

PERTH MONTESSORI

ANNUAL REVIEW FY 2022



PERTH
MONTESSORI
—

Encouraging curious, independent,
lifelong learners.



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PERTH MONTESSORI

VISION & VALUES



PERTH
MONTESSORI
—



VISION

Encouraging curious, independent, lifelong learners.



MISSION

To empower our children in an environment based on the values of resilience and respect.



APPROACH

Following the Montessori curriculum and SCSA curriculum, we provide a multi-age, prepared environment that encourages students to feel valued, safe and secure. Students are encouraged to become independent learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers who can take initiative and responsibly make their own decisions in an atmosphere of mutual respect.



Principal's Overview

The beginning of the 2022 school year saw the transmission of the COVID-19 virus within the Perth community for the first time during the pandemic. The impact this had on schools was notable and ours was not immune. Under the competent and caring leadership of Consulting Principal Jo Bednall, however, the School weathered the storm well with minimal disruption through contagion and staff absences. In addition to navigating COVID-19, Jo Bednall continued the challenging work of rebuilding the school culture. This involved ensuring staff and student wellbeing were prioritised through active listening and giving a voice to all.

On the 23rd of May 2022, I joined Perth Montessori as the substantive principal and was welcomed into the community with open arms. I immediately felt privileged to lead a Montessori school, following recent positions in mainstream education. Striving to implement the Board's vision to re-establish Montessori principles and practices presented itself as an exciting opportunity to contribute to the building of a sustainable school for years to come.

Beginning this work in earnest, staff spent time together examining the vision and mission statements, pulling out the values that best represent our approach to education as Montessorians. These values – independence, curiosity, respect, resilience and life-long learning – were further unpacked as we explored our school's unique value proposition through a series of design thinking workshops led by educational consultants, NoTosh. By clarifying our core values and identifying examples of how we embed these in our work with students, the direction of our Montessori future is looking clearer.

Ongoing hard work by the Tours and Enrolments Team comprised of Playgroup Director, Sharika Bisnath and school parent, Doug Butcher, resulted in 57 new enrolments in 2022; an impressive figure. With interest strong, we continued to focus on ways to improve and streamline the tour, enrolment, and transition processes for students and their families with a view to increasing student retention. Improvements have been made in collecting and sharing information, as well as ensuring policies and agreements are clearly communicated and easy to understand. These measures help to ensure new families are fully informed and committed to the Montessori approach.

Thanks to significant support through grants furnished by the Town of Victoria Park, the School was able to refresh its exterior with an impressive Melski mural painted on the façade of the administration building at 150 Burswood Road, as well as through the landscaping and planting of a waterwise verge comprising native plants and seating. Many within the school community came together to support these special projects by helping to paint and plant.

In July the School returned to its former name, Perth Montessori, while simultaneously launching a new website, logo and fresh marketing materials. Daily Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn posts highlight the engaging, hands-on work enjoyed by our students under the staff's expert guidance. The weekly e-Newsletter communicates whole school and classroom news as well as important information to our community. These efforts to promote the School have resulted in an increased digital presence on social media and a visible position within the community.

Aside from our fresh new look, the other prominent change in 2022 was the growth in high school enrolments. Following the decision to explore Big Picture Learning at PM, staff and students spent the year delving into the elements of the design that lead to rich, authentic learning opportunities. Over the course of the year, student and staff understanding of the approach and their confidence in using its design elements has resulted in more authentic and rigorous learning and attracted students looking for a real alternative to the standard secondary educational approach that allows very little room for individual choice and personal interest. Enrolments in the high school grew from eight at the start of 2022 to 25 by February 2023.

Also in 2022, the gradual relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions allowed Perth Montessori to enjoy the return of whole-school events and opportunities for parent participation, including the Classroom Showcase, Todd's Music Concert, Father's Day Brekkie, and the first Open Day in several years. Additionally, parent

education evenings and observations were reintroduced and communication between the school and home was prioritised through parent-teacher meetings, SeeSaw updates and termly class newsletters.

Numerous professional learning and development opportunities were made available to staff with the intent of improving outcomes for students. These included involvement in two research projects through ECU; the Soil Project with Jayne Kaiko and Jacaranda students, and the School Transitions Project involving Caroline Kennedy and Sharika Bisnath.

