

Prospectus



The *whole* Child. Better for the *whole* world.

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THE
FUTURE-PROOF
PROJECT

ME
Montessori East
Primary & Pre School

A MONTESSORI EAST INITIATIVE

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Welcome

I am very proud to share with you the story of Montessori East, a remarkable school with an ambitious vision for the future. The story begins in 1979, with a group of Sydney parents seeking a new way of raising and educating their children. That year we had fifteen preschoolers in a small church hall in Vacluse.

Since then, we have grown into an integrated pre-school and primary school, with a parenting program for infants and toddlers. In the past twelve years as Principal, I have witnessed the school community mature to become a place where sound educational principles and a proven methodology are firmly established. Today we stand strong, prepared for a new era of growth where Montessori East not only serves a greater number of families, but also becomes a bright beacon for other schools desiring relevant teaching and learning approaches for the 21st century.

I would like to share our vision of the future - a future where we raise and educate our children entirely in keeping with our understanding of their growth and the world they will encounter as adults. Where we work to help them become the person they are destined to be; an active citizen contributing to a better world. Where we recognise the importance of the family and the community in every child's journey.

Education at our school is a journey through vibrant mixed-age learning communities that

children join, are enriched by, and move on from. Each stage reflects a particular point in their personal journey – from the sensory exploration of the two year old to the scientific curiosity of the eight year old; from the vulnerable questioning of the twelve year old to the deep scholastic endeavours of the sixteen year old.

Our ambition is to build on our existing community to create a holistic place of learning for children of all ages, as well as parents. Our approach will become an open-source model, to be shared freely with the world. We are already on the way to achieving this goal, with the backing and support of our Montessori community. However, considering the scope of our project, we know that to have the greatest impact we will need the support of all those who are sympathetic to our vision.

I invite you to learn more about our school and our project, described in this prospectus. It is our hope that you will be inspired to join us on our exciting journey into the future.

Bill Conway
Principal, Montessori East

BILL CONWAY has been Principal of Montessori East since 2007. His background includes classroom teaching, guidance counselling, administration and principalships in schools in the US, Colombia, New Zealand and Australia.

His career in education took him to mainstream schools before 'coming home' to Montessori East. Bill is an advisor to the education department in Thailand on the implementation of Montessori methodology in the Thai public school system.

He chairs the Program Planning Committee for the upcoming International Montessori Congress to be held in Bangkok in 2021. He is also the international administrator trainer for AMI and has co-written the curriculum for the training course which is an internationally recognised Montessori qualification. Bill has four adult children, two granddaughters, and lives in Sydney.





Our Purpose

- We advocate an approach to education that is holistic and engaged with the community.
- We provide a dynamic environment, dedicated to supporting children's natural development so that they become resilient, compassionate and confident human beings.
- We work to equip each child with the skills and attitudes they need to become lifelong learners, and to reach their individual potential.
- We contribute to a healthy society that is peaceful, compassionate and sustainable.



The Future of School

The world is changing faster than ever before. When students eventually graduate from many of our country's high schools, they can find themselves without many of the skills needed to contribute to a rapidly changing society and ill-prepared to meet many new demands from tertiary institutions. Parents and teachers around the world are questioning long-standing education practices that may actually be doing more harm than good, and asking how things could be better.

Fortunately, the radical change required needn't be ill-informed or without precedent. For those of us in the Montessori community, our experience has shown that we can address exactly these issues.

We believe we can create a school experience that addresses the needs of young Australians and the social context in which they are coming of age. Our established pre-school and primary school methodology, as well as our parental support programs, lay a firm foundation for extending into the adolescent experience and offering ways of learning through to adulthood.

At the heart of our approach is a philosophy of caring and compassionate citizenship. At each stage of their educational journey, children become part of a greater multi-age community and recognise their role within it. Each stage builds on previous experiences, rather than the year-by-year dislocation that many school students feel today. Beyond the school itself, our scope extends to the families and communities around it. No longer a place of isolated teaching, our school shows greater awareness of and engagement with the world around us.

