

NORTHSIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL - EARLY LEARNING, PRIMARY & SECONDARY

CHRONICLE

SPRING 2024



SCHOOL REPORTS

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL REPORT

TRANSITIONS

A MONTESSORI APPROACH TO SEPARATION ANXIETY

IDENTITY FORMATION

THE ROLE OF THE ADULT

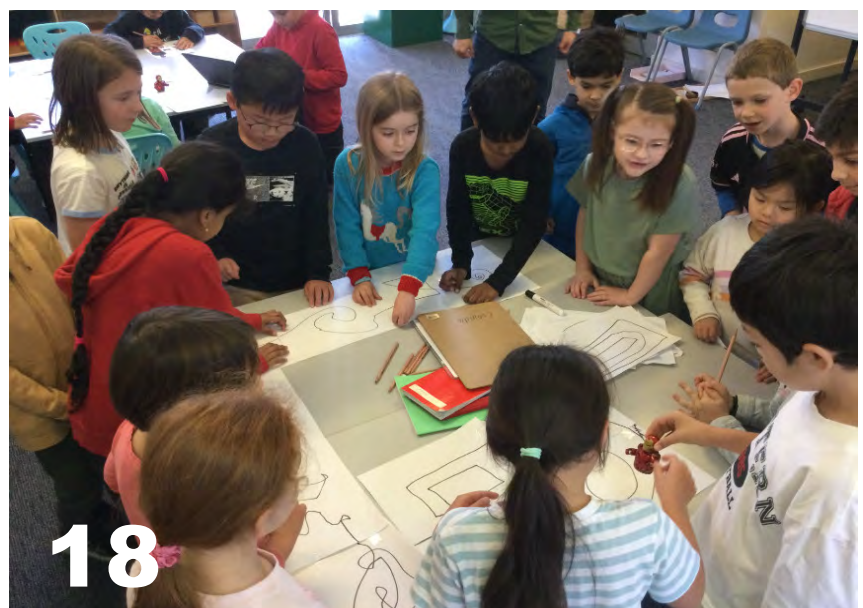
HUMAN TENDENCIES

DEVELOPING IN THE MONTESSORI ENVIRONMENT



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Message From the Principal



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Northside Montessori School Chronicle. This edition covers Terms 2 and 3 of 2024 and we are excited to share many of the wonderful activities and events that have occurred in the life of our school, as well as some insights into the Montessori education method.

During these last two terms, our students have been busy across a wide variety of areas. There have been camps for primary and secondary students; students and their families have travelled to Rome to participate in Montessori Model United Nations Conference; and we have also celebrated Maria Montessori's birthday with a fun day for our students. Across all these events, we have celebrated the joy of learning, working in collaboration and the diversity that exists within our school community.

It is such pleasure to be part of the Northside community. As we continue to build our community, as well as growing our Adolescent program, we are very fortunate to have parents and staff who are deeply committed to the Montessori model of education. As a community we see the great benefits that this method provides for all students, both within the classroom and for wider life.

Across the whole school we have highly qualified and dedicated Montessori-trained staff, both assistants and teachers, who strive to ensure that all that occurs in their classroom is true to the Montessori way of learning. Similarly, we are fortunate to have a parent community that understands and seeks to further develop their knowledge of the Montessori philosophy and how this can exist both at home and at school.

As you read through this edition of the Chronicle I hope you can see not only the exceptional learning experiences that our students are involved in, but also the deep level of commitment to authentic Montessori education.

Adam Scotney
Principal



Understanding Your Child's School Report

by Janene Johnson, Deputy Principal

It is almost school report time again at Northside Montessori. New South Wales Government legislation requires that, for school-aged children, two comprehensive reports each year are created for parents about their child's performance at school. Your child's report is only one way that we communicate with you regarding your child's progress. There should not be any real surprises when you receive your child's report. Any significant concerns about your child will most likely have been raised in a meeting between you and your child's teacher before the reports are distributed.

Main aims of the report

The main aims of a report are to:

- use plain language so that parents can understand the report
- provide information on a student's learning in each of the Key Learning Areas, referred to as KLAs:
 - Primary – English; Mathematics; Science and Technology; Human Society and its Environment (HSIE: History and Geography); Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE); and Creative Arts
 - Secondary – English; Mathematics; Science; Technology; Human Society and its Environment (HSIE: History and Geography); Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE); Creative Arts; Languages (if applicable); Music (if applicable); Micro-Economies; Subject Electives (if applicable)
- compare the student's achievement against state-wide syllabus standards using a five-level descriptor scale (Kindergarten is exempt from the scale)
- include teacher comments for each KLA that identify areas of student strength and areas for further development
- provide information about student's social development and commitment to learning
- have information about the student's attendance at school
- provide information about student achievement in relation to school programs that extend or are additional to syllabus requirements
- allow the student the opportunity for self-reflection and evaluation.

Five report descriptors (grading scale)

The five levels of the scale are judgements about a student's performance at a particular point in time based on the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses and outcomes. The descriptor selected for your child is based on their ability to meet the NESA outcomes. These judgements are 'part of the total picture', or overall assessment. They are based on observations, ongoing anecdotal records, the student's level of understanding of the work and the work produced and other contextual



information known by the teacher. Dialogue occurs between teachers across year/cycle levels, to enhance the level of consistency in our student reporting when students are transitioning to a new class.

- **Limited:** 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.
- **Basic:** The student has a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.
- **Sound:** 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.
- **High:** 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.
- **Outstanding:** 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 processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.

