

Melbourne Montessori School



Curriculum Overview Cycle 2 2020



Cycle 2

Curriculum Overview

Language

“The development of language is part of the development of the personality, for words are the natural means of expressing thoughts and establishing understanding between people.”

Maria Montessori

Language is the exploration of great human achievement, so we present the study of English in an imaginative way. The Story of Communication and The Story of Writing inspire an interest in Language and Writing. Grammar materials are presented through engaging stories and activities. Word study and spelling activities are presented sequentially where the child works at their own pace. Using both the spoken and written word, children work to develop effective communication skills. All through the year, the children cover various genres such as Narrative, Recount, Report, Procedural and Persuasive writing. Using Montessori materials and targeted lessons children cover spelling, grammar and punctuation.

They are encouraged to choose reading material that promotes progression in their reading ability and encourages reading for information and pleasure. They identify reading material that matches their individual interests and they are introduced to a wide variety of literary styles and genres, as well as analysing texts through comprehension exercises.

Mathematics

Maria Montessori said it best: “In its natural state, the human mind is already mathematical; it tends toward exactness, measure and comparison.”

Building on children’s individual foundation in Mathematics, our method involves presentations with Montessori materials, along with investigations and practice. The Story of Number encourages an interest in the past and present mathematical discoveries of Man, while providing an incentive to be mathematically inspired.

Our Mathematics curriculum covers the decimal system through addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Demonstrations of fractions, measurement and geometry are presented to engage interest and promote individual exploration. Our aim is that the study of Mathematics goes far beyond memorization and becomes a useful, comfortable tool for each child’s daily life.



Cultural Studies

“We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are a part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity”

Maria Montessori: To Educate the Human Potential

Our aim is to provide children with learning environments designed to support the development of social, intellectual and ethical independence. Our approach is that children learn best when they learn through their own chosen activity. Children who learn this way become self-confident, self-reliant and self-disciplined.

In the Montessori curriculum, cultural studies are known as Cosmic Education. We began our studies this semester with the Great Stories including The Creation Story, The Coming of Life and The Coming of Man. Areas of scientific studies introduced through the stories include: Astronomy, Geology, Physics, Biology, and Chemistry which give

children a sense of Nature and the formation of their world. One of the foundations of Cosmic Education is the interconnectedness of all life. At this stage in their development, children are drawn to the study of plants and animals as they have a love of living things. They can follow an interest that is sparked through the key lessons to the fulfilment of their passion. Children use prepared materials such as timelines, classification charts and nomenclature individually and in groups. The studies of the Fundamental Needs of Man demonstrate the basic needs which have been consistent through time and place.

Art

During the first part of Semester 1, Cycle 2 children focused on painting skills after viewing early, vertical images of people by Pierre Bonnard which were inspired by Japanese Ukiyo-e Print Masters. They composed a narrow, vertical composition with a figure facing away looking back towards the viewer. They painted leafy, textured backgrounds, modelled each other dressed in a gown and created a face in profile. Children decorated the garment in check patterns and added and painted over images of their own pet or that of someone else.

They began constructing foam Muppet-style puppets after viewing many portraits of Pierre Bonnard and Marthe, which the children will further develop and complete when face-to-face schooling resumes.

More recently, they have been focusing on their own feelings and noting those portrayed and expressed in Japanese Contemporary Artist, Yoshimoto Nara’s images of children, especially, Dream Time, 2015. Cycle 2 children have also been developing check pattern options for their own drawings after viewing those used in Pierre Bonnard’s and Japanese Print Master, Keisai Eisen’s works. They experimented with possible ways of making their own soft-toned paint from materials available in their pantries and fridges at home. While they have been learning to make and decorate their own beds, they have been building a self-portrait of themselves in bed with their thoughts, dreams, toys, comforters, pets and books.



