



Principal's Report

Shelagh Powell

Welcome

A very warm welcome to everyone at the Courtyard and a special welcome to new parents/whanau and caregivers joining us since our last newsletter went out. The early years of your child's life are a critical influence on lifelong learning and development and our community at the Courtyard recognise and respond to this.

For those families who will leave us at the end of the year, we bid you farewell and hope the next stepping-stone in your child's education is as rewarding as the time spent at the Courtyard. A big thank you for your support and the contributions you have made to the preschool during your time with us, it has been through your commitment to the preschool that we continue to grow and achieve so much.

2009 has slipped by as previous years have also done and here we are in November starting to think of Christmas and all the festivities associated with this. It is a wonderful time of year to look forward to, and the children begin to get excited about social get-togethers with friends and family and the tantalising possibilities of what 'Santa' might bring! As we move into the second half of the term I urge you to refer to your Calendar of Events, as it is usual for the last few weeks to become quite hectic and busy, both here at preschool and out in the community.

2009 has been another fabulous year at the preschool. It is always fulfilling to look back and see what has been accomplished by the many people who are dedicated to ensuring the preschool continues to flourish and succeed in its pursuit of consistent quality practices in all areas of the preschool from teaching, management, administration and governance. To this end I thank all those who work diligently both in front of and behind the scenes on various projects big or small that enable us to stand up and be counted at the cutting edge of excellence in early childhood.

The teaching team have enjoyed a busy year, with Paula and Danielle continuing with their studies towards their degrees and Helen has been busy these last six months studying towards her Montessori Diploma. Up to date theory provokes interesting discussions at staff meetings and encourages us to think about why we do the things we do, and review our practices to make changes for the better.

As our waiting list continues to increase with a number of families desperate to join our community, we are currently in the process of advertising for a teacher to work alongside Monika and I in Room 1 next term. This means we will have three teachers in the morning and extended/full day classes, thereby enabling us to

increase the number of children attending Room 1. Room 2 currently operates with three teachers, as has Room 1 in the past and we see this as a successful solution to alleviating the waiting list. We will keep you up to date as the process evolves and we appoint someone to this role.

Our Christmas party is booked for Sunday 29 November with this being a lovely day for families to come together to celebrate the Christmas season and we are sure the children will enjoy a fun day, with 'Santa' set to make a guest appearance. A notice about this fun day will be sent out via the classrooms (if it hasn't already preceded the Courier!). During the next few weeks, the children will begin practicing for our end of year concert, which will be held at Our Lady of the Assumption School Hall on Sparks Road. A notice will be following the Courier in regard to this event. As there is currently a 'younger' group of children at preschool (we have only six children leaving us to attend primary school) our concert will be small with limited expectations of our children.

Our Parent/Child evening was well attended, and we hope families who otherwise do not get the opportunity to see what their children are up to were able to spend some time watching various activities in progress. Children enjoy showing their skills and interests, and it provides connection between home and preschool.

Catherine Smith will be back again this week on Thursday during outside time, to take those lovely candid photos of your child at play. For many years Catherine has been taking photos at the same time of year and I can highly recommend these reasonably priced photos as Christmas presents for families and friends.

Thank you:

On behalf of the teaching team, Gillian, Board of Trustees and myself – thank you for your help and support over the past year. It is very rewarding to work alongside such wonderful families/whanau and children.

I take this opportunity to extend my admiration to our Board of Trustees for all the great work they do as a governing body in their own time and especially Siobhan Bergin our Chairperson whose support and encouragement never falters.

From us all at the Courtyard, we wish you a very happy and relaxing Christmas break. Please keep safe wherever your holiday takes you and we look forward to seeing you in 2010.

Ka Kite, Shelagh

Chairperson's Report

Siobhan Bergin



Dear Parents,

Here we are in the midst of Term 4 with Christmas fast approaching. There is no doubt that this is a time of change as we have sadly said farewell to a number of children over the last couple of terms as they embark on their school journey. But it is very pleasing to be welcoming the many new families who have joined our community, and we look forward to getting to know you all a little better.

