

Courtyard Courier

Volume 47, Term 4 2011



A Few Words ...

Shelagh Powell

Kia Ora to Everyone.

This newsletter comes out to you with only three weeks left of term and is the final newsletter for 2011. The year has flown by here at the Courtyard and it has been filled with many accomplishments and successes in the midst of such devastation throughout our beautiful Christchurch in the wake of the February and June earthquakes.

We have a number of children heading off to school between now and the beginning of next year, with some children being replaced with younger siblings. This affirms and consolidates for the preschool that you as parents continue to acknowledge that our philosophy and teaching practices position themselves comfortably within the context of your family life.

Our classes are all full under our current ratio, and we have a healthy waiting list of families keen to join our community as spaces become available. I am always surprised and heartened by the families eager to start, citing our excellent reputation we hold out in the wider community. It could also be true that Montessori philosophy can serve as a balancing influence to us all. Our society, bent as it is on a breakneck pace of production and achievement at all costs, desperately needs to work toward the balance that seeing the world through the eyes of the child gives. Children really do have their own natural laws. Recognising them and adjusting our pace and tempo to them, can only serve to be beneficial to us as adults as we move into a frenetic time of year.

The Christmas Party was a resounding success and signals Christmas is just around the corner. We complete our social activities with our Shared Morning Tea and Carol singing on Friday 16 December. We will introduce a variety of Christmas activities into the classroom over the final two weeks of term for the children to enjoy. While we recognise Christmas as a lovely time of year as we bask in the warmer weather (hopefully!) and the anticipation of Christmas and holidays, we need to take care not to take too much on in our already busy lives in the lead up to it.

Property Development: We are hoping to continue with Stage 2 of the playground over the Christmas break. Stage 1 has been more or less completed with only seating to be completed around the bigger circle, so families can sit there any time for a catch up and chat. We are also working on a bike stand to be placed on the smaller circle for easy access in the morning and afternoon. We have been thrilled with what a difference opening up the entranceway has made and all the lovely planting adds to the overall ambience.

I extend a big thank you to everyone who has worked alongside me this year, especially the teaching team, Gillian and the Board of Trustees, who collectively make the preschool the fabulous place it is.

On behalf of Board of Trustees and Staff we wish each and everyone a Happy Christmas and a GREAT New Year.

I leave you with these little quotes:

"Never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall."
Larry Wilde, author 'The Merry Book of Christmas'

"Gifts of time and love are surely the basic ingredients of a truly merry Christmas."
Peg Bracken.

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The Importance of Developing Social and Emotional Skills in Young Children

Shelagh Powell

As parents, we all want our children to have friends and for the most part this happens relatively uneventfully. However, for some it can also be a real science and the road to building and maintaining friendships can be full of pot holes and in some cases great crevasses! Developing social skills takes more skill than we give weight to. Do we then, in our daily lives give enough credence to the social and emotional development of our children? I do not want to devalue the importance of literacy and numeracy skills, however the increased pressure for these skills can come at a cost to the value of social competence in our children.

As preschool teachers we are privileged to have the children of the future in our hands. Often preschool is the first place that many children interact with other children on a systematic basis outside the family home. Because of this, it is essential to remember that how as teachers we relate to one another and to the children impacts directly on them. As teachers, how we relate and socialise with children, helps in the way they are going to relate to one another.

How children act toward and are treated by their classmates (co-operatively or aggressively, helpfully or demandingly, etc.) appears to have a substantial impact on the relationships they develop (Ladd, 2000). However, healthy social development does not require that a child be a "social butterfly". The most important index to note is the quality rather than the quantity of a child's friendships. Children (even rejected children) who develop a close friend increase the degree to which they feel positively about themselves over time (Ladd, 1999).

There is evidence that some children are simply more shy, or more inhibited than others, and it may be counterproductive to push such children into social relations that make them uncomfortable (Katz & McClellan, 1997). Furthermore, unless that shyness is severe enough to prevent a child from enjoying most of the "good things of life", such as birthday parties, picnics, and family outings, it is reasonable to assume that, when handled sensitively, the shyness will be spontaneously outgrown.

How children act toward and are treated by their classmates appears to have a substantial impact on the relationships they develop

Evidence suggests that unless children achieve minimal social competence by about the age of six years, they have a high probability of being at risk into adulthood. Interestingly the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not IQ, not school grades, and not even classroom behaviour but, rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children and who cannot establish a place for themselves in their peer culture are seriously at risk (Hartup 1992). The risks are many: poor mental health, dropping out of school, low achievement, and poor employment history etc. Armed with this information it seems logical that developing social relationships should feature as the first of the R's of education!