Interpreting the results

'Grading' or deciding on a descriptor level for your child is done against the NESAsyllabus outcomes, not the student cohort. We do not rank students against each other. 'At Grade Level' means that your child's performance is meeting the aligned NESAsyllabus outcomes for their stage.

At different times throughout their education, you may notice that your child has gone from a descriptor of 'High' to 'At Grade Level' or 'Developing'. This can happen for a number of reasons and doesn't mean they are going backwards. Sometimes it is because they have moved from one NESAsyllabus Stage to another. For example, a child in Semester 2, Year 2 is at the end of NESAsyllabus Stage 1, but when they move into Year 3, they are at the very beginning of NESAsyllabus Stage 2, with new outcomes. The change in 'grade' could also be because they have recently learned a new concept and haven't yet mastered it, or they may have been sick and missed a lot of school. So don't worry if you see this in a report. Just talk to your child's teacher to find out why this has happened.

Teacher comments

The teacher comments are a valuable insight into how your child is progressing, understanding concepts, using the materials and abstracting information. The teacher will also often comment on things like how well your child works as part of group or contributes to discussions. The teacher may make suggestions for areas of improvement or set goals for moving forward. If they believe your child may require external support such as an assessment, occupational therapy or speech therapy, they will mention this in the comments; however, usually this will have been discussed with you prior to the report being written.

Work habits and engagement

This section of the report covers the areas that are good indicators of students being as successful as they can possibly be. Characteristics such as self-regulation, independence, concentration, academic stamina, organisation, responsibility, empathy, collaboration and community involvement are assessed by the teacher and also by the student through a self-evaluation process.

Student self-reflection and evaluation

Providing time for students to reflect on their work helps them make connections to previous learning and experience. It helps them to more deeply understand why they were successful or unsuccessful at different times. It is also an opportunity for them to think about where they would like to go and how they can improve. The self-reflection provides useful information for their teacher as well. The teacher gains a better understanding of the student and how they are thinking and feeling, and they can use this to support the student in a more effective way.

We are introducing self-reflection and evaluation into the Work Habits and Engagement section of the Primary reports. Our students are very capable and insightful and, with support, will be able to complete this section very honestly. They are also used to doing this in their weekly conferences with their teachers. In addition, the Adolescent students reflect and evaluate their progress by writing comments in their report for each of the KLAs. These comments accompany the teacher's comments and, again, are very insightful, honest and enlightening.

Modified reports

Some students require a modified report as they are unable to meet the outcomes for their stage of learning at a given point in time. Some reports have modifications in one KLA only. For example, if a student is in Stage 3 but is still finding reading and writing challenging, then the report might indicate that they are working at Stage 1 outcomes in English. We do this as it is a much more accurate reflection of the student's ability in the current timeframe. Some students may require a modified report for all KLAs. If your child is receiving a modified report, you should have been made aware of this through discussions with your child's teacher. The modifications to reports are reassessed every semester. As your child improves, they will often progress to the Stage-appropriate report.

Parent-teacher meetings

Teachers will request a meeting if they have any concerns about your child's progress. If you have any concerns or questions about your child's progress, please contact your child's teacher as soon as possible. We would much rather answer your questions than have you worrying.



Toddler and Transition Program: A Montessori Approach to Separation Anxiety

by Sandra Sin

“We are better parents when we fill our own cup – not from our child, or our partner, or our work, or approval from others. We are full cups, happy in our own right, ready to support and be the guide our child is looking for ... Letting go is standing on our own two feet, so that our child can have wings.”

– Simone Davies, *The Montessori Notebook*

In Montessori education, we see the child at each stage of their development working on them becoming independent and separating from us:

- in the first plane of development (0 to 6 years) – biological independence
- in the second plane of development (6 to 12 years) – mental independence
- in the third plane of development (12 to 18 years) – social independence
- in the fourth plane of development (18 to 24 years) – spiritual and moral independence.

For the toddlers, there is a period of separation anxiety usually expressed between 8 and 16 months where the child is learning object permanence, i.e. learning that when something goes away, it comes back. Separation anxiety is a normal phase of development that will pass in time.

The importance of attachment in supporting children going through separation anxiety cannot be underestimated. With a strong foundation, toddlers know their parent will be there to support them as much as necessary and as little as possible. On the other hand, without strong connection and trust established, it can be distressing to both parents and children to experience tearful goodbyes and anxiousness.

Based on Montessori principles, here are some strategies to help ease this transition.

- **Create a consistent routine:** Establish a predictable daily schedule to help children know what to expect and develop a sense of security. Establish a positive and happy morning routine that may include encouraging children to pack their own bag and/or find their favourite comforter. It is helpful to give plenty of time to get ready and arrive on time. Feeling late or rushed can cause children to feel additional anxiety.
- **Practice short separations:** Start with brief separations to help parent and children get used to the idea of separation. Gradually increase the duration as they become more comfortable while acknowledging both parents and children for successfully navigating separations, which can boost their confidence.
- **Set clear boundaries:** Clearly communicate what the parent will do and what is expected. For example, “I will drop you off at school and I’ll be back to pick you up after lunch”. This clarity helps reduce uncertainty. Speaking with assurance about their plans and using phrases like, “We’re going to have a great day, and I’ll see you soon!” can help instil confidence in children.
- **Stay calm and positive:** The parent’s demeanour sets the tone. When a parent feels comfortable in a situation, children will pick up on their feelings, behaviours, and emotions and learn to trust their parent’s judgement. On the other hand, children are more likely to emulate them if their parent is feeling upset or uncertain. Parents can demonstrate how they manage their own emotions and decisions by staying calm

during children's outbursts and understanding their own emotional triggers and responses. This self-awareness helps parents manage their reactions and support children more effectively and thoughtfully. Understand that it's okay to allow children to experience discomfort. This doesn't mean parents are being neglectful; it means parents are giving children space to learn to manage their own reactions without relying solely on parental support. Keep in mind that your child's resilience is built over time. Each experience, even the challenging ones, contributes to their development.