The fundraising team, led by Bernie McCarthy, did a fabulous job of organising the quiz fundraiser in Term 3. It was great to see so many families taking the time to support this event as well as coming together as a community. I am sure under Bernie's direction the next year will see more great fundraising events rolled out which meet the objectives of bringing the preschool community together and at the same time raising funds for specific equipment and resources for the preschool.

The roll out of 20 Hours ECE in Term 4 has run smoothly and we are grateful for the positive feedback received and delighted with the prompt payment of optional charges. We have a few minor administrative matters to iron out but otherwise all is going good so far.

The playground sub-committee have been working away on the upgrade of the playground and outdoor environment, this project now is being led by Emma Godfrey (Board Member). We are close to getting some conceptual plans to view and hope that at some stage in Term 1 we will be able to bring these to the preschool community for review and feedback on. In the meantime over this Christmas there will be extensive work done

on drainage and driveways so nothing will be visually changing but these works are essential and have been waiting to be sorted for some time.

We are currently planning and setting financial targets for the next 12 months, so still lots to attend to before year end which also includes interviewing for an additional teacher in 2010.

It has been a busy year for the Board and teaching team and I would like to thank everyone for all the additional time and effort and expertise that you have dedicated to the preschool that has contributed to another successful year.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to wish you all a merry and safe festive season and we look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Christmas party and Concert and then back from holidays in 2010.

Kind Regards,
Siobhan

Fundraising Report

Bernie McCarthy



Welcome to the fundraising report for the Courtyard Courier. Firstly I would like to give a huge thanks to everyone who made the Quiz Night a success. Thanks to all the parents and associates of the preschool who donated prizes, the teachers for working with the children to make the fabulous artwork, the people who helped on the night and for everyone who came on the night and participated and bought our auction items. The Quiz Night raised over \$2,000 which will directly benefit each and every one of our children. What for me was most important was the fact that it was an event that had such a strong community atmosphere, which is one of the objectives the fundraising team has. So thank you one and all.

Next year we are planning to hire out a movie theatre at Hornby and have a movie night, so keep this in mind and we will look forward to having another fun night for the preschool.

Please feel free to approach me if you have any great ideas for fundraising or if you want to help out in any way.

Thanks and regards,
Bernie

Getting Kids In Sync

Paula Scott



On Wednesday 28 October Shelagh and I were extremely fortunate to attend a one day workshop with a pediatric occupational therapist, Genevieve Jereb. She is a long serving and accomplished therapist working with children with sensory integration dysfunction worldwide.

The focus of the workshop was 'Getting Kids in Sync' – A Sensory Approach to Challenges Associated with ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning and Behavioural Problems.

'What is sensory integration dysfunction?' I hear you ask.

Gen miraculously managed to open up our understanding of how we all learn; how we learn to integrate our entire life experiences by organizing all of the millions of sensations we are continuously receiving. She was able to clearly show the pathways of learning and what our brain does with these experiences to create them into thoughts, feelings, ideas, dispositions, skills and knowledge. In short, how these sensory experiences make us, us!

The importance of moving to learn is paramount to how the 'all important' vestibular system is creating the motorway of learning to our amazing brain. But what if that motorway keeps jamming up? What if it is one big traffic jam that has trouble clearing itself? Well, it's probably not signposted well and you will need a map. The vestibular system is the point of reference for all other systems in our brain. It's the 'YOU ARE HERE!' on that map. A well defined map gives you access to all the information you need to function physically and cognitively.

For children who find formal learning difficult, the children who are challenged physically and experience social and behavioural difficulties, and for the children who sit somewhere on the spectrum for the dyspraxias, attention deficit disorder or who may display autistic tendencies, this woman was able to provide us with a pathway to support them to achieve wellbeing and autonomy for them to be the best they can be.