Because social development begins at birth and progresses rapidly during the preschool years, it is important that at preschool we include regular opportunities for spontaneous child-initiated social play. Berk and Winsler (1995) suggest that it is through symbolic/pretend play that young children are most likely to develop both socially and intellectually. Thus, periodic assessment of children's progress in the acquisition of social competence is appropriate. At the Courtyard we understand the importance of healthy social interactions and make many references to these through our Planning for Learning interviews and through informal feedback.

As teachers we observe and monitor interactions among children and let children who rarely have difficulties attempt to solve conflicts by themselves before intervening. If a child appears to be doing well then it is reasonable to assume that occasional social difficulties will be outgrown without intervention. Parents and teachers who over react to minor transgressions and try and shield their child away from disappointments and/or upsets can hamper the building of resilience. It is also reasonable to assume that children will strengthen their social skills, confidence, and independence by being entrusted to solve their social difficulties without adult assistance. However, if a child seems to be doing poorly we can implement strategies that will help the child to overcome and outgrow the social difficulties. Children's current and long-term social-emotional development, as well as cognitive and academic development, can be clearly affected by the child's social experiences with peers and adults.

A crucial ingredient applicable to children in developing social and emotional skills is the need to care and have empathy for those they interact with. With this as a cornerstone, our children will develop a sense of social inclusiveness for the group to which they belong.

I leave you with this thought:

"Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as important to the child as it is to the caterpillar."



Congratulations to Helen who has completed her Montessori Diploma!

Motivating Learning In Young Children



Helen Westrupp

“Young children learn from everything they do. They are naturally curious; they want to explore and discover. If their explorations bring pleasure or success, they will want to learn more. During these early years, children form attitudes about learning that will last a life time.”
(Junior Horizons, 2006)

Motivating children is a whole lot easier than most people think it is. The reason for this is children are born with ‘intrinsic motivation’, which is where they have the desire to repeat actions, as it gives internal satisfaction. Then the satisfaction generates motivation, which is self-sustaining for as long as the child wants to continue with the action. Unfortunately for some children they also engage in activities because others tell them to, or to please someone. These children are ‘extrinsically motivated’. The reward of persisting with the activity wanes as they are reliant upon some outside force to complete whatever task has been set. So what this means for learning is that children who are ‘intrinsically motivated’ will retain information better than those children which are ‘extrinsically motivated’.

Highly motivated children will display some behaviour characteristics, which are listed below, along with some tips on ways to help children develop these.

- ✓ **Persistence:** A highly motivated child will stay involved for a long period of time, whereas one who is unmotivated will give up very easily when not instantly successful. However, remember to factor age into the equation as the younger children cannot concentrate on an activity for lengthy periods like older children. To promote a little persistence, have on offer activities that provide a challenge, but make sure it’s not too overwhelming.
- ✓ **Choice of Challenge:** When children experience the success of completing a challenge, they become motivated to attempt more, whereas unmotivated children who haven’t received early success will select something that is easy to complete and will guarantee instant success. With this easy success children feel little satisfaction, yet when children choose a challenge and achieve it then they feel a high level of satisfaction. So the aim is to help children find an appropriate challenge, which is intrinsically driven.
- ✓ **Dependency on Adults:** Children with strong ‘intrinsic motivation’ do not need an adult constantly watching and guiding, whereas it is the opposite for children who are ‘extrinsically motivated’, as they are dependent on attention from adults and cannot function independently. This dependence is not a good thing as it will greatly impede their success at school, as independence is a strong aspect in children’s learning. To help reduce dependency on adults, parents can provide activities and toys that appeal to the child’s natural creativity and curiosity as this will allow the child time to explore with confidence.
- ✓ **Emotion:** If children are motivated, they will exhibit a positive display of emotion, through satisfaction in their work and more enjoyment while completing the activity. Bored, quiet and sullen are good indicators that children do not have motivation for that particular activity and will display no apparent pleasure

and will often complain about the task they have to complete. Making sure the children are selecting work from ‘intrinsic motivation’ will be the best way to ensure that they are satisfied with the work.

