form of 'useless' help becomes an impediment to the child's development. Let us not be those obstacles for the child's journey to independence. Let us be the bridge for their paths to truly fulfil their potential.

SUMMER OF SPORT

by Mary Abolins (Sports Teacher)

Looks like we are finally getting back to normal, that is if anyone can remember what normal is! Covid has affected many sporting events and it has been a credit to the organisers working out ways of keeping these events going.

It goes to show the level of importance that is placed on sport, whether it is a major event like the Australian Open Tennis or individuals participating in an activity to keep fit or for health and wellbeing, which are important for adults and children.

Wellbeing is not just the absence of disease or illness. It's a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social **health** factors.

Looking to achieve wellbeing we need to develop strong relationships with family and friends.

Make regular time available for social contact.

Eat wholesome, nutritious foods.

Do regular physical activity.

Become involved in activities that interest you.

Join local organisations or clubs that appeal to you.

Set yourself achievable goals and work towards them.

Try to be optimistic and enjoy each day.

Our sports program at Northside Montessori gives the children the opportunity of trying different sports and hopefully this encourages the children to participate in all different kinds of activities on a regular basis.

So far this year we have done Cricket for levels 3 to 6 and Gross Motor Skills for extended day to level 2. All levels are now doing a Basketball program funded by 'Sporting Schools'.

Sport and physical activity have long been used as a tool to improve mental, physical, and social well-being.

Lockdown proved to be a positive to many people as they were more conscious of their physical and mental wellbeing. Trying to buy sports equipment during this time from major sporting stores was almost impossible as adults and children were exercising more.

Just going for walks, I am sure you noticed more people out and about and fitness going on in the parks.

The children at Montessori are always willing to learn new sports and participate with enthusiasm, they love their activities and the variety that is offered to them.

Let's try to keep active and maintain our good health and wellbeing making 2022 a positive year.

**Yours in sport,
Mary**





MONTESSORI AS A WAY OF LIFE

by Linda Van Lierop (Cooinda 6-9 Directress)

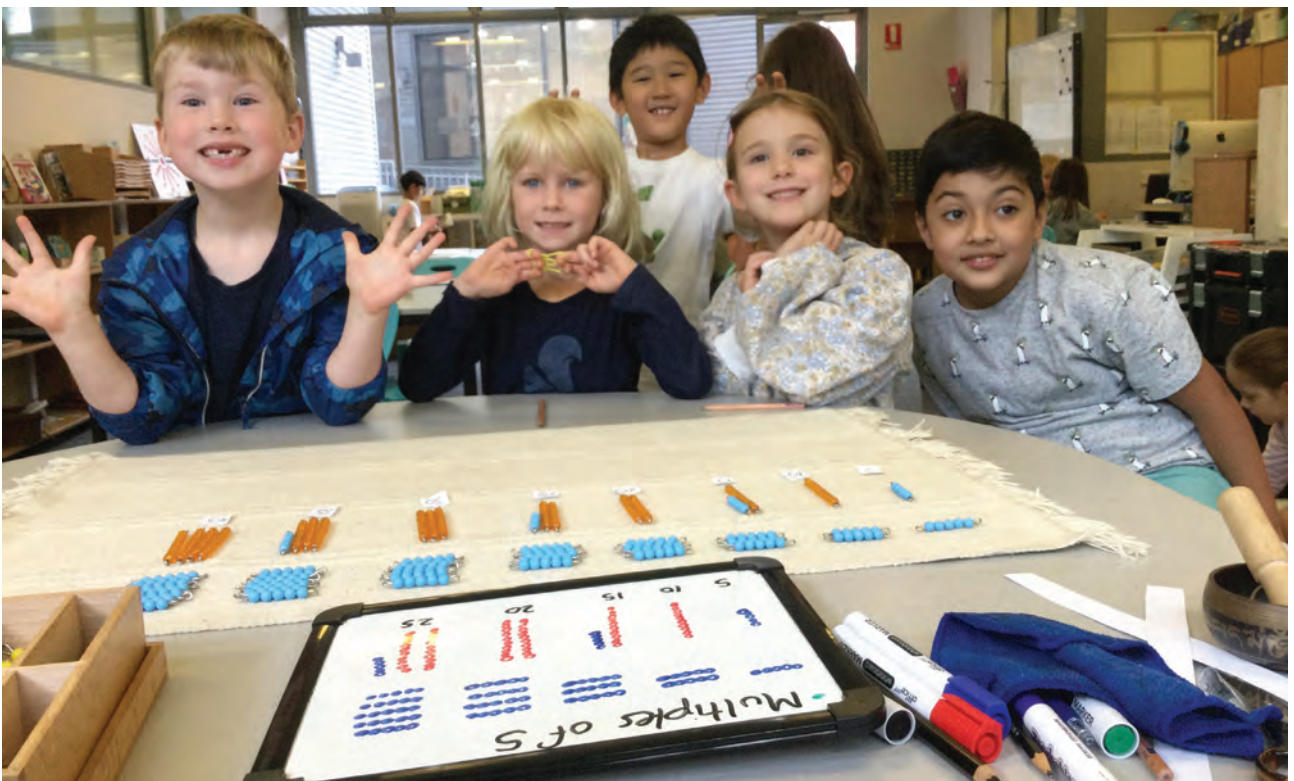
Throughout life learning is a constant factor, where even as adults, we learn new things regularly. As children, learning occurs daily and forms a strong foundation for their development.