Children have to learn to modulate (control) their sensory systems and for many this can be a difficult task. Children have fluid nervous

systems and if they are still developmentally in the primal 'fright, flight, fright' mode because of sensory processing issues, then they are living with high levels of adrenalin and cortisone in their systems. This can make it very difficult for them to function successfully.

Some golden gems that Gen doled out regularly were...

* Crawl, crawl and crawl some more! Even if you're an adult, crawl with your children, play crawling chasing. It strengthens the body core which gives stability to our physical frame. It establishes the point of gravity which gives the foundation to grow, manoeuvre and learn with our bodies.

* Move well away from formal learning (writing and reading) until the child has established their core stability. This means lots and lots of physical work. Pushing and pulling, climbing, swinging, crawling, jumping with two feet together. Real work such as digging in the garden/sandpit, window washing, pulling trolleys etc. (it makes work valid and meaningful for the child). Avoid sitting and working at tables, working on the floor is great. Put your babies on the floor and keep them crawling for as long as possible.

* Behaviour is a symptom. If a child seems clumsy or reactive it may be that they have difficulty moderating all of the sensory messages they are receiving all at once. Through observation we can find out what is most organizing for this child and put predictive strategies in place before the recognized 'trigger' moment arrives.

It is assuring to know that our own Maria Montessori built her philosophy and method on this same understanding. We can all take great comfort knowing that the experiences our children are provided with here at preschool go a significant way to giving them sound opportunities to create stronger sensory integration discrimination.

We came away with that 'Oh Wow!' feeling and we can honestly say it was one of the most clarifying, affirming and inspiring days I have ever spent in professional development.

Paula

Parent Liaison Room 1

Angie Partridge



Hi, my name is Angie Partridge, I am the Parent Liaison for Room 1. My husband Tim and I have two girls, Ella in Room 1 and Lily. Other than chasing around after the girls I do the accounts for our business and love getting out in the garden with the family. My job as Parent Liaison for Room 1 is to be a smiling face for new parents, to be

another support other than the teaching staff, to answer questions and to share my experiences as a parent at the Courtyard.

Angie

Helping Our Children to be the Best Little People they can Possibly Be



Danielle Graham

At the beginning of this term we were lucky enough to have Adele Orangi from SPARK speak at our Parent Education evening on the importance of active movement for under five year olds. This was a very engaging and informative evening and provided everyone with some great tools for getting children up and moving.

Adele guided us through how important physical movement is for children's brain development. Their social skills, emotional well-being and cognitive and physical growth, as well as behaviour outcomes hinge on their need to 'move to learn'. Adele spoke about the physical needs of young children and highlighted to us that their needs are very different to the physical needs of adults. In my opinion the most significant part of Adele's presentation was her passion for advocating that too many children are 'sitting' to do activities rather than getting down onto the floor to move, learn and explore. When children work on the floor, their neck and back muscles are being developed and they are being encouraged to cross their midline and build core strength.

Adele emphasised that to grow confident, competent and secure learners who are well rounded and capable communicators, then it is imperative that their early years be filled with active movement opportunities. This is because active movement is the core to establishing a healthy mind, body and spirit and enhances all other learning a child may engage in throughout their life.

At the Courtyard we provide active movement opportunities for all our children on a regular basis. Music and movement times occur three times a week and at these times songs are incorporated into our group time to encourage children to move their bodies and cross their midline. We dance and move to a beat for rhythm and balance, use bean bags to encourage catching and to develop eye/hand co-ordination and turn our bodies upside down to keep the cerebral fluid in our cortex flowing.

The outside environment is a wonderful place for children to move, climb, jump and swing and within our environment the children are

provided with a challenge course every day. This promotes stability and balance, co-ordination and strength. Large boxes are provided for climbing on, jumping off and constructing with to encourage your child to understand height and discriminate distance when moving from one place to another. Bars are vital for swinging and developing upper body strength and builds up children's arm muscles, this in turn will aid them in the future for writing.

