

# COURTYARD COURIER

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## PRINCIPAL'S REPORT BY SHELAGH POWELL



Kia Ora Everyone....we hope you like the new look Courtyard Courier that our very own Gillian has created. Over the previous few years a past parent has kindly done the honours for us, but we have decided to try a new creation of our own.

### **Welcome:**

Welcome to the new families who have joined us this term, and farewell to those who leave us, we hope you look back with fond and happy memories of your time with us. Time is speeding by, and appears punctuated and defined only by our regular newsletters, and events that make up the busyness of our terms. These are the social events, regular routines and practices and also the changes that occur from time to time within our teaching team and Board of Trustees that make the Courtyard unique and dynamic. I am also reminded of the passage of time when I see younger siblings enrolled and ready to commence their preschool days, when it seemed only yesterday we were guessing whether they were going to be a boy or a girl, depending on the shape of mum's tummy! It seems winter is upon us, and although we did experience some lovely mild autumn weather, the usual colds, coughs and random bugs have inflicted their worst on some of the children and teachers already! I would just like to take the opportunity to remind everyone about our 'Infectious Illness and Disease Policy' with particular reference to vomiting and diarrhoea....it is really important that even if children appear well after either of these, they are kept at home for at least 24 hours after the event. In this way we can limit the impact it might have on others. An Illness and Infectious Disease chart is in each classroom foyer for you to refer too.

### **Social Events:**

Next weekend we will all join together at the Okey Family residence for our Family Fun Day. This is a wonderful opportunity for the preschool community to join together and enjoy a social get-together amidst a variety of children orientated races, with maybe one or two for the adults as well! We look forward to seeing everyone there, and a big thank-you to Rachael and Mike for hosting and organising this event and to those who have volunteered to help out.

We had a great turn out to the Parent/Child evening, which highlights the interest and support of families in seeing what activities children have been working on. It is often nice to see the activities in action and appreciate both the process and work that goes into perfecting them.

The coffee morning at Addington Co-op (held last Wednesday morning) is a relatively new idea, and again a wonderful opportunity for either mum, dad or both to join together for a coffee with younger siblings not old enough to join the classroom team yet. It also provides an hour to relax and put life on hold for a time.

I'm sorry to say I don't appear to have much success with the scheduling of the shared morning tea, as inevitably it either rains on the day or the night before to make everything wet and muddy! We might just have to do a spur of the moment morning somewhere in the term and hope for the best.

On Saturday 27 June the teachers and children will be inviting families to come along to our Art Exhibition that we are beginning work on. This will be another opportunity for extended family to come along and view the children's individual art creations. We will also have group art displays that we intend to auction at a combined quiz/auction evening in Term 3. Rest assured notices will be sent home in regard to these events closer to the time. Over the coming weeks the children will be preparing both their individual and group exhibition.

### **Professional Development:**

Teachers continue to develop their skills and knowledge across a number of domains. Paula and Danielle continue with papers toward their degree, Danielle is working on Guiding Positive Behaviour in Young Children and both she and Paula are working on Designing Environments for Children. With all this relevant up to date knowledge and expertise they both have, they have joined the Playground Sub-committee, which has formed to look at further enhancing our outdoor environment. Monika is underway with her bicultural review and has circulated a questionnaire to both families and teachers in order to gather relevant information for her review. Helen will begin her Montessori Diploma in July after the holidays and she is looking forward to learning the theory behind the practice.

### **ERO:**

Will be visiting us on Tuesday 2 June and Wednesday 3 June. We have had the pleasure of meeting Debbie, one of the reviewing officers, last Friday and she has spoken to the team about their schedule over the Tuesday and Wednesday when they are in the centre. Debbie and Gerard are looking forward to spending time in our preschool; with Debbie already commenting on what a beautiful setting we have at the Courtyard.

### **B4 School Checks:**

A number of you will have been through the process of this relatively new initiative from the Ministry of Health. There is a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire which is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about 3-16 year olds. It exists in three components to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists. As a team we have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this questionnaire and have not felt comfortable with the way some of the questions have been phrased and the tick box answers that are required, so to this end we had declined to fill in the form. However, I have spoken with Canterbury B4 School Project Co-ordinator who has informed me that if we choose not to fill in our part of the check then they are unable to fully complete the screening process. As a result of this we have decided that we will complete the forms as parents hand them to us for the four year olds. In light of this decision, families who have approached us in the past can now request teachers fill in this form.

