



## Principal's Report

Shelagh Powell

### Welcome

Here we are into the third month of 2010 and our first Courtyard Courier for the year. For new families joining us we extend a warm welcome to you all and hope you enjoy becoming part of our community network that will enable friendships to be established and to grow. The feeling of belonging, in the wider sense, contributes to inner well-being, security and identity for everyone. The articles are contributions made by many people associated in one way or another with the Courtyard and are intended to inform you about news relating to the preschool and families attending. Term 1 is traditionally a busy term, and as you will have noticed from the Calendar of Events, this one is no exception. It is also the shortest term with Easter at the beginning of April this year.

We have commenced the year with a number of social activities, and it is wonderful to see so many families come along and enjoy these occasions. The shared morning tea provided an opportunity to mix and mingle over morning tea and a chat while the children enjoyed playing with friends. The camp out was a great success with both grassed areas at capacity with an assortment of tents and bedding. Once the children had had their fun and retired for the night, the adults settled down to test their skills at cards and I understand found a champion within their midst. The coffee morning at the Addington Co-op was well attended and this week we look forward to a Parent/Child evening before we settle down to the business of the AGM.

We welcomed Debbie at the beginning of the year and we are enjoying getting to know her as she settles into life at the Courtyard. Debbie has contributed a profile on herself for your information in this Courier. Danielle is settling into her role as Team Leader in Room 1 and we are very fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and dedicated teacher like Danielle in a leadership role. As we increase our roll in Room 1, we will have three teachers in the classroom, the same as Room 2. We will be seeking to employ a new teacher before the commencement of Term 2 and will let you know when we have appointed someone.

The long anticipated blog site is up and running, and we are enjoying experimenting with it in order to be able to bring you some little snapshots of either planned or spontaneous activities that happen during the day. We hope you have had an opportunity to look at the camp out photos and the Room 2 children raising the flag from Graubunden in Austria. We appreciate we are still very much at the novice stage of blogging, but I am confident we will get better, as we learn the secrets of formatting.

After Easter the teaching team is attending the Montessori Conference being held here in Christchurch at Lincoln University. This conference is held bi-annually and provides a great platform for networking with other Montessori teachers throughout New Zealand. The theme of the conference is 'In Service of the Child' with some great presenters leading workshops over the course of the three days.

We wish Paula and Danielle all the best as they start the last year of study towards the Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (ECE) and to Helen who has begun Book 2 towards her Montessori Diploma. Debbie is keen to start her Montessori Diploma in the second part of the year when the course starts up again.

The teaching team has introduced a new 'Planning for Learning' format for the last parent interview delivered six months prior to a child turning five. The new format will specifically relate to what learning has happened in the previous six months with a focus on work skills and dispositions and emphasis on where to for the lead up to turning five. We will also discuss the option of staying with us beyond five and offering the opportunity to read our pack on the benefits of staying beyond five.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to families to take care with parking when dropping off and picking up in the morning. The triangle outside our car park and next to our neighbours signals a 'no parking area' for obvious safety reasons and we request families refrain from parking there even if only for a few minutes. The car park is for families dropping off or picking up who have other small children in the car to consider. Otherwise please park on the road. If you are a family using the car park, we request that you turn around in the car park and not back out. These small requests may seem insignificant but you would be surprised at the number of people who lodge complaints about dangerous parking and use of the car park, especially in the mornings.

We look forward to our next event, which is the Parent/Child Evening on Thursday 11 March and our Easter Picnic and Easter Egg Hunt on Wednesday 31 March.

On behalf of the teaching team, we wish you a happy first term.

Ka Kite, Shelagh

# Chairperson's Report

Siobhan Bergin



Dear Parents,

Welcome to existing and new families who have joined the Courtyard in 2010.

The Board of Trustees have already met to identify actions that we need to proceed with in 2010. The major focus remains the upgrading of the outdoor environment and our property representative, Emma Godfrey has dedicated a considerable amount of time and work to get the initial stages of this project underway. A huge thank you is extended to Emma for getting the ball rolling on this one and motivating us all to be committed to completing this project by the end of 2010. The initial proposed plans for the outdoor project are on display outside the office and we encourage you to take the time to have a look and provide us with your constructive feedback.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to extend a huge thank you to Danielle for stepping in as acting Team Leader at the beginning of Term 1, and also now to congratulate her on her promotion to Team Leader of Room 1, already it is great to see what Danielle is planning and working on with our children.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 25 March 2010 at 7.30pm. This is a good time to hear what has been happening over the last year and hear some of the future plans as we move forward into 2010. But also more importantly it is also time to elect new members onto the Board. If you require a nomination form please collect one from Gillian. We ask that you give some thought to the skills and talents that you may be willing to share. The strength of the Board of Trustees is its diversity of skills and its ability to work as a team. This year we have some Board members stepping down so it would be great to see some members of the community come forward to fill these vacancies. If you are interested please free to contact either myself or Shelagh.