- **Use transitional objects:** Allow the child to bring a comfort item to school. This can provide a sense of security during time apart. An alternative to a comforter is special 'love notes' in your child's lunch box or sending them to school with a photo of your family.
- **Encourage independence:** Letting go means fostering skills like dressing, self-feeding, and basic problem-solving. Allowing children to take over more and more steps and become independent helps build confidence, which can reduce anxiety.
- **Create a goodbye ritual:** Establish a positive and prompt goodbye routine. This could be a specific hug or wave that signals it's time to part ways. Delaying the inevitable by staying for "just one more minute" is not going to help anyone. Maintaining consistent routines and responses to help your child understand what to expect can alleviate anxiety.
- **Talk about feelings:** When children express their big emotions about separation, acknowledge and validate their feelings without becoming overly reactive. It is important to accept that children's unhappiness at being separated from parents is real, very normal, and temporary. Reinforce that parents understand that leaving children makes them unhappy, but that it is important that parents leave, and that children have a good time. While it's important to acknowledge feelings, avoid excessive focus on them. Instead, redirect the conversation to the next activity or positive aspect of the day. Approach separations with confidence and positivity to help your child feel more secure. The parent can say, "I'll see you after story time. Have fun!" rather than a long farewell.
- **Role-play:** Use dolls or stuffed animals to role-play separations. This can help children understand and process the experience in a fun way.
- **Read books about separation:** Share stories that feature characters dealing with separation anxiety. This can help normalise their

feelings and provide strategies through relatable scenarios.

- **Reinforce positive experiences:** It is important to be punctual when picking up children from school. Let the school know if you're running late to avoid causing your child to feel more anxiety and making drop off the next time much harder. After reunions, talk about the fun they had and reinforce that parents always come back. This helps build trust.

By integrating these strategies, parents and children may find it easier to navigate separation anxiety. By embodying independence and emotional resilience, we create a stable and supportive environment that helps children feel secure and reduce the intensity of their emotional reactions over time. It may help if parents can reflect on and identify what specifically triggers their desire to rush in and smooth things over. Understanding their own emotional responses can help parents manage their own emotions better. If we're going to assist children to grow their resilience, the first step is to increase our own resilience in tolerating our children's distress and respond thoughtfully without feeling compelled to rush in and smooth over everything for them. By working on our own resilience, we create a stable and supportive environment for children, helping them learn to manage their emotions and become more resilient themselves.

Please understand that both parents and children are on a journey of trying, failing, pivoting, adjusting, trusting and learning about themselves more. Therefore, mistakes are part of the learning process for both parents and children, as growth comes from experiences, not flawless execution. Some parents may feel enormous pressure to get it right and not damage their children going through separation anxiety. Those parents may struggle to find a balance in the amount of attention they give their children. With all the best intentions, some conscientious parents tend to shift their focus from their own actions and feelings to attending to their children's happiness. As we learn to embrace imperfections in both parenting and childhood development and recognise that growth takes time, be patient with the process and celebrate small steps forward.

3-6 Classroom: A Typical Day in Kookaburra

by Kalpana Lakkaraju

Many parents wonder what makes a Montessori classroom different to other programs or settings and how a child benefits from being in a Montessori environment. There are several important differences between being in a Montessori environment and other programs, and it can be difficult to imagine how those differences play out in the classroom during the day and over a period. Every environment has its own rhythm and unique set of activities. To get a deeper understanding of the Montessori method and how it is implemented in the classrooms, let us walk through a typical day in Kookaburra class.

Drop-off and welcoming of children

The beginning of a school day can be difficult for young children. Some children (and parents) experience separation anxiety at the thought of drop-off for the day. The Montessori philosophy lays emphasis on meeting the individual needs of each student – even the needs that happen outside of the classroom environment. Because of this, the educators in Kookaburra help with the separation process each morning to ensure that needs of each student are met. Therefore, we often ask the parents for their drop-offs to be swift, in order to make the separation as smooth and painless as possible for both children and parents.

Playground activities

Kookaburra classroom considers time outside a priority. When children arrive in the morning, they look forward to catching up with their friends. Their social time with their peers is as important as their learning in the classroom. Playground activities channel their need for socialisation and prepare their minds for classroom-based learning. Unstructured play helps the children learn important life skills such as exploration, collaboration, being a team player, negotiation and conflict resolution, in addition to critical thinking.

Work time

Kookaburra classroom is a prepared environment, meaning it is a structured learning space where everything has a purpose and place. The furniture is child-sized, learning materials are hands-on and designed to fit in children's hands,

and the shelves are open and accessible. The work cycle runs for approximately 3 hours, where students are provided with opportunities for focused learning through collaborative and independent work in age-appropriate activities presented to them by the directress. To make their learning more engaging, games are also incorporated into their learning.

