

Essential Elements of Authentic Montessori Practice at Wā Ora Montessori — Area and Preschool

Principles

1. Wā Ora puts into practice the philosophy of Maria Montessori, using her life's work of writing, speaking and experiences to underpin the decisions made in the school. We also seek out current research that strengthens and augments our educational practice.
2. Wā Ora is a place where students can flourish. They are given the freedom and responsibility to pursue aspirations, take risks, think laterally, and believe in their intrinsic worth as independent beings with agency in an ever more complex global community.
3. The Montessori planes of development are realised by preparing special environments. These are designed to meet the developmental needs of each plane/sub-plane of development by:
 - a. Having a full set of age-appropriate Montessori materials in every room incorporating control of error appropriately.
 - b. Being peaceful, uncluttered, beautiful, clean and ordered.
 - c. Using supplementary materials to meet targeted objectives.
 - d. Using the outdoors as an extension of the classroom.
 - e. Having ākonga in the full 3–4-year mixed age range.
 - f. Giving ākonga as close to the full 3-hour work cycle as possible.
 - g. Allowing for freedom of movement and choice of work wherever possible.
 - h. Making use of natural materials wherever possible.
 - i. Ensuring the equipment and activities are refreshed regularly and unused equipment does not lie on the shelf to gather dust.
 - j. Creating a safe environment for exploration through promoting friendliness with error.
 - k. Creating a respectful atmosphere where ākonga, the environment, the adults, the staff and parent community are honoured.
4. As a result of this alignment with authentic Montessori philosophy, children who start at Wā Ora at the age of three and leave here at age 17 or 18 will be:
 - a. Able to think for themselves and show empathy for others.
 - b. Confident, independent, lifelong learners.
 - c. Autonomous.
 - d. Aware of themselves as part of humanity and the contribution they can make to its development.
 - e. Concerned about the environment and able to act on that concern in order to make a difference.
 - f. Able to meet their needs while upholding the needs of others.
 - g. Reflective, resilient and responsible contributors to the society in which they choose to live.

People

1. Teachers:
 - a. Who are head teachers in the preschool, and all teachers in the area school, are required to have, or be working towards, face-to-face Montessori qualifications.
 - b. Experience ākonga as spiritual, thinking, feeling beings.
 - c. Display humility of character and genuine love for all ākonga.
 - d. Will apply their Montessori principles in their teaching practice and foster within the child a respect for self, other persons, materials and the natural environment.
 - e. Are role models in the way they dress and in the way they speak and act with ākonga, whānau and each other.
 - f. Observe classroom activity in targeted ways and ensure feedback is respectful and constructive, leading to reflection, analysis, and planning.
2. The principal:
 - a. Is a leader who is committed to maintaining and acquiring a depth of knowledge of Montessori principles and curriculum, through training and experience.
3. The community:
 - a. Takes part in information programmes to promote understanding of Montessori principles and curriculum.
 - b. Families show commitment to Montessori philosophy throughout the programme and are in partnership with the teachers.
 - c. Will seek to develop warm responsive relationships with others in the community, based on reciprocity, mutual respect, and generosity
 - d. Supports and upholds the principles and values of Wā Ora Montessori School.

Pedagogy

1. Teaching staff present lessons that:
 - a. Follow the child's interests, needs and sensitivities.
 - b. Incorporate the three period lesson where appropriate.
 - c. Are intentionally tailored to the individual or group's learning needs.
 - d. Are presented with passion, verve, purpose and sensitivity appropriate to the lesson.
 - e. Are designed to capture interest and encourage further independent exploration.
 - f. Situate the student in place and time within the world.
2. The preschool environment:
 - a. Lays the foundation for development by recognising the needs and sensitive periods of the child between the ages of three and six.

- b. Covers the areas of practical life, sensorial education, math, language, culture and environmental studies, control and refinement of movement, care of self and the environment, and grace and courtesy activities.
- c. Extends ākonga up to and beyond the age of six years of age.

3. The primary environment:

- a. Has cosmic education as its underpinning; this stems from the impressionistic or 'great' stories that are told and give the 'big picture', before focusing on details.
- b. Human tendencies of exploration, repetition, orientation, perfection, order, imagination, manipulation, work, observation and communication are catered for and appropriate to the age and developmental readiness of the child, in all of the classrooms.
- c. The child will be given the freedom to meet their needs and interests within the limits of the environment, community and the child's own developmental readiness.
- d. Has the responsibility to nurture and develop children's innate love of learning through their work.

4. The high school environment:

- a. Aims to extend and build on the work in primary by adapting an environment and curriculum that will act as a 'school of experience in the elements of social life', providing authentic, socially engaging, intellectually stimulating, ecologically conscious, community enriching and personally valorizing experiences.
- b. Provides a broad and engaging education through realistic and meaningful integration of subjects, regular opportunities for creative and physical expression, and a context in which to facilitate individual academic and vocational or cosmic aspirations to their full extent.
- c. Recognizes the necessity for performance, work (hand and head), economic and entrepreneurial exploration, connection with the land, reflection, critical discussion, conflict resolution, communication, contribution, and collaboration within a community that includes all people and identities equally.
- d. Aids the full realisation of the conscious adult identity within humanity and history.