

NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL - EARLY LEARNING, PRIMARY & SECONDARY

CHRONICLE

SUMMER

WE HAVE BEEN
THINKING ABOUT ...

THOUGHTS FROM
NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI
EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

HOW
CHILDREN LEARN

WIRING, PATHWAYS, PLASTICITY,
SENSES LANGUAGE & LOGIC

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NORTHSIDE CHRONICLE
SUMMER 2021

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL



It has been wonderful to be back at school for Term 4. With the challenges that we have all faced these past 8 months it is great to be back and classes running normally. The last Chronicle was at the end of Term 2 2021, with lockdown causing us to not produce the Term 3 Chronicle for this year. It is pleasing to be able to end this year with an edition that highlights many of the exciting things that are occurring at Northside.

Our Multi-Purpose Hall

As you are aware, over the past year we have been undertaking the extensions to the Jacaranda building with the addition of a new Multi-Purpose Hall. During Term 3 this space was completed and prior to Term 4 the OOSH room moved into this this new space. It is lovely to see this space being utilised this term with activities such as Health Harold as well as all the rehearsals for production. Our students and staff are using this space on a daily basis and it is such a great addition to the facilities that our students have access to. The new pavers that many of our families designed at the beginning of the year look great in front of this new space.

Classes Return after Lockdown

It was pleasing to see students return in the early part of this Term as normal classes recommenced in line with the scheduled return to school plan. With most students away from school for all of Term 3, it has taken some time for students to settle back into the routines of school life and reconnect with their teachers and friends. We are very appreciative of the work that parents and staff did during the lockdown period and grateful for your support as our students have returned. Our planning throughout Term 4 has meant that we have been able to move many of our key events such as production, Healthy Harold, Extraordinary Ordinaries, Interrelate,

"This is education, understood as a help to life; an education from birth, which feeds a peaceful revolution and unites all in a common aim, attracting them as to a single centre. Mothers, fathers, politicians: all must combine in their respect and help for this delicate work of formation, which the little child carries on in the depth of a profound psychological mystery, under the tutelage of an inner guide. This is the bright new hope for mankind."

- Dr. Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*

our end of year events and some Going-Outs into this term. It is also wonderful to see students engaging in authentic Montessori education again after a term doing remote learning.

Adolescent Program for Northside

At the end of Term 3 the 6-9 Gunyah Class also relocate to the rooms previously used by OOSH as the final relocation of classes in preparation for the Adolescent program set to commence in 2022. The facilities and staffing for the Adolescent program are well underway with the spaces in the BER Classrooms being prepared for this program. Our science lab is complete in the BER 2 classroom, while the deck area adjacent to BER 3 has been extended to create a larger outdoor workspace for the students. The room, previously used for the library has also been prepared as the workshop and Maker/Art space. This area will be used by all students for Technology, Visual Arts and many other practical aspects of other subject areas.

Maria Montessori wrote that "education should therefore include the two forms of work, manual and intellectual, for the same person, and thus make it understood by practical experience that these two kinds complete each other and are equally essential to a civilized existence." (From *Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 65) As we develop our Adolescent program we are ensuring that we are aligned with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) to meet the content requirements, but will provide a rich Montessori experience for our students as our program will be shaped by the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of our students. We are excited about the development and establishment of our Montessori Adolescent program which will be a pathway for families in Sydney who wish to choose Montessori education all the way into secondary school.



As the year draws to a close and we make our preparations for 2022, we wish all our families a safe and enjoyable holiday break and look forward to all returning in 2022. We hope that this coming year will be one that will provide a more settled school experience (free of lockdowns) than that over the past two years. We are looking forward to sharing Montessori Education with our whole community, including new families from pre-primary through to secondary schooling.

Adam Scotney
Principal









WE HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT...

by Belinda De Santi (Director Northside Montessori ELC)

The Infant Community

After the last couple of years with the COVID-19 pandemic we have been thinking a lot about community, sharing, the environment and our surroundings.

This has led us to embark on a few new adventures.