Within the extended day programme, the full day children play a wide variety of gross motor games which involve chasing, climbing through hoops, jumping over cones and weaving over and under ropes. All of these activities promote the two hemispheres of the brain and encourage them to 'talk to each other' and share information, which awakens the brain for formal learning.

As you can see, positive early movement experiences impact on the ways young children learn and grow. Moving to learn is essential. By strengthening positive concepts of active movement through knowledgeable interactions, as well as by providing a contextual environment both at home and here at Montessori, children are empowered to become confident and competent movers.

For more information visit our parent library. This is situated in the entrance area of Room 1 and there are a range of informative books and DVD's on how children learn.

Danielle

Parent Liaison Room 2

Nichola Loose

Hi, my name is Nichola Loose and I am the Mum of Jorja in Room 2, Sophia in Room 1 and Eva who comes on my hip. You may have had a chat to me already in my small role at the Courtyard as Parent Liaison for Room 2. We understand that starting your children in a preschool comes with a lot of emotions for you and your children - as the Parent Liaison for Room 2, I am available as another

level of support for parents new and old to the Courtyard in helping to continue to foster the community spirit. I touch base with the parents of new children in Room 2 after the first few weeks for a general chat mostly and enquire if there are any questions that parents may have - I look forward to a chat and answering any questions at anytime. Nichola



Become a Fan

Michelle Truettum



They say brand nirvana is having a strong base of loyal customers and minimising churn – those customers who defect.

Organisations the world over want to reproduce, by marketing artifice, the relationship dynamics that will not only retain their hard-earned customers, but also, crucially, turn more of them into “raving fans” – because nothing beats referral power.

Word of mouth pull is age-old but timeless. It underpins social media, the new engagement and exchange frontier. The most compelling sites with rapid and prolific market penetration require users to spread them to interact with them - think Facebook, YouTube, Twitter...

Brand equity is the measure of how many customers feel invested in a reciprocal relationship with a given brand and are high value consumers over time. It's shorthand for a preference set that communicates values, quality and trust. The more connections we have to a brand (service or product) through knowledge, empathy, identity and experience, the more we will continue to use it.

It's the Pygmalion effect.

Conversely, of course, if you have a bad experience, you jeopardise that relationship. But marketers will tell you that if you have enough residual brand equity, you won't lose them the first or even second or third time. Basically, if the customer was a “raving fan” of your brand, he or she will give you a bit of leeway.

At first glance, all this can seem somewhat removed from a small preschool in suburban Christchurch with an even smaller marketing budget administered by a group of volunteers. But we're sitting on a goldmine and we've all got a part to play.

We have what the big guys - the ones with deep pockets and professional marketing and creative teams – want. For example:

- A distinctive, clear, relevant and compelling proposition (a Montessori preschool programme)
- A (brand) reputation for quality and excellence (teachers, resources, environment, community)
- The ability to replicate the service/product time and time again (consistent brand experience)
- Relationship with a niche group of consumers who place a premium value on the brand
- Repeat business - loyalty
- Word of mouth referral – the ultimate endorsement.

We all need to understand just what we have got – the stuff that makes marketing managers very happy – and leverage it.

It's not about putting ads in the paper or the radio, or a few posters here and there – although these tactical communication tools all have a part to play. The real marketing gold to be mined is to have more of our own people referring the Courtyard to family and friends.

We need to talk it up to build our brand reputation amongst an interested and, hopefully, appreciative audience.

It's not about being artificial and giving a spiel; it's about telling what you know and like about the school. Take the opportunity when it's right. The annual questionnaire is a timely prompt.

Although comparatively short and infrequent it does provide an excellent snapshot of your thoughts, ideas, accolades and recommendations. It's one of the few formal communication opportunities we have and your time and input is greatly valued.

While the results provide insights to guide strategic and operational decisions, there is enormous value from a marketing perspective too. Watch this space...