We believe in the need for a new educational approach, preparing individuals with the relevant skills, personal traits and a global perspective. Through our 'whole community' philosophy, we are building holistic learning communities that are naturally suited to our modern society and supporting the young people we are raising as active citizens.

"Tomorrow is not what it use to be."



School is a Journey

It has often been observed that mainstream schools reflect the industrial era in which they first appeared. They represent the 'factory model', a system built on conformity and process, efficiently educating a mass population.

Times have changed, and our perspective is profoundly different. We see school as a journey, focused on the individual and relevant to their own drives, aptitudes, and interests. Through this journey, they are constantly discovering themselves, the world around them, and their fellow travellers.

Paced according to the development of the individual, our schooling model is made up of three-year cycles that map different planes of social, psychological and cognitive development. Each stage in this journey has its own community of children, with prepared environments that support the children's stage of development.

"A Montessori educated child is different. Responsible for, and guided to self direct their own learning pathway and ultimately their futures."

The Journey

INFANT AND TODDLER COMMUNITY

In the Infant and Toddler Community, families begin to establish the ways of relating and behaving that will guide their children toward healthy, independent adulthood.

Age: Prenatal - 3
Parent Programs



Age: Prenatal - 3 | PAGE 10

THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE

From around three years, the Children's House provides opportunities to explore colours, shapes, numbers, language, and other aspects of their environment.

Ages: 3 - 6 | Cycle 1
Pre-school & Kindergarten



Ages: 3 - 6 | PAGE 12



Ages: 6 - 12 | PAGE 14

LEARNING AND DISCOVERY COMMUNITIES

At six, the scope of exploration is increased in the Learning and Discovery Communities, where children are immersed in more abstract knowledge about the physical and social world around them.

Ages: 6 - 12 | Cycles 2 & 3
Primary School (Years 1 - 6)



Ages: 12 - 18 | PAGE 16

HIGH SCHOOL

During the critical early teenage years, High School provides young people an opportunity to explore and shape their own identity, while laying the groundwork for the personal and practical capabilities that will prove invaluable in further study, professional work, and life generally.

Ages: 12 - 18 | Cycles 4 & 5
Middle School (Years 7 - 10)
Academy (Years 11 - 12)

Infant and Toddler Community

Parent Programs. Prenatal - 3

The Infant and Toddler Community is a space where parents encounter Montessori principles, often for the first time. Through various programs and sessions, parents take the first steps to becoming active participants in their child's learning, implementing key principles in their own homes and understand how their interactions with their children can be most beneficial for both parent and child.

In taking a holistic approach to education, the family is a key part of the learning journey. Much of the Montessori philosophy speaks of the 'prepared environment', which is created to facilitate the child's development. The adults in a child's life, and parents in particular, are an important part of that environment. For this reason it is critical that they appreciate how their interactions shape their child's development. Through this process they become 'prepared adults', part of the environment that guides the child toward realising their human potential.

With guidance from experienced educators in the Infant and Toddler Community, parents gain knowledge of how their child will develop, and how they can deepen that knowledge through observing their own child. They can also learn how their home can become a 'prepared environment', a place that supports the rapid learning occurring in these early years through sensory experiences and meaningful play.

For parents, the Infant and Toddler Community is also an invitation to actively participate in a broader learning culture that extends beyond a 'school' and includes fellow parents and skilled educators. Families can continue to be part of this journey as their children progress through childhood, ready to embrace the natural changes of each new developmental plane.



“Especially at the beginning of life must we, therefore, make the environment as interesting and attractive as we can.”

Maria Montessori

Modelled after Maria Montessori’s ‘Casa di Bambini’ in Rome, the Children’s House is a place where the child is surrounded by a carefully prepared environment. These beautifully prepared environments incorporate bespoke materials that appeal to the child’s interest and different sensory needs while developing specific skills.

In these early years characterised by the sensitive periods of the ‘absorbent mind’, children take the first steps on their individual education journey. They are guided by the adults and peers around them, at their own pace, toward their own destination.

