

Statutory Annual Report 2014

June 2014 – June 2015

Montessori International College
880-932 Maroochydore Road
Forest Glen QLD 4556



MONTESSORI
INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

Part One

Independent non-systemic schools, such as ours have challenges not often understood by the wider population. Ours lacking the support of a solid institution like a government or church if and when they go through a bad patch, are possibly more vulnerable than some others. Montessori International College has experienced many challenges these past few years as it navigated the often treacherous and nonsensical bureaucracy of securing our schools future. But throughout our lives we have to deal with the failure of institutions that we hoped would not fail: governments lose elections, businesses go broke, and marriages end in divorce. Nothing lasts forever. These events are part of our experience as humans. People die, and so do the entities and enterprises into which people sometimes coalesce. We should not be so afraid of such happenings. We learn from them and ideally they should help us develop resilience and strength.

Excessive attempts to regulate schools so that they become failure-proof will result in the extinction of innovative small schools, and the paralysis of the schools that survive. The idea that schools or any other institutions can be rendered failure-proof through the labours of bureaucrats is as ludicrous as the idea that children can be raised so 'successfully' that they will live lives of pure happiness. No school is invulnerable, and neither should they be.

However independent non-systemic schools are of great benefit to society. We are often more easily able to experiment, to innovate, to improvise. We are flexible, and can act as laboratories, pioneering new ideas. Parents who send their children to so-called 'alternative' schools might reasonably be expected to endorse new strategies and techniques more readily than many parents at mainstream schools.

Nevertheless I think many of our visitors come to MIC expecting to see radically different approaches to education; perhaps even 'magic wands' that will fix problems they might be having at their own schools. They may well go away feeling somewhat disappointed. Much that is unique about our school is intangible; sometimes invisible.

Ours thankfully (she says with a sigh of relief) is a story of success. However, there were many moments along the way we were reminded of the shifting sands in which this new era of knowing calls for flexibility, adaptability, creativity as it continues to tune internally and externally to its current realities

During 2014 the College was focussed on the building project and development of the new campus at Forest Glen. The other area calling for attention was assisting staff and families manage their capacity for change. I had underestimated the emotional struggle many adults experience when presented with the reality of change, shifting perspectives and transition. I would like highlight that the children, of course, had no issue with the relocation. They were filled with excitement and curiosity. More about this interesting observation at another time.

The past year was filled with sizeable achievements of which we should be proud. We built a new campus, nurtured and inspired learning and managed a community of children, adolescents and adults through a transition like no other with grace and humility.

In the words of the MIC board president, Kyle Kimball "And while there is a lifetime of work yet to be done, there certainly appears to have been several lifetimes worth of work put in by Chiray, grant and Phillip, all the teaching and support staff and the community itself. Our new college campus is something of which we should be immensely proud."

Part Two

Unaffected by the building project the college remained focus on developing and enhancing the learning culture within the college.

In 2014 the college established its' fourth 3-6 learning environment (Maiem) and welcomed Jacqueline Williams to the academic faculty. The college also began 2014 with the addition of a third 6-9 environments. The senior phase entered Year 11 and we welcomed Nick Harrison as the leader of the senior phase program at the college.

Whole school parent education learning sessions continued were introduced in 2013 to enhance the existing 'learning parent' program.

Some of the learning opportunities provided to our children and adolescents included the Mudjimba camp, Cultural Fair Day, Senior Primary Sleepover, Canberra Adventures for graduates, Seussical the Musical, Artist in Residence program, Arts Council Performances, Grandparents Day, Yoga, and Arts @ Sunset, Adolescent Odyssey, Adolescent One Week Once Act Plays, Naidoc week activities, Leader in Me; Entrepreneurial Start Up Weekend for Youth, Science Fair, Land for Wildlife, Kitchen Garden Program and the Adolescent Land Lab.. This list is by no extensive but provides a glimpse into some of the learning experiences shaping our school culture.

Our specialist programs continue to develop with Chinese, Drama, Music and Dance influencing and developing the children's intellectual and creative capacities. Studio programs also provide avenues for engaging curiosity with sessions such as Environment Detective, Decoupage, Craft, Eco-Sculptures.

The college has also hosted a number of visitors and forums during 2014-2015. Some of these visitors have included new parents, Executive Director of North American Montessori Teachers' Association and founder of the Hershey Montessori Farm School, Professor Shelly Dole: Head of School, School of Education University of the Sunshine Coast, Kay Boulden: Montessori Children's Foundation; Phil Smith: President of the Sunshine Coast Creative Alliance; Gordon Browning: Bundjalung/Yungaburra Artist; and Selina Tomasich: Academic Lecturer – Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Creativity.

The College successfully hosted its first national event in 2015. Meeting in the Middle is a 4 day professional learning forum for Australian and New Zealand Montessori adolescent practitioners. The College also introduced in 2015 an afterschool and holiday program named Montessori Beyond.

Aside from these developments, the College was selected as 1 of 4 schools worldwide to a Centre for Adolescent Studies. These 4 schools from an international conglomerate and recognised by AMI and NAMTA as best practice in emerging programs (land laboratories). The 3 other schools are:

- The Hershey Farm School (Ohio,USA)
- Colegio Montessori de Chihuahia (Mexico;and
- Montessorikolan Lara fur livit (Sweedan)

Aside from the international prestige that attends this fantastic selection, the ongoing benefits to the College and its learning community include:

- Our students receive the very best adolescent Montessori learning in Australia (the world) has to offer;
- Significant leverage for seeking philanthropic donations; and
- MIC becomes recognised as a research, study and international training facility.