Over time, scientific research gathered by Angeline Stoll Lillard, has demonstrated that people learn best when they are interested in what they are learning about, when they feel a sense of control and choice in their actions and when learning occurs in a meaningful context. These are considered optimal learning environments, and it is this research that supports the importance of a consistent Montessori Education. "It is the child who makes the man, and no man exists who was not made by the child he once was", as stated by Maria Montessori herself, supports this notion that development does not stop at a certain age but continues through ones whole life.

This journey of learning is something that takes place over ones whole life rather than just for a stage of life. Northside Montessori allows children the opportunity to choose work and have control over it, provides a context for all content, starting with the great stories, and encourages the children to develop interest through the materials and charts used. In each stage at Northside Montessori, this journey of learning continues, enabling the children to continue from where they left off in the last stage.

The Montessori Method stretches far and wide across the globe, with people from all walks of life believing in and supporting this method. Thomas Edison, famous for his science and inventions, the inventor Alexander Bell and Jean Piaget a renowned psychologist, were involved in, helped and supported Montessori schools.

The materials that a Montessori child handles in the classroom environment assist in providing the children with experiences that help them to build their character. As Maria Montessori once said "education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment".



OOSH NEWS



BEFORE, AFTER SCHOOL CARE AND HOLIDAY PROGRAM

by Surendrini Giritharan (OOSH Coordinator)

What an exciting and busy start to this year. We had several new children join our OOSH this year and we wish them a very warm welcome. It was quite uncertain start for some of the 3-year-olds, but they have now all settled in well with our program and are getting along well with their peers. Overall, it has been a smooth transition for all the children.

For our the new families, this is what we do in Before School Care (BSC) and After School Care (ASC).

BSC starts at 7:30am. Breakfast is served from 7:30am to 7.45am. Children are provided with a healthy breakfast according to the dietary requirements, taking into consideration any other food allergies. The morning program has activities that encourage all the kids to be involved in group activities, games, story time and free play until they go to their class rooms.

Our afternoon program contains a variety of activities to get the children engaged with interest. We start the afternoon with "Silent Sitting" for the children. Here we practice a simple breathing technique with eyes closed in the meditative posture every afternoon for 5 mins. The children are able to sit and concentrate for this time. They hope that this practice will benefit tremendously in the future.

We also introduced a Yoga practice called "Brain Yoga". Research shows that this type of activity has a lot of benefit for the children. We practice this every afternoon soon after the silent sitting.

Students then have afternoon tea, which is nut free and always healthy with two fruits, two vegetables, one carbohydrate and one dairy product. The menu is changed consistently depending on the children's likes and dislikes with a variety of healthy options. Food is also prepared taking into consideration children's allergies and special dietary requirements. Following this, the activity for the day is based on that week's theme. This includes activities such as cooking each Thursday. Children get to take a cookbook home filled with the recipes they prepared each week (Due to Covid we have been unable to undertake cooking in Term 1).



We also allocate time for story time, group games, free play and 1 hour of outside play.

We have games, a variety of construction activities, puzzles, board games, storybooks and other activities suited to all age groups that will help develop their brain, muscles and other developmental needs.

