

# Curriculum

children's learning and development

## INTRODUCTION



*Learning opportunities develop thinking skills*

A curriculum covers everything designed to help children's learning and development. It describes all the experiences, activities and events that happen in our preschool. At Tawa Montessori Preschool teachers are guided by the Montessori philosophy as outlined by Dr. Maria Montessori and Te Whaariki, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum.

In an era of technological revolution and social change, the foundation of a good education is to learn how to learn. At Tawa Montessori Preschool we provide learning opportunities for the children that develop thinking skills, as well as research, expression and practical application skills. Learning activities are introduced simply and concretely. The curriculum provides opportunities for learning through action and activities which promote the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive development of young children. It enables all children to experience an environment in which they are safe and are able to learn in appropriate ways, using developmentally appropriate programmes and practices. Activities include active and quiet, planned and spontaneous, small group and individual activities both indoors and outdoors in which children can make choices. At Tawa Montessori Preschool, the Montessori curriculum and Te Whaariki are interwoven, examining the whole child; social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual.

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## MONTESSORI

*children learn best through hands-on experience*

The Montessori classroom is a prepared environment, care and attention is given to creating a learning environment that will reinforce the children's independence and intellectual development. Our Montessori classrooms tend to fascinate both children and their parents. The shelves are filled with intriguing learning materials. Young children are naturally curious and want to work with everything they can get their hands on. They absorb concepts and skills from their surroundings and peers almost through osmosis. Provide children with a challenging atmosphere and intriguing learning materials, and they will spontaneously investigate what they are and how the work. Learning can and should be natural.

Children learn best through hands-on experience. They need opportunities to learn by trial and error and discovery. They need time to practice and apply new skills and knowledge. We ask the right questions and lead children to discover the answers for themselves. Learning becomes its own reward, and each success fuels a desire to discover even more. We encourage children to do their own research, analyse what they have found, and come to their own conclusions. Our goal is to lead children to think for themselves and become actively engaged in the learning process!

We help children achieve their goals, so that they can take pride in the quality of their growing skills and knowledge. As we allow children to develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline, we also set a pattern for a lifetime of good work habits and a sense of responsibility. Our children take pride in doing things for themselves carefully and well. Independence does not come automatically as we grow older; it must be learned. In Montessori, even very small children can learn how to tie their own shoes and pour their own milk. At first, shoelaces turn into knots and milk ends up on the floor. However, with practice, skills are mastered and the young child

beams with pride. To experience this kind of success at such an early age is to build up a self-image as a successful person. This leads one to approach the next task with confidence.

As our children develop, they learn all sorts of everyday living skills, such as cleaning, sewing, baking, arranging flowers, and gardening. We build many opportunities into our curriculum for our children to gain hands-on experience. Children are capable of amazing things. With guidance and kindness, they can develop depth of character and values.

Grace and courtesy are vital, everyday living skills that children need in this world. Young people do not automatically understand and accept that we all have responsibilities to other people. They have to learn how to handle the new situations that they will face as they become increasingly independent. Most importantly, they need to develop a social conscience and a clear sense of values. We consciously teach our children ethics and interpersonal skills. Each child is treated with dignity and respect. As a close-knit community, children at Tawa Montessori Preschool grow up in an atmosphere of warmth, safety, and mutual trust. They learn working courteously with one another. They quickly learn that they may not interfere with someone else's work unless asked to join. They learn to walk through the room calmly, to speak politely to friends, and to clean up after themselves. While they may work alone or with friends, they may not disturb others. Learning how to live and work together with others in a peaceful and caring community is, a most critical life skill.

The following is a brief overview of our core Montessori curriculum in the areas of practical life, sensorial, language, mathematics, environmental studies and , arts and crafts. This only represents an overview, and is not meant to be complete. Children progress at their own pace.



## **Practical Life**

This area of the curriculum focuses on developing skills that allow the child to effectively control and deal with the social and physical environment in which he lives. There is a growing pride in being able to "do it for myself." Practical life begins as soon as the child enters the preschool and continues throughout the curriculum to more and more advanced tasks appropriate to the older children.

## **Sensorial**

In the Sensorial area children develop and refine their senses; visual, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, auditory and stereognostic sense. This is an important preparation for reading, writing, and mathematical thinking. The child increases the ability to think by developing skills to distinguish, classify, and organise.

## **Language**

In the Montessori classroom the majority of activities aim towards the development of the skills required for learning writing and reading. Language activities run parallel with other activities in the classroom. Most language learning occurs during the daily life interactions within the classroom.

## **Handwriting**

Control of the hand in preparation for writing is developed through many exercises, including specially designed tasks in the use of the pencil. Such exercises begin with very young children and extend over several years so that mastery is gradually, but thoroughly, attained.