See you at the AGM.

Kind Regards,  
Siobhan

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## Profile

Debbie Cocks



My name is Debbie Cocks and I am the new teacher at the Courtyard. I have the privilege of working with the Room 1 children in the mornings and Room 2 children in the afternoons.

I have lived in the community from the age of ten, attending Somerfield School, then Christchurch South Intermediate and finally Cashmere High School. I have been married to my husband Dave for almost 28 years, and have four children; three boys and one girl, ranging in age from 25 to 11 years.

I worked alongside my husband in our Printing Supply Business for over twenty years. In 2006 I decided to fulfil my dream and enrolled at Christchurch Teachers' College to start my Early Childhood career. After completing the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, I was employed by the University of Canterbury, caring for infants and toddlers.

Whilst at College, I was fortunate to spend five weeks on a Teaching Practice placement at Airdmhor Montessori. I was impressed by the Centre and became interested in the Montessori Philosophy. In my third year of training, I chose a philosophy paper that allowed

me to spend the year looking further into Maria Montessori's life, her interest in child development and methods of education. At the end of that time I had decided that this was a philosophy that I wanted to work within.

Therefore, when the vacancy arose here at the Courtyard I applied straight away and was absolutely thrilled to be accepted to the position! I am looking forward to beginning the Montessori Diploma in July of this year.

My aim is to work alongside the other teachers as we 'provide an environment of excellence, rich in those experiences required by children for their self-development'.

I have been impressed by the strong sense of community here at the Courtyard, and enjoyed the 'camp out' on Friday 19 February. I would like to thank everyone for your very warm welcome and acceptance.

# Emotional Intelligence – A Montessori Perspective



Paula Scott

Maria Montessori had some fundamental beliefs about raising children; beliefs which she linked strongly to her humanitarian ideals for a peaceful world. At the foundation of all of these beliefs sat **a deep respect for the child** and a constant striving to promote **independence** within them.

Role modelling is our most powerful tool as a parent, the kind of respect children show others is a reflection of the kind of respect they themselves have been shown. This in turn will result in a young person who can express emotions appropriately and react with the correct level of emotion.

Guiding children to achieve self-moderation and autonomy of their emotions is a parent's ultimate goal. A child who becomes robust, philosophical and fair is a rich reward for our efforts. This will not occur overnight, it is a journey fraught with hiccups and there will be times when we have moments of failure and moments of success, good days and bad days, pure joy and deep despair as we support our children to cope on the rollercoaster ride of life. It is our contribution, in partnership with our communities for us to create emotionally competent young people.

Some tips for supporting emotional growth:

- \* Avoid projections; these often leave a child carrying blame. *"You always break things, you're so clumsy"* could be approached with *"I'm so cross that so many of our lovely things are being broken. I want you to move with care and slow down"*.

- \* Assess the child's developmental age. How fair and realistic are your expectations?  
*Expecting a child to be responsible for keeping their clothes clean and dry during play may be unfair for a child under 5 years of age.*
- \* Try to truly understand what is happening for your child and cultivate empathy by remembering what it felt like to be a child.  
*Can you remember how it felt to be considered 'naughty' for a genuine mistake?*
- \* Take care of your own emotional wellbeing and manage your own emotions first.  
*If you are really angry, try to remove yourself to calm down rather than react in the moment. Take time out and make every effort to clarify why you are angry, this will help to add truth to your response.*
- \* Be authentic when expressing your emotions. Children know whether we are being honest or false. A child will listen with more than their ears if they are gauging an authentic emotional response from an adult.  
*It's good to express your emotions if you are clarifying how you feel about a situation.*

*'The ultimate source of all advances in human civilisation – political, social, individual – can be found in the day-to-day innovations in child rearing invented by each caretaker and child in their developing relationship.'* (Quote – Lloyd de Mause)

Paula

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## Fundraising Report

Bernie McCarthy



The first term of 2010 is well underway and fundraising at the Courtyard is starting to get busy.