If those were some characteristics of how motivation is presented, then how does motivation develop? As was stated above, children are born with a tremendous amount of ‘intrinsic motivation’ and as they grow they gain more control over their movements and body, which leads to a feeling that they are successful. Through success children gain a higher self-esteem and higher feeling of self-worth. This is based on the child’s ability to accomplish goals they intrinsically set themselves and **not based** on an adult’s idea of what success is. By the age of three most children will have developed the ability to execute a sequence of events in order to achieve a goal and they become interested in doing things well, opposed to just doing them. This is the stage when they have an idea of different levels of competency and judge their own success by their own internal standards. Therefore there is less need for adult feedback and their thoughts on the quality of the child’s efforts. During the preschool years (3-6 years old) speech becomes a big factor in motivation, as children begin to verbally communicate problems and find out ways to solve them. Initially this is done out loud by younger children, yet as they mature this becomes internalised. With the self-confidence that comes with being able to problem solve, children become motivated to accept new and challenging situations, which in turn lead to greater learning.

So it is up to us as teachers and parents to foster the development of motivation. Yet this is not about always supporting them with extrinsic rewards, as we must be very cautious when using these. Overuse of these within the child’s environment through rewards like lollies, money or excessive praise will enforce external standards, which will replace the internal reward system. This will lead to the child losing their intrinsic motivation and may only feel success when someone else judges them as successful. However in saying this, praise can be appropriately used when celebrating an achievement that the child has intrinsically selected and worked through from their motivation.

“Did I do well?” is a question from a child who is extrinsically motivated, yet teachers and parents want children to be confident in their own success, so here are a few tips to help children remain intrinsically motivated.

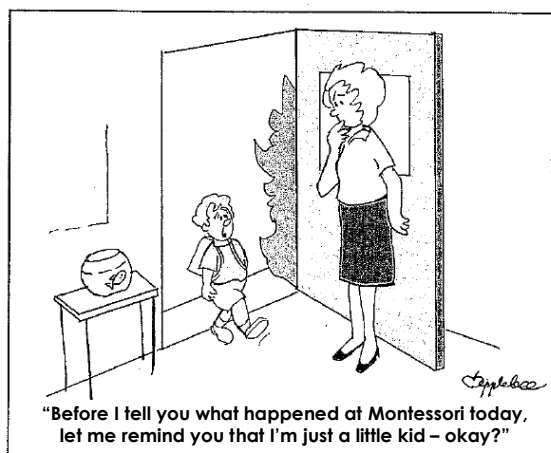
- 😊 Provide an environment where children are free to choose and explore the materials that they want to. This means that the activities are age appropriate and children can see the effects of their movements, for example balls that move when young children push them. The Montessori environment is set up perfectly to support and promote this as every curriculum area contains simple to complex activities that children are free to use, once they have been presented with the materials.
- 😊 Resist that natural urge to ‘help’. Watch, observe and allow ample time for children to persevere and finish without interruption. Maria Montessori was a great believer in the power of observation and placed it highly under the qualities a

teacher must be able to do. Observation is a great tool for seeing what really interests a child, deciding if new challenges need to be presented and of course allowing children time to complete their work to satisfaction.

- ☺ Be as predictable and consistent as possible when responding to children's needs and allow them opportunities to be as independent as possible. This of course does not mean releasing all control, as all children need clearly defined limits. Let your kid be a kid and have play time unstructured and less 'organised', and if they are intrinsically motivated then no doubt they will be learning and developing anyway. Montessori classrooms are set up to allow the children freedom to independently select the work that they want to complete. Of course there is the expectation that each activity they choose to work with must be treated with respect and care.
- ☺ Explore, work and interact together, as it is fun learning about the activities that interest children, while providing a role model who is intrinsically motivated to be with that child and discover what makes them 'tick'. Montessori teachers are there to provide a link between the child and the environment. They role model how to use the materials and provide ways to extend the activities to directly link with the child's interests.

- ☺ Allow opportunities for children to work with acceptable challenges, which are slightly difficult, more motivating and provide stronger feelings of success when the task is complete. Be patient as there might be a bit of trial and error at first. Again, this is where in a Montessori classroom observation comes in handy, as we are able to observe what is a challenge for the child or what may be too easy and adjust the materials we present in the future according to this.
- ☺ "What do YOU think?" is a great question. Give the child an opportunity to evaluate their work and give an opinion rather than a teacher or parent sharing their view on the work.
- ☺ Persistence is what should be valued and praised in children's work rather than the actual outcome of work, as excessive rewards tend to undermine children's ability to value themselves as confident and competent learners.

