The Beehive Montessori School

AGM Principal’s Report  Monday 8TH April 2013

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Strategic Plan
2012 – 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.

Welcome to the 2013 Annual General Meeting.

We would like to acknowledge Mrs Tonya McCusker who is the Patron of The Beehive Montessori School Inc.

It is time to report to you the school’s activities over the past year. Before I begin I would like to welcome all the new families who have entered our school over the past 12 months. Since April 2012, 23 new families have entered the school.

Students:
As of today, Beehive has enrolments of 231 students. We have had four 3 year olds start at Beehive this year and another 28 more to commence. We have had the great pleasure of enrolling three second generation students. Our school will now be functioning at its maximum enrolment and we have 120 children on our waiting list and enquiries daily. This reflects our schools reputation and the high level of educational program that is delivered by well trained and experienced staff.
Beehive students participated in NAPLAN testing last year and our results were consistent to other years. We were above the national and state average in every year and subject except for our Year 7 spelling where we were 2 points behind the state average. As you are aware Beehive does not agree philosophically to this kind of testing as it is only a snapshot of a performance on one day on a certain subject area, it really does not reflect the child’s general knowledge or in fact ability to succeed. As I mentioned earlier empathy and self-regulation are the most important factors as well as self-esteem and global responsibility.

Extra-Curricular Activities:
As part of the Adolescent Programme, the children are involved in a dramatic performance. Last year they performed Mid Summer’s Night Dream and the performance was magical. The students never cease to amaze me with their creative ability. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Susan Russell for coordinating the event and directing the play, Min Adlide for making the costumes, Dave Ashby, Mick Bailey and Ashley Cole for making the sets. The performance was captivating and enjoyed by everyone … well done!

The music program in the school is going from strength to strength; Robyn Matthews is doing a sensational job working with every junior primary and primary student and also with 2 of the school bands, the B Sharps and the B Minors. Brendan Giambazi, the Adolescent Programme teacher and also a WAAPA graduate has invigorated our music program as every student participates and they have formed a band called ‘Terra Firma’. The children were able to show case their musical talent at the Art and Music Soiree and ‘Terra Firma’ also performed as the backup band with Eskimo Joe at a school function. Although Montessori education does not promote specialist teachers I believe that both Robyn and Brendan have brought a depth to musical education that would have been difficult for other teachers.

Italian:
Every child in the school studies Italian, last year the position was shared with Silvia Romagnoli and Carolyn Winterbottom. I would like to thank Italo-Australian Welfare and Cultural Centre for partially funding this program. This program concentrates not only on the grammar and conversation but on art, music, food and geography. Of course, the study of Italian has particular significance to Beehive as the founder of Beehive is of Italian descent and the close proximity to Fremantle, where there is a very large Italian community.

Art:
Our artist in residence last year was artist Adil Writer, an architect and ceramist from India. Adil worked with the children to create 2 kilns and the special technique that he used was to use unfired bricks and have a ceremony where they built a fire to fire the bricks from the inside out. The fire ceremony was truly spectacular; in fact I haven’t seen anything like it. I would like to thank BCG Brikmakers for their sponsorship; they closed the factory for us so that special bricks could be made. I would like to extend my appreciation to Sam Buckeridge and Vince Scavaci. The artist in resident program at Beehive is a unique and extraordinary experience for the children to work alongside
successful and well-known artists who share their specific artistic talents; this is a rare and unique experience.

Maria Montessori Sculpture:
We commissioned Greg James to create a full size sculpture of Maria Montessori. He spent many hours researching her history and anatomy. The process involved sculpturing Dr Montessori first in clay, then wax and finally dipping her in bronze. I feel very privileged to be involved in this process as it was extraordinary and the result is splendid. She was installed in our school at the end of last year and sits in our Piazza as if she has been there forever.