Teaching staff worked with Sheryl Ridout, Montessori Institute trainer and former Director at the School, to refresh their understanding of fundamental Montessori practices and principles. Sheryl has assisted with audits of the prepared environment and provided refresher training on presenting lessons. All high school staff trained in the Big Picture Learning Design, strengthening overall understanding and fidelity in using the approach.

Despite the achievements of 2022, the year was not without its challenges. One of which was the fluctuation in student numbers, which made staffing decisions and class cohesion difficult at times. However, the staff remained dedicated to the students and School and showed their professionalism and willingness to work hard to see it shine. The strong and supportive leadership of Adin Livnjak, Deputy Principal, has been a stabilising and reassuring presence for all in the community during this time.

Finally, there was a palpable ambience of hope and excitement at the end-of-year Christmas Concert as we celebrated the significant milestones of continued service at Perth Montessori by Caroline Kennedy, Kerryn Johns and Todd Bebbington. On that note, I give thanks to the wonderful staff, students and parent community for their outstanding support and commitment to Perth Montessori and to me during my first year as principal of this wonderful school.

Sally Alderton
Principal



Board's Overview

2022 has been a very busy and productive year for the Board and its committees. Our focus was four-fold:

- Finding and appointing a new School principal,
- Managing the School's finances and developing a more sustainable staffing and resourcing model,
- Rebranding the School from Perth Individual back to Perth Montessori, as the community had voted for at the previous Annual General Meeting, and
- Developing and implementing more effective marketing strategies in order to attract new enrolments and rebuild the high school.

Appointment of a new Principal

After an extensive search and long interview process, the Board appointed Sally Alderton as our new substantive Principal. Sally began at the School on the 23rd of May, and certainly hit the ground running.

The Board takes this opportunity to express our sincerest thanks to Jo Bednal, who agreed to return from retirement to be our interim Consulting Principal in September 2021 and support the School through a difficult transition process.

Jo was instrumental in addressing some of the long-standing issues within the School, which had come to a head with the COVID-19 experiences of 2020 and 2021. Jo also played a key role in the search for a new principal and provided invaluable advice and experience throughout the interview and appointment process. This allowed us to discover and entice Sally into the position.

Managing the School's Finances

The Board is very proud to report that the School finished 2022 with an operating surplus of \$130,505. Whilst this may not seem particularly noteworthy, it actually represents the first non-COVID/JobKeeper related surplus for the School since 2014.

Moreover, given our net deficit of \$262,193 in 2021, this represents a nearly \$400k reversal of fortune over the course of just a single year, and was achieved with total annual revenues of around \$2.1 million.

Even more importantly, the Principal and staff at the School did their utmost to ensure that the efficiencies and cost-savings required were very carefully considered and implemented in a way that did not adversely affect the high quality education provided by the School to its students. The Board would like to applaud the Principal, Accounts Manager and all staff at the School for their support and the enormous efforts they made to make this happen.

At the end of last year, the Board took the potentially risky decision to continue supporting two separate classrooms in each of the lower cycles and investing in the high school to trial the Big Picture programme. Thankfully, these decisions paid off in 2022 as enrollments grew from 73 to 95 (including pre-K) and the lower cycles have been able to readily accommodate these increases, and the high school has bloomed beyond expectations.

The School now has tried and tested systems in place to support its ongoing financial modelling and reporting. It is actively paying down its debts, successfully applying for and receiving external grants to fund improvements to grounds and campus infrastructure, and has resources available to support the implementation of new educational programmes across the School.

Returning to Perth Montessori

The Non-Government Schools Regulator approved the School's request to change its name from Perth Individual back to Perth Montessori, to occur on the 17 of July 2022 during mid-semester break. Thus, the first half of the year was spent finalising the new website, designing and branding new marketing materials, printing brochures and signage, and reformatting internal and external documents to reflect the changes.

The design work was led primarily by the Marketing & Communications Committee, so the Board would like to sincerely thank volunteer parents; Clayton Cabral , Yakuta Khumri, and Caroline Raines, for the enormous amount of time, effort and professional expertise they invested in this project.

Obviously the work did not stop there as you will be seeing for some time the ongoing replacement of signage around the School and grounds as funding allows.

