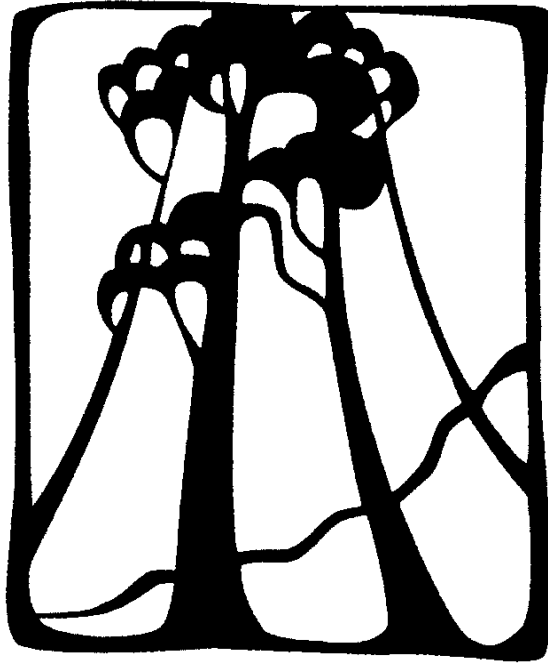


Treetops Montessori School



Vision

2001—2011

12 Beenong Rd (PO Box 59)

DARLINGTON WA 6070

Phone: 9299 6725 Fax: 9299 6724

e-mail: admin@treetops.wa.edu.au

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. VISION 1*
- 2. PURPOSE 3*
- 3. MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES 3*
- 4. MONTESSORI AT TREETOPS 6*
- 5. A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL 6*
- 6. OPERATING ENVIRONMENT 7*
- 7. DEFINING THE VISION - GOALS 9*
- 8. FUNDAMENTAL OPERATING VALUES & PRINCIPLES 10*
 - 9. DECISION DRIVERS 10*
 - 10. ENABLERS AND POTENTIAL BARRIERS 11*

1. **VISION**

Our Vision is that Treetops is a beacon; an excellent, intimate Montessori educational community which, through its children, makes a difference.

In every child at Treetops, we

- inspire a passion for excellence;
- nurture the curiosity, creativity and imagination born within us all;
- awaken the human spirit;
- encourage them to fulfil their absolute potential with respect to their intellectual, social, physical, spiritual and emotional development.

2. **PURPOSE**

We provide an environment that:

- supports a broad, harmonious and thorough education; and
- maintains Treetops' unique, positive, caring and encouraging energy, which is shared and appreciated by the wider community.

3. **MONTESSORI PRINCIPLES**

3.1 **Maria Montessori**

Maria Montessori, Educator for Peace

Maria Montessori, doctor, educator, and feminist was one of the most brilliant and original thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Her work revolutionised education in the early part of the last century and her influence continues today.

Born in Italy in 1870, she became, in 1896, the first woman to graduate in medicine from the University of Rome.

She developed her educational ideas through close observation and experimentation as well as freely using ideas from contemporary education.

Montessori had a profound respect for the child. The need to treat children with dignity, trust and patience is fundamental to her educational approach.

Her faith in the child extended to a deep concern for the future of humanity.

Montessori's View of Peace

The threat of war troubled Maria Montessori greatly. War and conflict have been part of human history from the beginning. They are one aspect of our life which we have not been able to control despite advances in knowledge. Scientific discovery has enabled considerable technological progress, the advancement of civilisation and an improvement in the level of material well being. Nevertheless this has not always produced great contentment and

happiness. Instances of intolerance, tension, frustration, disillusionment and stress abound. Increased knowledge has not been as successful in developing an understanding of and meeting the inner, personal and social needs of people, as it has been in solving the mysteries of the physical world.

Montessori's vision of peace involves social harmony, love, justice, the pursuit of knowledge and the co-operation of individuals and groups for the betterment of humanity – this peace is an active rather than a passive state. Montessori also believed that the world could only attain a genuine state of peace if individuals had first acquired their own inner peace.

What characteristics might be seen in people at peace with themselves? These might include – contentment with their lives; calmness; self-confidence; taking responsibility for themselves and their actions; tolerance of and concern for others; respect for the environment and for beauty in the world; and a sense of security. Montessori believed that the key to a peaceful future lay with the child, and that it was the nature of childhood experiences which determined an adult's character and personality.

Thus the real work of creating peace is through education where the role of education is in nurturing children to support the unfolding of their inner peace. Education must not be seen merely as teaching, the passing on of facts or the process of acquiring culture. Rather it must aid the development of the whole personality and will involve parents as well as educators. Education must foster the development of people who value themselves, who feel in control of their lives, for only then can they direct their energies to a wider community and work to build a better world. The fulfilment of this goal is the foundation for social harmony which constitutes a genuine state of peace.

