

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

TERM 4, WEEK 9 DECEMBER 2011

Dear CMS families,

It has been an eventful and busy 2011. On behalf of the entire Canberra Montessori Community I would like to wish all of our families a joyous holiday season and all the best for 2012.

This year our school worked on a number of initiatives. Our primary focus was to complete our childcare licensing, school registration and begin the Montessori Foundation's Quality Assurance Program. Each of these projects were tackled and completed by the end of the school year. On the curriculum side, we focused on Writing and tried to develop a greater appreciation for composition amongst our students. I am pleased to say that all of the classes showed a renewed interest in writing, and developed their writing skills through classroom work and extended their interest by entering writing contests and even by corresponding to our Prime Minister! A focus in 2011 was our facility and I end the year very pleased with the progress we have made in maintaining our buildings and grounds and look forward to an era of improved property management. Lastly, we focussed on a few items to help facilitate communication and improve our overall profile. It was nice to see a new clothing line introduced at the school, a new school Facebook page and I was especially pleased with the Values book we were able to publish and distribute to all families in recognition of our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

On Monday, I had the pleasure of attending our graduation luncheon and wishing our Grade 6 students all the best as they leave us for high school. It was rewarding to spend time with an outstanding group of graduates and their families. More and more, I am finding that Montessori Education is particularly relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. There is an article by Dr. Steven Hughes in the most recent edition of Montessori Insights which explains that current brain research is now elucidating the activity of the pre-frontal Cortex, the part of the Brain that manages the resources of our cognitive functions. These Executive Functioning skills managed by the pre frontal cortex involve concentration, organisation, planning, refining, monitoring, strategizing, adjusting and maintaining persistence. Research has shown that early development of executive functions is a better predictor of later academic performance than is the early acquisition of academic skills. Current research seems to be backing up the insights from Dr. Montessori who understood the types of environments where learners thrived. In a related article, I noticed just last week, researcher Adele Diamond, was describing the types of environments that promote healthy executive functioning and I found her description an eerie parallel to the way Montessori School's organize themselves;

"School curricula empirically shown to improve EFs (executive function) share several features in common. First, the classroom is not centred around the teacher, and the teacher is rarely expected to teach all children the same thing at the same time. Instead, children progress at their own individual rates. They work largely on their own and with one or a few other children. They help mentor other children and work cooperatively. Because other children are productively engaged when the teacher works with any individual child, individualized instruction can readily be provided and the teacher can spend time observing and assessing each child's progress, seeing where assistance or new challenges might be needed for a particular child. Finally, children are required neither to sit still for long nor to learn primarily by listening rather than doing. These approaches minimize stress for both teachers and students. Rather than acting as primary enforcers of rules, teachers encourage internal self- discipline. Students are rarely embarrassed or shamed. Teachers provide supports that ensure that children are far more likely to succeed than to fail. Even young children plan what they are going to do. Extrinsic rewards, such as stickers, are absent; exploration, discovery, and mastery are seen as their own rewards. Character development—such as the fostering of a spirit of kindness and helpfulness—is a priority. Social inclusiveness and mutual support are cultivated among the students. The most effective way to improve EFs and academic achievement is to address the child's full social, emotional, and physical development."

If you have an interest in this emerging research, I have included a link to an interview with Adele.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TB6sVyTXJRg>

So it's on to 2012. I look forward to seeing all families back for the start of the school year in February. I plan to take a short trip to Tasmania over the break, to see the many spectacular vistas that Bob Dent used to show me from his many visits. I have no doubt that one or two of them will involve golf.

Peace

The Rice Family

## Reconciliation Action Plan

In a collaborative initiative with the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT (AISACT) we are working to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Paul Paulson of NAHRI will be guiding us through this process. Paul has worked extensively with large corporations across Australia in developing corporate Reconciliation Action Plans.

A RAP is a plan of activities to support the vision of Reconciliation Australia. These activities are designed to turn “good intentions into action”. The vision of Reconciliation Australia is for:

*“an Australia that provides equal life chances for all, recognising and respecting the special place, culture and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians.”*

I will be meeting with representatives from AISACT over the next year and together we will formulate an Indigenous ACT Independent School policy. I envisage that this policy will embrace authentic partnerships in Indigenous education through the implementation of staff training and development with a focus on cultural awareness in terms of curriculum, teaching strategies and effective cross-cultural communication. We will be working alongside local Indigenous people throughout this project. Montessori in Australia has a strong connection with Indigenous education largely through the work of the Montessori Children’s Foundation in remote areas of Australia and across the Torres Strait Islands.

I hope to form an Indigenous Education Committee at CMS with the aim of implementing the RAP outcomes as developed by AISACT. I will post future information on the formation of this committee early in 2012.