School events:
We concluded a series of school events last year, these included:

- Home room meeting;
- NAPLAN;
- 2 Visitors' morning;
- Junior Primary Orientation Day;
- Middle Primary Orientation Day;
- NAPLAN Parent Evening;
- Art and Music Soiree;
- Portfolio Day;
- NAIDOC celebration;
- Adolescent Programme parent information evening;
- Adolescent Programme performance;
- Market Day;
- Fathers Night;
- Grandparents' Day;
- 3 working bees;
- Maria Montessori Day; and
- Graduation Concert

Staff:
I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at The Beehive Montessori School, teachers, assistants, administration and finance staff, ground staff and cleaners. As the old saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child” and I am proud to be a member of the Beehive Montessori School team. All the staff work to the best of their ability. They are kind and considerate and willing to offer support when it is needed. Last year we had the mammoth job of relocating several classrooms and all the staff pulled together to make this as seamless as possible, they came in during the holidays and physically packed, moved and relocated several classrooms. This is an example of the type of support they offer each other.

Last year was a fertile year at Beehive, 3 babies were born to, Amy Walton, Kim Seymour and Lucy Clarkson Fletcher. All the children are fit, healthy and thriving and the mothers are in their element. Lucy’s maternity leave is being covered by Kathy Woodhouse, we welcome her to our team, she is a highly trained and experienced Montessori teacher and
her orientation to the school has been effortless. Cathy brings with her, a 3 year old son Finlay who has settled in to La Casa Del Nord.

Amy’s maternity leave is being covered by Daniela Pruiti who has since taken on the role of the Italian teacher in the school so now we welcome Greg Longman who is now working with Sam in Upper Primary. Greg is an artist and brings with him his passion to the creative arts and the children are enjoying his input into the classroom.

Kim has given birth to her 2nd son and has extended her maternity leave until the end of this year. Bronwyn Hope is slowly transitioning back into her teaching position at Beehive. She is working one day per week this year and hopes to work 5 mornings next year when her daughter begins at Beehive. We have had a few changes this year but the main staff are consistent and solid and the basis of our ongoing success.

**Professional Development:**

Last year as a whole staff participated in First Aid Training, ‘Marine Waters Professional Learning’, ‘MAZE’ (a computer program for recording student attendance), this is compliance for teachers and ‘Fast Forward’, a program for children with learning challenges in literacy. We began this year working with Alistair Paterson on ‘Where History Meets English’; here the teachers looked at the anthropology of the Australian Aboriginals. We also looked at how to diversify our curriculum to meet individual needs of children. The staff were involved in basic training in ‘Protective Behaviours’, this is a program that helps children identify when they are at risk and gives them strategies for dealing with uncomfortable situations.

For our Occupational Health and Safety, we participated in a Fire Extinguisher demonstration and Anaphylaxis training. Jane Polla attended an Electrical Testing and Tagging program.

Teachers also attended workshops provided by SPELD Dyslexic Foundation, for strategies in dealing with children with learning challenges.

With regards to the Australian National Curriculum, Debbie has attended several workshops regarding “Linking the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum”, and has developed checklists that meet the regular requirements for Compliance.

**Montessori Training:**

Brendan Giambazi and Debbie McCarthy travelled to Cleveland, Ohio to participate in “The Orientation of Adolescent Training”; this is a 5 week rigorous course. Both returned having attended sessions in Montessori Psychology, Curriculum Development and strategies for structuring the Adolescent Programme around the developmental needs of students for this age. Beehive can be proud to say that their commitment to “getting it right” has been internationally acknowledged, we have funded the training of 6 teachers in the Adolescent Programme and we can see the benefit of this by the prepared environment.
Reconciliation Action Plan ‘RAP’:
“A RAP” is a business plan that turns good intentions into actions. They are about creating respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

We have found that by focusing on respect and relationships, sustainable opportunities can be created. That’s the simple formula that makes the RAP program so successful.

Since 2006 the RAP Programme has grown to include 300 organisations ranging from big corporations to community groups and schools.

A RAP publicly formalises an organisation’s contribution to reconciliation by identifying clear actions with realistic targets and is developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and leaders.

RAPs are also about embedding cultural change within a whole organisation through building good relationships, respecting the special contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and creating opportunities.

We believe that strong relationships based on respect will lead to opportunities for the organisation, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Beehive Montessori School is the first Montessori School in Australia to have a registered RAP.