Montessori's Educational Philosophy

Montessori's approach to education is child centred and is based on mutual respect and co-operation. She believed that children should be provided with an ordered and secure environment where they are free to explore and discover. An environment constructed specifically to meet the child's needs at different stages of development, which recognises children's natural love of learning, the importance of learning at their own pace and prepares them for the world they are to live in.

Montessori recognised parents as the child's prime educators for life and the important influence of the home and family on the child. Every experience to which the child is exposed is an educational experience. The process of education, to be successful, requires close co-operation and continuity between the home and school.

3.2 Respect

Our goal for children must be to allow them to develop their full potential. Fundamental to this is respect for the rights and needs of the child, starting from birth.

The uniqueness of the child and the right to be treated as an individual is paramount. The child who is accorded the same respect as an adult will be better able to develop compassion for others. When there is respect there is no need for one party to exercise power over another.

The role for adults is to support children in their growth towards independence and their quest to understand the world around them.

3.3 Order and Freedom

From their earliest years children should be provided with a safe, ordered environment where they can learn and develop through exploration and discovery. They need sensible rules and regular routines so that they can understand and feel secure about their place in the family, the home, the school and eventually, the world. An ordered environment fosters inner order, calmness and confidence in the world.

Children need opportunities to exercise choice about themselves and for themselves. A child able to work on something that interests her, that fulfils an inner need because she has chosen it, will be absorbed by that work and will experience joy in that work.

3.4 Responsibility

Children provided with opportunities for choice will quickly learn that their decisions and actions have consequences and that they must take responsibility for their actions.

Children who learn to direct their own actions will grow into independent adults, less prepared to accept domination by others and more questioning of the injustices they may see around them.

3.5 Co-operation

Montessori classes span a three year age range corresponding to different developmental stages of the child. The mix of ages provides a community of children. Older children are models for the younger ones and have the opportunity to contribute to the class by teaching the younger children, thereby increasing their own confidence and knowledge. They also acquire a sense of responsibility through being the leaders in the class.

Competition between children is reduced. The range of work offered and the range of ages means that not all children are working on the same activities or at the same level. Children are not rewarded for being better than others. The purpose of work is the acquisition of knowledge and the joy of learning, rather than the end product alone.

3.6 Self-Confidence

Children given responsibility and independence will grow in confidence in themselves. If we encourage children to do things for themselves e.g. dressing, putting things away, cleaning up, then mastering simple everyday tasks provides a foundation for growing independence.

If children are provided with opportunities to experience success at school, they will come to value and feel secure about themselves. They can only learn to care for others if they first care about themselves.

Children require, above all, encouragement for their efforts and abilities, to know they are loved and valued for who they are, not for what they have achieved.

These ideas form the basis of the Montessori ethos-philosophy-method within Montessori Schools around the world.

(Based on extracts from 'Peace – A Montessori Approach', Canberra Montessori Society Inc. 1987)

4. MONTESSORI AT TREETOPS

At Treetops, we add to the basic Montessori methodology by, or through:

- Appropriate use of technology (such as research over the internet and using digital cameras)
- Excursions into the wider world
- Opportunities to participate in music, art / craft, media and sport activities on an individual basis
- Opportunities for large group social interaction (such as drama, music and movement)
- Encouragement to be part of the local and global community
- Linking learning to real life
- Involving the older children in enterprise education
- Offering a strong LOTE (Languages Other Than English) programme at primary and secondary levels
- Supporting children with specific learning needs
- Employing trained and educated staff who are willing to think creatively, adapt methodologies to suit a variety of individual children, be flexible and use initiative
- Researching new educational ideas
- Implementing 'best educational practice' ideas

5. A BRIEF HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL

There has been an independent school on our site since the Lance Holt school began here in 1972. Then followed The Hills Family School and the Beenong School until a group from Guildford Montessori set up Treetops here in 1988. We retained the business name of the Beenong School Association and have traded as that ever since.

There were about 11 children at the start, two of whom were full time. There were only two teachers. Soon there were 30, 3-5 yr olds in Children's House. With further growth we became a three-part school – Children's House (3–6 year olds); Lower Primary (6–9 year olds) and Upper Primary (9-12 year olds) and our staff increased. Later we added a Playgroup.

Financially the school struggled in its early years, supporting a large inherited debt. The money needed to turn the old craft shed into a classroom added to the debt. However, the school community rallied and as they performed the physical work on the building, loyalties and co-operation evolved. The hard times strengthened the school community. Slowly we grew in numbers and became more financially stable.