Remember children have only had a few years to discover the wonder of the world and through their eyes it is still an awesome place, which only requires a small amount of direction and a large amount of freedom to provide excitement and surprise. The accomplishments that children gain through the discoveries and exploration of this exciting place is reward enough!



Chairperson's Report

Well here we are in term four with Christmas just around the corner. It is hard to believe that we are here, getting ready to see the end to yet another year. Never could we have imagined at this stage last year (after what had already occurred), that we would be faced with what we have in Christchurch this year.

This year has seen a large number of interruptions to the school year, Board meetings and projects, which has shown more than ever the dedication of the staff and Board members. The staff have done a fantastic job this year as always, especially dealing with and reassuring the children with the ongoing earthquakes, and at times having to put the safety and needs of the children at the preschool before their own. The Board members have done a fantastic job also under increasing time pressures, volunteering their time, skills and expertise, to deal not only with the ongoing matters that are

required to run the preschool, but also deal with the additional matters that have resulted from the events of this year.

The Board is currently working on a number of matters that include earthquake damage remedial work, planning financial targets for the coming year, Stage 2 of the playground upgrade, and a review of the maintenance plan for the preschool.

Finally, on behalf of the Board I would like to wish you all a relaxing and safe Christmas and New Year. We would also like to wish the families of the children that are leaving the preschool all the best in the next stage in their children's education and we look forward to the families that are returning next year to enjoy the preschool that we are very proud of!



Kevin Riddle

Managing Children's Behaviour OR The Art of Natural Consequence



Paula Scott

Sometimes trying to support our children to make good choices in their day, use kind words and think sensibly before acting is an exhausting job. We wonder where we went wrong when our child exhibits behaviour we are unhappy with. The ultimate goal for any of us is to teach our child to develop self-discipline, responsibility and consideration for others. Remember our children are young, impressionable and only just learning how to manage their emotions, words and actions. They need us as their guides and mentors.

We are more likely to foster these behaviours in ourselves and our children if we teach our children appropriate ways to behave and encourage good behaviour. It also helps if we communicate well with our children so they begin to understand our values and expectations.

Because we love our children and enjoy being loved in return, we may think that if we're too firm, maybe our child won't like us, so to show them how much we care, we tend to do too much for them or allow them to push boundaries. This not only robs them of their independence, it quickly becomes an expectation on their part.

Natural Consequences

If we focus on catching our children being good, (and using the other strategies described in this toolkit) we will need to use consequences less. However, there are times when a negative consequence for difficult behaviour is needed. Consequences are used to enforce limits and reinforce rules when simple reminders haven't worked.

It really pays to put some thought into how and why you might use consequences because if you overuse negative consequences or use them badly or inconsistently, they can have unexpected and unwanted effects.

Sometimes it's best to let children experience the natural consequences of their own behaviour. When children experience the results of their behaviour, they can learn that their actions have consequences. They might learn to take responsibility for what they do.

Here are some examples of using natural consequences:

- If your child refuses to put on a coat, let her get cold.
- If your child won't eat, let him feel hungry.
- If your child breaks a rule on the sporting field, he'll have to take the penalty.

These are important but hard lessons, and life is often a better and faster teacher than we parents are, and you don't have to be the unfair bad guy. You can feel for them by acknowledging their poor decisions with sympathy, such as 'I'm sorry you're hungry, I'm sure you'll enjoy your tea tonight' this helps them to realise they are the master of their own choices.

Related Consequences

A 'related consequence' (sometimes called a 'logical consequence') is when parents impose a consequence that is related to the

behaviour they wish to discourage. For example:

- If a child is mucking around and spills his drink, he must wipe it up.
- If a bike is left in the driveway, it gets put away for the rest of the afternoon.
- If children are fighting over a toy, the toy is put away for ten minutes.
- If a child wears their socks outside, they have to scrub them with laundry soap.

The advantage of related consequences is that the child has to think about the issue. The consequence feels fairer, and they tend to work better than consequences that seem irrelevant. But it's not always easy or possible to find a related consequence. So another tool is ...

Losing a Privilege

With this type of consequence, the child loses access to a favourite object or activity because of unacceptable behaviour. The 'privilege' is not necessarily related to the difficult behaviour. For example:

- A child who is not co-operating with his mum might lose the privilege of an outing or play date.
- A child who swears at her dad might lose television time.

