

ANNUAL REPORT



2020

Hills Montessori School



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Introduction

The Hills Montessori School is a community based preschool/ kindergarten located in the leafy Hills District in Sydney.

The Hills Montessori Society was established in 1979. Since that time, it has expanded to provide early childhood education for children aged 15 months to 6 years. Our classrooms consist of two (2) pre-primary classes for children aged 3-6 years who attend five half days a week, two (2) Full Day classes for children aged 3-5 years, five (5) Parent / Toddler sessions for children aged 15 months – 3 years and a Kindergarten class. We also offer before and after school care. We are licensed for 90 children per day who attend in an intimate, stimulating setting with qualified, dedicated staff.

The school delivers a program based on the philosophy of Dr Maria Montessori's method of education along with the curriculum of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The school meets all the requirements to be registered with NESA and we pride ourselves in the wonderful program we offer due to the dedication of our staff and the commitment of the families attending our school, both past and present.

The Montessori program includes the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework, the National Quality Standards Education and Care Services National Regulations by ACECQA and the key learning areas stated by NESA.

The 2020 annual report provides information about the programs and performance of Hills Montessori School. It has been written for accountability purposes and is part of our process of self-evaluation, reporting and planning for both the present and future needs of the school.

Mission Statement

We believe a lifelong love of learning is instilled in children through an environment that caters to each child's unique strengths, interests, abilities and potential. To facilitate this, we follow and abide by the principles of Dr Maria Montessori's method to create authentic Montessori programs for children ranging from infants to 6 years old in our community.

Our child centred approach enables children to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, physically and creatively to become successful, competent and capable individuals. We believe in establishing peaceful and aesthetically pleasing prepared environments using our philosophy expertise and genuine Montessori materials. This enables children to develop their critical thinking skills, problem solving abilities, build self-esteem and grow pro-social and emotional intelligence that will prepare them for future learning and life success. We recognise the rights of each child and actively deliver inclusive programs for all.

As teachers we observe and interpret children's experiences and use assessment practices to plan for and present Montessori lessons based upon individual learning styles, strengths and dispositions. Our experienced, dedicated and loyal teachers hold both Montessori and Early Childhood qualifications and continually update their professional knowledge, proficiency and skills.

We embrace the sociocultural values of our families and affirm the rich diversity of our community. Strong partnerships with families are made through open communication and information sharing which further enhances children's learning and achievement. Families endorse our efforts to actively transition children smoothly as they progress between age-appropriate programs.

We acknowledge the Dharug people as the traditional custodians of our local area and show respect for the Indigenous and Torres Strait Island communities by embedding their cultural heritage and customs into our program and professional practice to teach children Indigenous perspectives and our shared history.

Our natural outdoor learning environments afford children the capacity to grow their understanding of sustainability, with our many interconnected living systems, and by engaging in the care for the environment through practical life work and scientific exploration. The welcoming open spaces encourage physical activities that promote psychological wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle. We view the outdoor environment as an extension to the indoor classroom and a classroom of its own right.

Faculty and staff understand high quality early childhood education promotes superior educational outcomes for children. Our national 'exceeding excellence' rating is underpinned by embracing best practice and adhering to the high standards set by three official governing bodies, making us unique leaders in our field.

Philosophy & Program

The Hills Montessori School follows the Montessori Philosophy, providing an environment that is best suited to the development of the child through the basic principles of freedom of choice, independence, individual learning, and discipline from within the child which are an integral part of the child's experience.

This philosophy is based on the knowledge that a child growing in an atmosphere of respect and understanding for each other and the natural world will develop those values into adulthood.

It is our understanding of the sensitive periods that occur during the development of the child which guides staff to introduce materials and activities that are best suited to the child at the time. The child is then able to best utilise the materials to provide the challenge to maintain their interest with sufficient opportunity for success to encourage their confidence and self-esteem.

Our peaceful environment and compassionate staff nurture respect for self and others, foster a strong sense of community, and stimulate independent thinking. Students carry with them a solid record of academic achievement, a belief in the dignity of work, and a sense of responsibility for their own development as happy and productive human beings.

This environment is designed to foster the natural development process for the child, providing stimulus and freedom to explore according to their changing developmental stages. We understand that children have a natural love and curiosity for knowledge and through their own exploration and discovery, utilise their imagination and creativity. The child will internalise that knowledge, understanding and skills required to ascertain their place and contribution to the world and humanity.

Specially designed equipment provides the child with the freedom to explore concepts and attributes at their own pace and according to their needs and particular skills. They offer the child beauty, exactness, and opportunity to further develop and understand concepts and acquire skills in a sequenced order.

Due to the complexity of the curriculum, key learning areas regularly overlap due to themes, projects or learning processes involved. While the child is introduced to skills and concepts on an individual basis, these are slowly built upon and developed to allow the child to be able to call on an increasing range of skills and information in dealing with the activities and learning experiences in a collaborative and co-operative community.

While each child has a specific program as an individual, it is based on a general program which is found in each teacher's curriculum album. These have been written up during training and added to during in-service courses taken later.

The materials are specifically designed to represent concepts and information in concrete form, enabling the child to interact directly, allowing him/her to develop skills, understand concepts and explore alternatives as an individual or with a small group.