In 1996 we completed the new primary building and although this put the school back into debt, the community believed it was worth every penny. Renovations on the original building and improvements to grounds and facilities have constituted our main spending over the last few years. Much of this has been funded by Grants from the Federal Government through the Association of Independent Schools of WA or as Low Interest Loans through the Office of Non Government Education.

By the end of 1997 the school had grown to the point where the Principal, who was also the Upper Primary teacher, could no longer be expected to teach full time and run the school. In 1998 we employed a specialist administrator who performed the duties of Principal and part time teacher. In 2000 our growth necessitated the Principal's role becoming full time and another full time teacher was employed.

In 2000 we purchased the Masonic Lodge on an adjoining block and renovated it as a School Hall and small classroom to accommodate our newly extended educational programme of a Middle School class (12-15 year olds) with 12 children. We received assistance through the Work for the Dole programme to construct a timber walkway, linking the main campus with the Hall.

In 2001, we received a grant of \$150,000 towards the construction of a purpose built Lower Primary classroom to be situated near the current Children's House.

In 2002 the school has 119 children enrolled from 89 families. There are twenty teaching staff including teachers, aides and specialists. We have a part time Maintenance Person, a full time Office Administrator and a part-time Finance Administrator as well as a part time Bursar and a Specialist Literacy Coordinator

6. OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Treetops operates within a network of other organisations responsible for regulating Education Services, providing Funding, setting Curriculum and a number of other functions. They are:

Regulatory Bodies

The Office of Non-Government Education (ONGE)

ONGE oversees the registration of all Non-Government Schools. Schools cannot operate without a current registration as an "efficient school".

Association of Independent Schools of WA (AISWA)

AISWA represents most of the Independent Schools in WA. It offers professional development, industrial, curriculum, and political support and also administers Commonwealth Government programmes in the schools. Financial and educational reports on all funded programmes must be submitted to AISWA.

Department of Education Science and Training (DEST)

DEST is primarily a funding organisation but it also sets many parameters for things like space allocation per child, pupil/teacher ratios and conditions for Capital Grants i.e. for the building of new facilities.

Curriculum Council of WA

The Curriculum Council is responsible for educational delivery in schools (see Education below for further information).

Worksafe WA

All schools must adhere to minimum standards of Occupational Health and Safety as set out by Worksafe.

Mundaring Shire

The Shire gives permission for our facilities to be used as a school. We are also bound by all normal Shire regulations.

Teachers Registration Board

This is a new body currently being created which will require teachers to demonstrate certain minimum standards for registration. Registration will be compulsory by law for a teacher to be employed.

Funding

ONGE administers the State Government Recurrent Grants to Non-Government Schools. ONGE also administers a Low Interest Loan scheme available to Independent Schools.

AISWA administers all Commonwealth funding for Recurrent Grants, Targeted Programmes and Capital Grants. AISWA also assists with the assessment of Low Interest Loans.

DEST provide the Commonwealth Grant Funds.

Treetops funding is made up of approximately 55% parent fees and 45% government funding from the above sources. The Commonwealth funding makes up approximately 2/3 of the government component and the State provides the other 1/3.

Education

The Curriculum Council is responsible for setting and monitoring the Curriculum across all schools in WA. The Curriculum has recently been redeveloped and is now based on an Outcomes Approach. This is called the Curriculum Framework and is mandated to be active in all WA schools by 2003. Essentially we must meet the same curriculum at the same standards as the State Schools.

Treetops also implements the Montessori Curriculum, which matches much of the State Curriculum, but goes beyond what is required in most areas. Specifically, the Montessori Curriculum in Geography, Botany, Geometry and Science is much more rigorous academically than the State Education Department requires at equivalent levels.

Montessori Affiliations

Treetops is a member of the Montessori Society of WA. This organisation exist to assist Montessori schools and to help parents and prospective parents. They direct enquiries to specific schools, offer a library of educational books and materials for loan, organise parent education courses, and act as a political lobby group when necessary. We are also a member of the IMC (International Montessori Council). The I.M.C. is a worldwide organisation of Montessori Schools which offers professional advice, sets standards and operates as a support network.

The Montessori Teachers Association is the organisation which assists teachers through providing courses and classes, informal collegiate events and also works towards recognition of the Montessori Method and its benefits becoming more widely known. All of Treetops' teachers and Aides are members of the Association.

The Montessori schools in WA are not legally or financially connected to each other but there is a commonality of purpose which unites us. We work together regularly on matters affecting us all and we share knowledge and information freely. We form a mutually supportive network where all schools have access to advice and assistance if required.

We also have relationships with other non-Montessori schools in our district. These relationships are both competitive and collaborative. We draw our students from the same

areas and our funding (in the case of the other Independent schools) from the same sources. We also share organisational and cost responsibility for specialist visitors and we work on community programmes together. In many cases we have students from our families with siblings at other local schools. We have links with other Independent schools throughout the State via the Small Independent Schools Collegiate network. This group meets on a regular basis to address issues of common concern.