Important things to remember when applying a consequence:

Use consequences consistently. Related consequences, loss of privileges or time-out as a last resort might be used when the child ignores reminders and breaks rules, but you should apply them in the same way and for the same kinds of behaviour every time. It's very confusing for children if something they do earns a negative consequence today but was ignored yesterday.

Apply negative consequences to all children in the family, not just one who's deemed 'naughtier' than others. Even very young children will be upset if they see siblings not being treated in the same way as them.

Keep consequences short. They don't have to be harsh, mean or long to be effective. The advantage of keeping a consequence short is that you quickly give your child an opportunity to try again. For example, if the television is turned off for ten minutes because children are fighting over it, they will quickly have another opportunity to solve the problem in a different way. If it is turned off for the rest of the day, there are no more opportunities in the day for them to learn to manage the situation differently. Also, a long consequence can be worse for parents than children – a child deprived of his bike for a week is likely to get bored and cranky!

Reserve consequences for children over three. Children younger than this won't really understand consequences, particularly if they don't understand the connection between their actions and the

outcomes of those actions. Consequences will just feel unfair to them.

Wherever possible, explain consequences to the children ahead of time so they don't come as a surprise. If you talk to the children about possible consequences, they're less likely to be resentful and angry when they are implemented. Negotiating consequences ahead of time makes them more effective and easier to implement if they are ever needed.

In most situations, warn your children before you implement the consequence. For example, 'Guys, this yelling is just too loud for me! If you can't work out how to use the LEGO fairly, I will put it away for an hour'.

Beware of the trap of repeated warnings or not following through. The exception to giving a warning before a consequence is where you have a well-established family rule. There might be important rules where a consequence will immediately follow the breaking of the rule.

Timeliness is important. Consequences work better when they occur as soon as possible after the behaviour.

Remember children are working incredibly hard at creating themselves. They are learning the social complexities of negotiation, turn-taking and empathy along with developing communication skills and managing emotions. They need all the help they can get and we are their greatest role models, mentors and advocates in this process of self construction.

Good Luck ☺



Maree Hawtin-Morrow

When Is Your Child Ready For School?

How many times have you heard the phrase, "(S)he's so ready for school"?

The compulsory starting age for school in New Zealand is six so where did the idea come from that being the magical age of five means that a child is ready for school? In other countries such as Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland every child must be seven and these countries are fast becoming global superstars in the area of educational standards.

While teachers assess children's skills and development right through their time in early childhood education, the decision of when to send the child to school ultimately lies with the parents. However it is important that parents try to make as informed a decision as possible through consultation with teachers and I hope this article helps a little.

Below are competencies that can help decide readiness into the more formal school environment. They could fall under three headings however this is not a checklist, just a guide.

Individual Attributes:

- Generally in a positive mood
- Not excessively dependent on adults
- A willingness to learn
- Good coping mechanisms when things go wrong
- Can empathise with others
- Has one or two positive relationships with their peers

Social Skills:

- Able to approach others positively
- Able to give clear reasons for their actions
- Can enter discussions
- Can take turns
- Can negotiate compromise

Peer Relationship Attributes:

- Is accepted by others
- Is sometimes invited by others to play
- Is named by other children as their friends

Other factors shown in various studies to be important in determining school readiness are that children are:

- Able to follow basic instructions and have an awareness of why we have rules
- Inquisitive
- Keen to participate
- Have the ability to communicate effectively with adults and peers
- Have independent skills such as toileting, dressing and fastening shoes
- Can write their name and know their address.

Longitudinal studies indicate that sending a child to school before they are socially or emotionally ready may have detrimental effects on their learning and social interactions in the years during puberty. There may end up being a necessity to repeat a year at school which is much more emotionally challenging than having an additional year in early childhood education.

Transitioning to school can be a stressful time for children who are not socially/emotionally ready and this can make the experience a negative one. Self-esteem and confidence can be significantly affected making risk-taking and 'giving things a go' less likely.

Some ideas in order to help your child become 'school ready' might be to play board games with them that will help with the concepts of turn-taking, following rules and learning how to win and lose gracefully. Doing things like baking with them, or supervising your children baking together, helps with sharing and working together co-operatively for a common goal.

In conclusion, some children will be 'ready' for school at five and some may not. In consultation with the teachers, and what you know about your child, you will make an informed decision that is right for you and your child.