We hope everyone enjoys the rest of the term and we will see you at the Okey's next weekend. Ka Kite Ano, Shelagh

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

BY SIOBHAN BERGIN



Thank you to those parents who attended the AGM in March. This was an opportunity to hear of the teaching practices, management and Board's collective achievements for 2008/09 and also to learn of the progress of our preschool over the past year.

As a result of the AGM we have welcomed a new Board member to our team. Kevin Riddle, father to Corbin in Room 1, has joined us as a general board member. We are grateful and thrilled to have Kevin join us and acknowledge the strong business and technology skills he will contribute to the Board. Thank you Kevin and we look forward to your involvement in our future plans for the preschool.

Speaking of which, the Board have met and organised sub-committees to work on the key actions planned for 2009/2010. Sub-committees have been formed and have already met on Playground and Outdoor development, 20 Hours ECE, Information and Technology and much more, so it is all go and we have a busy year ahead which we will be keeping you informed of along the way.

At the AGM we announced that the Board again reviewed the structure of 20 Hours ECE and as a result of that review established that by making some changes to the existing

structure of the preschool and charging for consumable and administrative resources we would be able to adopt 20 Hours ECE (Early Childhood Education funding) in October 2009 (Term 4). This would result in a significantly reduced charge to the families of the Courtyard but at the same time protecting quality standards and the future sustainability of the preschool. We are excited at being able to offer this fantastic opportunity but like any change it will require compromise of all parties involved to enable it to work successfully for our organisation. We know from our annual survey that 99% of parents do not want us to compromise the quality Montessori education and environment that we currently have on offer. With this in mind we are confident that we are working with a community that will work with us to protect the long term sustainability and quality of the preschool. Bear with us as the sub-committee iron out the details, we aim to have further information to you on 20 Hours ECE by the end of Term 2.

So it is onwards and upwards for us as we kick into a busy and challenging year ahead.

Regards, Siobhan

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## THE MAGIC OF LEARNING STORIES

BY MONIKA POLZ



I am sure you are quite familiar with the learning stories of your children and in this article I just want to provide you with some information about the early childhood sector's reasoning for this form of assessment and planning. Over the last years we have seen many trends and changes in the education system. The shift to move towards the use of observations of 'magical moments' within the context of your children's daily experiences is not only welcomed but also embraced by us.

The stories are a small snapshot of a significant moment that teachers have observed as a real noteworthy event taking place for the child, whether it be a newly learnt skill, attitude to an activity, or a social grace and courtesy. The stories are embedded in learning dispositions, children's voices and parent comments. It reflects so much more on the individual strengths, unique personalities and current interest of the child than any tick box style document of achieved or failed assessment. The learning stories reflect a holistic approach, positive learning experiences and progress in the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of your child. We endeavour to present situations where children are successfully engaged in their learning and want to self reflect on their confidence, curiosity, problem solving skills, love for exploration and self esteem to name just a few of the learning dispositions. We want to give some background information on why and how your child became inspired to be involved in this particular learning situation and what is currently relevant to your child. We want to focus on the aim that the children develop positive "dispositions that encourage learning" and identities as learners (Te Whariki, 1996).

While we try very hard to give you regular verbal feedback, the learning stories are another powerful option to foster two-way communication between teacher, children and parents. Research provides evidence that the link between early childhood services and children's homes have a positive influence on the sharing of information regarding children's preferences and interests, thereby increasing children's engagement in learning (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003). Please take the opportunity to write your thoughts and ideas under the learning journey or your children's feedback. This will give us a valuable guideline to where to go next, given our previous observations. It does not have to be long and it is so encouraging and motivating for us teachers to read about your thoughts, ideas or even concerns. We are together on this journey to provide the best possible learning outcomes and opportunities for your child's development, learning and enthusiasm for life.

The learning stories are a beautiful record of your children's individual learning journey during their early childhood years and will trigger good memories for the years to come.

Ka Kite, Monika

# TIPS FROM OUR VERY OWN SUPER NANNY

## BY DANIELLE GRAHAM



As some of you may know, before I was a preschool teacher I worked as a nanny. In my role of a nanny I had some wonderful experiences and chances to travel, throughout New Zealand and as far as the United States. As well as experiencing different cultures, diversities, and some outstanding sights came a lot of hard work. One of the most common issues I faced as a nanny was dealing with the challenging behaviour of young children.