Marketing Strategies

“Your brand is what other people say about you when you’re not in the room.”

Jeff Bezos, Amazon CEO

For many years, the School has relied on word-of-mouth as its primary marketing strategy. However, a lack of proactive maintenance and direct investment in the grounds and buildings of the School has left the campus looking increasingly tired and unkempt. We only get one chance to make a first impression, and the environment in which our students spend their days matters a lot. Thus, the new Board was keen to begin making a difference here as this is as much a marketing opportunity as any new logo or brochure.

Word-of-mouth relies on a strong sense of community to make people want to say positive things about the School. A vibrant, active and welcoming community is also an attractive one to outsiders. Thus, with the COVID-19 restrictions gradually being lifted over the year, the Board was keen to welcome parents/carers back on site and begin rebuilding a sense of place and community within the School.

Our Melski Mural

The mural painting on the front facade of school reception was started in March and completed in April. This saw students, staff, parents/carers and members of the surrounding community all participating in the painting process, under the close supervision of the artist, Melski, and her assistant, Lilsiski. The Place grant that funded this project was applied for and awarded the previous year.



Figure 1: Some of our Cycle One students helping Melski paint the mural.

The next step was to add the name and new logo to the facade. This had to wait until the official date for the name change and the required funds were available. This happened in October and was followed by the application of an anti-graffiti coating to finish everything off. Figure 2 shows the final result of everyone's efforts.



Figure 2: The front facade before and after the mural, and after adding the finishing touches in October with the School's name and new logo.

Water-wise Garden

Members of the Fondation at the School submitted a grant application in May for a second Place Grant from the Town of Victoria Park to develop a water wise community verge garden with logs and seating for the corner of Burswood and Egham Roads. This application was successful and work on this also began in October.