Physical Movement Is The Door To Learning For A Child



Danielle Graham

Early childhood is an exclusive time where children experience important social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and it is believed the most important key to enhancing children's learning and development is through physical movement.

Research shows that children who spend their early years in a physically less stimulating environment can display delays to their central nervous system, which can lead to cognitive and socio-emotional delays. Therefore, it is very important to provide opportunities for children to learn and develop fundamental movement skills in their everyday experiences.

Fundamental movement skills have the ability to awaken and activate many of our mental abilities. Researchers in the field found that children who have competent physical skills are more likely to have feelings of self-confidence and have a higher self-esteem, which in turn can enhance positive relationships with their peers. This enforces the importance of educators to provide children with lots of positive and well-balanced physical movement experiences, which will help children to develop a sense of playfulness and will encourage them to use their imagination.

Jill Connell, along with other professionals, suggests that children who gain physical movement experiences not only have the chance to use their imagination, but are also integrating many forms and varieties of knowledge such as teamwork, motivation and goal setting.



The more researchers look at the complicated interaction of the brain and body, the more clearly the link and relevance movement has on a child's growing brain. Neuroscientists, psychologists and movement specialists verify that movement is essential for growing the brain and developing higher brain functions as well as improving creativity, stress management, health, memory, sensory development and the ability to communicate between the two sides of the brain for processing information. This is because movement activates a transmitter that enhances learning by boosting the ability of the brain cells to communicate with each other. Physical movement is at the heart of learning, because when children actively move they are helping to strengthen and develop these associations in the brain and body. Children who are lucky enough to be able to participate in physical movement will be strengthening the body and the brain, as well as reinforcing neural pathways and senses, for growing and developing.

Providing physical movement activities is a lot easier than we think because all children are born curious about the world around them, and are very excited about experiencing as much as possible. A child will move through a series of milestones throughout childhood such as crawling, walking, running and jumping. By encouraging

children to be physically active, educators are giving children the opportunity to learn through movement and as a result helping a child to reach full potential in learning and development. By creating a physically fit body, mind and spirit, both educators and adults are providing a child's brain with oxygen and glucose, which is the brain's source of nutrition and just like our body, the brain needs food to be able to function. Consequently, with opportunities to move, a growing child will be developing their essential and fundamental movement skills and through developing these essential skills, children are allowing the two hemispheres of the brain to communicate with each other.

The key step in allowing children to have fun while stimulating their brain through physical movement is to develop an accurate ability in fundamental and essential movement skills such as running, jumping and hopping. Children will develop fundamental movement skills and essential movement skills through being guided, encouraged, and given opportunities to practice these skills from active, enthusiastic educators and adults. "Parents and caregivers can ensure the growing child has the best possible start to life by making a knowledgeable and loving commitment to an active lifestyle." As early childhood educators, it is important to not only recommend to caregivers to provide their children with daily opportunities to be active, but to be a positive role model and to take some time in the day to create playfulness with children and provide as many opportunities and programmes as possible which will teach and develop physical movement skills in young children.

At the Courtyard we are encouraging physical movement skills every day through outside times with challenge courses, the climbing equipment, bikes, and lots more. Music sessions also provide children with movement opportunities and for those children who attend extended day we have set a session aside for opportunities through specialised movement activities to work on developing individual fundamental and essential movement skills in children. We have also tapped into an organisation called 'Playball'. This organisation provides specialised coaches who are very passionate about promoting movement skills in young children. At these sessions the children are engaged in fun moving to learn games, where they are unconsciously learning and developing sports skills. Playball has been a wonderful experience for all our children and they have seemed to really enjoy the energetic and fun spirited coaches. However, Playball is more than just sports skills, it also teaches children the importance of team building and supporting one another.

Physical movement is an indispensable part of learning and development and is at the core of establishing a healthy mind, body, and spirit as a prerequisite for all other learning that a child may engage in throughout life.

Success



Debbie Cocks

What does that word conjure up to you? We all have our own definition of success, mine can be totally different from yours. Wikipedia states that success may refer to, “a level of social status, the achievement of an objective or a goal, the opposite of failure”. The Collins Dictionary defines success as “a favourable accomplishment, attainment, issue or outcome, successful person or thing”.