Children are not limited to timed work schedules except by the schools operating hours. Children who require further time to understand concepts or develop skills have that available, within the constraints of the operating hours, along with any assistance they may require. Those children who grasp and understand the concept or information quickly are allowed and provided with materials to move on. It is understood that most children are not likely to have strengths in all areas of the curriculum and the flexibility of time allows the child to work on the weaker areas as needed. This means that each child has their own individual program and work schedule according to their needs.

The child has the opportunity to develop qualities of self-esteem, self-reliance, self-direction, self-discipline, and independence and to build the habit of concentration, research and orderly work pattern.

The Montessori Method also fosters a social awareness and responsibility in children. The three-year cycle for pre-primary and the integration of additional needs children offer a microcosm of society within which children have the opportunity to develop skills essential for interacting in the wider community. This environment promotes individuality, independence, interdependence, awareness of and consideration for the needs of other human beings, which leads to an appreciation of life.

The Hills Montessori School actively encourages the child to appreciate and contribute to the care and conservation of the environment creating an approach of sustainable and ecological practices.



Hills Montessori Society

The Hills Montessori School is managed by the Hills Montessori Society, a public company limited by guarantee and a non-profit organisation. The society is regulated by the Corporations Act and is endorsed to access the following tax concessions – GST concession, Fringe benefit Rebate, income tax exemption and payroll tax exemption.

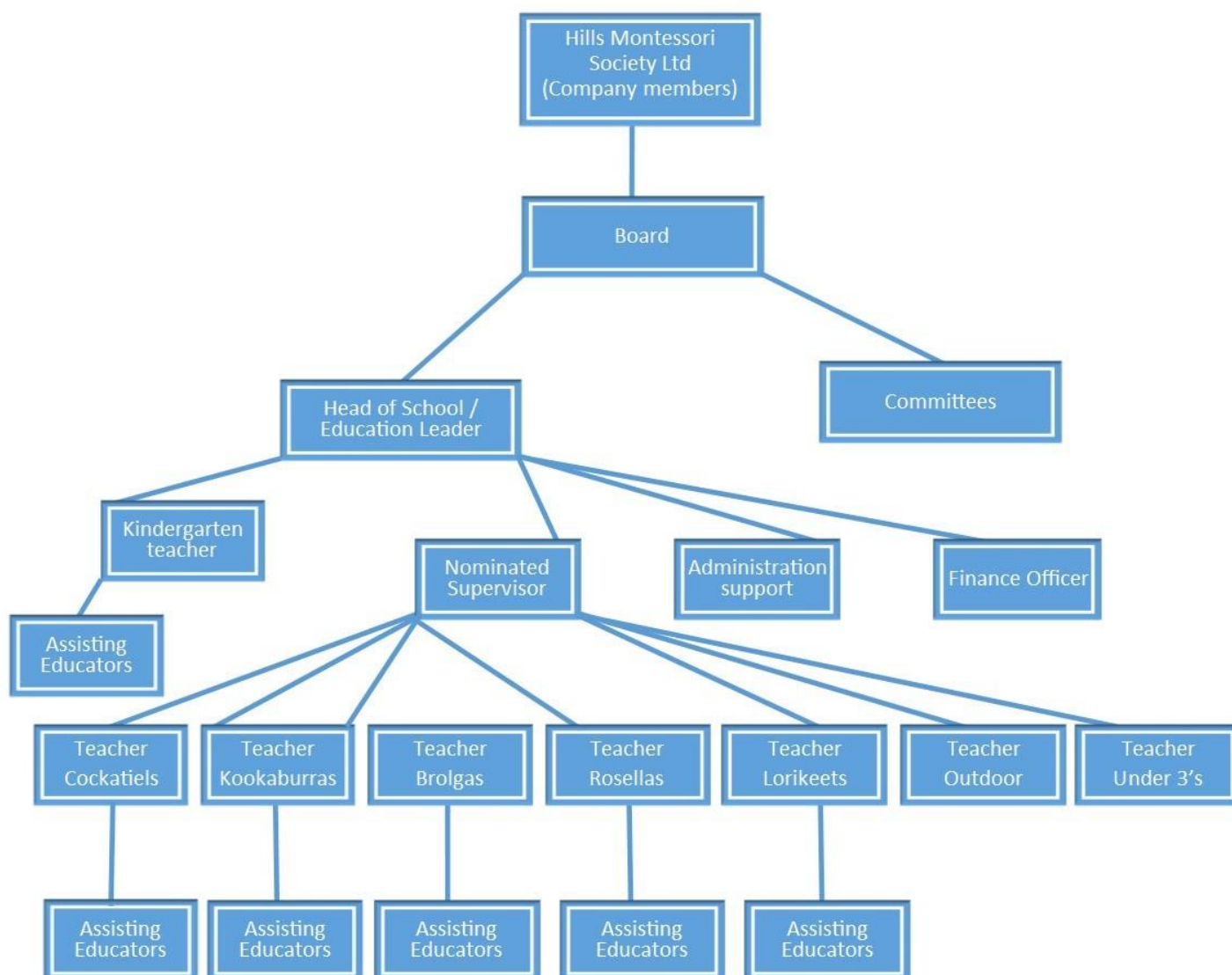
Each family with a student at the school is required to be a member of the Society. A Board of directors administers the Society. The Board is elected by the members of the Society at the Annual General meeting held in April each year.