Much of the child’s day is spent engrossed in self-chosen activities and guided by well-prepared educators who respond to the

individual’s needs and interests. These activities relate to the wide ranging and comprehensive curriculum and includes many practical life tasks, encouraging a sense of care and responsibility for their environment. They also develop their choice-making abilities, concentration and sense of independence.

Some tasks appeal explicitly to the senses; some depict aspects of

culture and the natural world; while others build literacy and numeracy skills by way of specially designed materials and approaches.

Combined, these materials seek to provide the introduction to the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the arts while nurturing fundamental qualities such as empathy and acceptance.



Learning and Discovery Communities are non-competitive learning spaces where children often work in small groups rather than individually or as a whole class. In pursuing knowledge about the world, children are introduced to five overarching themes: astronomy and earth sciences; life sciences; social sciences; literature; and mathematical ideas.

In contrast to most mainstream primary schools where each classroom represents a single year of study, Learning and Discovery communities are divided into two types of classrooms – some for younger children up to the age of 9 (referred to as Cycle 2), others for older children (Cycle 3). In this way, children spend three consecutive years in the same class, with the same educators. The result is a richer, sustained community that evolves over time. Children enter as the youngest in the community, then over time take on the role of leaders and guides as they become the oldest.



"We put the child at the centre of everything we do, to help create self-starting independent thinkers and confident problem solvers."



CYCLE 2 VS CYCLE 3

In Cycle 2, children begin to encounter more abstract ideas, from the scientific to social; from philosophical to psychological. This transition continues in Cycle 3 where much of the focus is now on abstract ideas. There is still, however, an important role for concrete materials and hands-on activities.

Creative arts plays an important role, and children are encouraged to express their ideas through a wide range of materials and artistic techniques. Also integral

to these years is the practice of children planning their own investigative excursions, building their independence and connecting them to the world beyond the classroom.

THE DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM

The class operates democratically through weekly meetings to discuss codes of conduct; decide duties and responsibilities; and raise any problems to be resolved. Actively contributing through practical roles in maintaining the space is an important aspect of classroom participation.

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

Rather than tests and exams, children are continually assessed through observation and project work. They are also encouraged to develop their capacity to critique their own work, and that of others. Their assessment is not only against their academic progress, but broader intellectual capabilities such as creativity and critical thinking, as well as their social and emotional skills.

High School - An Introduction

CRITICAL YEARS

The adolescent years are a period of immense change. With the onset of puberty, children experience profound personal transformation physically, mentally and emotionally. It is a time of vulnerability, as the child becomes a young adult. It is also a time of great potential, as in these years we develop an understanding of our role as citizens of a broader society.



Given the importance of these critical years, it is unfortunate that they are often handled poorly by families, schools and society at large. Rather than adapting the way we relate to adolescents, they tend to be blamed for their own changes in behaviour. They seem easily distracted, emotionally needy, at times intentionally obstructive. At the same time, many describe feeling alienated, awkward, and out of place – at home, at school, and in the broader community.

THE ADOLESCENT TO ADULT

During adolescence, young people are grappling with their own identity, their values, and their relationships with others. They develop an intense interest in the social organisation and roles. They also experience a new urge toward creative arts, as a means of self-expression and self-discovery. With all these things in flux, many struggle with more functional aspects of life. Some parents and teachers observe that students seem less academically capable as they move through this change.

Young people are changing profoundly during adolescence, and so must the way we approach their education. This is a time for re-engaging with the physical and natural world, as their bodies mature. A time for exploring, examining and challenging their ideas – of themselves, of others, and of society beyond the school walls. It is a time, too, for coming into the world, and beginning to take on some of the responsibilities of adulthood.

“The adolescent must never be treated as a child, for that is a stage of life that he has surpassed.”

Maria Montessori

The Middle School offers a distinctly different learning environment from the stages that precede and follow it. It recognises that students are developing socially and personally, exploring their own identity, their connections with each other, and their role in the world. As a consequence, time at school feels less academic, and more concrete – students work collaboratively on real world projects and have the time and encouragement to gain a sense of self that results in an independent, empathetic, resilient young adult, ready to move on to the final stage of their school journey.