The group games and all other activities that are provided in our environment are vital for their brain development and growth. These activities also encourage the children to develop confidence, creativity, learn to interact with their peers in a proper manner and reinforces respect, fairness and diversity, they also learn how to become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing.

We encourage all children to take part in all the activities. Parents can look at our weekly program sheet which is posted in our OOSH room notice board. Parents or carers are always welcome to chat to our staff about any concerns. We also do termly observations of each child individually and in group situations.

Children's safety and Hygiene is another very important component, so a task sheet is filled out every single day about the safety and hygiene practice of the activities that are being performed.

As part of the learning we also celebrate cultural events, including Chinese New Year, Easter, Deepavali, and Christmas.

Vacation Care

Vacation Care runs from 8am-6pm. Students need to bring with them enough food for morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, a water bottle and most importantly a HAT. We request that all a child's belongings are clearly labelled with their name. Outside time will be in the morning before 10am and again in the evening after 3/4pm depending on the weather. Sunscreen will be given to all children during outside time. We provide children with sunscreen but parents are more than welcome to provide one for their child with their child's name on it.

We have a variety of Incursions organised from outside providers, we also introduce new activities to create interest, learning and excitement. We do repeat some of the popular incursions. We also organise a Kids First Aid training during our December-January holiday program. During this time, the children learn basic lifesaving skills which can be very valuable. This session was very much valued and appreciated by the children and parents. We have decided to conduct this training course every year in term 4 as a refresher so that the children don't forget these skills.

The April holiday program flyer and the booking forms are available on the Skool Bag App.

Now coming to our staff members, we have a wonderful group of qualified and energetic staff who work diligently to make sure the program runs smoothly and in a safe manner. I hope that all our families have a wonderful holiday, and we look forward to seeing you during our holiday program and again in Term 2!





FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN 9-12

by Rebecca Grimshaw (Orana 9-12 Directress)

Dr. Montessori's plan for the human being was to train their intellect and thinking skills so that their constructed intellect can make judgments. It was her recognition of the constructive powers of the child that made her so acutely aware of the importance of liberty for each child.

She started to talk about liberty within the prepared environment, and it is the whole phrase that is significant. It is not just liberty for its own sake, but within the environment that allows each child to construct themselves. These two elements are necessary in order for self-construction to be maximised. It is not freedom in the void, but freedom in the environment prepared in such a way that the children will be able to find their way toward their unique development of this potential.

Our work as educators and teachers is helping each child construct themselves as a human being. We need to help children understand what it means to have freedom and what it means to be responsible with the choices made. It was through Dr. Montessori's observations and work that she was able to give us guidelines. In *Education and Peace*, she says, *"The human personality must be given a chance to realise every one of its capabilities. Every side of the human personality must function. To function fully as an integrated whole, a person has to be able to recognise the reality of freedom given to us and the necessary limits to the exercising of that freedom. We also have to be able to recognise the responsibility we bear because of that freedom and be able to accept the responsibility."*

The children coming into the 9-12 prepared environment come with independence to a certain degree, with responsibility, and with a unique potential that will continue to develop. The 9-12 child needs freedom to continue their formation and development as a social being. We need to remember that we are talking about two societies: first, within the prepared classroom, and second, outside of the classroom. We have to take care that we prepare both of these environments for the children so that freedom and responsibility can continue to develop unimpeded.

In the 9-12 prepared environment we need to make use of the children's highly active imaginations. We need to make possible an orientation of these children into society and functioning of the world and take into account the different type of order they need. They need order for the mind. They need to see laws and objectives so that they can reach their own understanding.

This is the age of moral development, and we need to help these children develop a sense of justice, a sense of compassion and of service to the community. Within the 9-12 environment, children should still have the freedom to choose their own work, but now in the second plane of development that freedom resides within the limits set by the children's needs to learn what society expects them to learn.



It is not the same kind of freedom to choose work as it was in the first plane. It is the child's ability to recognise society's demands that can make them responsible for their work in the 9-12 classroom.

We need to work with the children, helping them become responsible for their work. We need to help the children realise that those things required by society have to be worked on. You cannot choose never to follow up on addition of fractions, for example, because that is a learning area on the school and state curriculum which they need to know by a certain time. The children still have their freedom to make their own work schedule, but sometimes they will need help in setting their own limits and when certain aspects will be followed up on.