The Organisational Structure is the basis for the operation of our high quality Montessori Early Childhood Education and Care program. Our programs operate under a clear structure of accountable persons, known as the School Board (Board of Directors).

The School Board consists of a minimum of 6 Board Members, four are Society Members and are usually parents of current students and two of which are employees; Head of School & Treasurer / Finance Officer.



Organisation Structure



Head of School Report



Our school year started off with many excited children eager to return to their classes and engage in their work. The school was now filled with the noise of children going about their day and enjoying being back in the class after the long holiday break. We welcomed all our new families to our school with our annual Meet the Teacher night. The parents had the opportunity to meet the class teachers and other parents. They were able to gain an understanding of the daily routine, the activities in the room and get all their questions answered.

As Term One progressed we held our Open Day in March where perspective parents are given a tour of our school. Then we were hit with a global pandemic. COVID-19 dramatically changed the way we had to teach our students and launched us into learning many new technical skills to keep our students engaged as they began their journey of learning from home. Our usual full classes and playground were now reduced to a handful of students. The staff and students became versed in zoom meetings, emails and online lessons. Hills Montessori School was still able to provide a variety of programs to engage the children's academic, physical, social and emotional development and continue to support their love of learning. The staff should be commended on the effective way they learnt new skills and adapted to this changing way of teaching.

Usually, the children gain an understanding of the larger community beyond the walls of the school through the many learning experiences offered. Members of the community are invited to come along and share their expertise with the children such as dental visits, police visits, Healthy Harold and many more. Our Early Stage One class (Kindergarten) have opportunities to go out into the community on excursions allowing them to explore the wider part of the environment as well as demonstrating and further developing their social skills. All this however was paused until we overcame the unknown risks of COVID-19.

As restrictions began to ease and we saw the children begin to return to the school there were many new routines and procedures that had to be implemented. Temperature taking, sanitising and constant hand washing now became the norm for all our students and staff. Both the students and the staff took on these new responsibilities with ease and the joy of having the children back in the classrooms was evident to all. A sense of normal was returning as the school began to resume education evenings, excursion and incursions and community events, with strong COVID-19 strategies in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our whole school community.

The School continues to expand the learning opportunities for children covering a diverse range of activities. Our outdoor environment has been our focus again this last year. We started the process of engaging with an Indigenous artist to help us paint a newly installed retaining wall with a mural of indigenous artwork.

I have been fortunate to be part of this wonderful school for over 30 years and recognise that the school provides a very special education which enriches and inspires all children who attend. We appreciate the importance of the families who trust us with their children on a daily basis and allow us into their family circle. We realise the privilege each year of sharing in their lives and watching their personalities grow and develop as they become active members of the wider community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the 2020 Chair and Board Directors and all the staff for their support, guidance and commitment over an incredibly challenging year and I look forward to 2021.

Kylee Paddy
B.Ed. (ECE) Mq. Uni
AMI 3-6 Montessori Diploma AMTEF



President's Report



As I begin to write this report and reflect on 2020 my mind instantly goes to the impact COVID-19 had on the world around us along with the impact it had on our school. We quickly had to find ways to deliver remote learning, something I am sure Maria Montessori would have never considered as many of her specially designed equipment is hands on work for the children to engage in.

The staff quickly went into action to learn as much as they could about the digital world of online learning. They developed ways to put the curriculum online and provide parents with much needed ideas and guidance as they went into the role of teacher. I would like to thank all the staff at Hills Montessori and commend the remarkable job they did in responding to this unprecedented situation and activating measures to ensure the continued education of the children and survival of our school.

To support the School Board and staff, we continue to seek a Maintenance Assistant to assist with maintaining the school grounds and repairs to our environments. This can often take up much of the staff's time in sourcing quotes and meeting with trade's people to ensure jobs are completed of a high standard.

I would like to acknowledge the parents' consistent contribution and dedication towards the school community and for the support they showed the school and staff as we adapted to the ever-changing requirements of COVID-19. From being able to enter the school gates if needed and socialise with other parents to being stopped at the gate and social distancing was a huge change for our parent group. The parents are usually so involved with the running of the school through helping with working bees and participating in social events. Parental participation is cornerstone to Montessori and to all great community schools. The Montessori Method of education is strong, reliable and proven. The key highlight of this approach is to create a better everyday life for our children. As a parent I see such positive outcomes for the children as evidenced in the very special, thoughtful adolescents and young adults that they have become.

With the reduced numbers of children attending during COVID it gave the school the opportunity to upgrade some of the furniture and materials in the classrooms. Both the Kookaburra and Brolga classrooms were able to get new shelving and all staff spent time renewing and making new materials for the classrooms.

Over the past 9 years that I have had the pleasure to be associated with the school, both as a parent of two Montessori children and as a board member, I continue to admire the spirit and dedication of the academic and administrative team to improving the learning environment for our children. I personally wish to thank these teams, without their selfless dedication the school would not be the success it is today.