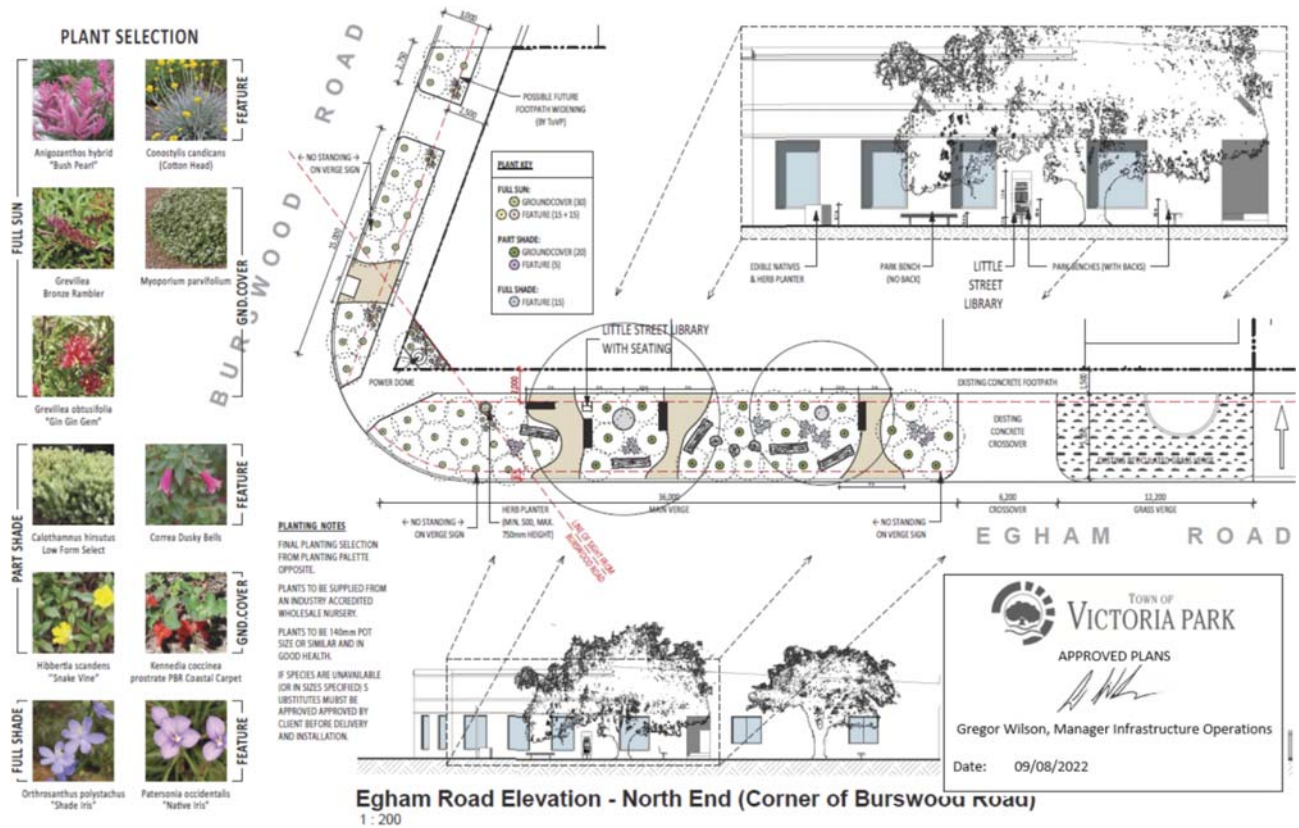


Figure 3: The application for the proposed waterwise garden submitted to the Town of Vic Park.



Figure 4: The finished garden ready to survive a long hot summer.

Uniforms

Uniforms have been a feature of Perth Montessori for a very long time, but issues with suppliers and the change of name to Perth Individual in 2017 had led to a situation where new uniform items were becoming difficult to find and old uniforms were still allowed. Thus, clothing at the School was gradually becoming anything but uniform.

The new Board was keen to solve these issues and provide a solution that was easy for parents and students to follow, and where uniform items were readily available, hard-wearing and cost effective. This work was undertaken primarily by P&F volunteers who spent an enormous amount of time visiting uniform suppliers, researching every available option, and developing a comprehensive uniforms proposal that the Board voted to adopt.

The Board would like to specifically thank parent volunteer, Annie Purchase, who single handedly sorted out and managed the uniform shop, striving to recycle and reuse old and new uniforms to keep families supplied with suitable items for their growing children. Annie did this for quite some time, through multiple iterations of previous Boards and our own relatively protracted design and implementation phase. This work was invaluable as it gave us the opportunity to take time to get the uniforms and policy right.

However, not all Montessori schools have a uniform policy and, in the time it took to find a supplier, negotiate a contract and develop a viable uniform policy of our own, there had been significant turnover within the School community and we had recently appointed a new Principal. Thus, prior to signing the contract, it was felt necessary to put the choice of having a uniform (or not) to the community again, as well as the proposed uniform policy, to make sure it was still what the majority wanted.

A community-wide survey was conducted in late October. More than 90% of the community responded and the result showed that 88% supported the School having a uniform policy and 78% preferred a compulsory uniform required every day at school. Thus the contract was signed and uniform policies and procedures were implemented from Term 1 2023.



Figure 5: Mock-ups of the final uniform items selected.

Sense of Community

The progressive lifting of COVID-19 restrictions during the year allowed parents and carers back on site to enjoy events such as Friday morning Cafe and after school Stay & Play opportunities for the students. The Principal and members of the Board and Executive Council have all reached out to parents to gauge interest and find volunteers for the P&F, but it just hasn't been the right time yet, so we plan to redouble our efforts on this front in 2023.



Figure 6: The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions has allowed parents and carers back on site for events like Friday morning Cafe.

The Future

There is still much work left to do. We would dearly like to see a rekindling of interest and participation in the P&F and the organisation of more community-led social events for everyone to enjoy. There are also other funding applications pending that we are hopeful of being successful with, which may provide more opportunities for the community to physically participate.

The Board would very much like to thank the staff, students, parents and carers for their continued support and dedication to the School. Perth Montessori has had a very busy, but enjoyable and successful 2022, and is now much better positioned for future growth and success.

PM Board of Directors 2022

Dr. Andrew Marsh
Chair

Dr. Rocco Loiacono
Deputy Chair

Yakuta Khumri
Director

Sally Alderton T2
Principal

Key Student Outcomes

Student attendance

Student attendance in 2022 was 83% (down 1.5% from 2021). Given the increase in absences due to the changed nature of COVID-19 cases during 2022, this is not surprising.