...the environment

We wanted to get a pet for the Centre, but also wanted our pet to be helpful to the environment. Whilst keeping in touch with one of our families via Storypark as they stayed at home during Lockdown, we saw their beautiful bee hive in the garden. We chatted about what type of bees they had, how they came about owning a hive and what maintenance was required... after the discussion which we knew that a hive of native stingless bees was the right pet for us, and our journey began. Via our connections with Northside Montessori School, we met Allyson from Beecology.com. Allyson came to our Centre to find the perfect spot for the hive and made suggestions about what plants we could add to our gardens. Early November Allyson returned with a hive of 10, 000 Australian native *Tetragonula Carbonaria* bees - one queen, about 500 drones (males) and the remainder female worker bees.

Allyson and Dan placed the beehive in the lower playground and strapped it to the fence for safety. Once secure, Belinda took the cover off the entrance and the bees immediately set off to discover their new surroundings.

Did you know that there are around 2,500 different species of native bees?

Our bees will forage in temperatures between 18 - 36 degrees Celsius. In cooler weather the bees keep their eggs warm by 'shivering' over them. The eggs are laid in an amazing pattern of an upward spiral in the centre of the nest.

The bees have an added bonus of grounding you as you watch them arrive and leave the hive. Some of our staff

have ventured to the hive during their break times to be immersed in the bees' world. In this current climate, anything that calms you is fabulous!

...community

Our next adventure ticks many boxes - the environment, sharing, and community. To combat waste and to involve the wider community, we will be setting up a Street Library. One of our past parents, who now has children at Northside Montessori School, has kindly built us a beautiful street library house! Once it is finished and we have the equipment to fix it to our fence, it will be ready for us to share books and board games with each other and the wider community.

...sharing

And finally, another new adventure we have recently embarked upon is a Community Sharing Pantry. This is a space where we could share produce that we have in abundance - such as parsley, rosemary, tomatoes, mandarins... the list goes on! We had thought about many different receptacles for our sharing pantry, but one stipulation was that it was safe from our lovely possums, brush turkeys and cockatoos that visit our Centre frequently. Also, we didn't want to purchase another piece of furniture, we preferred to reuse or upcycle. Then along came a donation from one of our families that hit the brief; our search was over! We now have a small three-tiered trolley with wheels, so that we can move it indoors overnight or undercover in the rain. Now our families can feel free to share their produce along with any extras we have from our gardens. Recently we were given a large art and craft donation from a 'Girls' Shed' and what we couldn't use at the Centre, we placed on the trolley for Stocking Fillers and Rainy Day Art and Craft Activities for our community.

These are just a few small steps that will provide community spirit, caring for others, sustainability and conscious thoughts about our environment.



GUINEA PIG CARE IN THE TRANSITION PROGRAM

by Sandra Sin (Toddler Transition)

Dr. Marie Montessori noticed that children benefit and gain immense satisfaction from caring for living things.

Care of the environment, including care of plants and animals, is part of our practical life curriculum and an important part of Montessori education. In our room, we have two guinea pigs and they are named "Curry" and "Ginger". Children in Transition class love these two squirming loveable furry creatures and are actively involved in feeding and caring for them.

We keep a planter box with all different vegetables e.g. carrot, dandelion, and kale to ensure guinea pigs have continuous supply of greens during the term. Every day, children water the garden and cut some leaves to feed the guinea pigs in their lap. After the guinea pigs finish eating, children will groom them by brushing their fur gently. Children may notice how Ginger will sit calmly and enjoy the companionship while Curry will start wiggling and climbing on their shoulder in no time.

Since the beginning of this term, Guinea pig care has become a wonderful media for our young students to develop several skills along with many positive character traits through daily feeding and caring activities:

- Explore the concept of volume as they fill up the watering can and observe how plants grow when they water the garden.
- Identify and learn the names of plants and different parts of plants.
- Practise their skill in holding and using scissors to cut leaves as some of them find it tricky to coordinate two hands to cut – one hand holding a leaf and other hand cutting with a pair of scissors.
- Begin to understand responsibility and gain self-confidence through understanding and meeting the needs of animals.
- Learns grace and courtesy by waiting for their turn, using gentle touches, petting them softly and treating them respectfully – beginning of friendship.
- Understand and properly interpret non-verbal language – we may tell a child who tries to push a leaf in guinea pig's mouth "It seems like Ginger is full now. Let's put leaves in the cage for them to eat later"

"Children have an anxious concern for living beings, and therefore the satisfaction of this instinct fills them with delight. It is therefore easy to interest them in taking care of plants and especially of animals. Nothing awakens foresight in a small child, who lives as a rule for the passing moment and without care for the morrow, so much as this."