This term we are getting the children to draw self portraits and these will be made into one tea towel design for the preschool. There will be a sample tea towel left in the cloakrooms for everyone to see how they will look and next week you will be able to place your orders. These are lovely keepsakes and make fantastic presents for family and friends.

We are also preparing for term two when we will be holding a movie night and publishing a recipe book. The recipe book will contain all your favourite recipes so we ask that every family

submit a recipe for a main meal, baking and one other item (eg. soup, sauce, pickles etc). I will be putting out a notice soon asking for these recipes and then we will be collating the recipe book and having them on sale late next term.

Once again please feel free to come and talk to me with any ideas you might have for fundraising, or any offers of help will be greatly appreciated. Please generously support our fundraising efforts as it is really important to supplement the preschool's funding with the adoption of 20 Hours ECE.

Thanks and regards,  
Bernie

# Courtyard Blog Site

Helen Westrupp



Trying to keep up with expanding technology can be an ongoing battle for any preschool teacher and just when we thought we were getting on top of it, we decided to set ourselves the challenge of learning how to use a blog site. The adventure began after reading an article about a North Island kindergarten successfully using a site to share information about the day to day experiences of the teachers and children. We all thought this would be a brilliant way to share information with parents/whanau from the wider community, as we have many children with relatives or friends overseas. We also think it is a great way to provide families with small snapshots of activities the preschool and children participate in and contribute to over a day/week and term. We have often seen some wonderful things happening at preschool and wished we

could share the moment with families. Initially, we have decided the information on the blog would follow our planned events of the year such as the camp out, Easter picnic, and school trips etc. However we also want to add spontaneous activities that will happen during the day, such as raising different flags and outings for full day and extended day children. As we become more experienced bloggers, we can also add small video clips. We attached this blog site to our Courtyard website as an easy way to access it and parents are also able to follow this web address <http://xyzabtest.blogspot.com/> to view the blog. So with a bit of practice we will all be adding posts to the blog site as often as the opportunities arise.

## Understanding What Grace and Courtesy Really Is

Grace and Courtesy lessons are designed to give children the skills to practice ways of dealing with a social situation. These lessons promote harmony in the very broadest sense. Grace is that harmony between mind and body, courtesy being the harmony between oneself and others. The social aspect of these lessons focuses on the goal of establishing and maintaining satisfying relationships in the classrooms, allowing a means for each individual to be satisfied within the group.

Montessori presents lessons of Grace and Courtesy along with those of Practical Life. This is, of course, understandable as social skills should ideally help to oil the wheels of social living and should in fact spring from the heart.

At the beginning of establishing a class, there is a need to concentrate on grace and courtesy exercises, along with the exercises of practical life, in order to establish what Montessori calls the 'right rapport' between the children and the environment. Grace and Courtesy lessons are presented so there is an atmosphere of peace and communication in the classroom. For example, the focus of these lessons might be to model how children can negotiate their way around the classroom, or appropriate things to say in certain specific situations - in this way children become more at ease with themselves and with other people. They also become aware of more ways to effectively communicate their needs.

Generally Grace and Courtesy lessons are given in small or large groups, with the children given the opportunity to role-play in a specific situation. Some of these lessons on Grace and Courtesy may include:

- How to get someone's attention.
- How to stand in a line.
- How to interrupt when necessary.
- How to ask for a turn or a space.
- How to tell someone you did not like something.
- How to hand objects to another person, especially sharp objects like scissors and knives.
- How to walk around a mat.
- How to greet someone in the morning/afternoon.

These exercises in Grace and Courtesy are normally given over a considerable period of time and as new children start these are repeated.

Grace and Courtesies are invaluable tools in which we incorporate daily into the programme, and it is very gratifying to see the progress children make in these areas and how they are often transitioned into the home.

# Our Children's Experiences ... Supporting Healthy Development



Nicola Woollaston

**"Education is the *kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel*"**

*Socrates - Ancient Greek Philosopher*

Many people assume that as a trained ECE teacher I sought out and selected a Montessori programme based on my professional knowledge. The truth is, four years ago when I started looking for a preschool for Emily I tried to keep an open mind. I visited five ECE centres, I spoke to the staff, to other parents, to the children and to friends and colleagues. How did I decide on the Courtyard? In the end, during my first visit as I waited to speak to one of the staff I watched an incident unfold in the sandbox. This one incident, involving a volcano, four-five children, some enthusiastic stomping, some pushing, a few tears, a lot of communication, collaboration and problem solving sold me on the spot.