Circle time

Circle time in Kookaburra can include 'grace and courtesy' lessons, songs, poems, stories, demonstrations of 'show and tell', games, and opportunities for expressive language such as 'true stories' and 'news'. Occasionally we have students from Primary visiting us to read a story or share their work during circle time.

End-of-day activities

After the morning work cycle and subsequent lunch, play and guided relaxation, the children are back in the environment and continue with their work. The end of the school day is typically a time when students come together as a group and do their end-of-the-day chores as per the roster, which changes every week. The younger students assist the older ones with their classroom chores. The end of the day is also a time to talk about the plans for the next school day, listen to a story or song, and generally wrap up the day. This helps students get a sense of closure to the school day and gives them time to prepare to go either to after-school care or home.

If you happen to observe a Montessori classroom, you will see some version of the day outlined above. Of course, there will be differences in individual classrooms. However, most of the elements of the Montessori model, such as the work cycle, circle time, and time alone for focused work are found in every Montessori environment that closely adheres to the Montessori method. Wouldn't you love to be a fly on the wall watching your child go through their day in a Montessori classroom?

3-6 Classroom: Exploring the Purpose of Practical Life Exercises in the 3-6 Environment

by Helen Atkins-Carey

At the heart of the Montessori 3–6 environment are practical life exercises and simple, everyday tasks that give the child purpose in their movement, promote independence, nurture self-confidence, and allow for autonomy to develop. The children can be found working on various practical skills, such as cleaning, sewing, preparing a snack, watering plants or polishing; while all serve a purpose in maintaining the environment, they are equally significant in establishing the necessary executive functioning skills while laying the foundations of further learning. The term 'executive function' refers to the mental capacity to plan, focus and remember instructions to manage a task successfully.

We see that those children who are given the correct tools or direction when ready will be more capable of doing things for themselves, fostering independence and allowing them to act independently of adults with increased self-confidence. Parents often comment that they see their child frequently repeating the same work and will ask that the teacher move the child on to learn something new. Intrinsic motivation leads the child to repetition; as a result, the child reaches a feeling of competency and self-confidence. The child displays confidence when they feel competent in their skills and abilities. The uninterrupted time during the work cycle allows the child to become deeply engaged in their work and enhances their ability to concentrate for extended periods. This ability to focus will set them up for success when concentration and the ability to follow through with a task are essential.

The freedom to choose work from within the prepared environment offers the child ownership of their learning and the space, and time to act on their intrinsic motivation. This freedom is coupled with responsibility within the environment and respect, grace and courtesy towards others. The freedom the child has encourages self-regulation and the independence to choose a piece of work, complete it, and reset it for the next child.

Through the work presented, the child's skills to plan, focus and follow through are practised; for example, the child who chooses the mirror cleaning arranges the items needed to clean the mirror on a small table mat, laying them out from left to right in order of use. This prepares the child for reading and writing; watching as they polish from left to right aids in preparing the eyes for tracking words, while manipulating the cotton tip prepares the hand to hold a pencil. Once they have completed the work, as a courtesy to others they will replenish any items on the tray before returning them to the shelf, ready for use by the next person.

Practical life exercises and the exercises of grace and courtesy form the social component of the early years in the Montessori environment. It is through being part of a classroom community that the children learn empathy and gain an understanding of how their actions can impact others, regardless of their intention. This sense of belonging and participation is the foundation for emotional wellbeing and personal development.

The Montessori practical life exercises entice the child because they are purposeful but also align with the child's sensitive periods for movement, order, grace and courtesy, and language. This learning creates a peaceful environment that fosters holistic growth and meets the needs of the child as they grow and learn.

"The exercises, which children do, help their adaptation to the environment. The first adaptation to the environment is to become conscious of it. To become conscious, they need to acquire knowledge. Children acquire knowledge through experience in the environment."

– Maria Montessori, *The 1946 London Lectures*, p123

6-9 Classrooms: A Fun Term in Cooinda and Gunyah

by Linda Van Lierop



The 6–9s enjoyed travelling back in time during Term 2 on an exciting visit to Rouse Hill Estate. During this visit they had the opportunity to experience a glimpse into what school life was like in the late 1800s. The inability to move or speak at will was a shock but a fun novelty for many of the kids. (We suspect the children gained a greater appreciation of their luck in receiving a Montessori education.) The children were able to also gain a taste for farm life in the late 1800s and were given the chance to partake in some activities and chores. They helped pump water (although they didn't have to carry it anywhere like children used to do), hang up a few pieces of washing, feed the chickens and polish the harnesses.

In Term 3, the children of 6–9 excitedly took part in watching a production of *Edward the Emu* at the Sydney Opera House. They gained a deeper understanding of the power of the imagination, observing the role this plays in the background of a theatre production, props and characters. After enjoying the play, they were given a tour of the Opera House, where they were lucky enough to witness an opera singer and orchestra rehearsing.

Over Terms 2 and 3, the children of 6–9 have been lucky enough to participate in three incursions. With the rest of the primary school, they enjoyed a special Brainstorm production all about cyberbullying. Monkey Baa Theatre Company introduced them to the art of puppetry, in particular puppet-making, in which the

children enthusiastically attempted to create their own puppets. For those children interested in drawing, a special guest presenter, James Foley, opened their eyes to an intriguing prospect of illustration as a career choice. The enthusiasm to trial this new information was undertaken by many children, who enjoyed drawing with new vigour.

During Term 3, the Year 3 children have put in a great deal of effort into thinking about a theme for their production and independently writing the script. They have worked hard in pairs or groups of three to write their own section, which they will publicly recite during the production in Term 4.