The quality of academic faculty is second to none. These adults are exceptional human beings who bring to the children stunning intellects, pioneering spirits, compassion and an unwavering commitment to honouring each child's unique personality. The often hold multiple degrees, are talented, empowered, model respect and work tirelessly to serve the children and adolescents in their care. These professionals are thoroughly trained in Montessori theory and practice and are selected on the basis of their enthusiastic motivation.

Under the guidance and care of their teachers, students at Montessori International College become valuable contributors to their own learning.

Part Three

I am required to present information about our educational setting and philosophy and am happy to do so. MIC is divided into four smaller schools; this is aligned with Dr. Montessori's Continuum of Development. How interesting it is, that in recent years it has become fashionable to present 'sub-schools' as something wildly innovative. Montessori schools have been implementing this practice for over 100 years.

Our **Early Years Community (EYC)**, children ages 3-6 work alongside each other in multi-age learning spaces. Montessori philosophy recognises that these children have an inherent urge to learn and to master all that is in the environment around them. The Montessori learning contexts invite these children to apply their creative energies to master skills which develop their increasing ability to think, understand and concentrate.



In the **Junior Primary School (Years 1-3)** learning is centred on the unique needs of children between the ages of six and nine. Our teachers serve as guides for the children's explorations as they acquire skills, pursue interests, and develop their unique potential. Ignited by the materials and lessons, these children use their imagination and reasoning minds to explore widely and deeply the universe. The Great Lessons offer inspiration and open doors to new areas of investigation.



In the **Senior Primary School** (Years 4 to 6), learning experiences lead children from a comprehension of the concrete to an understanding of the abstract. Learning spaces provide maximum opportunity for the children to learn from and with each other. Skill acquisition at this stage of development supports the child as they weigh options, examine contradictory evidence, tolerate differences of opinion, and make connections among different learning concepts and personal experience. These children are avid consumers of knowledge and deliberate critics of logic.



Our **Adolescent Community** (Years 7 to 9), recognises in these students a new level of independence. An innovative setting and developmentally-responsive curriculum provides opportunities for students to use academic disciplines in real world contexts. Meaningful work, real-life problem solving together with creative expression and entrepreneurship enable these students to discover new capacities and a vision for their own future. This remarkable learning environment allows adolescents to experience real risk with real consequences, and from these endeavours learns how to add value to whatever they do.



Part 4

Most of our eligible students did the NAPLAN tests again this year, despite our best advice – I only glanced at the results, but it seemed that there was a significant upward trajectory over the years, which I suppose is better than a significant downward trajectory. For those who value this kind of thing, a summary of the results is available via My Schools Website.

I will re-iterate as I do every year. MIC will never ‘teach to the test’. Yes, I am talking about NAPLAN. Deep and profound learning does not occur via a homogenous schedule. The Montessori approach is an attitude to learning not merely an acquisition of knowledge. Academic excellence is not the prime objective, but rather an attitude to learning as a part of life itself. The college does its best to minimise the interference to learning caused by the NAPLAN tests each year and in spite of these efforts, our students perform well, although our small cohorts sitting the tests make any generalisation about the results meaningless.

Below you will find information relating to staff composition, academic qualifications of teachers, professional learning expenditure, attendance data, staff retention and alike.

STAFFING INFORMATION: Staff Composition

15 Full-time Teachers	3 Full-Time Non-Teaching Staff
2.4 Part-time Teachers	7.5 Term-Time Non-Teaching Staff

Qualifications of Teachers: Detailed information regarding our teaching staff can be found by visiting the school's website www.montessori.qld.edu.au

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Percentage of classroom teachers and school leaders at the school holding this qualification</i>
Masters	17%
Bachelor Degree	86%
Diploma	84%
Certificate	34%

Professional Development: College Expenditure on Professional Development

Participation of the Montessori International College teaching staff in professional development activities during 2014 was 100%.

Number of Teachers	Total expenditure on Teacher PD	Average expenditure per teacher
17.4	\$29,504	\$1,695

Staff Attendance

Number of Staff	Number of School Days	Total Days Staff Absences	Average Staff Attendance Rate
17.4	187	48	99%

Staff Retention

Number of permanent teaching staff at end of previous year (2013)	Number of these staff retained in the following year	% Retention Rate
14.4	13.4	93 %

Student Data: Student Absences

Total number of all students	Total number of all student absences	Average Attendance Rate
142	2,217	92%

Number of school days in program year	Average Attendance Rate for a particular year level
Year 1	96%
Year 2	95%
Year 3	92%
Year 4	95%
Year 5	95%
Year 6	92%
Year 7	91%
Year 8	92%
Year 9	94%
Year 10	90%

Absenteeism and/or truancy are not an issue for our college. If a child is absent parents will either phone and or email us prior to the commencement of the day. In the case of unexplained absences, the college contacts the parents by phone.

Based on the information provided, it is safe to say that the Montessori International College community is being managed with foresight and integrity. We look forward to sharing more next year!

Chiray Fitton
(Principal)