If you would like to be involved in this initiative, contact me via email.

Carolyn Hunter  
Karri Class Co-Director [carolyn.hunter@canberramontessori.com](mailto:carolyn.hunter@canberramontessori.com)

### A letter from the forest

Dear Friends,

Greetings of the new season! Summer has begun and the sun is starting to bite. We must all do what we can to keep cool and save water over our long hot Canberra summer.

When I was a little owlet my mother used to tell me the story of the life of the precious water drop - its journey from the clouds down to the earth, through the ground to join with other droplets in the creeks and rivers and then home to the sea.

In the middle of a baking hot summer the water drops are few and far between, and the plants and animals of the bush must do what we can to save every precious drop. Like many other animals, I chose to be nocturnal. I rest by day in the shade of leafy trees and go about my business in the cool of the night. At times the air is just too dry for my tasty friends the frogs -they bury themselves deep down in the mud and wait for the autumn rains to come.

Even the plants must do their best to save water. The slender leaves of the gum tree droop down to hide from the midday sun. The leaves are tough and waxy to keep the precious water in. Look at the thin needles of the Casuarina tree - so thin they hardly look like leaves at all!

I've heard that many humans migrate to the coast at this time of year, to enjoy the sea breezes and cool their bodies down in the ocean. As you leave our school and go home for a busy festive season, please pause and reflect on what is happening in the natural world. Think about the journey of the brave little water droplet, and do your best to save water too.

Take care of yourselves, your families and the earth this summer.  
See you in the forest!

LES, the Boobook Owl  
and the Learnscapes and Environmental  
Sustainability committee

## UPCOMING DATES

### Term 4

Dec 14	End of year picnic—Red Hill
Dec 16	Disco
	Last Day of Term 4
Dec 19	Pupil Free Day
Dec 20	Pupil Free Day

### Term 1 2012

Feb 6	Pupil Free Day
Feb 7	Children return Term 1 2012
Feb 14	Class Parents' Meeting 9am
Feb 15	Meet & Greet 7pm Holder
Feb 16	Meet & Greet 7pm Red Hill
Feb 23	Fundraising Meeting 7pm
Feb 29—Mar 2	Life Education Program EDtoC3
Feb 29	Learnscapes Meeting 7pm
Mar 8	Parent Education Evening 7pm
Mar 12	Public Holiday—Canberra Day
Mar 13	Parent Teacher Interviews begin Cycle 1
Mar 19-30	Parent Teacher Interviews C2/3
Mar 20	Annual General Meeting 7pm
Mar 21	Harmony Day Gathering
Mar 28	Canteen Day Cycle 2
Mar 30	Disco 5.30pm
Apr 4	Canteen Day ED & C3
Apr 6	Public Holiday—Good Friday
Apr 9	Public Holiday—Easter Monday
Apr 13	Last day of Term 1

### Term 2 2012

Apr 30	Pupil Free Day
May 1	Children return to school

Full 2012 CMS Calendar out soon



## Teaching Staff plan 2012

I am very pleased to announce that there appear to be very few staffing changes on the horizon for 2012. This is the optimal situation and helps with the continuity of our program. Of course, we also know that planning for Human Resources is fraught with uncertainty; as openings emerge the school needs to remain flexible and proactive.

In Parent Toddler, Aine will be back, welcoming new families to the school. In Cycle 1 all of the Directors remain in place while in Cycle 2 Anca and Kerrie will return and be joined by the new Director of Waratah, Helen Still. In Cycle 3 Jackie and Carolyn will continue their efforts as co-teachers, with Carolyn continuing at a load of 0.8.

Mi Kyung, Alison and Jane will return to instruct Korean, Music and Visual Arts respectively and Kimberly Stern will return as our Learning Resource Teacher. Next year, Kimberly will be focussed on students with funded or diagnosed learning differences and will be working Monday morning as well as full days on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays.

As for the assistants, Shannon will be leaving Melaleuca at the end of the year after filling in for the final 3 terms in 2011. Mi Kyung Kim (morning) and Louise Bennett Draper (afternoon) will assist Anca in Melaleuca. Mi Kyung has experience working in Melaleuca previously and Louise is completing her Bachelor of Education with a focus on primary students. Martina McGovern will continue to assist in Grevillea. Veda will move over from Banksia to support the students in Casuarina. Banksia and Red Hill will both begin the year with one assistant, while they await graduates from the parent toddler program to emerge and fill their vacancies. The remaining Cycle 1 assistants will continue in their current classrooms.

Nicole Chudzinski will be directing the Gumnut program for younger students, while Viv Moir will be running the second classroom for older children. Assistant(s) for Gumnut will be hired for the hours required over the summer.