The 6–9 children also enjoyed undertaking the study of a mathematician or an author. They researched, interpreted and presented their findings in a variety of ways, especially posters, dioramas and sculptures. They took great pride showing their loved ones the great work they had produced.

Gunyah and Cooinda each welcomed a new student in Term 3, with Teddy joining the Cooinda classroom and Austin joining the Gunyah classroom.

It has been a busy and exciting two terms, with the children partaking in and experiencing a variety of new areas. Happy holidays to everyone!

9-12 Classrooms: Life in Amaroo and Orana

by Rebecca Grimshaw

It was wonderful to see the 9–12 Amaroo and Orana students return to school after such a busy first term with great enthusiasm and excitement. One of the 9–12 big works during Term 2 was the Extraordinary Ordinary artist project, which the students thoroughly enjoyed. Their enjoyment was evident in their individual artworks, which they created after being inspired by our visit to the Archibald Exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. It was wonderful to see so many creative minds wandering the gallery to soak up the culture while observing many forms of artistic expression. A firm favourite was the Junior Archibald artworks and it was great to see the expressions on our students' faces when they realised the ages of some of the entrants. Observing that 'lightbulb' moment when our students realised that they too could create magnificent pieces of artwork was inspiring. As Pablo Picasso famously said, "Every child is an artist; the problem is how to remain an artist when we grow up". This excursion was a great foundation for the students to draw on when they created their own pieces of artwork for our evening presentation for parents.

Another important aspect of Montessori education is the student's development of independence away from the family home, and what better way to do this than attend camp. We were very lucky this year to visit Berry for our camp and the students had a ball! Our focus this year was to provide the students with activities that encouraged social engagement and development as well as personal development. The students participated in a range of activities, such as kayaking, indoor rock climbing, rogaining and traditional First Nations games to build upon their life skills of independence, responsibility and communication. It is safe to say that the

paint balloon combat was the most enjoyable activity and our karaoke skills while filling our balloons with water created a lot of giggles and incredible vocals with some very smooth dance moves! Who knew that we had so many talented musicians among us. The connections that the students make during camp always creates a stronger bond among both students and adults, which is marvellous.

After an explosion of mathematics in both Amaroo and Orana, with students independently exploring many areas of maths – such as binomial and trinomial algorithms, numbers in other bases, square root, cube root, the Pythagorean theorem, geometric form of multiplication, the area of a rhombus, the area of a circle, building successive and non-successive cubes, and the investigation of polygons and triangles – our classes held a Maths Presentation Evening to share the wonderful Montessori maths materials with parents.

This event provided an opportunity for the students to share their knowledge with their peers as well as the wider community and it was admirable to see the confidence and maturity each student displayed when presenting their independently chosen work. As Maria Montessori said, "Great creations come from the mathematical mind, so we must always consider all that is mathematical as a means of mental development". The feedback we received from the students after their evening of presentations was extremely positive and they were all very proud of their work. It is always awe-inspiring to be a part of the students' learning when they are solidifying their knowledge while exploring with the Montessori materials and moving towards abstraction.



After many investigations and experiments in science throughout the semester, the students from Amaroo and Orana attended a workshop incursion by Fizzics Education to learn more about liquid nitrogen with scientist Parker. The students had the opportunity to assist in the many cool liquid nitrogen demonstrations while finding out more about how solids, liquids and gases change when rapidly heated and cooled. They learnt about the Leidenfrost effect, how Newton's Third Law of Motion can explain a liquid nitrogen sprinkler, and how to shrink a balloon instantly, not to mention what happens to balls and living things such as leaves when they are frozen. There was quite a buzz about liquid nitrogen for a long time after our workshop.

Both the Amaroo and Orana students have been exploring sustainability and participated in a workshop with Reverse Garbage to explore the elements of sustainability while working collaboratively to design and construct a sustainable house using packaging and other reusable materials. The students brainstormed different aspects of houses that can help to improve their sustainability, from technology to lifestyle changes. Using simple low-waste construction techniques, the students developed an understanding of visual representation and constructed a model of the ultimate sustainable 'house and land package'.

The students learned about sustainability on different scales, from the way that we create to the ways we can think about our homes. It was magnificent to observe the students take such an interest in and positive approach to their sustainable practices for their future.

The Amaroo and Orana students have started preparing for the 6–12 production that will be performed in Term 4. The Year 6 students have written their scripts and helped choreograph the dances. All students have started learning their dances and songs enthusiastically and have had a positive attitude towards helping design and create their costumes, backdrops and props. This is an exciting part of being in 9–12 and the students enjoy and look forward to showing their performance to the school community.

Both the Amaroo and Orana students enjoyed learning with Healthy Harold this semester through their participation in various sessions to discuss how the body works, emotions, being cyber-wise and the importance of relating to others through connection and respect. The students participated in some Healthy Eating sessions in which they learned about the importance of diet and the foods we eat.

From Week 5 of Term 3, the Amaroo and Orana students participated in swimming for sport at the Aquabliss swim school at the end of Bobbin Head Road. The students enjoyed their nice



walks to and from the pool in their chosen groups. While at the pool the students further developed their swimming techniques and skills in their group lessons. The students who did not participate in swimming participated in sport activities at Bannockburn Oval in Pymble.

During Term 4, Amaroo and Orana students have been participating in Peer Support Australia with a focus on developing friendships, including fair play, adapting to changing friendships, supporting peers and appreciating friendship diversity. Prior to the sessions commencing, the Year 6 students undertook leadership training in which they participated in discussions and activities to further develop their skills when managing small groups of students while completing a variety of tasks.

