Principal’s Report to the Board
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 24th MARCH 2014

The Beehive Montessori School

Strategic Plan
2013 – 2016

Mission

The Beehive Montessori School aims to provide an environment that helps the developing child move towards their fullest potential. By respecting and nurturing individual needs and abilities, we encourage an enjoyment of learning, intellectual, physical, spiritual and emotional growth, independence, and a sense of community responsibility.

The Beehive Montessori School is an educator of children and adolescents according to the Montessori Method with a particular reference to the guidelines of the AMI (Association Montessori Internationale).

We respect the Whadjuk Nyungar people as the traditional custodians of the land on which the school is situated.

To achieve this vision the Board has adopted the following strategic objectives:-

Strategic Objectives

1. To preserve and continuously improve on an educational system for children based on the education of the whole child in keeping with the purest ideals of the Montessori Method and the guidelines provided by the AMI (Association Montessori Internationale).

Although ACARA has ratified the Montessori National Curriculum as an alternative Curriculum we now have to comply with the ‘Government of Western Australia School Curriculum and Standards Authority’ to gain recognition of an alternative curriculum. We have tabled our submission to the WA School Curriculum and Standards Authority and have received a receipt of this submission.
There is also an assessment requirement to grade students from A to E. This is an area that causes some conflict with the Montessori view of evaluation. We will also submit to the Standards Authority stating that Montessori does not philosophically support grading and comparing children and would like to use the reporting system that is already in place at Beehive.

Let’s hope that the Government will allow parents to choose what is right for their children.

In term 4 the whole staff embarked on the mapping of the Australian National Curriculum content descriptors to the Montessori National Curriculum. We have systematically gone through the subject areas and produced a new document that shows that our curriculum meets the expectations of the Australian Curriculum. This was a very useful professional development for the teachers because it reassured them that the AMI Montessori Curriculum that we deliver at the Beehive more than meets the requirements of the Australian Curriculum.

Training: Carolyn O’Toole replaced Samantha Abrahams who is on maternity leave, as the upper primary teacher. Although she is not Montessori trained she has worked a day a week in upper primary for 2 years and has many years of experience. We decided to conduct in house training with Carolyn and for all of term 4 Bronwyn Hope spent 2 days a week delivering the lesson content on the Montessori Curriculum for 9-12 year olds. As part of her ongoing training I am teaching maths in the classroom so that she can observe this in action and Bronwyn is working through geometry. I am very pleased to report that Carolyn has taken to the Montessori content like a duck to water.

April Drury will be going on maternity leave at the end of term 1 2014 and she will be replaced by Bronwyn Hope.

2. To maintain its commitment to an Education Support Centre for students with special needs.

Beehive has shown its commitment to the Education Support Centre through its professional development of teachers in the areas of dyslexia, dysgraphia, autism, aspergers and cerebral palsy.

The Education Support Centre not only caters for children with special needs but also children facing learning challenges. These children are identified in junior primary and spend time working with Lorraine to develop their skills. This early intervention has been very successful and has been reflected in our very successful NAPLAN scores. Please see the attachment in the Annual Report.

3. To support and promote the personal and professional development of its staff and to ensure it attracts, promotes and retains the employment of AMI trained teachers within the school.

The teachers, assistants and administrative staff have been involved in professional development; this is outlined in our 2013 Annual Report.
Our teachers have also been involved in specific Montessori professional development. Ellen McCarthy attended the Montessori Australia Foundation Conference in Canberra; Jessica Henke, Brendan Giambazi and Debbie McCarthy attended an adolescent forum in Adelaide where they made a presentation; Anthea Brignoli and I attended the Montessori World Congress in Portland, which is held every 4 years. The congress was based on Montessori physical environment and sustainability, and they attracted world class speakers from around the world. There were breakout sessions and I had the opportunity to speak about the Beehive’s building project and circulated Capital Gifting material.

In November the whole staff enjoyed the staff retreat at the Rydges hotel on Friday 1st November and Saturday 2nd November. We explored our personality types, looked at neuro-development, executive functioning, and how that effects children with learning challenges. We enjoyed some team activities and an artwork activity on Saturday. Everyone enjoyed themselves and it was wonderful to spend some extended time together.

Debbie McCarthy attended the National Quality Standards: Independent Sector Training. This workshop is to train Principals and Assistant Principals in the new national compliance and reporting requirements. I will be attending a session in June 2014.

4. To maintain and market the Adolescent Programme to educate students from years 7 to 9.

As mentioned before, Debbie, Brendan and Jessica travelled to Adelaide to attend a Montessori Adolescent Forum where they spoke about our programme and gave examples of some of our activities. Their presentation was received very well and as a result we had a Principal from another Montessori school from Melbourne travel to Beehive to observe our environment, and we were able to give her some assistance developing a programme in her school.

Internally, the year 6 children spent a month in transition in the adolescent programme last year. They studied micro-economy with Debbie as well as taking part in the community activities. This transition was followed by a parent education information evening; we also invited other Montessori schools and small independent schools in the area to attend and as result we had a couple of enrolment applications.

Internationally, students from year 9 went on their study tour of Italy in November 2013. We were accompanied by Mick and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We also focus in developing leadership skills that they can take with them to their new schools. The highlight of the trip is to visit the first Montessori school, La Casa dei Bambini where we are already well known and welcome.