Non-attendance at school is managed by the following procedures:

- The attendance roll is marked by the teacher every morning and afternoon.
- This information is reported and checked by the school administration.
- Parents/carers are responsible for notifying the school if their child is absent for any reason which is recorded by the school (any sequential absences are referred for follow-up).
- If a student is away, the administration notifies the parent/carer to ask why the child is not at school, this is then recorded and the Principal/delegate follows up accordingly.
- All absences are recorded to inform the government census.

Student achievement

An analysis of student achievement data according to teacher judgements (semester reports) indicated that overall, students perform the most strongly in reading, with writing and to a lesser extent mathematics identified as areas where we can add value.

Perth Montessori students from Years 3, 5 and 7 who sat the NAPLAN testing in 2022 demonstrated mixed results with trends difficult to identify. This is largely because of small numbers and transience of enrolments. This is consistent with the School's NAPLAN results from previous years. The overwhelming majority of students achieved results above the national minimum standard for their age with several results being well above this. Overall, results were stronger in Reading, Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation, with Writing and Numeracy highlighted as areas to focus future improvement efforts.

Small student cohorts mean it is difficult to draw conclusions from the aggregated data because a small number of students can disproportionately impact the average. Furthermore, Montessori is structured on working at the student's own pace and acknowledging that progress is not always linear. This means at times student achievement does not reflect chronological age; this does not mean they are not making growth or will not make sufficient growth in the future.

On Entry assessments in Literacy and Numeracy were completed for all students from Pre-primary to Year 2. Results were consistent with similar schools and highlighted strong achievement in numeracy.

Student retention

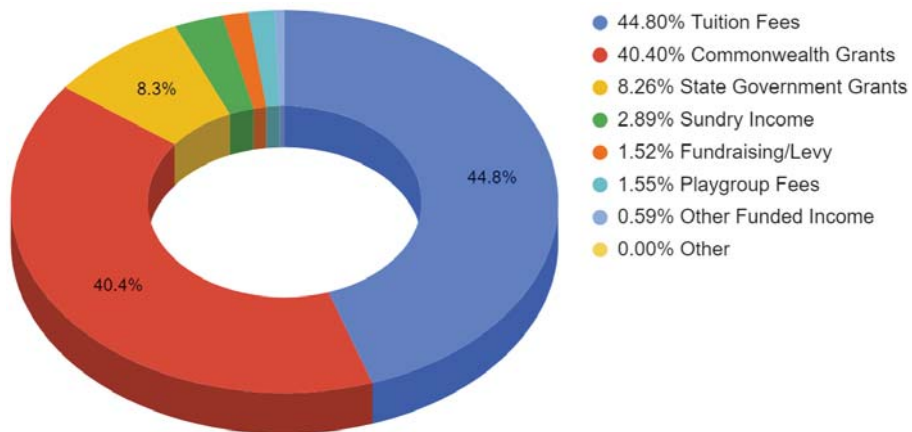
Student retention (from years 1-10):

- T1 2022 to T4 2022, 73%;
- T1 2022 to T1 2023, 71%;
- 37 new students joined the school
- during 2022, 19 students left: 2 in first semester, 8 left second semester;
- an additional 9 students left at the end of T4;
- 16 new students enrolled for T1 2023.

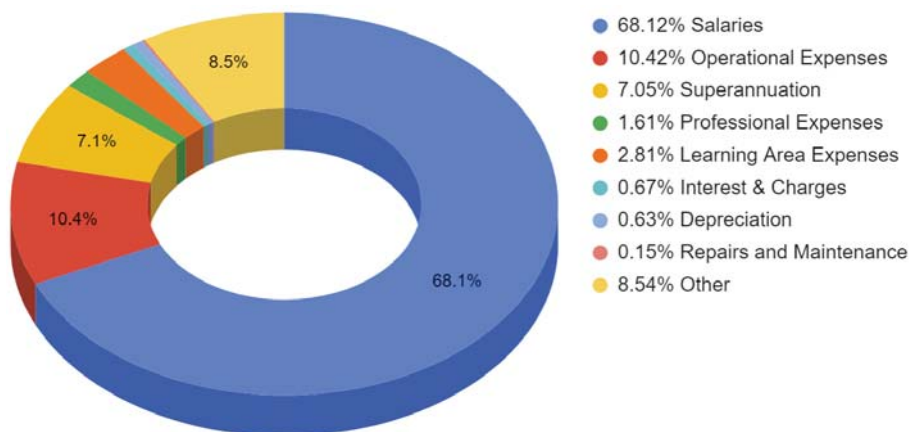
Student retention (from years PKG-10):

