



# Montessori Children's Centre McLaren Vale

## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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The Montessori Method of Education underpins the policies, procedures and practices of all aspects of our work with young children at Montessori Children's Centre.

The Montessori Method of Education was developed by Dr Maria Montessori (1870 –1952).

The Montessori methodology has long enjoyed worldwide acceptance as a respected alternative educational approach.

In December 2011, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) recognised the Montessori National Curriculum as an alternative national curriculum framework to be included on ACARA's Recognition Register.

The Montessori Method of Education provides an educational framework for children from pre-school to university age with principles and practice guidelines for educational environments for the four planes of development Dr Montessori identified children pass through on their journey to adulthood. The Montessori approach is supported by three distinct components.

- A Philosophy of Education
- A Methodology to Guide Educators
- A Set of Materials to Support the Translation of the Theory into Practice

At Montessori Children's Centre Educators follow the principles and practices Montessori developed for Plane 1 of development and use the many different Montessori materials which correspond to this age group to provide inspirational environments for young children. They see education as an "aid to life" as the natural development and interests of each child informs their interactions with young children.

The Early Years Learning Framework educational principles of Being, Belonging and Becoming are embedded in the practice of all Educators at our Centre as holistic environments are prepared for, and professional practice reflected upon, in collaborative partnerships with families and children.

Montessori Children's Centre is committed to honouring and respecting the cultural diversity of all the families in the service.

The Montessori methodology is well documented and supported by scientific research which has validated the insights made by this remarkable woman over a century ago.

*'The child is both the hope and promise of mankind.'*



## OUR MISSION

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Montessori Children's Centre is dedicated to providing inspiring learning environments based on the Montessori philosophy and principles of learning which encourage independence, develop confidence and respect while guiding and nurturing each child's individual development.

*We acknowledge and honour the sense of belonging to the family children from all cultures bring to their pre-school experience and nurture and develop this sense of belonging to embrace the children's pre-school and wider social community.*

*We recognise that children come to us with individual strengths, capabilities, learning styles and interests and build on these by developing collaborative learning environments.*

*We create prepared inside and outside learning environments where children freely explore their natural sense of wonder and choose their own work with enthusiasm and interest.*

*We respect children's individual emergent skills by providing them with opportunities which allow for autonomous learning.*

*We provide an environment and guidance which encourages the children's development of kindness, courtesy and self-discipline.*

Montessori Children's Centre embraces a community of children, families and early childhood educators who work together to build and maintain a culture of caring where respect, integrity and tolerance are created and nourished.



## ABOUT MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Maria Montessori (31st August, 1870 - 6th May, 1952) was an Italian physician and educator and is best known for the philosophy of education which bears her name. Her educational method is in use today in public and private schools throughout the world.

Maria Montessori was Italy's first female doctor when she graduated in 1896. Her natural intellectual curiosity led to an exploration of children's minds and how they learn.

She believed that environment was a major factor in child development.

Dr Montessori opened her first Casa Dei Bambini- house for children in an apartment tenement in the slum area of San Lorenzo, Rome, on 6th January, 1902. It was here that she refined the educational theories and Montessori materials she had been developing whilst working with abandoned and intellectually challenged children as part of her work at the University of Rome.

Montessori applied the principles and methods of philosophers Itard and Seguin that children learn best through a sensorial approach and with a scaffolded approach, with that of Froebel and Pestalozzi, who believed that children learned through activity.

Montessori believed that Educators must follow the child by creating nurturing and stimulating environments where they could freely choose activities based on their interests. She believed that small children under the age of 6 years strive for independence and their catch cry is

***'Help me to do it by myself!'***

Dr Montessori's work has inspired children and Educators for more than a century and is as respected and popular now as it was when she first attracted worldwide attention in 1907.

Dr Montessori was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1949, 1950 and 1951.

## PRINCIPLES OF MONTESSORI EDUCATION

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Montessori identified 4 planes of development on the child's passage from birth to adulthood.

In the first plane from birth to age six, the child is characterised by his or her "absorbent mind", absorbing all aspects of his or her environment, language and culture.

In the second plane from age six to twelve, the child uses a "reasoning mind" to explore the world with abstract thought and imagination.

In the third plane from twelve to eighteen, the adolescent has a "humanistic mind" eager to understand humanity and the contribution he or she can make to society.

In the last plane of development, from age eighteen to twenty-four, the adult explores the world with a "specialist mind" taking his or her place in the world.

**Source:** *montessori.org.au*

It is the principles and practices of Plane 1 of development which are applied at Montessori Children's Centre.

### **First principle. The Absorbent Mind.**

#### **Unconscious Absorption**

- Montessori believed that an infant possesses the capacity to absorb the environment simply by being in it. She used the way the child learns to speak as an example of this.
- Montessori believes that the first three years are those of unconscious absorption.
- We don't know that the child has been absorbing things from the environment until the child brings them to a conscious level e.g. says his/her first word.
- All of a baby's impressions are registered by his senses. The child touches everything, examines it minutely and puts it in his mouth.