A SOCIAL COMMUNITY

Similar to the other stages, this stage forms a self contained community in its own defined campus. Appreciating the developmental aspects of adolescence, this is seen primarily as a social community. The Middle School is made up of a number of classes, each with twelve to fifteen students of different ages. Each year, several of the students in a class will move on to the Academy, and several students will join from Learning and Discovery communities. While much activity is done in classes, there are also plenty of opportunities for students in different classes to interact, socialise and collaborate.

SYLLABUS AND CURRICULUM

During their time in this stage, students cover the required NSW syllabus content, which encompasses English, a second language, mathematics, science, history, geography, visual art, music, technology, personal development, health and physical education.

THE HOME CLASSROOM

Rather than moving between different classrooms according to a weekly timetable of periods, each group of students in the Middle School has a 'home' space that they can make their own. Given the importance of building relationships at this life-stage, each class also has one 'home' teacher who works with students to plan and manage their own learning. These generalist teachers are supported as required by a roster of specialist teachers as well as discipline experts from outside the school.

CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITY

Continuing the theme of classroom participation, students take responsibility for many aspects of the operation and management of their campus. From preparing food for the cohort to cleaning classrooms; from staffing the school's reception desk to participating in leadership meetings, this is one of the many different ways that students in the Middle School begin to explore their role in the broader world beyond their own class.



"Less learning to remember and more learning to think."



The Middle School will look and feel different to traditional high school in many ways. Some of the most significant and visible differences will be;

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS

Rather than the class all learning the same thing at the same time, students have the freedom to choose when and how they learn. Their home teacher works with each student so that they understand the content they must cover, and the resources they have to do so. Following the independent study model of earlier stages, students are then responsible for managing much of their own time – and tracking their activities to ensure they are meeting the requirements of the curriculum.

DIFFERENT LEARNING MODES

Given this individual approach, on any given day a student will spend some time working independently – from doing research into topics of interest to building their subject-specific skills with in-class materials and online resources. The remainder of their time will be spent working with other students on group projects, in small seminars with specialist teachers to explore particular subjects in depth, or participating in whole class activities to develop social and personal competencies.

REAL WORLD INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS

The projects that students work on take many forms. Importantly, they do not sit outside the curriculum

– each project is seen as an interdisciplinary unit of work, mapped onto the different subjects involved. This might include the geography research required to understand a human need; the technology and science skills to develop an innovative solution; or the English competencies to clearly articulate the solution in a grant proposal. The other key feature of Middle School projects is that they relate to the real world – from the school, to the local community, to a global context. As a consequence, students gain experience working with businesses, charities, entrepreneurial communities, and other schools, to create meaningful solutions to problems.

REGULAR EXCURSIONS INTO NATURE

Maintaining a connection with the natural environment is crucial at this life-stage, particularly for adolescents growing up in urban areas. The campus will provide the opportunity for urban gardening and some form of animal husbandry. Beyond this, students will have the opportunity to connect with different natural environments each week through class outings. Each term the whole Middle School community will embark on a week-long excursion to one of the many incredible natural environments around the country. Just as with projects, these excursions do not sit outside the curriculum, with time spent on activities to develop interpersonal skills; on physical education; and on fieldwork for subjects such as science, history and geography.

The final years of school are a time of powerful opportunity and potential. This is a time when young adults have just come into their own identity, and are developing the personal and cognitive capabilities to grapple with ever more complex and nuanced ideas.



This is also a time of great stress and anxiety for many students, as the curriculum becomes a dense collection of overcrowded subjects. School becomes a series of escalating cramming exercises for a battery of high stakes tests that reward rote memorisation and regurgitation.

In appreciating the path of their students beyond the end of Year 12, the school will set its sights on four distinct but interrelated goals:

ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Students who go on to tertiary education often find that school leaves them ill prepared. To address this, schools must seek to provide real opportunities to experience styles of learning characteristic of university and other tertiary study.