As children grow up and begin to understand life's rules and boundaries, parents often view guiding appropriate behaviour as a very daunting task; nevertheless it is a very important step in raising young children to be well-adjusted, enjoyable people to be around. We often underestimate how knowing young children can be, but the truth is children are very clever and are frequently two or even three steps ahead of adults in regards to knowing how to get their own way. This gives children a head start when it comes to manipulating many situations to suit their own needs and desired outcomes. Children have an innate ability to know exactly how far they can push and sometimes extend the boundaries, if they sense parents are unwilling to establish consequences, or they are inconsistent in decision making.

On one occasion as a nanny I remember asking the (very cute butter would not melt in her mouth 2½ year old America toddler) to tidy up her toys before lunch. This request seemed very straightforward and logical, but she very quickly tired of this job and asked me to do the rest. I offered to help, but she was adamant that she had completed all she was doing in the tidy up stakes, and if I didn't like it, too bad! She set about explaining and rationalising all the reasons why she couldn't do anymore, while I started to pick up the rest of the toys. I suddenly realized that she was sitting back watching me and I thought why am I having this discussion with a 2½ year old? Very quickly I explained to her why she needed to put her toys away and then when I was met with further resistance I had to remind her that we couldn't have that yummy lunch until toys had been put away. A few minutes later all the toys were put away and she was sitting at the table smiling and eating her lunch. Reflecting on this story often brings a smile to my face as this shows how clever this little girl had been. By engaging me in conversation and initiating resistance, she very nearly got out of tidying up all together!

Over the years I have become a lot wiser and have with a bit of luck perfected my technique of positively guiding young children's behaviour, in order to promote their overall development and learning.

Here are some tips I have learnt along the way to guide children's behaviour:

- Children learn through watching others and in particular their parents, whānau, caregivers and significant other adults in their life. Therefore make sure you role model the correct behaviour that you expect from your children.
- Don't forget to be very clear about what your expectations are of your child and deliver that expectation in language the child can understand. It is very hard for children to understand how to act if they have not been told, or are confused.
- Children are very clever and have an amazing ability to understand right from wrong from very early on in life.
- Reward the good behaviour in some way. Praise can have a very positive affect on changing young children's behaviour.
- Reinforce by explaining to the child what they have done and what you expected of them, before consequences are put in place for inappropriate behaviour. By doing this you are making sure your child knows what acceptable behaviour is and what is not. Disciplining children for something they have no understanding of has little affect on their overall behaviour.
- Timeout is an effective way of disciplining young children in a home environment. This only works however if the child has been told beforehand that if the inappropriate behaviour continues, for example: stands on the table when specifically told not to, hits their sibling, or throws something then they will be placed in timeout for so many minutes (usually the age of the child is a good guide for how many minutes they stay in timeout for). The child should be told what the behaviour was that they did, told why it is unacceptable and then taken to the designated area for the required time established. If the child gets up or comes out before the designated time is up, then return them, offering no further communication.
- Not being firm enough is just as damaging as being too firm.
- Remember children generally do whatever they need to do to get their needs met!
- The most important tip of all is to work out what best suits your family and always be consistent, consistent, consistent! Sometimes it is easier for parents to ignore occasional bad behaviour or not follow through with the desired punishment previously set because you are tired, you have had a bad day and it is so much easier to ignore than to challenge, but consistency is vital to changing the behaviour in your child that you wish to permanently change. Remember if you don't stick to the rules and consequences set up, then neither will your children.

## FAMILY RACE DAY

Just a reminder to let everyone know the next fundraiser/community event is on Sunday 7 June starting at 1.30pm. This event is shaping up to be something quite special. I heard a rumour that we may even get a visit from the local firemen, something for everyone I think.

Race tickets can be bought on the day for \$5 and remember your loose change so mums and dads and anyone else who might come along can get in on the action.

I look forward to seeing everyone there with running shoes, sacks or whatever else you might be racing in, on.