- *The Discovery of the Child*, p.73

Most importantly, when caring for guinea pigs, our young students learn to express love, empathy, compassion and respect for other living things. This is part of Cosmic Education - a cornerstone of the Montessori Philosophy, which teaches the interconnectedness of all things.





"...if for the physical life it is necessary to have the child exposed to the vivifying forces of nature, it is also necessary for the psychical life to place the soul of the child in contact with creation, in order that he may lay up for himself treasure from the directly educating forces of living nature..."

- Dr Marie Montessori, *The Montessori Method*



BROLGA TERM 4 IN REVIEW

by Kalpana Lakkaraju and Ruth Young (Brolga)

Term 4 in Brolga has been busy and productive. There has been focus in Practical Life: Grace and Courtesy lessons, Self Help, Self-Care and Caring for the Environment. It has been insightful to learn and discuss a few different cultural celebrations from different parts of the globe too. We have shared some birthday celebrations, welcomed new friends into Brolga, who are settling in nicely. Older children are developing their leadership by helping our younger children; showing them things they know how to do.

At the beginning of the term, it was a pleasure to watch the children walking through the school gates after lockdown, bringing in some sort of normalcy after a particularly stressful term for everyone involved. During Term 3, while we were working very hard to put the learning packages together, incorporating as much Montessori-based learning as possible in them, it was evident that the children have been working very hard at home with their parents during lockdown period. When they returned to the classrooms, they have

consolidated their learning, using Montessori materials with little guidance from the adults. Their fine motor skills have improved tremendously which are noticeable in their hand writing and the ongoing advanced level Christmas Craft they have been working on.

The pre-primary children went for an excursion to the Australian Reptile Park and particularly enjoyed the show where they got an opportunity to meet the reptiles and learn about them. They have also participated in their first ever 'Healthy Harold' session on Zoom and thoroughly enjoyed contributing their knowledge about health and well-being in this interactive session. The children made poppies for 'Remembrance Day' and learnt about why we observe silence at 11:11 AM. The transition of extended day children to 6-9 is happening steadily, with children looking forward to their primary visits. To top it all off, we had Vanessa Ryan-Rendall visit us to read her book "Bee Detectives" in person. The children remember Vanessa from her book reading in Term 3 during one of our Zoom sessions.

As the term is drawing to a close, amidst the constructive chaos in the classroom, Brolga is looking forward to ending the term on a hopeful and positive note wishing everyone the very best of this much deserved holiday season.



EXCURSION TO THE REPTILE PARK

by Edna Salvador (Kookaburra Directress)

The three pre-primary classes recently went on an excursion to the Australian Reptile Park. Days before the event, the children started talking about it excitedly. For some, it was their first time to go to the reptile park and there was a lot of talk about crocodiles, snakes and turtles.

Some preparation was done before the trip. We talked about do's and don'ts while inside the bus and while inside the park. When discussing about the things they should remember to keep them safe, the responses came from the children themselves - "don't stand up while the bus is moving; wear your seatbelt; don't talk too loud as it will distract the bus driver and the bus will crash; don't tease the animals because you will get bitten and always stay close to the teachers because strangers might get you". It was quite amusing listening to the children throw their answers at me.

On the day of the excursion, not a single child was late. They came armed with their snacks, lunch, water bottles and raincoats. The excitement was very palpable. We

also invited two parent chaperones to come with us (thank you Eunju and Suzette) and asked them to help us look after the children. We assigned each child with a buddy.

Boarding the bus was just as exciting. We take these things for granted but for the children as young as three, this could be such a novel experience. Imagine riding the bus with all your friends! We helped the children settle in their seats and fastened their seatbelts. We were off! We passed by suburban streets and then finally the M1. They pointed to familiar sights along the way - "that's the way to my house!"; "I have been there!"; "Woah, look at that bus!"