Treetops Board

The Board of the school is the body which oversees the operation of the school. It holds the registration for the school on behalf of the Association. The Association, which is an incorporated body, is made up of all parents and staff at the school. The Board members are elected for a period of two years to set policy and ensure that the governance of the school happens in an efficient and proper manner. The Board must have a minimum of 7 members and is made up of both parents and staff. The Board operates pursuant to a formal Constitution which has been registered with the Ministry of Fair Trading.

Other factors affecting the operating environment of the school include:

- Our participation in the local community as well as the wider national and global communities;
- Our site which is beautiful but challenging;
- The lack of knowledge, generally, in the community about what Montessori is and does.

7. DEFINING THE VISION - GOALS

LONG-TERM GOALS

Over the long term (by 2011) we intend to:

- provide a Montessori education from Playgroup to Upper Secondary with all the necessary facilities.
- deliver a broad and relevant curriculum which fulfils the curriculum framework requirements in the most creative, innovative and comprehensive manner.
- maintain and enhance a strong supportive school community.
- provide opportunities for positive interaction with local and global communities
- have an effective financial and business strategy in order to achieve our Vision, Missions and other Goals.

8. FUNDAMENTAL OPERATING VALUES & PRINCIPLES

Through the application of the following values and principles, we aim to assist our children to become self confident and responsible adults who are assets to themselves and the world.

Our **Fundamental Values** are **Respect** and **Integrity** which we will demonstrate in our school community in the following ways:

1. parents, staff and children all operating within the school's vision
2. clear and honest communication
3. ethical behaviour, in carrying ourselves with, and acting towards each other with, integrity
4. open door policy
5. provision for progress at different rates
6. tolerance
7. commitment to face to face negotiation and conflict resolution
8. payment of fees on time

Our first set of **Fundamental Operating Principles** are directed towards **Nurturing** which we will demonstrate in our school community in the following ways:

1. cultivating an environment where we help and care for each other
2. fostering self esteem and self confidence
3. fostering potential
4. creating an environment where our children are not afraid to express themselves

Our second set of **Fundamental Operating Principles** are directed towards cultivating an **appreciation of the world** which we will experience in our school community in the following ways:

1. teaching our children how to think, not necessarily what to think
2. being optimistic
3. encouraging curiosity
4. modelling 'learning for life'
5. promoting appreciation and care for our natural environment
6. celebrating our achievements, small and large
7. engaging in creative pursuits
8. appreciating diversity
9. enjoying the pursuit of knowledge
10. experiencing joy and zest for life

9. DECISION DRIVERS

We have identified a number of Decision Drivers or principles that will drive decision making and resource allocation over the short to medium term. These are as follows:

1. Is it compatible with our Goals?
2. Is it compatible with our Values?
3. Is it in the best interests of the student body?
4. Is it consistent with teaching and interacting in accordance with our agreed Treetops Montessori philosophy?
5. Will it improve the quality of educational provision?
6. Will it promote / support strong and positive relationships within the school?
7. Will it promote / support strong and positive relationships between the school and the community?
8. Will it contribute to the special character and identity of the school?

9. Can we afford it?
10. Is it fiscally responsible?
11. Do we have the resources to provide it?
12. Does it comply with State and Commonwealth funding requirements?

10. ENABLERS AND POTENTIAL BARRIERS

We have identified a number of factors that may enable or hinder the achievement of our goals. These are as follows:

Barriers - what will impede or prevent success

1. Apathy
2. Burnout
3. Lack of people to take over key roles
4. Lack of funding
5. Lack of understanding of benefits of Montessori educational philosophy
6. People not acting in accordance with our Vision, Values and Operating Principles
7. Diversity of expectations
8. Other schools marketing more effectively
9. Customer service issues
10. Not understanding the history and unique character of this school
11. Recession

Enablers – what will help to achieve our plan:

1. Co-operation and collaboration between like-minded people
2. Clarification of roles of different groups
3. Support from MSWA, ONGE, AISWA & DETWA
4. Networking between our school and other Montessori / independent schools
5. Greater use of media for publicity purposes
6. Recognition that our school operates as a business
7. Effective forward planning
8. Keeping goodwill and enthusiasm alive
9. Funding – identifying and accessing sources
10. Attracting more entrepreneurial investment
11. Appreciation by parents of benefits of Montessori schooling
12. Promoting ourselves (more) effectively
13. Our effective Montessori education
14. Experienced, committed, caring staff qualified to teach within our agreed Montessori philosophy
15. Access to appropriate training
16. 'Cutting edge' technology and educational practices
17. Stable effective leadership and infrequent turnover of staff