Jennifer Rufati

Parent Involvement

The School is a community-managed school. Each family is a member of the Association managing the School and therefore has the ability and opportunity to participate in its running with one vote per family for General meetings and the opportunity to stand on the Board. Other opportunities for parents to be involved in the school including Working Bees, classroom craft, Open days, social events.



Staff

Qualifications & Composition

The School's workforce - 18 staff.

- 6 trained teachers,
 - one combining the role of Head of School, Educational Leader and teacher in the classroom
 - one combining the role of Nominated supervisor and teacher in the classroom
- 9 Childcare trained educators
- 4 administrative staff composed of the administrative assistant, finance officer, executive assistant and enrolment /marketing assistant

Number of staff with following qualifications:	
Bachelor of Education / Teaching	6
Diploma of Montessori (3-6)	7
Diploma in Early childhood	2
Child Care Certificate	8
Montessori Assistants Certificate	3
Diploma of Health Sciences	1
Diploma in Business Studies	1
Bachelor of Economics	1
Bachelor of Commerce	1

Composition:

- 100% of staff speak English
- 67% are from an English speaking background
- 33% have Korean, Arabic, Palestine, European or Tagalog-Filipino backgrounds
- 100% of staff are female
- Average age of 53 years.
- Average time at Hills 10 years

All of the staff have completed the Working With Children Check upon appointment and hold a current first aid and CPR certificate. Staff attendance has been excellent due to a healthy environment created by adhering to our Work Health and Safety policies and the love of working in a Montessori environment. Long term staff employees ensure a great stability with the children and the overall program.

Professional Development

Hills Montessori encourages and supports Professional learning amongst its staff.

This is supported through fortnightly staff meetings where discussions cover Pastoral Care, Work Health and Safety, administration necessities, and curriculum and policy development. In addition, staff are required to attend workshops, conferences, seminars and other school observations.

The school has a Staff Training Policy that ensures our annual budget includes funding to cover ongoing staff development to allow staff to retain up to date training in all areas. Four pupil free days are allocated each year to each staff member to enable them to attend workshops and allowing additional professional development training during the year as required.

This last year

- one staff member completed her Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.

During COVID-19 restrictions the staff were able to take advantage of the opportunity to maximise their studies. Most courses undertaken were free. The expenses for the paid training totalled \$6,960.00 – an average of \$410 per staff member.

Total number of hours of professional development during 2020 was 151 hours – an average of 9.5 hours per staff member



Topic	Provider	Participants
Bilingual	Trillium Montessori	1
Music and Road Safety	Kids and Traffice NSW	5
The Complete Guide to Canva		1
Moving Your Organisation to the Cloud		1
An Introduction to Microsoft Teams		15
Improving your Website Traffic and Organic Reach		1
Creating balance in the Age of Technology	Trillium Montessori	1
Goal Setting and Data Collection for Children with Developmental Delays	Fitkidz	1
2021 School Registration	AIS NSW	2
Visual supports and Social Stories	Fitkidz	1
Supporting Communication in Children with Autism	Fitkidz	1
Understanding Autism in the Early Years	Fitkidz	1
Supporting the Sensory Processing Needs of Child with Autistic spectrum Disorder	Fitkidz	1
Aspen Medical Infection Control Training-COVID-19	Aust Gov't Depart of Health	2
Sewing in the Classroom: Meaningful Practical Life	Trillium Montessori	1
Purposeful Work: Practical Life in the Montessori Toddler Env	Trillium Montessori	1
Setting the Stage for Writing Success	Trillium Montessori	1
Infant Environment Deep Dive	Trillium Montessori	1
Bachelor of Education (ECT)	UNE	1
Fairness, Equality and Justice	Trillium Montessori	1
The Rainbow Reading Series	Trillium Montessori	1
Website Wellness Check-up		1
10 Ways to Deepen Our Practice With Toddlers	Trillium Montessori	1
Bringing Montessori Back to Montessori	Trillium Montessori	2
Mathematics Workshop	MWEI	1
Crossing Professional Boundaries	AIS NSW	1
Understanding the NSW Child Safe Standards	AIS NSW	1
NSW Child Protection Legislation Updates	AIS NSW	1
How to sustain Your Well Being and Engagement During Struggle & Uncertainty	The Flourish Movements	1
Early Signs of Autism and Raising Concerns with Families	Fitkidz	1
Google Ad Basics		1
Next Steps with SEO		1
Wonders of Wordpress		1
CPR	Australian Training Institute	15
Getting Started with SEO	Search Engine Optimisation	1
Control of Infectious Diseases COVID-19	NSW Department of Health	12
Transitioning to Remote Work	Connecting Up	2
Learning at Home with Adobe Creative Cloud	AIS NSW	1
Learning at home with Microsoft for Education	AIS NSW	1
Learning at home with Google for Education	AIS NSW	1
Q & A with NSW Dept of Ed ECECD	CELA	1
Sensory Processing	Fit Kidz Foundation	3
Aboriginal EC Planning Day	Koori Curriculum	1