When we reached our destination, it started drizzling so as soon as we got off the bus, the children started donning their raincoats. We had the park mostly to ourselves except for a few families and so the children spent a leisurely time looking at the reptiles and getting to touch a python, blue-tongue lizard, feed kangaroos and get up close and personal with a Komodo dragon. They also sat through a thirty-minute show about the reptiles where the children sat wide-eyed as listening to the zookeepers talk about the python, blue-tongue lizard and the koala.

By this time, pangs of hunger started to be felt and the children asked if they could eat. We found the covered



picnic area and spent a few minutes partaking of morning tea. Just like it was at school, they were mostly independent in eating by themselves, only asking for help if they couldn't open a snack pack. After morning tea, the children explored the rest of the park. There were other animals aside from reptiles and they saw quokkas, echidnas, wallabies and green tree frogs. Too bad they didn't get to see some of the spider species because there was a power outage in one of the show rooms (much to the dismay of one of our spider experts in class).

Time flew by quickly and soon it was time for lunch. There wasn't much food left in their lunchboxes this time and lunch was a quick affair. Not to be missed was the big playground near the picnic area and the children headed for the slides, swings, merry-go-round and monkey bars in no time at all. It was raining more this

time but this just added to the fun. Puddles looked too inviting not to be stepped on! After about half an hour of playground time, it was time to head back to school but first some needed to change into dry clothes and dry socks. I was impressed at the executive functioning skills of most of the children - they changed their socks, put on their shoes, wore their raincoats, carried their bags and lunchboxes and kept track of their belongings. I wonder if they do this at home?

Inside the bus, the chatter continued but slowly died down as some of the children started nodding off to sleep. Everyone was exhausted. Excitement resumed at the sight of their parents waiting at the car park. They couldn't wait to share what they had seen and done! Needless to say, the excursion to the Australian Reptile Park was one big success.

TERM 4 IN COOINDA

by Linda Van Lierop (Cooinda 6-9 Directress)



The children returned to the classroom early in term 4 with enthusiasm and excitement to be back with their peers. The term started off quietly, with the children appearing to be in a state of shock, like they were experiencing a surreal event. This shock soon wore off, with happiness and excitement taking over, evident through the giggling, chatting and sharing of stories that could be overheard. The Cooinda children have enjoyed reconnecting with their peers, some who have not seen one another in person for over 4 months.

Half way through the term, the Cooinda children have taken part in Peer Support, with the focus on building positive communities. This unit is to help assist the children to form stronger connections across the whole school, with children of all ages and year levels.

Around the same time as Peer support started, transitions from 3-6 to 6-9 and from 6-9 to 9-12 have started. Starting week 5, Cooinda has had 2 children in the morning and 2 children in the afternoon joining us from the 3-6, those children who will be joining the Cooinda classroom in 2022. While we have been having children visiting us, our current year 3 children have been taking part in their own weekly visit to the 9-12 class in preparation for 2022. All the children involved in transitioning have appeared to enjoy themselves, with the current level 1 and 2 children proudly taking on the buddy role to support and guide the visiting children.

Due to remote learning in term 3, the children have started production rehearsal this term instead. The children have assisted in finalising the choreography for the dance they are in and have enjoyed taking part. They have been working on their costumes and ensuring they are ready for the real production performance in a few weeks' time.

In the classroom the focus has been on resettling in, rebuilding our positive work habits, and revising known (and forgotten) concepts using all the different materials, many of which were unavailable for use during lockdown. The children have happily been hands on with the materials, revising prior knowledge and extending this further. I have enjoyed having the children back in the classroom!



MUSIC IN TERM 4

by Marilyn Williams (Music Teacher)

In the absence of concerts and live music performances due to Covid it has been wonderful seeing the 6-12 children back dancing, singing and preparing for their production.

Our younger 3-6 group have been enjoying singing and playing to a wide variety of songs in music including Taba Naba, Freeze Song, Wash Your Face with Orange Juice and I am Australian (a favourite with the Extended Days). I am looking forward to increasing the opportunities to bring live music performances back next year.

The Year 1's and 2's were lucky enough to have one our Year 5 students Will Arrowsmith come into their class and demonstrate the Electric Guitar. A real treat with Will even playing requests.