The peer support sessions are conducted every Wednesday afternoon, and the Year 6 students

are assigned a group of Primary students whom they work with each week to develop their social, emotional and leadership skills throughout a variety of activities. These activities are independently prepared by the Year 6 students prior to their sessions, using the resources provided by Peer Support Australia. The Year 6 students develop their leadership skills and participate in a reflective debriefing session with their teacher and peers after every session to discuss their management of the session and how they resolved any issues they encountered. The Year 5 students are assigned as Co-Group Leaders and they work alongside their Group Leader to manage the sessions.

During Term 3, we welcomed Henry to 9–12 and are very excited to have him join the Orana classroom.

Adolescent Program: Fashion Design and Catwalk - a Sustainability Experience

by Margaret Kroeger

At the end of June, our adolescents showcased their creativity and hard work through a fantastic 'Upcycled Fashion Show' for their families. This event marked the culmination of about six weeks of work, with students participating in a diverse range of classroom activities centred around fast fashion, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, economics, environmental studies, textiles and creative design. The students took on a range of roles, including models, costume designers, bookkeepers, event planners, choreographers, music curators and artists. For some students it gave them an opportunity to explore their interests and creativity, while others faced moving out of comfort zones to try something new.

The Upcycled Fashion Show was not just about fashion; it was an opportunity for our students to connect with real-world issues in an integrated and practical way – a cornerstone of Montessori adolescent education. The journey began with discussions on the environmental and social impacts of fast fashion. Students explored the damaging effects, including the release of toxic dyes and microplastics into waterways, the accumulation of landfill waste, and increased carbon emissions. Socratic seminars on relevant scientific articles were held, fostering deep discussions. We also explored the human toll of worker exploitation within sectors of the fashion industry. As part of our Mathematics work we analysed graphs and statistics linked to fast fashion. Each student was allocated ten dollars to spend at local charity shops, with the aim of buying clothing and materials to 'upcycle' into an original design. We had some wonderful help from parents who assisted with transportation and visited the class to share their sewing skills. Students had to interact with the wider community and make real decisions with real money – all invaluable experiences for adolescents.

In Art, students sketched designs for their outfits, learning about the design process while delving into the intricacies of textiles – such as the basics

of warp and weft. They also acquired new skills, including pattern-making, alterations, and even hydro dipping accessories. For many, it was their first time using a sewing machine. The learning experience required adaptability; students had to rethink their designs when specific materials weren't available at the op shops or were not within their budget. They helped each other by offering feedback and suggestions. The students created a budget sheet, a design plan and an inspiration board. Research into upcycling techniques, such as immersion dyeing and embroidery, deepened the students' vision of what was possible. While some designs didn't go as planned, these challenges provided valuable lessons in resilience and creative problem-solving. Students who ran out of money were supported by peers who shared their extra funds, reflecting a wonderful spirit of collaboration.

With the outfits completed, attention shifted to event planning. Students selected music and runway partners, choreographed their walks, and rehearsed with both excitement and nerves. Invitations were designed, and students took ownership of various aspects of the event, from serving as masters of ceremonies to managing the playlist for the show. Emotions ran high on the night – some students embraced the role of a model more confidently than others, but the atmosphere was electric with support and camaraderie. Ultimately, every student took part in what turned out to be a truly fabulous evening.

This event would not have been possible without teamwork and collaboration. The students gained experience breaking tasks down into manageable steps, setting goals, and prioritising actions. They had to trust one another, step beyond their comfort zones, and work together towards a common goal. Communication, problem-solving and resilience were fostered. This experience supported the core principles of Montessori adolescent education: fostering personal growth within a social context, community-building, and hands-on learning in a collaborative environment. It was also a lot of fun.



While some of the benefits were clear from the start, others emerged in surprising ways. The event was an opportunity for personal growth. Several students were reluctant to participate and 'walk' the runway. Knowing that adolescence is a time of vulnerability and personal doubt, we gave those students the choice to participate or not. Seeing their friends' discomfort, the class rallied around the more nervous students, and everyone felt comfortable enough to participate on the night. Creativity and innovation were nurtured through the event too. Students were given the freedom to explore unconventional materials and to make authentic choices with their allocated funds. Who knew a deflated soccer ball could make such a great hat! Students volunteered to share money they didn't need from their allocated funds and to peer-teach skills. Students who were confident using a sewing machine helped those who were more reticent. We saw critical thinking, creativity and individuality as they designed upcycled outfits

that showcased their personalities. It was a really positive and collaborative experience. We were able to discuss how we can make small but important changes to the things we buy, in order to better care for the environment. This was a great opportunity to heighten awareness around being thoughtful consumers.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Independent Education Union for their generous support through our Sustainability Grant, which made this wonderful event possible. Most of all we celebrate the creativity, collaboration, and hard work of our remarkable Northside adolescents and also thank their families for their wonderful support of the event.

Identity Formation in Adolescence: What is the Role of the Adult in Supporting this Process?

by Helen Ralph

Identity formation is one of the most critical aspects of adolescence; a time when individuals begin to explore and define who they are. This period of self-construction involves committing to a set of goals, values, and behaviours that provide direction and purpose in life (Arnold, 2017). Adolescence is a unique and complex stage where personal identity undergoes continuous exploration, extending into adulthood and sometimes throughout life (Naudé, 2022). The role of adults – both educators and parents – is vital in facilitating and supporting this process, ensuring adolescents have the freedom to explore, while providing guidance and stability.