Rob Manning from the Department of Agriculture and Food WA brought some bees to school on Thursday 7th November to put in our hives. It was an exciting event and the end to a considerable amount of hard work for both students and teachers. The work with The Department of Agriculture is about surveillance-looking for any diseases that might come from rogue bees from the ships. Rob was very impressed with the work that had been done by the adolescent programme he said in an email: “I was most impressed with your apiary site, in fact quietly stunned at the effort, and every other beekeeper should have one modeled
on it! Good to see enthusiastic students who thought bees were “so cute!” Thank you too for everything – the surveillance part, it’s important. “

5. To research the feasibility of establishing a day care centre as a source of income for the school.

I attended a very interesting day care centre, Headland Montessori in Manly NSW. The Director of the Centre is more than happy to assist us if and when we are ready. The Strategic Plan has put this on hold and I believe this is a good idea as it will be a considerable expense to establish this. It is my intention that once we commence building I will have to have some time to do some more research.

6. To ensure the School achieves and maintains its current optimum size of 285 comprising four junior primary classes, three middle primary classes, two upper primary classes and one adolescent programme.

The optimum size of the school increased last year at our review of the Strategic Plan. We are now working towards increased numbers. Presently we have 233 children enrolled with another 30 three year olds to enroll during the year as well as some Montessori transfers from other schools. We will not achieve the new size of 285 immediately as this will be a gradual process.

7. To complete the development of the new school buildings, playing fields and landscaping to accommodate the current and future needs of the school.

We were unable to continue building in 2013 as the newly acquired land had to be tested for contamination and then re-classified. The testing is finished and the auditors Remediation Validation Report and the Site Management Plan were submitted to the Department of Environment Regulations on Tuesday 18th March 2014.

When the land has been re-classified we will continue our building project. The school has raised enough monies through investment and capital gifts to build 3 more junior primary classrooms, ablution block, staff carpark and gardener’s workshop and storage, as well as laying the pad for the middle primary classrooms. This is a very significant achievement and we require 1.5 million dollars to complete the middle primary classrooms.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, ‘it always seems impossible until it is done.’

8. To maintain operational financial surpluses from year to year in order to accumulate reserves for future expansion, improvement and other needs.

Explained in our Auditors Report tabled at the AGM March 24th 2014.

9. To undertake fundraising through a Capital Gifting Campaign to raise sufficient funds to achieve the building program and achieve ownership of the school’s land.
The school was very active in fundraising last year. As a community we raised $53,000.00 last year. The events included: Quiz Night, Love Me Again Shop, Jewelry Sale, Chill Out Session, mangia cookbook, Sundowner and coffee shop.

We also received various annual donations and capital gifts. Thank you to everyone who has supported the Beehive’s initiative to build a new school. This will be enjoyed by many generations to come.

10. To maintain a bursary system and scholarships.
   The Beehive community was able to display its commitment for diversity by offering bursaries to families experiencing financial hardship. In my opinion this is one of the most important things that the school does for our community as it shows that we value the families and their children within the community.

11. To develop and foster mutually beneficial relationships with educational and philanthropic organisations in our community with the aim of sharing resources and projects.
    Reconciliation Action Plan: as a school we acknowledged Sorry day and celebrated NAIDOC week and hosted beautiful events that included the Elders and the Indigenous Leaders within the surrounding communities. We listened to music and stories and enriched our understanding of the Aboriginal communities.

    We commenced our school concert with a ‘Welcome to Country’ that was led by Dr Simon Forrest. This was very important for the school as it explained to all of our parents why it is important for the Indigenous community to have sense of place and what this actually means. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Forrest and his wife, Roni for their support and guidance they have offered the school for its Reconciliation Action Plan and the hard work and commitment of the committee members.

    PALS (Partnership Acceptance Learning Sharing). We obtained a grant to implement an indigenous art project within the school based on the bark petitions modeled on the 1963 Yirrkala Bark Petitions. We were awarded a Special Acknowledgement of the Arts Award for our submission and we were invited to Parliament House to accept this award.

12. To develop and foster communication within the School and relationships with the wider Montessori Community as well as the local community.
    As you are aware the children of Beehive and its community have been committed to raising funds for many charities as well as some small fundraising events run by the children. The school has joined ‘Kids Who Give”, an initiative administered by the McCusker Foundation. Our main fundraiser this year was for medical research and we were awarded “Giving Champion for 2013” and we were described as a shining role model for Western Australians. “

    The Beehive has funded a film about our school. Filming is complete and involved students, teachers, parents, past parents and past students. The movie is about our school and its community. As there was some wonderful footage taken we have also decided to add to our website, small movies about the different parts of
our school, 3-6; 6-9; 9-12 and our Adolescent Programme and the Education Support Centre. I would like to thank one of our parents, Rob McGlynn for producing the movie for us and for pulling together a great team.

In finishing, I would first of all like to thank all the families that trust us with the education of your children, all of the staff who work tirelessly to provide a good education and sound management of the school. I would like to thank every volunteer on our school Board for your dedication and vision for the future and to John Bird who chairs this Board. I would also like to thank the Foundation, the Building Committee, and The Capital Gifting Taskforce, these committees are vital to the ongoing maintenance for our school and to the attainment of our vision.

Special thanks to our Beeliners who are led by our Queen Bee, Judy Loader and to our social committees that have created many events for the enjoyment of the parents and the children.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for the privileged job of the Principal of The Beehive Montessori School. I am honored by this position.

Rhonda Sheehan
Principal
24th March 2014.