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE

On leaving school, young people are expected to make their way in the world as independent adults. Despite this, for the most part schools continue to treat them exactly as they have for over a decade, encouraging conformity and subservience to authority.

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

For many, leaving school will mean entering the workforce, though increasingly in part-time or self-employed capacities. Students and employers alike lament the lack of real work experience, and an absence of professional skills. Schools need to rethink the focus on syllabus content and examination preparation, and put greater emphasis on skills and experience.

CAPABLE CITIZENSHIP

Given that these years see young people transitioning into full social citizens, it is a critical time for them to engage with social issues, responsibility and power. Rather than being seen as a distraction, meaningful social projects should be an important part of the student experience.

Students are part of the Academy during their final two years. The aim of this stage is to prepare them for their life beyond school – for tertiary education; for the many diverse forms of professional endeavour; and for their personal lives as engaged citizens. To do this, we seek to equip them with the necessary skills, experience, and personal traits.



THE IB PROGRAM

The school follows the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program curriculum, accepted in NSW as an alternative to the Higher School Certificate. This is a two-year program in which students will study six subjects in significant depth – English, a second language, mathematics, a science, a humanities subject, and one of

the creative arts. The program also includes time exploring the nature of learning and knowledge; the production of an extended piece of writing on a topic chosen by each student; and one or more personal projects in the areas of creativity, physical activity, and community service.

With each of their subjects, student will also gain a critical global perspective - from understanding how their actions can have global impact to appreciating their community as part of an increasingly post-geographical world. They will be encouraged to look for opportunities to participate as global citizens – individually and collectively.

The students continue to be part of a mixed-age ‘class’, this class grouping has less focus as they spend more time engaged in disciplinary study. Class teachers now take on the role of academic mentors, helping students plan their activities, manage their workload, and access the resources they need for their study.

While the focus on academic subjects is foregrounded in Academy, the stage still retains the core philosophy students have experienced throughout their journey. They are still responsible for the day-to-day care and maintenance of their areas of the school for example, and the cohort still comes together to grow, prepare and enjoy meals during the day.

In recognition of the increasingly independent nature of student activity, the school day in Academy will be more flexible. Depending on their preference and their current activity, students may wish to attend earlier, stay later, or indeed pursue more of their study outside of the school.

The Academy will look and feel different to the final years of traditional high school in many ways. Some of the most significant and visible differences will be:

THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE LEARNER PROFILE

Our ambition of cultivating personal traits resonates with the underlying objective of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program – to cultivate in all members of the school community “a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success”. Specifically, the International Baccalaureate describes an ideal ‘Learner Profile’, encompassing ten aspects of the learners that the program seeks to nurture: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Having developed their skills as independent learners throughout their school journey, Academy students take responsibility for their own study. Working with their class mentors they plan their time, define their own individual and collective projects, and track their own progress against course objectives.

SPECIALIST COLLOQUIA

Independent study and project work are complemented by regular colloquium sessions for each subject. During these sessions, all students studying a particular subject come together for presentations by specialist teachers, external experts and fellow students. Outside of these colloquia, students can organise individual or small group sessions with specialist teachers and external experts to discuss particular aspects of subject content, or for assistance with projects.

UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS, WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Collaborating with other organisations is an important way of offering students the opportunity to develop the ability to apply knowledge, and to gain practical, hands-on experience. By working with businesses and non-commercial organisations, students build workplace skills and can make a difference in their own community. By engaging with university academics in their areas of interest, students can gain a greater appreciation of the reality of tertiary study, as well as contributing to real research projects.

The Academy also recognises the increasing importance of entrepreneurial skill-set. Drawing on specialist teachers and external experts in enterprise, students can develop ideas inspired by their interests and studies into real world projects. The school community then actively supports students in launching these projects as new products or services.

The Origins of Montessori

Looking back with hindsight, Maria Montessori's unusual education and professional journey provided an ideal perspective from which to develop an approach which has remained relevant for over a century. Born in Italy in 1870, Montessori initially studied engineering, graduating from technical college at twenty. Determined to follow her passion she went on to attend medical school and became the first woman in Italy to graduate from medical school at twenty six.