**Cracroff Guide Centre, 151 Cashmere Road**

Andrea Webley

# ACTIVITIES FOR WINTER

BY HELEN WESTRUPP



As the winter draws nearer and the days grow colder its harder to get outside and release all the children's built up energy. It can be difficult to think of activities that aren't going to break the budget and will keep them entertained during the winter months. However there are plenty of activities just waiting to be discovered that can easily keep them occupied in or out of the home. During the winter holidays 4-19 July there is a booklet produced for Kidsfest, which has activities for children ranging in age from 0-12 years old. Check out the booklet or website for information on all the activities and costs.

Christchurch is bursting with other attractions such as the museum, which has the discovery room where the children can explore all sorts of weird and wonderful things. Other things around the centre of town include the Southern Encounter and Kiwi House with its touch tank, the tram and gondola and the arts centre with lots of different cultural experiences. Clip and Climb and the YMCA are great places for the children who love to climb and reach for the stars.

Experiences in the home can be just as fun as going out, because you can turn outside activities into inside ones. For

example, have an impromptu picnic or camp out in the lounge which can involve baking, games or even some friends over. Activities can be as simple as cutting up scraps of paper into snow flakes, putting on music and having a boogie or making some popcorn for an afternoon treat to keep the children busy. But don't forget to get outside when weather permits and explore the winter weather.

The internet is a great resource, for anything you will need to know from the recipes for strange, yummy or gooey baking activities to art activities with a winter theme. These websites have some great information for activities around Christchurch city and activities for home entertainment.

<http://www.christchurch.org.nz/Activities/KidsStuff.asp>.

<http://www.atozkidsstuff.com> for all things you can do at home.

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com> for facts, photos and videos on people, places and a variety of animals.

<http://www.kidsfest.co.nz> the Kidsfest website.

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com> is another site for activities, crafts and printable information.

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# THE FREEDOM OF THE CHILD: A MONTESSORI PERSPECTIVE

BY PAULA SCOTT



As a Montessori teacher, meeting new people can be an interesting experience for me. Once we have moved beyond introductions and we are beginning to divulge more of ourselves I have recognised a common thread to my conversations with them. These conversations are often triggered by that all too familiar comment "Oh, Montessori, yes, I've heard about that. It's a cult isn't it? Or some kind of religion? Anyway, I've heard it's very structured!" Initially I would launch into deep and meaningful discussions on the true essence of Montessori, however, over the years I have mellowed somewhat and now I just smile and say "Well, the environment is carefully prepared, and this is so the child may be completely free within it."

Let me explain...

Montessori saw freedom as the single most important factor in allowing children to develop as spontaneous, creative individuals. She saw the role of education as providing environments in which the children could be set free to follow their natural impulses - to become the wonderfully dynamic, natural learners they are designed to be. The freedom of the child and the prepared environment are closely linked, the concept that a child has the capability of educating themselves is often referred to as auto education or self education. The child who is actively involved in a prepared environment and is exercising freedom of choice literally educates themselves. The role freedom plays in this auto education is crucial.

The universal perception of the teacher-learning activities is that the teacher teaches and because of this, the child

learns. We overlook how much we all learn through our own efforts and how this is a powerful human capability. Therefore our Montessori teaching activities includes preparing the environment so that children, through participation in it, educate themselves. Reflect for a moment on those things that you learned yourself and try to recall the satisfaction that accompanied this learning and the power it had to generate continued and further involvement. This reflection may highlight your own memories of the power of these moments.

As teachers our observations of the child is our greatest teaching tool, because if we truly know the child, we are able to have complete faith in them to show us their interests and through the prepared environment we are able to provide for their needs and interests. From this point, we are able to look closely at how we can provide such relationships and experiences, so that we are able to individualise the experiences and environment for each child and promote INDEPENDENCE for each child. This independence for the child is also recognised as freedom, 'help me to do it for myself'.

As Montessorians, we therefore believe and recognise that each child is an individual learner. We encourage all children to work at the pace that is right for them. There is no pass or fail, grades or tests. Our school community is only interested in the results that ends up making us all feel good about ourselves, our achievements and our abilities.

Arohanui, Paula x

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT GRACE AND COURTESY REALLY IS

## ROOM 1 AND ROOM 2

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.

### Walking on the Line

Have you ever thought to yourself what is that line on the floor of a Montessori classroom, and what do they use it for?