We launched our Reconciliation Action Plan on the 29th June 2012. We began with a “Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony” conducted by Associate Professor Simon Forrest while Mr Andrew Beck played the didgeridoo. We welcomed the Mayor of Mosman Park and representatives from the Fremantle Town Council. We were then entertained by “Future Footprints Students of Iona”, a dance group compromising of Iona Indigenous boarding students. It was a delightful performance and thoroughly enjoyed by the children and all who attended. When they had finished, the Bartlett Brothers entertained us and we completed the day with the children singing “We are Australian” in Noognar. There were many Aboriginal attendees, as well as parents from the school and at the end, there wasn’t a dry eye in the Hall.

We have continued to honour our traditional custodians of the land with our Reconciliation Action Plan. We have a RAP Committee that meets regularly to make sure that we are continuing to approach our Reconciliation in an authentic and meaningful way. This committee is also exploring possible grants for future programs. We have been developing curriculum materials in the 3-6 environments for many of the subject areas such as parts of plants, animals, geographical formations and common vocabulary. We participated in a NAIDOC celebration and some teachers explored the Bidi Katitjiny Aboriginal Women’s Trail with the possibility of taking the children on the trail. They also ignited new relationships with the Aboriginal women working there.

I am very proud of our work in this area. We have been approached by quite a few people and have been asked to share our RAP Plan, surprisingly many schools and businesses are still to embark on this endeavour.
School Lease and Building Project:
I am very pleased and proud to report that we have finished our negotiations with PTA and have registered our long term lease of 42 years and incorporating 12,000 square metres. Originally we had 5,000 square metres in our lease and we have successfully increased this by 7,000 square metres.

We have also signed a 5 year lease with The Department of Community Welfare for 4,000 square metres. This means the total area of land for the school is 16,000 square metres, we have tripled our size.

I would like to thank everybody over the years who have been part of this achievement. We have relentlessly lobbied Government to secure our future; we have dealt with zoning changes and contamination and never gave up even when we were told there was no hope. There are too many people to thank personally but I would like to particularly thank John Bird. John is a volunteer for our school and has been working alongside me for the last 15 years that I have been Principal. We have been a great team and I am sure I would not have achieved these wonderful results without him. John, I am honoured and privileged to work with you and look forward to working with you in the future to release our vision.
I also need to thank the Premier of WA and our local member, Colin Barnett for his guidance and kindness in understanding our position and significantly helping us to achieve our goals. As a Principal it is not my position to talk about political parties but I can say that I have worked through 3 changes of Government during this process and Mr Barnett has been the most supportive and helpful Premier that we have dealt with during this time.

**New School Buildings:**
We have completed stage 2A of our building project and we are anticipating handover on 12th April 2013. Handover should have been late December 2012 but there were some complications over some fittings. We did take partial handover which enabled us to re-locate 2 Upper Primary classrooms into the new buildings. We now have approximately 75 children enjoying the new facilities and we hope to begin the construction of the other classrooms towards the end of 2013. I am proud to say that the concept behind the buildings is unique, we have built a village rather than a school and although the classrooms are yet to come, what we have built now has provided the community a place to be. The Piazza is the heart of our school and has enabled us to pull our community together. The buildings themselves are of a very high quality and we have had many architects come by and talk about them with admiration. The use of concrete with the rammed earth will mean that our buildings will age well and that they will stand the test of time in a beautiful but very harsh environment by the sea. I would like to thank Earthhouse for their innovative designs and MOJO for their construction.

**Capital Gifting Campaign:**
We have set up a Capital Gifting Taskforce chaired by Michael Hollingdale. The job of this Taskforce is to work with me in achieving our goal of raising $4.6 million to complete our building project. This year I was able to speak to every parent in the school through Home Room meetings and those who were unable to attend I met individually. I presented our Capital Gifting marketing material and shared with the parents our vision for the future and how they can help us achieve our goals in raising money. Firstly, I explained that we would have to source the significant amount of the funds from outside our school by approaching philanthropists’ and asking them to be involved in our project. I explained to the parents that they can assist in this process by introducing me to anybody they know who may be in a position to become involved in the exciting vision for our school.