HOW CHILDREN LEARN



by Darine Groch (Learning Support Teacher)

Building the Brain's Wiring System

Each brain cell (neuron) looks a bit like a baby tree. As babies take in information about the world, their neurons branch out and create connections with each other. Called neural pathways, these connections are like an electrical wiring system. Each neuron can have multiple connections to other neurons.

How Neural Pathways Work

Each neural pathway is a circuit. When electricity goes through a circuit, it powers a response eg. when you flip a light switch, a light comes on. Some brain circuits, like the ones for breathing and circulation, are already developed at birth. Other circuits are 'activity-dependent.' They need input to work, and the more input they get, the better they work. That input comes from all the experiences children have. Sounds, sights, tastes, smells, the way things feel, and emotions, all help the brain to release neurotransmitters and power those circuits.

Pruning the Pathway

The neural pathways that are used more often, get stronger. Circuits that are not used weaken and disappear over time through a process known as pruning. Young children have more circuits than they need. Pruning happens all the way through childhood and adolescence which means their brains are flexible

enough to build new circuits and refine commonly used pathways. This is known as 'plasticity.'

The Power of Plasticity

Plasticity is important, but especially important for children with learning difficulties. Their brains process information differently and don't always use brain chemicals effectively. These brain differences make it harder to create or strengthen neural pathways. Teaching alternate ways to process information takes advantage of plasticity. It helps neurons build new pathways. The information may have to take a detour or take a little longer to get where it needs to go, but it can still get there.

Learning Through the Senses

Children don't have to think about developing neural pathways. It happens naturally as they explore and learn about the world. The first stage is when babies use their senses - sight, sound, touch, taste and smell - to start to make connections. They taste, shake and throw objects. They also start to roll, and reach for things, and eventually crawl and walk. All of these activities help build neural pathways that control things like movement, vision and language development eg. babies keep making sounds that get them the attention they need. They keep putting things that taste good into their mouths, and they keep moving to places



they want to see. As they do these things, the brain strengthens those circuits and helps make the activities easier.

Learning Through Language

Between ages 2 and 7 years, language development takes off as children learn more words, use more complex sentences and read. This is a critical time to provide children with a language rich environment because the more words and ideas they're exposed to, the more neural pathways they'll develop. Children can now use objects to play more imaginatively.

Learning Through Logic

From 7 years old children start thinking more logically. During this stage they are more able to make connections between things. They become 'detectives' who are able to see clues and put them together. Socially, they develop the ability to take turns, put themselves in other people's shoes, and understand that actions have consequences. The circuits that process emotions and feelings strengthen and mature.

Learning Through Reasoning As they age, children start thinking more abstractly, and with more complexity. They consider the 'what-ifs' of situations to figure out possible outcomes.



MONTESSORI FOOTBALL SEGUEING INTO MONTESSORI SPORTS

by Margret Palma and Ruth Young

Montessori Football is progressing well. We are learning and developing new skills as well as revisiting old activities to refine skills and refresh memory. It is lovely to see the children outside the class environment and to build connections in a different setting.

The children who have joined the program since 2018 in Northside have taken ownership of the sessions, especially the primary-aged children who have stepped up into their leadership roles. There is a flow in the activities, especially when the guides plan the program for each session, and it progresses into child-led exercises. We merely have to step back and facilitate the sessions, allowing the children to create the rules and spend time preparing the environment for the games, with the equipment and the players. Sportsmanship is learned as we witness a mutual respect that they all have for each other. Some children ask for different balls and sports, apart from football or soccer, to play. We create the space and opportunities to learn these, which are in line with their

Sports classes that tie in with the curriculum, such as hockey, or their interests like basketball and tennis. They tweak rules according to what they all agree on as well as simply 'giving it a go'. It then becomes trial and error sometimes, especially when more discussion happens before the actual games. They all learn and laugh from their experiences. It is such a wonderful sight to witness the children reveal themselves through Montessori Sports. Thank you to Sarah Bazylenko, Leticia Castellanos, and Vyshnavi Bharadwaj for all their support in 2021. We look forward to continuing Montessori Sports in 2022!





TERM FOUR IN 9-12

by Leticia Castellanos (Amaroo 9-12 Directress)

In our 9-12 classes, Term 4 has been full of great work and events. The children were very busy preparing to present their Extraordinary Ordinaries research. Gandhi, Disney, Einstein, Elon Musk, Oprah, and Maria Montessori were some of the people featured this year. With great enthusiasm, the children made posters, timelines, models, and other crafts related to their characters.