Dr Montessori was a careful observer, and she noticed that children liked to walk on narrow fences or lines. They enjoyed walking along a limited line and perfecting their sense of balance. Young children are in a sensitive period for the perfection of movement and as teachers we need to be aware of this.

In the classroom we provide for this need with the exercises of "Walking on the Line". We use the line drawn or painted on the floor in the form of an ellipse, and we teach the children to walk on it. The purpose of these exercises is to aid the children in establishing perfect equilibrium and to help co-ordinate movements and the development of attention and will.

We normally demonstrate walking on the line to a group of children. Teachers demonstrate how to walk placing each foot on the line. Individual children may walk on the line at any time during the individual work period. Walking on the line is generally done with quiet calm music with not a heavy beat. As the children become more proficient at walking, we gradually introduce the carrying of objects, with increasing difficulty, for example:

- Small flags of different countries.
- Small tumblers or wine glasses with coloured water in them.
- Small bells (try not to let them ring).
- Lighted candles in candle holder with a drip tray.
- Cup and saucer.

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.

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## HOW PRAISE CAN MOTIVATE - OR KILL - MOTIVATION

### REPRODUCED COURTESY OF PRINCIPAL'S DIGESTS

Research has shown that praising children can be bad because it's an extrinsic reward that makes students dependent and less intrinsically motivated. But we all need and enjoy being praised for good work. How can we make sure the praise we give children increases, rather than kills their motivation?

#### The four principles of praise:

1. **Praise should sincerely commend something praiseworthy.** If we want praise to improve motivation, children need to believe it's merited.
2. **Praise should emphasis process, not ability.** Praising ability ("You are a wonderful writer") and intelligence ("You are the smartest maths pupil I've ever taught") may seem harmless, but it becomes a problem when

students encounter difficulty or failure. Praising effort, on the other hand, strengthens the belief that intelligence or ability is flexible and you improve with effort.

3. **Praise should lead children to draw positive conclusions about themselves.** When an adult says "That was a tough problem, but you kept working at it until you solved it" the child might think, "I don't give up easy. I persist". When the teacher says, "Your opening sentence grabbed my interest and made me want to read on", the pupil might think, "I'm getting good at writing."
4. **Praise should be immediate and unexpected.** Delayed praise loses much of its motivational impact, so a good rule of thumb, is that praise should come shortly after a praiseworthy act.

## PROFILE: KEVIN RIDDLE



Hi my name is Kevin Riddle, I am the new general member of the Board of Trustees. I will be working in the Property and IT Sub-Committees. That means that I will be helping with ensuring that the computers and associated network and equipment used by the teachers and admin staff are working in a way that is best for them, is reliable and protects their information. It also means that I will be helping with ensuring that the preschool is maintained and upgraded for the safety and requirements of the current and future children of the preschool.

Our son Corbin is in Room 1 and has been attending the Courtyard since last October when he turned three. He enjoys his mornings at the Courtyard and still proudly likes to tell us when we drive down Somerfield Street that "that is my new preschool" - it isn't so new now though! We also have a wee girl Ava who turns two in July. My partner Katrina and Ava may be familiar to you as she normally does the drop offs

and pickups at the preschool. Katrina runs our busy home, which also includes renovating our money pit/home and running her interior design business. I am a director and co-owner of Computer Culture Ltd with Craig Harrington (his youngest boy Jake is in Room 1). Our company specialises in providing extensive IT services to small to medium sized businesses.

Outside of work and preschool we try and spend plenty of good quality time as a family. We purchased a little power boat last summer and spent every opportunity waterskiing and boating. We also love to go camping and getting away for weekends.

As with Corbin we are very proud to be part of the Courtyard experience. We feel privileged that we have such a great preschool in our neighbourhood that has such passionate and talented teachers and parents.

## 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.
- You are not charged for school holidays.
- 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.
- Children are invited to attend Extended Day at approx 4.4 years of age in preparation for school and the Full Day option is open to all families.
- Families are most welcome to enquire about availability of Full Day spaces on Monday through to Thursday at any time throughout the term.
- 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.
- Please do not park on the triangle sign on the road between our car park and our neighbour's drive.
- The Privacy Act allows personal information to be disclosed when it is either used in a form in which the individual is not identified or when it is used for statistical or research purposes and won't be published in a way that could identify an individual.
- 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.