The three tools Dr. Montessori suggested we use to develop freedom and responsibility in the 9-12 environment are: the school curriculum, individual work journals, and individual conferences between the teacher and each child.

In the 9-12 environment the work journals become more specific. For example, the child may record how many problems they are doing, or how big was the divisor or multiplier. It becomes a clear record of how the child has spent their day if it is used correctly. It is important to realise that the work journals are not to be used for sitting down in the morning and planning what will be done for the day. Rather it is a record for the child to get checked throughout the day to promote responsibility and provide feedback on their learning.

The conferences are not the time to correct children's work. Instead, the teacher and the child spend this time to glance at their work, the work in progress and work that is finished, and to determine if they are following up on the lessons. The child with the teacher then makes



a note of things that need to be worked on and makes plans to do the follow-up lessons on these learning aspects.

These conferences enable the teacher to see which materials and lessons the child is working on and who they enjoy working with. Providing this time to reflect on the child's work, the teacher is providing an opportunity for the child to exercise their freedom. A greater sense of responsibility is recognised by the child. Additionally, the teacher can recognise which materials and learning areas the child may not be working on and this can be discussed.

There always has to be a balance if we are going to help the child to develop. We have to give the child the freedom to choose for themselves. We give the freedom that is required for that child at that time with limits. As teachers and educators, we only give the right amount of freedom to the child so that they can take and demonstrate responsibility within their prepared environment. With this freedom and responsibility, children develop success. Success usually develops from that will and the ability to plug away even if, at the time, we are doing something that we may not necessarily want to be doing.

This happens in the classroom. If the children have the persistence, and they concentrate on the content, they are the children that will be successful with that content. This is true for the adult as well. The child's Reasoning Mind needs to be given responsibilities so that the child can make the right choices so that they can think through a process. In *To Educate the Human Potential*, Dr. Montessori says, *"The reconstruction of a human society is contingent upon the strength and unification of the human personality, the full elaboration of which depends on a method of education rooted in the laws of development."*



TERM ONE IN 9-12

by Leticia Castellanos (Amaroo 9-12 Directress)

Having the opportunity to receive the children face to face this term has been very exciting. It was, without doubt, a great start to the year, and the enthusiasm with which the children have worked has been palpable. It has certainly been a very active term with wonderful excursions and projects.

One of the 9-12 big works during this term has been the Animal Project. The children researched an animal and learned more about its habitat, diet, life cycle, adaptations, predators, and conservation. Children have a natural inclination towards animals, and in Montessori, this is a great opportunity to introduce Zoology concepts such as scientific classification. Through this work, children understand more about

the scientific work related to animals and how they are grouped according to their characteristics for study. This project culminates with an exciting adventure to Taronga Zoo, where children ages 9-12 camp inside the zoo and enjoy various activities such as animal encounters and learning workshops. Due to the weather this experience has been postponed until Term 2.

Another important aspect within Montessori environments is the care of animals. Children in 9-12 did extensive research on fish, their needs and care to receive a group of baby fish donated by the Spencer family. We greatly appreciate this donation, and the opportunities it provides for children to learn about fish through observation and care. Students enjoy checking the PH levels of the water, as well as the nitrate, nitrite, and ammonia levels. The responsibility and respect the children develop taking care of the animals in the environment has been another important purpose. This term, the children also expanded their knowledge about bacteria with the help of Alexandra Prieto, who showed the children the process of producing water



kefir. Students will continue working on this process throughout the school year, observing and studying the life cycle and characteristics of these organisms.

After experiencing the floods at school, a group of Year 5 girls decided to undertake a Fundraiser to help the Red Cross and support the work they have been doing during the floods in Australia this year. It was heart-warming to see the children united, working as a team, and helping during this difficult time in our country. Thank you to all our students for the solidarity shown.

The children also showed great interest in the Art Gallery of NSW. This excursion catalysed studies on the history of colour and the exploration of some ceramic hand-building techniques. Thanks to Will Arrowsmith for his assistance in running an introductory ceramic workshop in Amaroo. We hope this interest can continue in the future.

Other important activities during this term were the Bush Dance. The 9-12 children built a traditional scarecrow with our class parent Megan Nguyen and showed great enthusiasm learning dance moves for the party. Cooking has been another important part of the work in 9-12 with Aydan May leading some recipes around the world in Orana. This has been a community-building activity that the children had enjoyed every week. We also want to thank Yifat Shirben for the delicious challah, a traditional Hebrew bread she cooked with the students on Harmony Week.