Working with intellectually disabled children, Dr. Montessori began developing an educational approach that combined medical work on sensory materials with the pedagogical theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel. In 1898, she became co-director of a school for children with various disorders, where she was able to implement this approach. Transitioning from medicine into education, she brought with her the practical, analytical approach of an engineer.

Two years later she left the school in order to study educational philosophy and anthropology, and later became a lecturer in pedagogy at the University of Rome. Looking to put her ideas into practice in a mainstream environment, she seized on the opportunity to establish

the 'Children's House' in 1907, educating working class children in a poor part of Rome.

During the years that followed, Dr. Montessori used experimentation and observation to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to early childhood education. She would later extend this model into the primary years. Her ideas flourished at a time when progressive education was also being championed by luminaries such as Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsy.

Radically child-centred, Maria Montessori's innovative approach made links between physical and mental experience and identified key periods for receptivity to particular types of learning. From these early years to the present,

Montessori classrooms have been distinguished in numerous ways:

- The environment is explicitly prepared with materials to educate the child
- The teacher plays the role of facilitator and guide, with children able to make choices based on their own interests, and to learn from one another
- Children determine the pace of their learning, with minimal interruption
- Learning occurs through doing, and cognition is intrinsically linked with movement
- Curriculum is timed to coincide with established psychological and physiological periods of receptiveness, and is individualised to each child.

"Within the child lies the fate of the future."

Maria Montessori





An Open Learning Community

While the school will be the heart of our learning community, our ambition is to create a place where people from all walks of life can participate in learning experiences. An increasingly dynamic society places greater and greater expectations on us to be lifelong learners, to adapt and to evolve – personally, socially, and professionally.

We hope to be able to help not only our students, but their families, and the broader local community, by providing opportunities for them to extend and educate themselves. From lectures to short courses; from practical skills to forums for ideas, what better place than a school to offer a whole community the chance to learn, together.

An Open Source Pedagogy

While our project is built around the Montessori East school and its community, our ambition is to provide inspiration to others and to contribute to the broader movement to more progressive approaches to Australian education.

In developing the future-proof school, we will be sharing our journey, our challenges, and our insights with other educators looking to achieve similar things in their own communities. We will take an 'open source' philosophy, making our learnings and resources available under a Creative Commons license.

Part of our open learning community will be a space for educators to come together and discuss their various experiences. We hope to not only provide a space for this, but bring our own contributions and questions to the discourse. We will also be actively participating in existing conversations within the education space.

Just as we recognise the importance for students to learn to be active, compassionate citizens within their own communities, we recognise our role in contributing to our own community of progressive educators.

About Us

Montessori East is a co-educational, non-denominational primary and pre-school for children aged 3–12 years, with an ‘under 3’ program for children and their parent or carer. The school follows the educational methods and principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori.



Montessori East provides an environment with flexibility to explore, boundaries to work within, and the guidance of highly skilled teachers attuned to the unique abilities of every student. We believe each child should have the opportunity to learn in a beautiful, creative, compassionate setting.

The school is registered with the National Education Standards Authority (NESA) and approved as a centre-based pre-school. Montessori East is a member of the Montessori Australia Foundation and the NSW Association of Independent Schools.

Montessori East is an independent school and primarily funded through student fees and the support of the parent body and community. It is one of over 150 Montessori schools in Australia and over 22,000 schools in 117 countries.

Our strength lies in a team of talented staff who share in the vision and values of the school. Educators are highly qualified with Montessori and university degree qualifications, and represent a wide range of cultural, educational, and experiential backgrounds.

Bill Conway has been Principal of the school since 2007 and has a career spanning forty years in education as a teacher and principal. His background has included experience in a wide range of education environments around the world. In seeking a better alternative to the way society educates children, he was drawn to Montessori and is committed to the philosophy.



**The Future-Proof Project
is an initiative of
Montessori East School**

If you'd like more information about any aspect of this project, including the development of the new High School, or if you'd like to be involved, please get in touch.

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