## **Composition**

At an early age, before handwriting has been mastered, the children compose sentences, stories, and poetry through oral dictation to adults and with the use of the moveable alphabet.

## **Spelling**

Children begin to spell using the moveable alphabet to sound out and spell words as they are first learning to read. They 'take dictation' - spelling words called for by the teacher. The sequence of spelling, as with all language skills, begins much earlier than is traditional in this country, during a time when children are spontaneously interested in language. It continues throughout their education.

## **Grammar**

The study of grammar begins almost immediately after the child begins to read, during the sensitive period when he is spontaneously interested in language. It continues over several years until mastered. The idea is to introduce grammar to the young child as she is first learning how to put thoughts down on paper, when the process is natural and interesting, rather than waiting until the child is much older and finds the work tedious.

## **Mathematics**

Maria Montessori specifically designed her apparatus for teaching mathematical concepts in a way that it is easier for the child to bridge the gap from concrete to abstract. She designed concrete materials to represent all types of quantities. The child not only sees the symbol for 1, 100 etc, but also holds each of the corresponding quantities in hand. The Montessori mathematical exercises follow a certain sequence. Each exercise, which has a direct and indirect purpose, presents a new skill. The children are introduced to the numbers 0-10, followed by the decimal system, counting one to thousand, and the four operations and number combinations.

## **Algebra**

## **Geometry**

## **Environmental Studies**

Learning experiences in the Montessori preschool classroom are designed to cultivate the ability to respect and celebrate the individual spirit within people of all ages and the value of all life. Maria Montessori called the child a “citizen of the world”. With a holistic approach, and understanding of the similarities and differences between people, she promoted peace. Activities are based on experimenting, observing, asking questions and finding answers, encouraging a caring attitude towards all peoples and creatures of the world.

## **Geography**

In the preschool environment the Montessori geographic activities emphasise the physical and social aspects of geography. The activities progress from the whole to the more detailed. At first, the child is introduced to the world. They then move on to the continents and their countries. The activities are sequenced so that the child is working from the simple to the complex, from the known to the unknown, and from the concrete to the abstract.

## **History**

Young children have a limited concept of time. A sense of time begins with a sense of order and sequence. Knowledge of daily schedules, days of the week, the order of the seasons, as well as knowledge of whether a five year old is younger than a six year old all help to comprehend the concept of time. The Montessori history activities in the preschool classroom take a holistic approach. They make the child aware of how we record time and the appropriate units of measurement used.

## **Science**

Being "scientific" involves being curious, observing, inquiring, and learning how to find answers. In the Montessori Preschool classroom children are encouraged to think about and interact with the world around them by using concrete experiences that require the use of their sensorial senses. Children are also encouraged to record their experiences, either through writing or by using other creative skills like rubbing, drawing, conserving etc.

## **Music and Art**

Maria Montessori observed the existence of an interdependent relationship between cognitive development and artistic expression. She created skill building activities to assist the child's creative development. Most of these activities develop the child's awareness of shapes and sizes. They also help increase control of the finger muscles and provide an opportunity to express ideas.

Curiosity, spontaneity, and self-confidence are essential to the creative spirit. In the Montessori classroom children and their questions, and ideas or solutions to problems are treated with respect. Creative thinking is encouraged. In addition to an environment of beauty, order, and reality, the child is free to develop creativity. They are also free to select what attracts him or her, free to relate to it without interruption, free to discover solutions and ideas, and free to communicate and share discoveries with others.

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## ENVIRO-NATURE PROGRAMME

*inspiring a sense of wonder*

The overall enviro-nature curriculum creates an environment that represents the connections between learning and the natural world; one that provides a setting in which children can grow to understand these relationships and connections, develop a sense of place, and experience the joy and sense of wonder of learning.

The preschool includes such features as recyclable and renewable materials, rainwater harvesting, native grasses and perennials. The extensive deck area enables children to move outside at a moment's notice. The consequence is a breakdown of what is outside and what is inside. Our children are not only comfortable indoors and out; they are also accustomed to using the outdoor experience, frequently and automatically, as an essential dimension to their learning.

The virtue of wonder occurs not just because the children are outside frequently. Teachers draw the natural world into the children's lives through investigatory learning experiences. Artwork, stories, science, and mathematical skills are all enriched by data and experiences absorbed from the natural world. Children are taught to observe nature closely and carefully, so their artwork and writing are shaped by investigation as well as imagination.

We are a pre-school that sees sustainability as a key element in our relationship with the natural world as much as with our social world. Children learn to share intellectual resources with peers to sustain a community. They also learn to share, respect, and conserve nature's resources. As we marvel at the gifts nature provides, we also learn that nature, like our social relations, must not be wasted by profligacy or indifference.