THE ADOLESCENT

Human Development

Dr. Montessori's held an anthropological view of education that asked big questions - for students and for parents/educators. These include:

- Who are we as human beings?
- How are we fundamentally designed?
- What is our role? How can we contribute?
- What is our purpose?

Her focus was on understanding human development and supporting self-construction. Dr. Montessori maintained that children have a natural developmental path that unfolds in stages or 'planes of development':

- 0 - 6
- 6 - 12
- 12 - 18
- 18 - 24 years
- Maturity

Dr. Montessori believed that if we understand the characteristics of each plane and can prepare an environment to be responsive to the needs and

tendencies of students in each stage, we can better support development. Montessori education is much more about respecting and nurturing human potential and natural development than simply delivering a prescribed list of materials.

Who is the Adolescent?

The Third Plane is the time of Adolescence - a complex transition period marking a moving away from childhood. It is a period of rapid growth and change on many levels - socially, physically and emotionally. There is significant brain development with the pruning of dendrites and the setting of neural pathways.

The Third Plane has many commonalities with the First Plane. The 0 - 6 child is embedding into the small world of the family. Their energy is channelled into movement and sensorial stimulus through their unfiltered absorbent mind. Being overwhelmed and responding to situations emotionally or inconsistently can be features of this stage. Like the 0 - 6 child, the Adolescent faces a dramatic shift, a vast transformation - leading to great fragility. They are embedding into the world of peers and moving toward the global



community. They have a strong need for social justice, personal dignity and economic and functional independence. At times, they too can respond with strong emotion, brutal honesty and inconsistency. However, this is often viewed less favourably and with less understanding than when it occurs in younger children. Like the young child, the Adolescent is making errors in order to develop. The pruning process begins in the back of the brain with the front section, the prefrontal cortex, being remodelled last. The prefrontal cortex is the decision-making part of the brain, and it impacts the Adolescent's ability to solve problems, control impulses and demonstrate executive functioning skills. Adolescents instead rely on a more primitive part of the brain, the amygdala. The amygdala controls our fight or flight response and is associated with strong emotions, aggression and instinctive behaviour. It is little wonder then when an Adolescent responds with extreme emotions or impulsivity. Knowing this, we as the adults in their lives can show patience and empathy whilst still allowing natural consequences, constructive feedback and support. Dr Montessori believed the Adolescent deserves deep reverence.

"The adolescent must never be treated as a child, for that is a stage of life that he has surpassed. It is better to treat an adolescent as if he had greater value than he actually shows than as if he had less and let him feel that his merits and self-respect are disregarded." (Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 72)

The Adolescent at Northside

Montessori viewed the Adolescent as a 'social newborn' - worthy of our respect and understanding.

"The education of adolescents is of capital importance because adolescence is the time that the child becomes a member of society"

(Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*)

Adolescents need freedom to make mistakes in an environment that provides safety, validation and natural consequences. As parents and educators this requires patience and reflection. While it is tempting to want to control life's ups and downs for our children and protect them from disappointment, Adolescents need practical experiences in trial and error. They need to feel their errors in a secure and caring atmosphere.