Many parents want their child to ‘be successful’ – but can we actually measure that, and in what areas do we see that success is important? This can be different within each family, even between parents. Sometimes it depends upon which ‘lens’ we are looking through. In some families, sport may be very important and therefore if the child achieves physically, they will look upon this as success. Another family may see social relationships as an important life skill and therefore the number of friends a child has will be seen as a level of success. Musical talent may also be significant and skill in this area will mean success. Lastly, many parents see educational achievement as an indicator of success and feel concern if their child is slow to learn to read and write.

with the simple and becoming increasingly more complex. As the child starts with an easy activity, they gain self-reliance, learn they can be ‘successful’ and move on to a ‘harder’ activity. The smile and satisfaction on their face says it all... “I did it!” As one little boy who had successfully completed an activity said to me, “I am an awesome dude!” These children are definitely seeing themselves as being a ‘success’.

Within the sensorial curriculum area, the didactic materials are carefully designed so that error and success are self-evident. The child can correct their own mistakes and modify their actions upon the materials. This amounts to a trial and success process. Maria Montessori observed that children ‘construct’ or ‘create’ themselves by means of their inner motivation. She described this as ‘the sensitive periods’. Later psychologists and educationalists would describe them as ‘transient sensibilities’, ‘temporary instincts’ or ‘the teachable moments’. These are those critical periods of development or ‘optimal periods of learning’. During these periods, certain functions or concepts are easily acquired if the environment is conducive to learning.

Within the Montessori environment all of our activities follow a set of processes, where the child is able to succeed at each stage.

When we look at our child we can see that every day they are successful in many different areas if we look at the number of times they complete ‘a favourable accomplishment’. This could be any achievement from the simple through to the challenging.

Within the Montessori environment all of our activities follow a set of processes, where the child is able to succeed at each stage. As they move from level to level they gain confidence and self-esteem. With the ‘control of error’ the child is able to ‘self-correct’ without needing a lot, if any, assistance from a teacher. Maria Montessori believed that a child’s dignity is derived from liberty and a sense of independence, the ability to meet one’s own needs.

The practical life area of the classroom is where all new children start. The shelves are set up from left to right with activities starting

The actual ages when these periods may occur vary from one child to another, even within the same family. Therefore, when a child is in a ‘sensitive period’, for example maths, they will be drawn to the maths activities and they will learn very quickly. If the child is not in a ‘sensitive period’ the teacher can work very hard for a small amount of progress. It is sensible to be ‘led by the child’, observe their interests, provide the teaching environment, and when they are ready they will reach success in this area. It is important to remember that this intense sensitivity will die down and disappear after a certain time, therefore it is important to provide for this at the appropriate time.

Within each area of the classroom, the child learns satisfaction as a result of their activity and their self-esteem is enhanced. This serves as a thorough preparation for future success.



Merry Christmas Everyone!

In Brief ...

The Government does not fund absences over three weeks, therefore if you are on an extended holiday during term time, you will receive an additional invoice for lost Government funding.

Fees are charged for days your child is booked for during the term, inclusive of public holidays and teacher only day.

We practice Fire and Earthquake drills once a term.

Notices will be sent out within the next two weeks inviting children to attend our Full Day programme next term. Children who are 4.2 years are required to attend one Extended Day a week and children 4.6 years are required to attend two Extended Days. However, you are welcome to attend more if spaces are available.

In keeping with our Illness and Infectious Diseases Policy we require children to be kept at home for at least 24–48 hours after vomiting and diarrhoea has occurred. If you are unsure whether your child might be contagious with an illness please refer to the Illness and Infectious Diseases poster in the foyers of each room and if in doubt best to stay at home.

Please do not park on the triangle sign on the road between the staff car park and our neighbour's drive. It is both illegal and dangerous to do so.

For Health & Safety reasons, the gate leading into the car park is only for use by staff and families who have young babies.

Whilst we open our doors to families at 8.20am, our Licence does not allow for children to be left at the preschool without a parent until 8.30am.

Remember to farewell your child at the door of the classroom if you arrive after 8.50am.

Policies for community review are placed next to the sign in/out sheets. Please take the time to read them, make any comments and sign. This involves you as part of our community.

Please return your Parent Planning Form in preparation for interviews as they assist teachers in understanding your aspirations, ideas and thoughts when preparing an interview.

The preschool has two car seats if you ever need to borrow one for the day.

Please inform teachers about school visits as soon as these have been scheduled in order for us to have the Transition to School letter ready for the new entrant teacher.