Why? To be truthful it was a gut reaction, but also a confirmation of my understanding of Montessori at the time, a sense that these children were engaged, exploring, conscious of, and supporting one another. It was the only place that I had felt comfortable with the sense the 'child' was at the heart of the programme.

And now? After almost three years in Room 2 Emily (6) is flourishing at school, Madeline (4) and Liam (3) are thriving at the Courtyard and Fin (17 months) will follow... the staff, the programme and environment at the preschool have repeatedly reaffirmed my initial reaction and assessment. As I further research early development for my second book I find myself increasingly grateful for the experiences of our Courtyard children. Since space and time is limited let us consider just three aspects of how the Montessori philosophy, the Courtyard programme and teachers support the healthy development of our children.

## Repetition

Babies are born with such potential, over 100 billion brain cells, each capable of making up to 15,000 connections. These connections are developed as the result of each experience, sensation and relationship...and are strengthened through repetition. Good and bad experiences, interactions and sensations experienced on a repeated basis help to shape future learning potential, to determine how each child interacts with the world around them, and how they view themselves.

Consider the work cycles provided at the Courtyard, the specific materials or activities and the opportunities for repetition, self-correction and problem solving. How many times have you

watched your little one pour water from one container to the next, sweep the beads into the circle in the practical life area, or attempt to build the pink tower or match the sound shakers in the wider classroom? Each time they repeat these activities they are helping to form more concrete connections in their brain about their experience and learning.

## Responsive Supportive Relationships

It is not just opportunities and environment that influence learning. More and more we are recognizing the impact that the social context has on learning and importantly, on healthy social development. Children supported within the context of responsive relationships actually develop more connections, have less issues with unregulated emotion and the accompanying chemical imbalances that can affect healthy development. Consider how each child is welcomed by name each morning, the way in which teachers genuinely appreciate the efforts our children make in their art, activities and the exploration of their environment...and how they show them this. The words that they use, the way they allow children to lean on them when they have need. All of this fosters a sense of security, trust and a platform from which they have the confidence to explore and learn.

## Opportunity and Success

In our preschool we are fortunate to have fabulous materials, toys and activities in a wonderful environment. The teachers present these so that they are inviting, they engage curiosity, and foster participation. I am very aware that although there is a progression and an increasing level of difficulty in tasks and activities during the preschool years, that the teachers continuously assess our children's capabilities and offer them opportunities to succeed. Carefully selecting and introducing new activities as our children show that they are ready. The result? As the saying goes "Nothing succeeds like success" (Sir Arthur Helps). This positive experience encourages our children to look for similar experiences, to explore, experiment and trust themselves and their abilities. That drive or desire to learn, to engage and trust yourself is not just beneficial for brain development...but for a lifetime.

## In Brief ...

- Notice of Withdrawal Forms have been sent out to families leaving the preschool at the end of this term, and if you think you might be leaving the preschool for reasons other than attending primary school please see Shelagh.
- Fees are charged for the days your child is booked for during the term, inclusive of public holidays and teacher only day.
- In case of a civil emergency that involves evacuating the centre, Somerfield School is our Civil Defence meeting place.
- Fire and Earthquake drills are practiced once a term.
- Teachers will be available for interviews from 8.00am, after session on a Friday or after extended/full day for morning parents and after session at 3.45pm for afternoon parents.
- We ask parents to leave the classroom by 9.00am so the children and teachers can settle into the morning programme.
- Please feel free to add anything to your child's profile book in reference to learning stories or any information about your child's interests and experiences that we can follow and extend in the preschool environment.
- Teachers are available to support families on the first school visit prior to commencing school. However, if families have already withdrawn prior to the visits, for example if families withdraw at the end of the term and school visits are scheduled for the first two weeks of the following term prior to your child starting we are unable to extend release time to accommodate this, but we will provide a transition to school letter.
- Please read reviewed policies by the sign in sheets and add any comments that you feel might be relevant. If you are happy with review or you have added comments please add your signature.
- In keeping with our policy, we ask that children who vomit or have diarrhoea be kept home for 24-48 hours.

