Annual Report
2015
In retrospect…

2015 was a year of success and achievement for Canberra Montessori School, supported through the commitment of staff and strong community partnerships. Throughout the year a particular quote resonated with me as a school leader… ‘Change is inevitable, only growth is optional’.

Change is an inevitable part of our lives and this is highlighted regularly in an education setting with vacillating political agendas and policies, where governments give funding, and governments take funding away. There is also more directly palpable change such as the removal of demountable buildings making way for newly built classrooms, modified play areas, staff transitioning in and out of the school, old families leave, new families arrive, ideas are presented, alternative ideas are offered, friends are made, friends move on… Change is constant.

Whilst we endeavoured in 2015 to ensure we did not introduce 'change for change’s sake’ we did accept that change was needed and this insight provided challenges for us as a school to reflect on and in turn offered opportunity for our growth. What we managed to achieve at the culmination of 2015 came from well thought out and managed change. There is always room for critical reflection, and from this precept we have a continually evolving school, driven by an enhanced desire to ensure what is provided to our school community under the philosophy of Montessori is, ‘simply the best for each child’.

The data we collect in this Annual Report demonstrates the school has continued to reflect improvement in many aspects of key learning areas as well as maintaining stable attendance, enrolment and improved professional learning. This 2015 Annual Report provides the school community with information and data related to our achievements and our identified directions and priorities for 2016. The school’s Strategic Plan was reviewed by the community with the revised Plan ready for implementation from April 2016.

I would like to thank the staff, students and parents who have worked relentlessly throughout 2015 towards making our school a quality learning environment.

Anthony Vandermolen, Principal, CMS
Message from the School Board…

2015 has marked a great step forward in the development of our school. We welcomed a new Principal, Mr Anthony Vandermolen. And it was also time for our triennial overhaul of our Strategic Plan, with great involvement from the community.

These two critical factors have led to a clear path forward being identified and many first steps taken on that path. The Board believes that, across all the areas that work was done at the school last year, there was one consistent theme, and that was ‘building capacity’.

The capacity of our valued staff has been improved by the implementation of a new professional development package and a reinvigorated focus on professional practice, career pathways and peer learning.

The capacity of our school administration has been bolstered by the development of our school leadership team and the engagement of Ms. Amy Duan as our new Business Manager. This focus on both distributing the leadership load and extending our leadership skills means that the school will be able to embrace opportunities and handle challenges far more robustly than we have in the past.

The capacity of our school to engage with modern technology took a great leap forward with the installation of a new data network, the implementation of new school administration software (PCSchool) and the launch of our parent app. This has significantly increased our ability to effectively manage all aspects of the school and our ability to track and analyse data to ensure we are making the best decisions for our students and community.

Our capacity for more effective communication with our parent community has been greatly enhanced not only by the afore-mentioned parent app, but also the launch of our new website and a targeted review and improvement plan for future communication.

And all of this leads, of course, to a single, over-arching focus – to build the capacity of each of our children at CMS, to help them become life-long learners with confidence in their own skills and talents, the strength to follow their passions and interests and the ability to be a valuable contributor to their community.

The Board would like to sincerely thank our Principal, our staff, our students and our community of dedicated parents and volunteers for all their immense efforts over the last 12 months, and we look forward to embarking on the first year of our new, 10 year Strategic Plan with all of you.

**Catherine Prosser, Board Chair**
School Context

At CMS, we believe education is a preparation for life, fostering the potential within each child. We believe our school environment should demonstrate values worthy of a child’s emulation. Among these values, respect - for the human dignity of others and oneself, and for the environment - is central. Our Montessori curriculum provides an individualised approach tailored to each child’s stage of development and capabilities.

Since parents are the primary influence on a child’s development, education must be a collaborative process involving parents and teachers. Parents are encouraged to develop a rich understanding of Montessori educational philosophy.

Our school is a learning community of teachers, students and families, working toward a common goal shared with the wider Australian Montessori community. We see open communication, with all views respectfully offered and heard, as a vital part of the healthy life of the school.

At CMS, we believe education is a preparation for life, fostering the potential within each child. We believe our school environment should demonstrate values worthy of a child’s emulation. Among these values, respect - for the human dignity of others and oneself, and for the environment - is central. Our individualised approach, tailored to each child’s stage of development and capabilities, and our focus on school-parent partnerships, means that our school is a learning community of staff, students and families, working toward a common goal of holistic education that develops the best that each child (and adult) has within themselves.

Canberra Montessori School was founded in 1981. Beginning with two classrooms for three to five year olds, the school gradually grew, in a succession of rented premises, to include upper primary classes and an under-three’s programme.

The grounds at Holder have been created with “Learnscapes” in mind and are designed to teach children vital skills outdoors while allowing them to play freely. Following the establishment of an additional permanent building in early 2016, the campus is purpose built to accommodate nine classrooms, each with three-year cohorts, a library, creative arts rooms, out of school hours care, community room and administration offices.

In 2015 there were 28 teachers and assistants, and seven administrative staff. This includes a dedicated Business Manager who directly supports the Principal in administering school finances and business operations.

More than 200 students, aged from three to 12 years, are enrolled at the school. A “Parent Toddler” program is offered for children and their carers six days of the week for children aged 18 months to three years.
The School is independent and is governed by its Constitution. The Board is comprised of up to 12 members of the Society who, along with the members of the Society, guide the strategic direction of the School.