At Northside, the role of the adult within the adolescent community is as subtle as it is essential. Our guides prepare the environment to meet the developmental needs of the adolescents, providing protection while allowing space for growth and learning from mistakes (Montessori, 2011). This protected environment is crucial, as adolescents, whom Dr Montessori described as “social newborns”, are actively working to build their understanding of society and their place within it. A key part of this process is providing adolescents with opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the community, allowing them to experience social organisation and mutual exchange under adult guidance. Facilitating these experiences helps foster personal dignity and self-confidence, which are essential for healthy identity formation (Montessori, 2011).

An essential aspect of identity formation is an ongoing cycle of exploration and commitment (Arnold, 2017). This process involves adolescents

navigating new ideals, values and behaviours through social interactions, and reflecting on how these align with their sense of self. During this time, adults need to create an environment that encourages such growth without pressuring adolescents to commit prematurely. The prepared environment for the adolescent encourages purposeful work and social engagement, which helps them to feel capable and valued. This is vital, as adolescence is a time of emotional fluctuation, and experiences during this period – whether positive or negative – can significantly impact identity development (Naudé, 2022; Heim and Brudelie, 2022)

In this environment, the adult’s role extends beyond simply facilitating; they are also a model for social organisation and personal behaviour. Adults in the community must model collaboration, respect and responsibility, demonstrating the values they wish to instil in adolescents. Through observation, adults can assess when to step in and offer guidance and when to step back, trusting the adolescent to take charge of their self-construction. By working side-by-side with adolescents, adults provide just enough scaffolding to support their growth without stifling independence.

The influence of adults extends to providing adolescents with meaningful work and experiences. Dr Montessori emphasised the importance of manual work and engagement with the environment in helping adolescents balance their physical and intellectual development (Montessori, 2011). Such work allows adolescents to build skills and understand the value of their contributions, reinforcing their sense of identity. Furthermore, the adult’s



responsibility includes bringing in specialists and passionate individuals from various fields to expand the adolescent's understanding of the adult world. This exposure to diverse career paths and role models broadens the adolescent's vision of their future possibilities.

Parents, too, play a crucial role in supporting identity development during adolescence. By providing emotional support, fostering independence and creating a safe space for exploration, parents help adolescents reflect on their experiences and make informed decisions about their identity (Arnold, 2017). Encouraging autonomy, while remaining available for guidance, empowers adolescents to take ownership of their choices and personal growth. The partnership between parents and educators is essential in creating a consistent, nurturing environment where adolescents feel free to explore, make mistakes, and grow into confident, independent individuals.

Ultimately, the process of identity formation during adolescence is deeply intertwined with the role of adults. Whether in a school setting or at home, adults are responsible for creating environments that support exploration, model positive behaviours, and provide the necessary scaffolding for adolescents to develop a strong, stable sense of self. By fulfilling these roles, adults help adolescents navigate the challenges



of identity formation, equipping them with the tools and confidence needed to face the adult world with resilience and purpose.

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Human Tendencies and the Montessori Environment

by Adam Scotney, Principal

Maria Montessori had a great understanding and knowledge of human development, which she gained through endless hours observing children grow and learn. During this time she observed that there were attributes that compelled humans to construct and refine the world around them. She called these attributes Human Tendencies, and she saw that they were universal for all humans. Dr Montessori identified 18 tendencies that are key to human beings and their development.

As Montessori educators, part of the training is to assist teachers to recognise and understand these Human Tendencies that Maria Montessori identified and to provide an environment where obstacles to these tendencies are removed and where these tendencies are supported and nurtured.

Dr Montessori's 18 identified Human Tendencies

Movement – Movement is key to the development of humans. Much of a young person's energy is concentrated on coordinated movements through their early development.

Exploration – All humans have the need to explore. Whether it is to investigate and inquire as to what is around, or to look further afield to lands beyond, there is a constant exploration in regard to our human existence.

Curiosity – We always desire to know. A healthy curiosity keeps our mind and body active to the opportunities available to us. It drives exploration.

Orientation – To know where we are is

important. Our sense of self physically, mentally, emotionally and socially is important; it gives us a sense of security.

Order – Order provides us with a framework to organise and understand our experiences and the many patterns and characteristics of our world. External order is important for the young child because they are absorbing the environment around them.

Observation – We need to understand our surroundings and what is going on. Observation is the tool that we use to do this. Young children are observing the details of their environment and absorbing all of it.

Imitation – All human beings imitate. Babies imitate their parents; humans seek to replicate the beauty that we see in nature through art. We learn many things through the imitation of our instructor. This imitation is only the beginning of learning; we move far beyond this as we grow and develop in a skill. Understanding that the child will imitate their movements, Montessori teachers take great care to ensure that each step is demonstrated clearly and meticulously. In the 3–6 environment, many of the tasks undertaken are preparation for something later on such as holding a pencil or handwriting, so imitation of the refined movement is very important.

Abstraction – The transition from concrete materials through to abstract thought has always been an important element of educational psychology. Dr Montessori understood that there were many elements to abstraction, and that these occur in very young children and continue throughout the person's development. For



example, the acquisition of language is a very complex abstract activity which is a work of the unconscious mind yet occurs quite effortlessly in the mind of the young child.