Financials

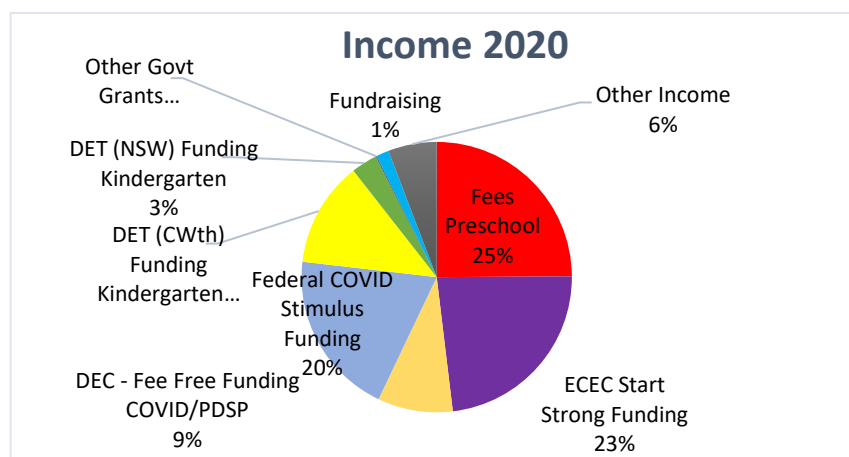
FINANCIAL REPORT 2020

The School reported a net profit of \$646,342 for the 2020 financial year. Revenue from school tuition fees was reduced substantially due to COVID-19 interruptions to normal enrolment and attendances through 2020. Government Funding was significantly increased due to the many government stimulus measures during 2020 including JobKeeper, Cash Flow Boost and 15 hours Fee Free COVID funding. Salaries increased as per mandated increases and we were able to retain all our employees throughout 2020 with the assistance of the JobKeeper subsidy. Rent increased by CPI as per our lease agreement.

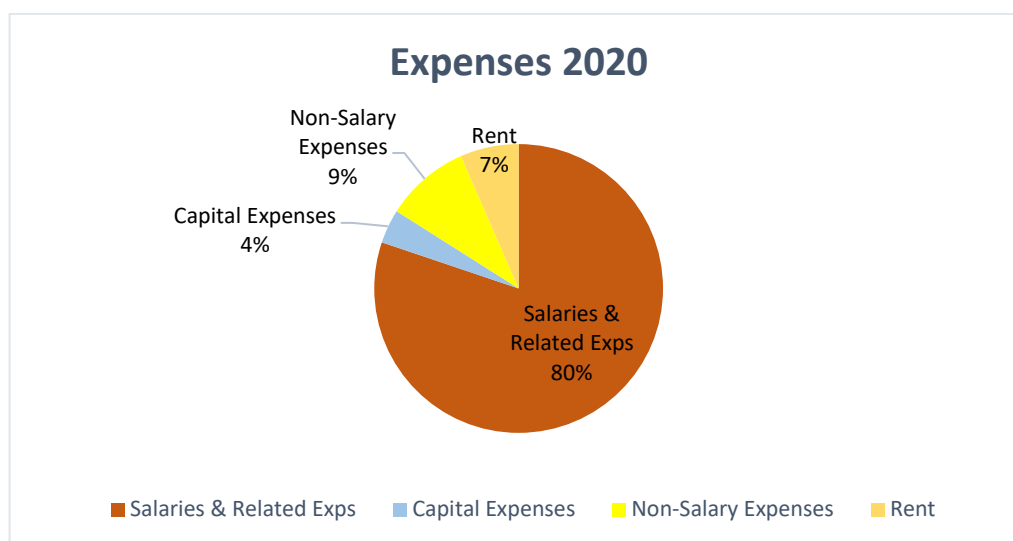
During the year we were able to purchase new classroom shelving for 2 classrooms and purchase ipads for staff members to upload photos and records direct to parents. New Montessori equipment was also purchased and a cubby house for the playground. At year end we were able to transfer funds to reserves to enable sustainability and future growth for the development of the school and continued training for our staff.

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

<u>INCOME</u>	2020 \$	2020 %	2019 \$	2019 %
Fees Preschool	519,819	24.9%	804,584	53.1%
ECEC Start Strong Funding	484,002	23.2%	211,353	14.0%
DEC - Fee Free Funding COVID/PDSP	187,558	9.0%	3,818	0.3%
Federal COVID Stimulus Funding	412,000	19.7%	-	0.0%
DET (CWth) Funding Kindergarten	263,339	12.6%	199,324	13.2%
DET (NSW) Funding Kindergarten	64,881	3.1%	48,618	3.2%
Other Govt Grants	3,000	0.1%	25,000	1.7%
Fundraising	31,264	1.5%	42,309	2.8%
Other Income	121,394	5.8%	179,359	11.8%
TOTAL	2,087,255	100%	1,514,365	100.0%



<u>EXPENSES</u>	2020 \$	2020 %	2019 \$	2019 %
Salaries & Related Exps	1,155,303	80.2%	1,076,927	79.2%
Capital Expenses	54,806	3.8%	41,384	3.0%
Non-Salary Expenses	136,499	9.5%	151,591	11.1%
Rent	94,304	6.5%	90,000	6.6%
	<u>1,440,912</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>1,359,902</u>	<u>100.0%</u>
Surplus (Deficit)	<u>646,343</u>		<u>154,463</u>	