Michelle

Learning Story

Helen Westrupp



Learning stories are an attractive way to present the children's learning to family and whanau. As the stories collect in the profile books, everyone is able to see the child's ongoing or changing interests. As a new feature in the Courtyard Courier, a teacher will feature a story capturing a moment of learning from either a group experience or an individual child. This will showcase the different ways teachers write stories and give everyone a 'sneak peek' into a variety of children's interests.

Finn's Early Morning Treat

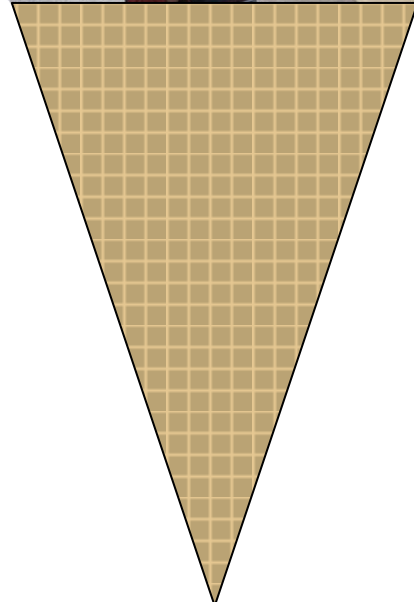
We all know how Finn loves using his imagination and creating inventive games from the materials in the classroom. Whether it is with the maths, language or environmental equipment, something can be created out of the simplest of materials. He has no hesitation with inviting friends into his games and sharing roles with them.

So today I asked Finn if he would like to work with the geometric solids, which provides him with different solid shapes to feel and construct with. As we began drawing the solids out of their box and saying their name, Finn started to assimilate them with familiar shapes. "That's a pyramid" he said retrieving and looking at the triangular pyramid object. It wasn't until we were nearly finished taking all the solids out of the box that Finn found one which instantly captured his imagination. "That's like an ice cream" he demonstrated, turning the cone solid upside down and pretending to lick it. "Here you can have this one" Finn said handing me the triangular pyramid upside down. From then on the solids became Finn's 'ice cream shop', where he created a variety of different ones. When Duncan arrived to have a look, Finn passed one over to him saying "Duncan, here you have one."

What a fun and delicious time we had with the 'ice creams' this morning.

As Finn explores the geometric solids through imagination, he is constantly acquiring learning about the solids as he feels and builds with them. Finn's curiosity to try out a different combination of 'ice creams' has provided him with time to practice problem solving skills by finding out how to make the solids balance on top of his cone.

We will continue to provide activities that allow Finn the opportunity to work with the materials in a creative way. Through this active exploration of materials he will gain a growing recognition of concepts within his interests like maths, language and the environment.



In Brief ...

- The parent copy of the Operations Manual is located in the Parent Library situated in the Room 1 Cloakroom. All Policies and Procedures are updated regularly.
- Children are required to attend one Extended Day at 4.2 years of age and two Extended Days at 4.6 years of age in preparation for school. The Full Day option is open to all families and you are welcome to enquire about availability at any time. Notices regarding places for Term 1 2010 will be sent out via the classrooms four weeks before the end of term.
- It is illegal to park on the triangle sign on the road between our car park and our neighbour's drive.
- All accounts being paid by automatic payments are required to be paid in full by 15 December 2009.
- As there still appears to be lots of 'nasty' bugs in the air, we respectfully request that you keep your child at home if in any doubt about whether they are contagious.
- Teachers will be available for interviews from 8.00am, or after session on a Friday or after Extended/Full Day for morning parents and after session at 3.45pm for afternoon parents. With our new system of holding interviews twice a year we respectfully request interviews be kept to 15 minutes.
- We ask parents to leave the classroom by 9.00am so the children and teachers can settle into the morning programme.
- All children are required to wear sunhats during outside time from Show Day until the end of Term 1.
- Term 1 2010 commences on Tuesday 2 February 2010.