**Staff & Professional Standards**

2015 was a year of great hope for improvement in technology use at CMS. While it took time for physical connections through cabling and wireless, the school was ready to have systems working early in 2016. As staff patiently waited for the connections to happen, there was a lot of drive from leadership to prepare staff for the changes. Rhoda Konstantinou was employed to support Appretio (Teacher online Professional Learning platform) and use of Outlook 365.

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**CMS Staff Professional Learning 2015**

The Pupil free days facilitated guest speakers and education for all staff which included:

- Mark Scarborough (psychologist) conducted a staff presentation to share strategies for supporting children presenting with learning differences.
- MAF Writing Workshop (with American Montessori trainer J McKeever).
- Workshop on the prepared environment with Australian Montessori trainer Amy Kirkham.
• Mentor programme facilitated by Kerrie Pillay to support our newer teachers to a level of full registration with the Teacher Quality Institute (ACT Teacher Registration).

• Disability Standards for Education e-learning course completed by CMS staff.

**IT Training for Directors included:**

• Datacom training on Makers Empire (software for 3D printer use).

• Appretio training from Cathryn Moore of AISNSW (Australian Independent Schools).

**Montessori Professional Learning included:**

• Jenna Cunningham, Louise Draper and Sarah Beresford-Jones completed Montessori training diplomas for primary years teaching

• Elizabeth Piazza completed a Montessori Inclusive Education Diploma

• Amy Kirkham observed and provided feedback with suggestions to improve practice for the Cycle 1 Directors

• Observation by Jenna Cunningham and Louise Draper at Montessori East in Bondi, Sydney

**Other teaching qualifications completed:**

• Sarah Beresford-Jones completed a Masters of Inclusive Education

• Sajee Mahaarachchi completed a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)

• Áine Barker completed a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood)

**Other workshops:**

• First Aid for all staff

• Felicity Young: Sue Larkey (Autism) workshop

• Peta Sheppard: Sue Larkey (Autism) workshop

• Jenna Cunningham: Sue Larkey (Autism) workshop
- Sarah Beresford-Jones: National Consistent Collection of Data workshop, Downs Syndrome Society mathematics workshop, AISACT endorsed Disability certification and completed Child Protection Training

- Áine Barker: National Consistent Collection of Data workshop, ACEL distributed Leadership workshop, Schools Leadership Colloquium and AISACT Colloquium.

**Teacher participation in professional development:**

A number of professional learning opportunities were made available to staff and are identified below. The average expenditure on professional development per staff member was $464.00.

**Staff absence:**

Based on 35 staff, the average number of days absent in 2015 not related to Professional Development is 17 days.
Student Attendance

Canberra Montessori School encourages parents to ensure children attend school regularly. Any absence should be reported at the earliest convenient time to the School Office. Should a child be absent from school and the office not informed, the school will contact parents to determine the reason for the absence. Students absent from school for any period of time exceeding 10 days in one Term must be reported to the Principal. If a student is away from school for a period of two or more days, an explanatory note must be provided to the school. This note is a legal requirement. Class rolls are collated twice a day, and electronic records are kept. The average attendance rates in each of the Montessori Cycles are detailed below:

![Overall School Attendance 94.5%]

National Assessment for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Last year, 12 of our Cycle 2 children (Year 3) and 7 of our Cycle 3 (Year 5) children sat various NAPLAN assessments. The results for CMS are outlined in the tables below with the National Average across Australia in this age group and each individual child’s scores:
Year 3 results range from Band 1 to 6

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Year 5 results range from Band 3 to 9

(Year 3 (2013) ranged from Band 1-6)

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School Community Feedback

Communication between Canberra Montessori School (Administration and Staff), parents and students is continuous. Whether it is a discussion between a parent and class director, feedback provided to a class parent, information distributed by the website and parent app (new in 2015), a parent information session, a suggestion submitted via email or a friendly chat on the path, effective communication between the school and the community is critical to the smooth functioning of the school.
School Income by Funding Source

2015 School Income by Funding Source

- State Funding, $294,825, 9%
- Commonwealth Funding, $585,783, 17%
- Fundraising Income, $43,719, 1%
- Capital Building Fund, $250,737, 8%
- Other Income, $41,868, 1%
- Tuition Fees, $2,156,598, 64%

2015 Recurrent/Capital Expenditure

2015 recurrent/capital expenditure

- Salaries and related expenses, $2,434,936, 67%
- Non-salary expenses, $838,254, 23%
- Capital expenditure, $344,509, 10%
Sponsorship Report

CMS is so happy to continue to offer two parent toddler placements per term to mothers and their toddlers from Karinya House. Karinya House is in its 18th year of operation and has provided residential and outreach support to 5,892 pregnant and parenting women over that time. We are delighted to be part of that ongoing support.

2015 was memorable for CMS when an initiative driven by Tara Wood, a CMS board member, sought the approval of the concept of accepting a child from Karinya House and offering tuition to the child through to completion of Cycle 3. The sponsorship is designed to start in 2016 and continue into the future.

Karinya House have included our school logo on their website by means of thanks to our society members over the years. We are proud of the partnership we have developed with the mothers and children of this worthy organisation.