Imagination – Many of the things that we enjoy in our lives today are the result of another person’s imagination. It is the driving force behind creativity, design and invention. Nurturing and developing imagination are a key aspect of human development. The freedom to develop the child’s learning and focus in many areas around their interests and passions provides the perfect facility for children to develop not only a deep understanding, but to use their imagination to explore the ‘what if’ of ideas and knowledge.

Concentration – The three-hour work cycle is a key element of the method that Dr Montessori developed. This cycle acknowledges the importance of concentration and recognises that children can come to a task and develop an intense focus for learning if provided with the opportunity. You can see this high level of focus and engagement in all of the cycles. Providing for this condition for learning through the three-hour work cycle is a tenet of Montessori education.

Work – This is required when any task is to be undertaken or achieved. This activity has been essential in the development of humans since the beginning of time and is key to their survival.

Work for young children is vital in their development of walking, talking, hand movements and developing independence. Children’s work, while an uncommon phrase to describe what children typically do, was a key observation for Dr Montessori. She could see that children gained great satisfaction and achievement from their own work, no matter what it was.

Exactness – Throughout our activity, humans have developed thousands of movements and processes that require exactness and accuracy for success. This exactness of the hands and body is also linked to precision of the mind: knowing how to solve a problem or plan an event requires this same precision.

Repetition – In developing the exactness required to complete tasks to our satisfaction, we require repetition. The old saying ‘practice makes perfect’ is very true, and Dr Montessori observed that in all things children desire to practice things repeatedly until they achieve mastery of a task. Some tasks require more repetition, while others require less. In the birth to 6 year-old child we can see the same activity being repeated to mastery, while in the 6 to 12-year-old we see the skills repeated in varying forms to achieve mastery of variations of a skill.

Self-Perfection – While we are not all ‘perfectionists’, we do have an inner drive



towards self-perfection. Self-perfection is the tendency to not give up after the first try. This involves the initiation of the will and is a process not a product. We can see that our birth to 6-year-old children are driven to self-perfection as they strive to develop their movement, language and general independence.

Calculation – This is the natural development of the child’s mathematical mind. Since the beginning of humankind, people have been able to think in terms of quantity, size, distance, shape etc. This thinking also causes humans to refine the exactness and problem-solving skills required for all these tasks. For the developing child we can see the use of calculation as children solve problems and develop exactness in tasks.

Gregariousness – While we often refer to gregariousness as a trait only seen in those who possess an ‘outgoing personality’, the human tendency of gregariousness is seen as the development of social connections: the child who develops the trust to engage with other human beings who are not directly related to them. Humans need to make these connections with peers and adults outside their family to ensure that they can obtain cultural and social information that exists beyond their family.

Communication – This is a crucial skill for children to develop as they work, learn and play together. Our students have many opportunities

to develop these skills, both in the home from a very early age and also at school.

Self-control – The tendency of self-control is the ability of the child to integrate the mind, body and will in harmony with the environment. It involves the development and control of impulses, the evaluation of consequence and the need to delay gratification in many circumstances. As children develop, we see these skills develop at different times. For our 9 to 12-year-old children, as they enter adolescence they often struggle or regress in their capacity to exercise self-control, as we see their risk-taking and impulsiveness at this age challenge their self-control.

Dr Montessori realised that by understanding these tendencies one could anticipate the kind of aid that a child may need throughout their development. The Montessori materials and the prepared environment are designed to meet the needs of the children at each stage of their development and incorporate an understanding of the Human Tendencies to help child’s development to be optimal.

Northside Montessori School is a place where these Human Tendencies are acknowledged and developed through the work of students in our classrooms.



OOSH News

by Surendrini Giritharan (OOSH Coordinator)

What a year we've had that's almost at an end! We've experienced lots of learning, laughter, and memorable moments.

Our last day for this term is Friday 20 December. We will be closed from 23 December to 19 January.

Our classroom accommodates multiple age groups, with children from Pre-Primary and Primary sharing the same space. This setup is based on Dr Montessori's understanding of children's development, where younger children learn from older peers, who, in turn, serve as role models exemplifying appropriate behaviours and work habits. Peer teaching and knowledge-sharing are encouraged, and older children take great pride and joy in teaching and leading their younger peers.

Our daily meditation/silent sitting practice has been a great success. We use this time to calm and relax the children after school, believing it will be beneficial for their future, especially for those with learning difficulties or behavioural challenges.

We have observed many Pre-Primary children learning to play different board games from their older peers during their afternoons in OOSH. Each year, we clearly see positive changes in nearly every child, including increased confidence in communication, learning, language skills, sharing, and participating in activities without fear.

We offer one hour of outside play during school terms and throughout the holiday program, along with a variety of incursions and sports games to build physical and mental strength, confidence, and teamwork.

Our holiday program is organised with a variety of enjoyable learning activities that engage the children's interest while keeping the fun factor high. We have a range of incursions, including indoor and outdoor games, arts and crafts activities.

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

- Please provide morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, a water bottle, a hat, and a change of clothes for Pre-Primary children in case of accidents.

- As it is a long day for the children, please ensure you pack enough food for the day.

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

Additionally, we would like to wish all the children leaving our school this year the very best in their new schools.

Finally, a big thank you to all our wonderful staff members: Christine, Lavina, Mandy, Ruth, Kieran, Sarah, Sandra, Silvia, Shimla, and Sharna. Your commitment, cooperation and support have made this program possible. The year went smoothly, and a big thank you goes out to all of you for making that happen.

Season's greetings and have a safe and relaxing holiday!



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