#### **Conscious Level**

- From about the age of three the child brings what he/she has already and continues to absorb to a conscious level.
- The child now begins to classify impressions e.g. colour red into shades of red.
- This substage which lasts until about the age of six is characterized by the acquisition of language and the mastery of physical movements.

### **Second Principle - Sensitive Periods for Learning.**

- Montessori believed that there are sensitive periods for learning in which the child will learn effortlessly.
- Once they have passed the learning can still be done but it is with effort only.
- These are now known as windows of opportunity and have been validated by recent brain research findings.

#### **From zero to six years the child is sensitive to:-**

- order
- acquiring language
- movement
- social aspects of life
- small objects
- learning through the senses.



## GUIDING MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES

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The child wants to learn.

The child has an innate tendency to explore.

The child wants to choose it and do it for him/herself.

The child learns through his/her senses.

The hand is the chief instrument of the brain.

The child wants to do what we do and use the same things we use.

The child is fascinated by small objects.

The child likes things to be orderly and beautiful.

The child wants a chance to practice things.

The child wants to do it right.

Practice makes perfect and permanent.

The child is interested in his /her social group.

The child has an intense desire to communicate and is particularly receptive to language.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOLLOWING MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES

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### **At Montessori Children's Centre we will build relationships by:-**

- Developing collaborative partnerships with families and children to enhance children's well being and learning.
- Recognising the family as the child's first and most important teacher.
- Respecting and valuing the child's home culture and incorporating this cultural diversity of families in our daily practice.
- Interacting with all stakeholders equitably and respectfully.
- Ensuring that the Service connects with the values and beliefs of the diverse children's cultures and communities by encouraging families to share cultures and beliefs.
- Providing opportunities for families to communicate with us about their child's learning.
- Providing opportunities for families to learn about the Montessori method of Education.
- Creating opportunities for families to be involved in decisions about their children.

### **At Montessori Children's Centre we will implement the Montessori Philosophy by:-**

- Acknowledging that children's interactions with the materials and their environments are their work to build themselves.
- Referring to children's choices in the prepared environment as their work.
- Preparing environments for the child with only the child in mind.
- Allowing children freedom of choice in the prepared environments.
- Ensuring materials and activities are easily accessible for children.
- Programming for minimal interruptions.
- Allowing time for repetition to consolidate learning.
- Providing a comprehensive range of developmentally appropriate Montessori materials for Plane 1 of development.
- Providing a comprehensive range of developmentally appropriate Montessori materials for each of the 5 Montessori curriculum areas:-
  - Language, mathematics, practical life, sensorial and cultural.
- Providing a comprehensive range of developmentally appropriate Montessori materials which are:-
  - Self-correcting
  - Allow for individual exploration
  - Allow for spontaneous interaction
  - Encourage problem solving
  - Isolate concepts to be taught.
- Providing a selection of developmentally appropriate non-Montessori materials which reflect Montessori principles of:-
  - simplicity
  - beauty
  - isolation of concept to be taught.
- Demonstrating the use of the Montessori and non- Montessori materials to enable children to experience success.
- Presenting Montessori and non- Montessori materials in a sequential manner enabling children to build on previous knowledge and make links to earlier experiences.
- Role modelling grace and courtesy.

- Role modelling equity and respect.
- Teaching children socially appropriate behaviours.
- Seeking, documenting and implementing children's input into the prepared environments and materials we provide for them.
- Observing children and documenting observations to identify emergent skills and interests.
- Observations methods will include the following methods but are not limited to:-
  - Anecdotal
  - Running records
  - Learning stories
  - Photographic records
  - Individual learning portfolios.
- Programming and planning for individual children and whole group based on these observations and Educators reflections on them.
- Using the Montessori curriculum and the Montessori materials first and foremost in all programming and planning for individual and the group.
- Using documented observations and reflections of the child's interactions with the Montessori materials as they progress through the curriculum areas in all learning domains as a significant indicator of developmental progress.
- Valuing the input of relevant professionals in planning and programming for individual children.
- Providing opportunities for individual and small group interactions.
- Empowering children to make decisions about working independently or with others.
- Not expecting children to share materials or activities.
- Ensuring that inside and outside learning environments are prepared with equal attention to Montessori principles.
- Allowing children freedom of choice of inside or outside learning environments where possible.
- Recognising that children work for the process and not the end product and encouraging and acknowledging effort and achievement in that process and not a finished product.
- Displaying children's work only at their request.
- Using acknowledgment and encouragement not reward or praise.

#### **Sources**

*Maria Montessori*  
*The Montessori Method*  
*The Secret of Childhood*  
*The Absorbent Mind*  
[ami.edu/amtcf/amtcf/historyami.htm](http://ami.edu/amtcf/amtcf/historyami.htm)

*Early Years Learning Framework*  
[www.acequa.com](http://www.acequa.com)