Lastly, I would like to thank our casual and relief staff, without whom, we could not operate. In particular, I would like to thank Sarah Gowans, Anne Follis, Melinda McRedmond and Nicola Schultz each of whom filled in at a moment's notice time and time again. Sarah in particular jumped into Cycle 2, Cycle 3 and Gumnut whenever called upon for extended periods and Melinda once again joined the Red Hill team as their number grew over the course of the year.

I should end this passage with; *"subject to change without notice..."* as one can never be 100% sure, but I am pleased with the team and the plan for 2012; and look forward to its challenges.

Jack Rice  
Principal, CMS

## FROM THE BOARD

We have come to the end of another busy year and the Board is pleased to say that we feel like 2012 is going to be bigger and better. Last week we hosted a drinks and nibbles for the wonderful staff at the school and were really happy to see the turn-out and feel the general good vibes in the room. It was great to get a chance to say thank-you to everyone at the school, teachers, assistants and admin staff alike, who make it such a lovely place for our children to be.

One of the nibbles served at the drink was these little cheesy biscuits, which proved so popular that we had several requests for the recipe. So in the spirit of sharing good food that is so much a part of this time of year, we would like to share this recipe with all of you in the hope that when you feel like something a little savoury after all the mince pies, pudding and Christmas cake, you'll have these at the ready.

We wish all the CMS community a very safe, happy and relaxing holiday and we'll see you in 2012.

CMS Board.

### Cheddar Cheese Biscuits

*(From The Women's Weekly 'The Big Book of Beautiful Biscuits')*

1 cup plain flour  
2 tablespoons self-raising flour  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon cayenne  
125g butter  
2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese  
125g cheddar cheese  
1 tablespoon lemon juice.

Sift dry ingredients into bowl, rub in butter and grated cheeses; mix to a soft dough with lemon juice. Shape mixture into a roll 38cm long, wrap in greaseproof paper, then aluminium foil; refrigerate at least 3 hours (or freeze for 20-30 minutes). Cut roll into slices 5mm thick, place on greased oven trays. Bake in moderate oven 15 minutes until light golden brown. Cool on trays. Makes about 80. Try not to eat them all before your guests arrive.

## Montessori National Curriculum

—A message from Megan Tyne, Executive Director, Montessori Australia Foundation (MAF)

Today MAF received official notification from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) that the Montessori National Curriculum has been recognised as an alternative national curriculum framework to be included on ACARA's Recognition Register.

This is a fantastic achievement and has positive implications for everyone working in Montessori classrooms, not only in Australia, but also worldwide.

ACARA established a very rigorous recognition process to determine the extent to which a well-established alternative national curriculum can deliver comparable educational outcomes for students to those based on the Australian National Curriculum. ACARA have advised that our curriculum aligns with the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, meets the particular principles and guidelines in relation to the Shape of the Australian Curriculum V3 Dec 2010, and allows for broadly comparable educational outcomes in English, mathematics, science and history by the end of Year 10.

The recognition is almost completely unqualified and further acknowledges our different approach to learning, the different approach to ICT in the early years, that our history program begins with the universe following through human civilisations to the local level, and notes the role of Montessori materials and activities in delivering the curriculum. We could not be happier with the level of recognition attained and the understanding ACARA has gained of the Montessori approach.

Many individuals have been involved in the initial development of the Montessori National Curriculum and ongoing refinement, discussions and negotiations with ACARA. This includes members of the National Curriculum Advisory Committee without whose input the Montessori National Curriculum would not have been formulated. Special thanks needs to be extended to the ongoing contributions of Dr Jean Miller, David Kahn from NAMTA and Dr Susan Feez from the University of New England. Jean, David and Susan's incredible grasp of essential Montessori principles, deep pedagogical knowledge and professionalism have contributed to a document of great integrity of which we can be proud. A special additional acknowledgement to Susan, who as the overall editor, has expertly crafted a document that beautifully encapsulates Montessori principles and practices and will be of lasting benefit to all Montessorians.

MAF would also like to acknowledge and thank the recognition committee at ACARA and in particular Wendy Engliss and Rob Randall who have been working tirelessly, patiently and professionally with us over the past two years to reach this outcome.

Subscriber schools will be sent a copy of the ACARA Recognition Recommendation wording and the final copy of the Montessori National Curriculum early next week.

We will now need to hold discussions with State and Territory registration authorities to support schools to implement the Montessori National Curriculum with a particular emphasis on quality assurance, something which MAF has been able to work on with the knowledge that this would be important for the process of curriculum implementation. What a great way to finish 2011 and to celebrate our achievements, as we move into 2012 with a strong and cohesive Montessori community, highlighting the benefits of working together.