- T1 2022 to T4 2022, 68%;
- T1 2022 to T1 2023, 65%;
- 57 new students joined the school;
- by the end of 2022, 15 who joined that year had left
- another 13 out of the 40 who left in 2022 had enrolled in 2021
- therefore, 28 out of the 40 who left in 2022 had been at PM for less than 2 years
- 25 new students enrolled for T1 2023.

Operations - Revenue 2022



Operations - Expenditure 2022



Professional Development & Engagement

All PM teaching staff are members of the Teachers Registration Board. All staff have their Working with Children Clearance, up to date Mandatory Reporting and First Aid Training and teaching staff either have their Montessori training or are working towards it*. Congratulations goes to Shamim Misso who completed the Montessori Diploma for nine to twelve-year-olds in 2022.

All teaching staff participated in the following professional development during the year:

- The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students with Disability
- Trauma informed practices
- CPR refresher

Individual staff participated in a range of workshops associated with Montessori Education and several staff attended a series of workshops on positive discipline.

The school was also involved in two research projects. The first involved all staff but focussed on transitions into Early Learning. This was run by Edith Cowan University (ECU), AISWA and the company specialising in design thinking, NoTosh. It was funded through a grant from the Australian Government managed by AISWA and was completed at the end of 2022.

The second involved Jayne and the students in Jacaranda. It was conducted by a research team from Edith Cowan and Curtin Universities and focussed on how to teach young children about the importance of soil. It was funded by a grant to the research team and was completed in early 2022.

In addition, the school was one of six independent schools to participate in a project led by NoTosh, 'Our Value Proposition Intensive'. The aim was to help schools better understand who they are, what is their point of difference, what's their core mission, what strategy will amplify their mission and, subsequently, how might they create a validating business model. It offered us the opportunity to find and tell our story and develop a compelling strategy. The PM team consisted of Sally, Adin, Nina, and Caroline Raines (volunteer parent). The work was invaluable in progressing the school's agenda to clarify and define its core vision and mission and learn how to successfully grow its brand.



Staff list and qualifications 2022

Cycle 1

Kerryn Johns
Education Assistant
Cert III CS

Arul Kalipernal
Education Assistant
BSc (Hon), PGDipEd

Udenie Karunaratne
Education Assistant
BSc, Cert III EA, Cert III CS,
DipMont(3-6y)

Caroline Kennedy
Director
BEd, DipMont(0-9y)

Michelle Kwok
Director
BEd(ECE), MSci(Sci,Math,Ed),
DipMont(3-6y)

Anthea Pinto
Director
BEd, Cert IV VisArts,
DipMont (3-6y)*

Cycle 2

Jayne Kaiko
Director
BEd ECE, Cert CC, DipMont(3-6y)

Deborah Pan
Education Assistant / Director
BEd ECS, DipCS

Michelle Watson
Director
BEd(ECE), DipMont(6-12y)*

Cycle 3

Jessie Connor
Director
GDip(Ed,Psych)

Shamim Misso
Education Assistant
DipBS, AssBS, Cert III EC CS,
DipMont(9-12y)

Cycle 4 & 5

Lee Cooper
Director
GDipEd (Pri)

Simon Miskin
Director
BArts, GDipEd(Sec)

Debra Oorschot
Education Assistant
CertIV(SpNds), CertIII(Bus)

Debbie Wrigley
Director
BAEd, GDipSS(LSci)

Tamara Yousry
Director
BA, MA, PGCertEd, PGDipEd

Special Programs

Physical Education

Adin Livnjak
BSci, GDipEd

Language

Linda Jones
BA(Asia), GDipEd(Pri,Sec)

Music

Todd Bebbington
CertMus, DipMus

Playgroup Coordinator

Sharika Bisnath
DipCS, DipMont

Waabiny (OHSC) Coordinator

Yoh Araki (T3 - T4)
Dip(ECE), AdDipComSer

Support Staff

Principal

Sally Alderton (T2 - T4)
BA(Hist), GDipEd(Pri),
GCert(EdRsh), GCert(PriPra),
DipMont(6-9y)

Consulting Principal

Jo Bednall (T1)
BSc(Zoo,Math), DipEd(Sec),
DipEd(Psych,Soc,Pol), MEd.

