



SA MONTESSORI  
quality early childhood education and care

# SA Montessori Pre-schools

## Statement of Principles

*Inspiring the  
love of learning  
since 1989*





# Statement of Principles

This document guides the practice, policies and procedures of our centre.

Montessori is the name given to a method of early childhood education that is well documented and supported by scientific research. The Montessori approach is comprised of three elements; a philosophy, a methodology and a set of specially designed materials to complement the method.

Dr Maria Montessori first developed her methodology in the early 1900's and since that time her work has become an internationally respected pedagogy. Today there are over 22,000 Montessori schools in 110 countries around the world.

The Montessori philosophy reveals a powerful understanding of the innate development of the child. Everything we do in our centre stems from this foundation.

The Montessori philosophy translates in a practical sense to inspire an educational curriculum framework which charts the continuum of learning from birth to age eighteen. Children in our centre are aged from

two to five years and during the time they are with us their learning journey is guided by the elements of the Montessori Curriculum corresponding to their age range.

Staff members working at our centre reflect the values and principles of the Montessori philosophy in their daily practice.

The Montessori Curriculum relates well to the Early Years Learning Framework as both are designed to provide quality outcomes for children. Both documents are used in the reflective practice of our staff.

Education and care cannot be separated, or considered different components, as they are inextricably linked to the whole development of a child. It is with this in mind that we, as Montessori educators, work within a framework that begins with respect and affection for each child and from this we build safe and consistent boundaries to allow the child freedom to discover truth, knowledge, exploration, independence and self worth.



We believe that each child, as an intelligent and capable learner, has an innate instinct to strive for independence and a desire to contribute in a meaningful and responsible way to their environment and community.

Therefore within the framework of the Montessori philosophy...

**We will** trust children to make responsible choices about their own learning experiences.

**We will** guide children's experiences by preparing an environment which attracts interest and invites discovery by the child.

**We will** provide many opportunities for children to practise the skills which will enable them to act independently and successfully.

**We will** allow children freedom of choice and movement in order to assist in the development of self discipline. This freedom is always balanced by the clear, consistent boundaries of safety and social responsibility.

**We will** provide a calm environment within which children can identify, classify, and order their experiences enabling them to formulate, store and build upon their knowledge in a logical and ordered manner.

**We will** provide proper tools to assist children to independently deal with everyday incidents such as spills, mess, or breakages that occur as a normal part of learning a new skill.

**We will not** steer children's learning with predetermined adult plans.

**We will not** be pressured to provide learning experiences that suit the adult rather than the child.

**We will not** do things for the children that they can capably do for themselves.

**We will not** prevent children from free choice and movement unless it impacts in a negative way on another person or the environment.

**We will not** endorse a noisy or disordered environment as this would distract children from their innate desire for order and concentration thereby preventing them from engaging in meaningful learning experiences.

**We will not** judge children in a negative way if they have an accident or make a mistake.



We believe that children construct themselves through their own experiences.

Therefore within the framework of the Montessori philosophy ...

**We will** provide unhurried and uninterrupted time wherever possible for children to practise, repeat and complete their tasks.

**We will** present materials that allow children the opportunity for repetition, problem solving, self-correction and reflection.

**We will** allow children the right to assess and evaluate their own achievements free from external judgment or rewards.

**We will** value the process of achievement above the final product of children's work in order to inspire creativity and risk taking.

**We will** empower children with the right to decide whether a task promotes 'teamwork' or requires 'independent focus', thereby removing the pressure to share.

**We will** respect the cultural diversity of the children in our centre and will endeavour to seek support and resources from the community to enhance their family heritage.

**We will** value children's involvement, ideas and input in the development of our program planning.

**We will not** provide inflexible schedules throughout the day or unnecessarily interrupt a child who is engaged in a meaningful task.

**We will not** correct children's errors, interfere with their efforts or offer answers without first allowing for investigation and self evaluation.

**We will not** offer rewards or adult acclamation to substantiate the value of children's work.

**We will not** judge or compare the value of children's work by showcasing their creations or by keeping an arbitrary portfolio of children's work for adult assessment.

**We will not** make children share their activities as we believe that children have the right to decide against sharing if they prefer to be solely engaged in their own task.

**We will not** underestimate the value of cultural diversity within our centre.

**We will not** underestimate the value of children's involvement in all aspects of our daily practice.



**Our role is to facilitate and observe the development of each child as it naturally unfolds.**

**Therefore within the framework of the Montessori philosophy ...**

**We will** use children's progression through the Montessori Curriculum as the primary indicator of developmental progress.

**We will** use the Montessori materials and the Montessori Curriculum as the basis of program planning for the classroom and the individual child.

**We will** follow the child to determine individual readiness for, or interest in, progression through the Montessori Curriculum.

**We will** use our skills of observation, not assumption, as the primary tool in building our understanding of the child.

**We will** use supporting documentary evidence only where it assists in the professional evaluation and planning for each child within the context of the Montessori Curriculum.

**We will** value every interaction as a meaningful reflection of the child's daily experiences and a manifestation of the child's constant personal growth.

**We will** regularly reflect on a child's educational, emotional and physical development. Documentary evidence of reflective practice will link to the Montessori Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework.

**We will not** apply appraisals conducted outside of the Montessori Curriculum that attempt to standardize children's developmental progress.

**We will not** develop classroom or individual program planning without reference to the Montessori Curriculum.

**We will not** set pre-determined goals for a child or pressure a child to meet arbitrary, standardized 'check-lists' based merely on time or age.