The children in 9-12 also took on imaginative writing work, creating a "cooking recipe" about themselves. After learning about character strengths, the children carefully chose the ingredients for their own recipe and described the preparation. Making use of their creativity they added fantastic decorations, putting them together in a beautiful book. The children enjoyed the entire process of writing, editing, and publishing. We hope that they will continue to make original texts like these and publish them in the future.

Another great activity that the children enjoyed during this term was the presentation of our Production. After months of writing and perfecting their script, the children designed their costumes and props. In the second last week of the term and with great enthusiasm, the children presented their magical version of Peter Pan, delighting us with their beautiful dances and performances.



We are also very grateful to Daniela Kaba, who visited us to give the children a beautiful art class in which they learned the decoration technique called decoupage. The children were very involved in this activity, and with great excitement made a Christmas decoration for their family with their own hands.

Another great event is undoubtedly the Graduation, in which the Year 5 children made beautiful speeches for our graduates, with the Year 6 children receiving their Book of Memories in a beautiful ceremony. We wish our graduates all the best on their journey through High School, and look forward to seeing them visiting Northside in the future.

All this, amid new presentations, work, and the joy of reconnecting with friends, the Montessori materials, and their environments.





CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

This is the time of year that we bid a fond farewell to our Year 6 Graduates as they begin their exciting transition to high school. It seems only fitting that we give each graduate a chance to share a little of themselves during this important time in their lives.

Koki - My dream job is to be an astrophysicist. If I could take 3 things on a deserted island they would be cubes, supplies and a way back. I think Mathematics can be beautiful.

Jace - If I could go back into the past or into the future, I would go into the future so I could get my first car. My dream job would be building engines. My favourite book is 'Lord of the Rings' as it's so dramatic. I would like to be remembered as being nice.

Thomas - I like going to this school because you can actually do things that are real life. I would like to thank my Mum and Dad for keeping care of me. In the future I would like to drive an off road trophy truck with great suspension.

Amirah - My hidden talent is being able to cut my own hair. My favourite book is 'The Diary of Anne Frank.' If I could change one thing about the world it would be to stop climate change.

Natalia - In the future I would like to be a conservationist. I play the violin and I am very open and accepting of new people. My favourite word is sophisticated because it is satisfying to say.

Ryan - I like going to this school because you have freedom, and it is a fun working environment. My dream job is to be an actor and perform. I would also like to be an author.

If I could be any fruit, I would be a mango.



Jack - If I could have any superpower it would be to read minds. My favourite food is pizza. If I could change one thing in this world it would be to destroy Covid-19.

Arturo - I would like to thank my parents for putting me in this school full of new things and good friends. My dream job is to be a fisherman or a UFOlogist. I would like to be remembered as a kind, open-minded, optimistic person who was loyal to his friends.

Amelia - I liked being a Montessori student because the teachers walk you through the work step by step. If I could only take three things onto a deserted island they would be a helicopter, a phone and a lifetime supply of sushi. I would like to be remembered as funny and dedicated. I have been at Northside for 10 years.

Sophia - My dream job is to be an artist. I would like to thank my parents for always being supportive. If I could be a fruit I would be an apple or a grape.

Chris - I would like to be remembered as funny, nice and cool. I like skateboarding. My favourite food is a kebab because it falls into the best category of food - A.K.A. barbecue.

Sara - My favourite game is Cluedo as I like solving crimes. When I grow up I would like to be a doctor because I like helping people. I would like to thank my parents for always being there for me and for supporting me with my disability. If I could break any world record it would be to sing as many songs as possible in one day.

As we end the year, Year 6

'Behind you are all your memories.
Before you are all your dreams.
Around you are all who love you
And within you is all you need.
Congratulation Graduates. We are so proud of each
and every one of you!

From all the Northside staff.





OOSH NEWS



BEFORE, AFTER SCHOOL CARE AND HOLIDAY PROGRAM

by Surendrini Giritharan (OOSH Coordinator)

What a year we had that it is almost coming to a close. Even though it has been a very challenging Term 3 with complete shut down we had a FANTASTIC start for our Term 4 in our new OOSH room. It's big and beautiful and great to see our regular BSC, ASC and a few new children joining with lots of energy.