Deputy Principal

Adin Livnjak
BSci, GDipEd

Finance Manager

Nina Thethy
CPA, BBus(Acc)

Librarian

Wendy Ho
GDip(LIS)

Receptionist

Laura Ruddle (T1)

Merlyn D'Souza (T2)

Yoh Araki (T3 - T4)
Dip(ECE), AdDipComSer

Cleaner

Monica Lazarevski

Maternity Leave

Sarah Caldwell
DipEd

* working towards.

The greatest sign of success for a teacher...
is to be able to say, "The children are now
working as if I did not exist."

~ Dr. Maria Montessori

PERTH MONTESSORI

WORKPLACE CULTURE STATEMENT



PERTH
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—

At Perth Montessori all staff enthusiastically contribute to a shared culture characterised by:



CURIOSITY

We ask questions, explore new ideas and learn from each other.



INDEPENDENCE

We take initiative and contribute to problem solving and decision making.



LIFE-LONG LEARNING

We understand that there is always more to learn and embrace opportunities to participate in learning activities.



RESILIENCE

We maintain a positive approach, let go of disappointments and learn from our mistakes.



RESPECT

We value individual differences, are mindful of how we communicate with and about others, and seek to work constructively with all members of our school community.

The Board and Principal of Perth Montessori understand that staff are empowered when they feel that they are acknowledged, trusted and valued.

perthmontessori.com

Our School's History

The School began life in 1980 as the Victoria Park Montessori Playgroup, before becoming the Montessori Children's Centre with the opening of the first Children's House in 1982 (Hibiscus). Throughout the mid-eighties, the Centre continued to expand with the opening of the first primary classes in the old cottage on the Egham Road site, as well as a second Children's House (Bougainvillaea). With the opening of the first phase of the School's new primary building in November 1989, two further middle primary classrooms were added (Jacaranda and Magnolia), as well as an upper primary classroom (Kangaroo Paw).

In the early 1990s, the second phase of the new primary building was completed and the School purchased the Leigh Street property which currently houses our Playgroup. The existing middle primary classes were also amalgamated into a single middle primary classroom (Jacaranda).

In 2002 the Centre changed its name to the Perth Montessori School. Around that time it also purchased the adjoining property at 150 Burswood Road to further improve the classroom environments and the School operations. In 2004 the School undertook a review of its internal governance policies and procedures which led to an updated Constitution and a new Board of Management structure.

In 2010, thanks to the Federal Government 'Building the Education Revolution (BER)' program, the School began the construction of two new buildings. The first to house our Cycle 2 classrooms (6 to 9-year-old) as well as Learning Support, Art, Home Economics and a Parent room. The second to house our Music, Playgroup and Out of School Care operation.

In 2017 the School changed its name to 'Perth Individual, a Progressive Montessori College'. This precipitated a more challenging time for the School with the retirement due to the illness of both the long-serving Principal in 2018 and the long-serving Deputy Principal in 2019.

At the start of 2020, a new Principal was appointed, who was very soon faced with the COVID-19 restrictions that began in March and affected everyone in Perth throughout both 2020 and 2021.

In 2021 the School community voted to return the School's name back to Perth Montessori to reaffirm its commitment to providing a quality Montessori education. In support of this name change, a new logo and branding were developed, as well as a new website and marketing collateral. The Department of Education approved the School's return to the Perth Montessori name in 2021, which took effect from mid-July 2022.

2022 was a pivotal year for Perth Montessori, with a new substantive Principal in place, and finally returning to a financial surplus after almost a decade of significant decline under previous Board and School Management. The School can now move forward with a strong foundation for sustainable growth for many years to come.



***“The greatest gifts we can give our children
are the roots of responsibility and the wings
of independence.”***

~ Dr. Maria Montessori



PERTH
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150 Burswood Road,
Burswood, WA 6100

+61 (0)8 9362 3186

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