Fundraising

With the 2020 Fundraising Levies and acquisition of grants from ECCMS we were able to undertake the following projects;

- Montessori classroom equipment
- Partitions to create a more secure space for our Parent/Toddler program
- Equipment for our Outdoor Learning program
- New shelving for two classrooms
- Purchase of 6 iPads for staff use in classrooms
- Defibrillator for main foyer

Excursions

Our Kindergarten class usually partakes in many excursions during the year, however due to COVID-19 many of our planned outings had to be put on hold. We did manage to take the children to the local park and hold our annual high tea for the parents before lockdown measures were put into place by the government. We did however engage the children in many online visits to zoos, museums, wildlife parks, art galleries and shows. Our Kindergarten class are very excited at the prospects of going out into the community and visiting different locations but understood the need for us to keep them safe.



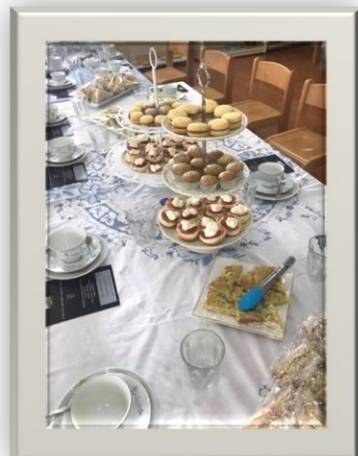
Kindergarten children joining us via zoom



Kindergarten children making moon cakes.



Park Excursion



Kindergarten High Tea

Incursions

COVID-19 also had a huge impact on the incursion we hold for the children. Parents coming to teach the children a new skill, community members such as the fire brigade, police, dental visit and Healthy Harold all had to be cancelled. We did take the advice from the NSW Department of Health and engage in many outdoor activities to ensure the children were provided with an airy environment to work in.



School Community Events

School events help to develop the community and allow parents and staff to get to know each other a little more. It is wonderful to see everyone participating and enjoying the opportunity to be together to celebrate each event.

Throughout the year the School hosts a range of courses, workshops and information sessions. During 2020 we were unable to hold the following events due to COVID-19 -

- Information evenings
- Introduction to our Montessori classrooms
- Open classrooms for mothers and fathers
- Orientation for new parents
- Classroom tours. Virtual tours were uploaded onto our website to offer prospective parents classroom visuals
- Montessori World Educational Institute

Prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to hold these events;

- Introduction to your child's classroom
- Open Day



Premises

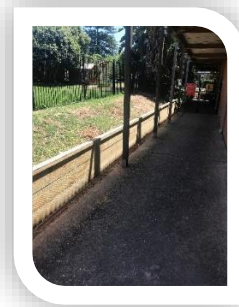
Maintenance of the Hills Montessori School premises is critical as it provides both a safe environment for the children to grow and learn as well as being a warm and fun place for them to socialise.

This is supported by the strong support of the working bees that are held twice a year with parents, children, staff and friends. The working bees focus on both minor maintenance jobs as well as major projects for the school.

The working bee program requires families to contribute a minimum number of hours to assist with maintenance of the school, the development of program activities and administration. This assists in keeping fees to a minimum as well as developing the community of the school.

Unfortunately, in 2020 our working bees had to be put on hold. We were able to see the following maintenance areas addressed with our staff members and a very handy parent.

- Installation of a retaining wall for a new garden bed
- Removal of the old cubby and installation of a new one



Communication

Parent communication of the child's development as well as school events is enabled in the following ways;

- Child Portfolios available at any time for parents to look at digitally and a copy is given when the child is leaving
- Parent/teacher conferences formally twice a year and on request
- A newsletter is emailed out for time or fortnightly each term with updates and class news
- Posters on activities or events are placed up regularly in the sign in area and emailed
- Sharing of information on Facebook and the school website
- Opportunity for daily conversation with teachers
- Photos from each class are regularly posted on the Hills Montessori Facebook page

Due to COVID-19, the following communication opportunities were not able to be offered;

- Information nights held at least once each term to provide extensive information and understanding on child development, family relationships and the materials and activities of the program
- Opportunities to join the child in the class environment each year

We did engage with the parents via zoom, phone and emails providing them with information of activities and strategies on learning from home, support and advice if required and talking with parents about their child's needs and development.

Student Attendance

Kindergarten

Enrolled students	23
Females	60%
Males	40%
Indigenous	0%
CALD	86%
Additional Needs	0 %
Attendance %	
Term One	50%
Term Two	50%
Term Three	80%
Term Four	84%

Pre-Primary

Enrolled students	94
Females	60%
Males	40%
Indigenous	2%
CALD	80%
Additional Needs	0%
Attendance %	
Term One	25%
Term Two	25%
Term Three	78%
Term Four	83%

Parent/Toddler

Enrolled students	36
Females	55%
Males	45%
Indigenous	0%
CALD	80%
Additional Needs	0%

NB: :Low enrolments in Terms One and Two were due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Hills Montessori School is committed to working with parents to ensure that all children enrolled attend regularly. While children will occasionally be absent, regular non-attendance is disruptive both to the individual and the workings of the class, and may result in difficulties for the child in their ongoing development. Where there are genuine reasons for non-attendance on a long term basis, the school will work with parents to ensure that the child's education is continued during that time. The school's staff overarching concern is for the welfare of children. Parents are encouraged to show their commitment to the value of education by ensuring their child's regular and ongoing attendance at school.