Performing Arts

Term 3

Djembe Unit: Through learning to play the djembe, Cycle 2 children practised, and consolidated, many musical skills and concepts. We started the term experiencing rhythm as clapping, chanting, passing plastic balls and stones, movement and body percussion. The children learned to play intricate Ghanaian 'Kpanlogo' rhythmic patterns on the djembe using the aural tradition of 'call and response'. Playing with a steady beat in time with the ensemble group was one important musical skill practised and performing polyrhythms (more than one rhythmic pattern at a time) was another. There was a strong focus on improving technique when playing the djembe. This included the ability to use the correct applications of bass and tone notes and playing with both hands while bouncing off the drum skin. It also required the children to use both hands alternately, engaging both sides of the body and brain.

The children learned to recognise and appreciate music traditions and culture of West Africa by listening to recordings and through playing the shekere and caxixi from Ghana. They learned about the construction and care of these instruments. They worked on improvising rhythmic patterns on the djembe and classroom instruments, moving on to composing ensemble pieces in a small group. The children built a repertoire of West African songs, experiencing group singing and practising singing in time and in tune.

The children communicated their understanding of rhythmic patterns verbally using Kodaly time names. This method is very similar to the Ghanaian traditions of verbalising rhythms when teaching another performer. Moving forward, the children wrote crotchets, crotchet rests, quavers and semiquavers using traditional notation. They were able to take rhythmic dictation and compose simple ensemble pieces using notation. Children with more music theory knowledge were encouraged to include time signatures.

Term 4

Puppet Unit: The Cycle 2 children devised, scripted and performed puppet shows which were then filmed. The shows reflected the children's connection to natural spaces and were inspired by stories of 'place', and of animals written by Indigenous authors. The children were encouraged to think about their own personal connection to the natural world, whether in their backyard, local park or special holiday place.

This project enabled the children to learn about many aspects of drama and film production. They worked in small groups to devise a story, write the script and create detailed storyboards for their show. Parts of the scripts were written in Italian, making a connection with their language studies. All of the classes collaborated to design and build a giant puppet film set comprising of forest, mountains, lakes, beach and islands. The children designed and built puppets from cardboard, paint and natural objects. They chose character traits for their puppets and represented these through both physical design and vocal performance. The children practised using vocal expression to create dramatic tension.



Physical Expression

In Term 1 of Semester One, children in Cycle 2 focused on ball skills, both in competitive game situations and to further their skills individually. They had the opportunity to experiment with different throwing techniques and evaluate the effectiveness of these when trying to hit a stationary or moving target. Throwing and catching within the context of a competitive sport was also taught and the children had the opportunity to play a modified game of netball. There was also a focus on teamwork and co-operative play with the children working together to solve a game called Cross the River. This game encouraged them to communicate supportively and co-operatively, as well as problem solve and work as a team to complete the challenge.

During Term 2 of Semester One, via an online learning platform, the focus was on fundamental movement skills. The children worked on the locomotor and non-locomotor skills of jumping, balancing, running and hopping, as well as the object control skills of throwing and catching. Balloons were used to practise throwing and catching while incorporating balancing, jumping and hopping. Children were given the opportunity to create their own combination of movement skills to keep a balloon from touching the ground.

Fitness and strength was also a focus for Term 2, with children participating in High Intensity Interval Training that worked on cardiovascular endurance, strength and flexibility. We explored movement to music and focused on body awareness and control. The children learnt two dance routines, Tony Chestnut and The Nutbush, to develop their temporal awareness, spatial awareness, co-ordination and balance.

Social and Emotional

“There is a great sense of community within the Montessori classroom, where children of differing ages work together in an atmosphere of co-operation rather than competitiveness. There is respect for the environment and for the individuals within it, which comes through experience of freedom within the community.”

Our aim is to provide children with learning environments designed to support the development of the child as a member of the classroom and school community. Our approach encourages reflective thinking, promotes reflective relationships and builds children’s capacity to manage their own emotions. We believe that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand as we guide the child on their journey to self-mastery.