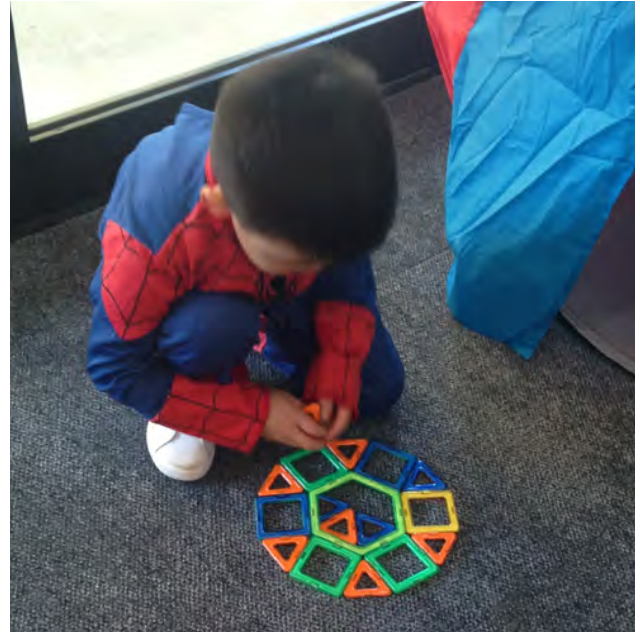
For the first couple of weeks every one was kind of lost forgetting their usual OOSH routine including us ☹️, but soon everyone settled in and we got back to our daily routine. Our daily meditation/silent sitting was a great success which has been going smooth and well. This is to calm and relax the children after school + the "Brain Yoga" Lot of research has been done into the area and shown that it really stimulates the brain, especially for children who have learning difficulties or other behavioural issues.

Our classroom is comprised of multi-age groups. Children aged 3-6 all share the same classroom. This is based on Montessori's understanding of children's development. The younger children learn from the older children, who in turn are able to be role models, exemplifying appropriate behaviour and work habits. Peer teaching and sharing of knowledge is encouraged and the older children take great pride and joy from teaching and leading their younger peers.

We provide materials and activities suited to all age groups for the children to make it really enjoyable and become engaged throughout the time they spend in the OOSH room. We also facilitate activities according to their interests and requests. We have also purchased lots of new materials such as educational games, dress ups and various materials where they can show their creativity and imagination.

You can see some of our children's highlights in our newsletter photos.

Staff work closely with children who have behavioural issues and also regularly communicate with families to explore ways to help children with their behaviour. Our program covers different aspects of learning in a practical way which creates interest in most of the children.



Each term we do different activities based on the season and incorporate learning in a fun way where children participate in a variety of projects where they learn a lot of life skills.

We always encourage children to spend time on their own to build their confidence and creativity to do anything in their lives. At the same time, we organise group indoor games and activities to build their social interaction, sharing and confidence.

Now coming to our holiday program which is organised with a variety of enjoyable learning activities which engage the children's interest, learning and are most importantly is still fun!

We have a variety of incursions every day including our own arts and craft activities.

Our last day for this term is 16th December. We are closed from December 17th - January 16th.

A gentle reminder to all parents and carers whose children are attending our holiday program:

- Please provide morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, water bottle and a hat.
- Since it is a long day for the children, they need lots of food during the day. So please ensure you pack enough food for your children.

Have a safe and enjoyable Summer break and we look forward to another exciting, fun and busy holiday program!!!

In addition, we would like to take this opportunity to wish all the children who are leaving our school this year the very best in their new school.

Finally, a BIG THANK YOU to all our wonderful staff members Christine, Elle, Helena Kalpana, Kay, Ruth Sarah, Sirisha and Vyshnavi, Ladies, without your commitment, cooperation and support the program wouldn't be possible. It wasn't a smooth year but we managed to make it through without any major hurdles and thanks to all of you for helping make that happen.

My sincere appreciation and THANK YOU to Helen, Ruth and Vyshnavi with the OOSH room move.