The School actively discourages taking children out of school during term time for family holidays during their third year of attendance because of the disruption that it causes to the education of individuals and class groups. However, it is helpful for staff to know of such absences in advance and upon parental request offer advice on projects that the child can undertake while on holiday to complement the classroom program.

Process for Noting Absent Days

1. Parents are asked to ring the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent for the day or for a period of time. Phone messages and emails are passed onto the relevant teacher. Phone messages taken by staff from a parent must fill out an Admin. Absent Form for the day but still requires a signed note from the parent.
2. Otherwise parents must produce a written note explaining their absence on the child's return. Forms are available to fill in at the school if necessary.
3. Contact is made with the parent if a child returns without a written explanation. Notification of absences is placed in the child's file and kept for a minimum of 7 years after the child leaves the school.
4. Parents of children who are absent for more than 3 days without explanation will receive a phone call from the Head of School. In the event a child is regularly absent, an interview will be organised with the parents to determine how to assist the child to attend on a more regular basis or the child's development while away from school.
Parents of school aged children are reminded of their legal obligation to ensure their child's attendance at school.

Attendance Records

1. A record of attendance is maintained each day.
2. An enrolment register is kept with the following information:
 - Name of child, age, address
 - The name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - Date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's destination
 - For students who have transferred from another school: the previous school or pre-enrolment situation
 - For students leaving The Hills Montessori School: the next school they will be attending
3. Where the destination of a student above 6 years is unknown, evidence that a Department of Education and Training Officer with home school liaison responsibilities has been notified of the student's name, age and last known address.

Rolls are marked daily. All absentee notes must be signed and dated by the parent. At the end of each year, the rolls and notes are collected by the school secretary and stored in the archives. These are kept for a minimum of seven (7) years as prescribed by the Education Act and Department of Education and Communities Regulations.

School Policies

We have all relevant school policies as required by NESA and Department of Education. These policies assist in maintaining a safe and inclusive environment, an ever developing and high quality program and ensures financial viability for the future.

Our policies ensure that all aspects of the schools' mission, in providing for student's welfare, are implemented. Hardcopies of policies are held in the Office with some placed on the school website.

Policies reviewed or developed this year were:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| - Accident & Injury | - Attendance & Absence | - Kindergarten entry | - Health & Safety - Asthma |
| - Anaphylaxis | - Child Protection - Maintenance | - Responsible person | - Pastoral Care |
| - Animal Care & Welfare | - Staff Professional Development | - Sleep & Rest | |
| - Arrival & Departure | - Interactions with Children | - Supervision of children | |

Enrolment Policy

Most of our students commence in our pre-school when they are 3 years of age. Prior to commencement parents are invited to do an observation in a classroom and attend our annual Open Day in March. Parents of the students are invited to a New Parent Information evening in November. At this evening staff explain the school procedures and how to prepare their child for pre-school. Parents are also provided with a handbook, which includes all school policies and procedures.

A probation period exists for the first term of the child's commencement to enable a child to withdraw without financial loss. A withdrawal is agreed upon by both staff and parents and is a very rare occurrence.

Students are invited to continue into our Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) class the year they turn 5 before the 1st August. From here children transfer to a Montessori Primary school or move into local public or private schools. There are no entrance exams into either the pre-school or the ES1 (Kindergarten) class. Enrolment requirements are as per our Enrolment Policy.

Parents have the opportunity to enroll their child for 3 years at Montessori. If the age of the child allows, children attend the Kindergarten group then move into Year 1 at the next school.

The school's policy on enrolment acknowledges the rationale and requirements of current legislation. It combines this with the processes of enrolment and responsibility for student welfare established in the school already. In particular it is the policy of the school that Hills Montessori School adheres to the legislated acts of the Anti-Discrimination Act (NSW); the Disabilities Act (1992); Occupational Health and Safety Act (NSW) 2000 and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000.

The School admits students of any race, gender, religion, national and ethnic origin in line with Montessori learning and philosophy. We are proud to have such a diverse mix of people in our school community. All enrolments are considered individually, based upon the Montessori classroom environment, the existing number of children, and staffing.

Offers of enrolment begin in June each year with general conclusion in November followed by an orientation evening for parents on school policy and procedures as well as administration of starting dates.

New children to the school start individually allowing opportunity for staff to assist with the transition into the school. Admission of children usually occurs over a number of weeks in Term 1 of each year and intermittently through the year as vacancies arise.

Child Protection Statement

Hills Montessori School takes the welfare of students very seriously and have policies and procedures in place that guide the school in meeting its obligation in the area of child protection. Our child protection policy states that the safety and wellbeing of all students are of fundamental importance to Hills Montessori School. All staff and the School have a range of different obligations relating to the safety, protection and welfare of students including:

- A duty of care to ensure reasonable steps are taken to prevent harm to students;
- Obligations under child protection legislation; and
- Obligations under work health and safety legislation.