Secondly, parents can be involved by giving a donation to the school as a gift or as a pledge over a period of time. These gifts can be tax deductible and we appreciate any gifts no matter what size and I encourage parents to make a gift if they were able to do so.

Thirdly and most importantly, I believe that all the parents should be supportive of what we are trying to achieve and encourage them to attend functions and participate in fundraising as much as possible.
I would like to report so far we have received $267,035.00 in gifts and pledges over the next 5 years and the school community has raised $106,000.00 over the past 18 months. This was raised through 2 Sundowners, Fire Festival, Eskimo Joe Concert, Melbourne Cup Day luncheon and Fundraising Class Photos, Quiz Night and the Uber Sale. I am very pleased and grateful to all of those who have helped in any way that they can, the feeling around the school is one of support and excitement. Personally I am privileged to have the opportunity to build a school and I encourage every parent to become involved in whatever way possible.

School community:
Beehive has a very well developed and caring school community. I am proud to say that when we look at education we don’t separate the child from their home and parents and care and love is given to all that attend the school, children, staff parents and grandparents. We had some very successful community events last year thanks to the hard work and creativity of Sami Bromley and Kirsty Hayden and their committee members. These events included:
- Sundowner
- Biggest Morning Tea
- Quiz Night
- Uber Sale
- Christmas Market Day
- Fun run
All of these events were well attended and supported.

Beeliners:
Last year, Judy Loader was appointed Queen Bee and she replaced Jacqui Tan who had been in the role for many years. I would like to welcome Judy to this important position; I am already enjoying working with her and look forward to our time together in the future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jacqui Tan for all her work over the years, her unbelievable enthusiasm, energy and organisational skills have been inspirational and valued.

I would also like to thank the Beeliners for their assistance they give the Teachers for helping organise our school events and welcoming new parents to our school. It is through them that we develop our real sense of community.

Wider Community:
Again last year we showed support for many people in the wider community. We participated in Jeans for Genes Day, raised money for Feed the Little People in Broome, the Bali Animal Welfare, an appeal for Shyla O'Donoghue and the Warrawee Women's Refuge. I would like to thank all the parents for their generosity. It is a wonderful opportunity for the children to raise money for those people who do not share the same conditions and for animals that are at risk. The Adolescent Programme students created Christmas hampers for the Kiwirrkurra Remote Community School in Alice Springs, NT.
The Children participated in The Fremantle Festival and what a day it was. We attend this every second year and we certainly make an impact. This year we won the prize for the best school entry. Thank you to all those who assisted the children to make the children’s costumes and head-dresses for the parade.

As the Principal I take on the role as the Chairperson in the Montessori Teacher’s Association and the main function of this organisation is to offer specific Montessori Professional Development in WA. Many of our staff are on the committee and I thank them for their commitment to their colleagues within WA.

I traveled to Sydney for the Montessori Australia Foundation, Heads of Schools Retreat and Business Managers Forum. I was accompanied by Elisa Main and Lisa Wieringa. It is always reassuring for us to attend these events as it makes us realise the policies and procedures that we have in place at our school are equal to the best worldwide. At this event, I was able to talk to the leaders of Australia about our vision for the future and our building project. They were in awe of our achievements and our courage to take on the important commitment to ensure the long term tenure of our school premises providing purpose built Montessori classrooms for the future generations of our school. The applause and recognition was humbling. Sometimes when you are involved in the work you forget to see how innovative and important it is.

We are very fortunate and privileged that Mrs Tonya McCusker agreed to become our school Patron. She attended a coroborree last year with her daughter, Mary and on Friday 5th April, she was accompanied by her husband, His Excellency, The Governor of WA. He addressed the children about his role as Governor and she spoke about the importance of giving. They were very impressed with the new school buildings and the Montessori education philosophies.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody for their contribution to Beehive, children, staff parents, committee members, Beeliners, and particularly Board members who have assisted in helping us realise the goals and objectives of our Strategic Plan.

Personally I am grateful for the support that I receive on a daily basis.

Rhonda Sheehan
Principal