Seasons greeting and have a relaxing and safe holiday! Christine, Elle, Helena, Kay, Ruth ,Sarah, Sirisha, Sureni and Vyshnavi





UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S REPORT

by Janene Johnson (Deputy Principal)

It is that time of year again when you will be receiving your child's academic report, which is why I thought it would be a good time to provide some explanation around what the reports mean and how we assess your child in Montessori.

This semester, our reporting to you will be different to our usual End of Year Report in that we have had to modify it due to the lengthy time away from school due to COVID. It will be based on the observations that have been made of your child during the Zoom sessions. However, next year you will receive the detailed, graded academic report that we usually deliver biannually.

Reports are important so that parents receive feedback about their child's progress and gain an insight into their strengths and areas where they might require extra support. The report should also provide information to parents about their child's behaviour, participation, social skills, concentration and willingness to learn. In Montessori we are also looking at how well a child can make appropriate choices, function independently and work collaboratively with others. The child's age and individual circumstances are also taken into account.

It is mandated in NSW that schools use an A-E grading scale. The descriptors for the scale are as follows:

A: The student has an extensive knowledge and

understanding of the content and can readily apply this knowledge. In addition, the student has achieved a very high level of competence in the processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.

B: The student has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the content and a high level of competence in the processes and skills. In addition, the student is able to apply this knowledge and these skills to most situations.

C: The student has a sound knowledge and understanding of the main areas of content and has achieved an adequate level of competence in the processes and skills.

D: The student has a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.

E: The student has an elementary knowledge and understanding in few areas of the content and has achieved very limited competence in some of the processes and skills.



At Northside, instead of assigning A-E, we assign the associated words ('outstanding', 'high', 'sound', 'basic', 'limited'). NESAs allow for flexibility with the grading scale and we find the use of a word is more meaningful than a letter. Many of us still associate a 'C', as akin to a failure, when in fact, a 'C' in this scale is a sound knowledge and understanding. If students receive a 'C' they are performing at a sound level expected for their age and stage level. The higher end of the scale indicates that a student is working consistently, independently and with depth of knowledge above his/her grade level. The grading descriptors are at the beginning of each report.

It is also important to understand the context of the assigned grade. A 'limited' grade might be assigned because your child has just commenced the work. In this case, you would expect that by the next report, this grade would have risen to a 'sound' or above.

When your child has been doing well in a particular area, and then it seems as if their grades have gone down in the following report, this can cause concern. There can be many reasons for apparent changes in grades. The most common reason is that they have moved into a new Stage. NESAs group the curriculum into stages: Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten), Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2), Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) and Stage 3 (Years 5 and 6). Your child may have completed Stage 1 (Year 2) at the end of one year and moved into Stage 2 (Year 3) the following year. Your Mid Year Report might indicate that for areas of maths your child has gone from outstanding to basic or sound. This is because they are now working on new outcomes and the expectations for their knowledge and understanding are higher than in the previous stage. Again, over the course of that stage (Years 3 and 4) you should see these grades improve.

Some of the other reasons we see children's performance decrease are behavioural (they may be heading into puberty or something maybe happening

at home that is distressing) or illness. They may be going through a stage where they are pushing boundaries. A pre-adolescent brain is going through massive rewiring so concentration and attention may shift, both at home and at school. This is a normal developmental process. Some children face learning difficulties which may present as a small gap when they are young but become much wider and more obvious as they get older. This can lead these children to avoid working on the areas that cause them the most challenge

This is why it is imperative, that if you are concerned about any aspect of your child's report, you discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. They will be able to put the report into context and make a plan with you for moving forward.

The aspect of the report that you will probably find most valuable is the teacher comments. Whilst the grading scale is applied to NESAs outcomes within the report, the comments are based on the teacher's assessment and observations of your child as a Montessori student. Teachers will comment on the Montessori materials your child is using, how well they work independently, whether or not they make appropriate choices, how well they participate in presentations and with their peers and whether they can set goals and follow through.

At Northside we aim to produce reports that are highly personalised and informative with clear directives for moving forward. Our reports comment on the whole child – not just their academics. We are very open to having discussions with you about your child's report and their progress. If you have any concerns or questions about your child's report, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to sharing our observations and understandings of your child when the End of Year Report is released later in the term.



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