**We will not** rely on arbitrary documentation or the opinion of other adults as the tool to form our understanding of the child.

**We will not** rely on documentary evidence other than where it is relevant to reflect on our own professional observations of the child within the context of the Montessori Curriculum.

**We will not** use photographic evidence or document a snapshot of a child's day as a summary of a child's total experience.

**We will not** spend time documenting observations that do not relate directly to reflective evaluation in the context of the Montessori Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework.





## Our relationship with Families

As a Montessori centre we value each child as an individual and use our understanding of the child's unique personality to create inspiring, engaging experiences within our prepared environment. As a part of our ongoing endeavour to know and to 'follow' the child we feel it is important to create a respectful relationship between the teacher and the child's family. We aim to gather information from families to strengthen or broaden our understanding of the child and in return we offer information not

only about the child's development in our centre but also of ways that the Montessori philosophy can be incorporated into the child's home life. We value input from family members and encourage open, reciprocal communication between the staff and parents.

We recognize that parents intentionally choose our Montessori centre for their child because the principles we stand for relate to their instincts and beliefs as parents. Therefore we offer support to families by staying true to our core Montessori beliefs.

We respect the role that parents have in guiding the development of their child and we aim to support this through informing the parent and nurturing the child. We welcome families to be active participants in our Montessori community.

Therefore within the framework of the Montessori philosophy ...

**We will** welcome parents to engage in discussion with us about their child's progress through casual conversation or shared anecdotes before or after class times, with scheduled Parent interviews or via phone conferences.

**We will** be available outside of class times for parent communication and education through formats such as interviews, phone calls, the collation of educational resources and Parent Information events.

**We will** create many opportunities for parents to access information about the structure and routines of our day as well as the Montessori philosophy, materials and method.

**We will** respect the diverse needs and beliefs of individual children and their families. We will show sensitivity to special requirements and supportively incorporate that into the classroom community wherever possible.

**We will** provide parents with referrals to other Early Childhood Professionals, such as Speech Therapists, Psychologists or Occupational Therapists where a strong need is identifiable.

**We will** endeavor to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere for parents to feel part of the Montessori community.

**We will not** be reliant upon providing written material as a form of communication to inform parents as we find verbal communication more efficient, effective, friendly and interactive.

**We will not** be available for parent discussion during class time as our focus and responsibility throughout the session is on being engaged with the children.

**We will not** allow parents to observe during class time unless scheduled and approved on the basis that it will not be stressful or disruptive to the children.

**We will not** discriminate against any child or family based on their culture, heritage or religious beliefs.

**We will not** attempt to diagnose (or be held accountable for the diagnosis or lack of diagnosis of) any specific condition that is beyond our realm of professional understanding or training.

**We will not** tolerate behaviour from parents, or families, which is threatening or in overt opposition to our Montessori values.





# The Montessori Early Years Learning Programme



The outdoor environment is an extension of the indoor program where children interact with nature by taking responsibility for tending the garden, caring for the plants and trees and discovering the inter-relationship of plants and animals. Creative play spaces also provide opportunities for children to engage in the social and physical activity of free play.

Children in a Montessori environment are immersed in pre-literacy learning through a vast array of experiences with music, stories and sounds. The richness and beauty of language as an expression of emotion and as a form of communication is enhanced as children are exposed to quality literature and culturally diverse music and language. The Montessori philosophy encourages children to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas through verbal and written communication. Montessori materials extend on this experience by allowing children to master the foundations of written composition and reading.

The Montessori Mathematics curriculum introduces children to the concepts of time, distance, dimension, currency and quantity. An extensive array of materials are available throughout the classroom that reinforce the numerical hierarchy of zero to ten. As children work with the materials they gain a strong recognition of these numbers and their corresponding quantities. From this solid foundation the children are then introduced to much larger numbers and to the mathematical operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The Montessori materials provide concrete representation of numerical value and this gives the children an ability to easily understand each concept before it is presented in its abstract form.

In the context of a Montessori classroom the Cultural curriculum consists of the study of science, geography, botany, history, biology, art, music and multi-cultural society. Children make interesting discoveries about the world they live in. Lessons present factual information to help children to identify, name and classify the things around them. Understanding the inter-relationship of plants, animals and people enables children to gain respect for all living things and for their environment.

The precisely crafted Sensorial materials provide the children with an opportunity to explore concepts of dimension, colour, shape, weight, volume, texture, scent, taste and sound. The materials encourage comparison, observation and problem solving. The lessons accompanying the Sensorial materials provide children with diverse descriptive language and a heightened sense of awareness to intelligently observe their environment.

Practical Life activities support the child in developing the essential skills to successfully deal with day to day experiences. Practical Life activities allow children to engage in meaningful tasks such as cleaning, food preparation, arranging flowers, gardening or caring for animals. Children can access child sized tools such as kitchen utensils, mops, sponges, sweeping brushes and watering cans that enable them to participate in the care of their classroom and outdoor environment. Practical Life activities assist children to refine and coordinate their movements, to develop concentration and to build skills that will allow them to contribute to society in an independent and responsible manner.

Children in a Montessori classroom are encouraged to move freely from one activity to another based on their interest and self-motivation. Children can work alone, with a friend or as a participant in a group activity. Social etiquette and safe conduct form an essential component of a Montessori classroom. Respect is also a fundamental element of the Montessori philosophy and reciprocal respect is present in all of the relationships within the classroom community.

## Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5
Children have a strong sense of identity	Children are connected with and contribute to their world	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	Children are involved and confident learners	Children are effective communicators



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(1912) Dr Maria Montessori