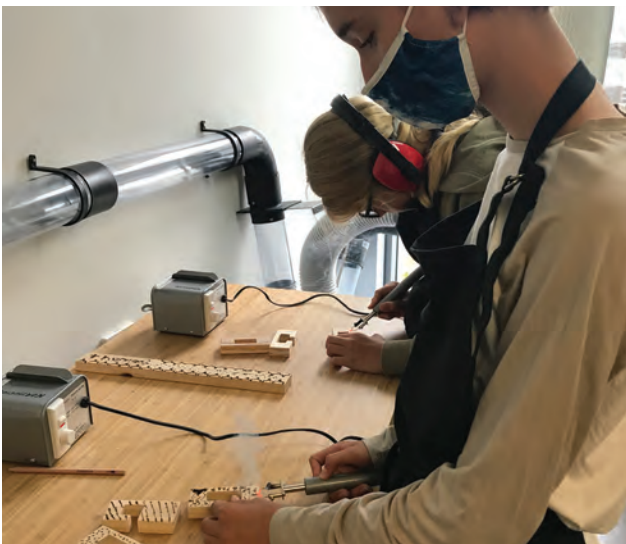
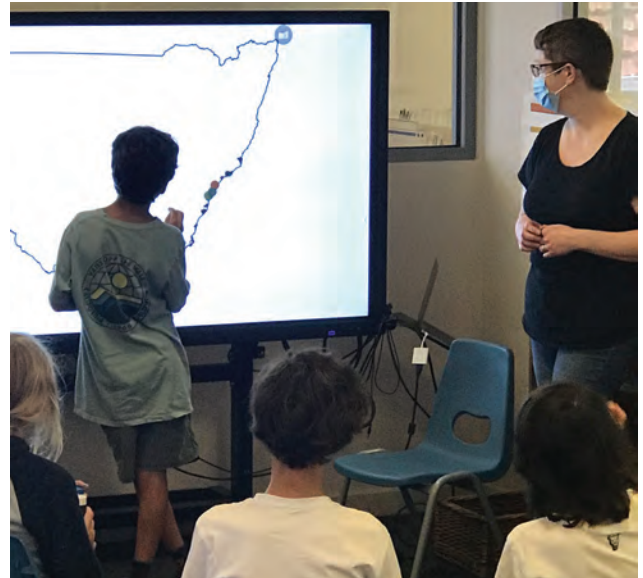
At Northside, the Adolescents practice restorative justice and peer feedback as part of their academic and social protocols.

This is a time when self-confidence can waiver but can be supported through agency and activity. Adolescents need physical work along with the academics. One enriches and reinforces the other. Examples of this happen frequently at Northside. The Adolescents are currently building bird houses in Technology. This allows them to apply their knowledge of angles, 3D solids, line segments and measurement – solidifying their understanding of geometry gained from more traditional teaching methods. Building and maintaining the aquaponics systems has allowed a hands-on science inquiry, bringing symbiotic relationships and the nitrogen cycle to life. Our book research in these areas is enhanced by these practical applications. Working on hands-on projects also stimulates further book research and academic studies.

Adolescents need opportunities to connect with the wider community. We have made links with Australian

and international scientists, local businesspeople, artists and musicians. We have participated in workshops on weaving and spinning and formed a partnership with Kur-ring-gai Council to work collaboratively on bush regeneration. One day a week we go off campus visiting museums, universities, art galleries, local businesses and national parks. The Adolescents make the phone arrangements and help plan the excursions. This helps prepare students for the wider world as adults and gives them agency in their learning.

Adolescents need opportunities to serve their peers in constructive ways. At Northside, we hold a weekly meal, prepared by the students, for the students. They work side by side on joint projects and enterprises allowing for realistic feedback from others. They need the truth delivered with care and empathy. This helps to bring clarity and a sense of self. The Adolescents at Northside have also built an indoor hydroponic and aquaponic model. They are growing microgreens and Indigenous plants to create their own products to sell.



Each student has a role to play in this collaborative work. They are collecting HDPE 2 plastic to create recycled pens in a business they have called 'Planet Pens'. Again, each member has an important and intertwined role in bringing this to reality. They take turns completing community tasks such as Office Manager, Botanist and Cleaner in order to maintain the environment for the collective good. These tasks allow students a chance to feel valued by the group in what Dr Montessori called 'valorisation'.

Adolescents need opportunities to develop critical thinking, meta cognition and empathy. At Northside, we support this through regular debates, Socratic seminars, role plays, social games, restorative justice protocols, student led council sessions, service learning and mindfulness activities. We share a range of texts (including interviews, plays, articles, documentaries, narratives and biographies) focusing on different people from diverse times and cultures so a wider perspective can be developed. Problem solving is modelled and made conscious through discussions and visual representations in all key

learning areas as well as in the social arena. The focus during presentations is not simply on getting the right answer but being able to explain how an answer was reached. Weekly Math Socratic seminars focus on various ways a math challenge can be solved. This communication of thought processes is an aid to developing meta cognition.

In keeping with Dr Montessori's ideals, our goal at Northside is for our Adolescents to emerge from the Third Plane with a solid and confident sense of self, an appreciation for individual differences, a thirst for knowledge, an adaptability to change and an optimistic view of the future. We want them to leave Northside ready to explore their full potential as an empowered adult.

"Free the child's potential and you will transform him (her) into the world."

(Dr Montessori)

Reference: Montessori, M. (1994). From Childhood to Adolescence. Oxford: Clio Press.



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