The purpose of this policy is to summarise the obligations imposed by child protection legislation on the school and on employees, contractors and volunteers at the school and to provide guidelines as to how the school will deal with certain matters.



Child Protection is a community responsibility. The School's policy clearly details the responsibility the school has in the areas of Mandatory reporting obligations, the identification and reporting of reportable conduct and the requirements for all employees to have clearance in the area of Working With Children Checks.

Details of the full Policy are available from the School Office and on the school's website.

Grievance Policy

In the event of a grievance the following procedures should be followed:

Throughout the procedures all parties must be made aware of their opportunity to access the Department office ~ Children's Services Advisor – 9202 5330 at any time.

1. A parent should first lodge the complaint either verbally or in writing to **the appropriate person related to that concern.**
e.g. problems regarding fees should be directed to the Finance officer or Head of School, and classroom issues should be directed to the teacher. If it is within that person's capacity to address the matter to the satisfaction of the parent, that person can direct action to avoid recurrence of the problem and **report the matter to the Head of School and/or the President.** If the complaint is about a person, that person should be informed and solutions discussed.
3. If there is a difficulty in doing this or if the discussions are unsatisfactory or unresolved, the matter should **be referred to the Head of School or President/Liaison Officer by the staff member or parent.**
4. If the matter is still unresolved, a meeting will be called between the **person/s involved in the concern, the Head of School and the President.** Time may be set aside for a meeting to occur without the person around whom the complaint revolves. That person would be given an opportunity later in the above mentioned meeting or at a later date to present his/her account of the incident.
5. **A committee involving the Head of School, President and two other committee members** may be contacted if the situation is still considered unsatisfactory.
6. If issues regarding the management of the school that have not been resolved at this level, the parent may wish to call an EGM in accordance with the Hills Montessori Society By-Laws
7. If still unsatisfied with the decision, the complainant may contact the Supervisor at Department of Education and Community Services 9836 9831 or Board of Studies for concerns regarding ES1 students on 9367 8341.
8. The Ombudsman; www.ombo.nsw.gov.au / 02 9286 1000, may be contacted if the complaint is not resolved by communicating through the above channels.

Pastoral Care

The quality of Pastoral Care influences the culture and feeling of the whole school. It creates an atmosphere in which children feel secure, valued and encouraged in their learning, growth and social development. It will inform and reassure parents that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and healthy environment.

Each person is respected and acknowledged as a valuable member of the School community. We seek to establish a relationship and partnership with staff, parents and students which promotes mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and acceptance. Pastoral Care is an approach to education which attempts to value and develop each member of the school community. It addresses the social, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and physical needs of the students so that each child has the opportunity to reach his/her potential, and acquire skills to cope with life.

The Montessori principles encourage the child to develop the ability to take responsibility for their own well-being and to care for others. The program allows quality teaching directed to the individual learning needs of the child and providing opportunity for the student to nurture individual growth.

The interest of the child is the primary concern at all times showing no bias to students with culturally and linguistically diverse or socio-economic backgrounds or special needs.

Staff have the responsibility of fostering quality interpersonal relationships amongst themselves, students, parents and support staff. Staff have a significant role of modelling the importance of building and maintaining relationships which are grounded in mutual respect, dignity, fairness, reconciliation, compassion and justice. Staff are aware of appropriate boundaries within teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships.

Pastoral Care is fully integrated into the school's daily routines and its curriculum. The safety, health and wellbeing of each member of the School community is of paramount importance.



Behaviour Management Statement

“Let us remember that inner discipline is something to come to and not something already present. Our Task is to show the way to discipline. Discipline is born when the child concentrates his attention on some object that attracts him/her not only with the useful exercise but with the control of error.” **MARIA MONTESSORI: THE ABSORBENT MIND**

The aim of a Montessori environment is to help each child develop inner self-discipline. This development is fostered by the ordered organisation of the classroom and by the child's freedom to choose and work at an activity without interference. Guidance is given when appropriate.

This approach alleviates many disciplinary problems by helping the child gain skills in self-discipline and mediation within a controlled environment. The mixed age group of each classroom allows the younger children to emulate the more mature behaviour in the environment.

Limits are set for the benefit of the group and each child's individual development. Setting limits helps children to start what is hopefully a lifelong process of feeling secure, orienting themselves in the world, and finding appropriate expression for feelings that are hard to control. Positive reinforcement is used to foster acceptable behaviour and children are given words to assist them to express their feelings so that they need not resort to physical responses, for example, hitting. Children are encouraged to become independent in their dealing with one another as appropriate to their age. Adult intervention occurs when the situation demands. Children displaying unacceptable behaviour may be required to isolate themselves from their peers in order to reflect on their behaviour. They are free to resume their activity when they feel ready. Behavioural problems may be discussed in the group without referring to the offending child(ren) by name.

If deemed necessary, the parents of a child, who is behaving inappropriately, will be notified and advised of appropriate action. Written records will be kept of incidents of unacceptable behaviour or inactive or withdrawn behaviour, and of conversations and correspondence with the parents. Where a formal meeting is required with the child's parents, they are to be given a set of minutes taken at the meeting. The parents are required to sign the minutes as acknowledgement that the discussion took place along the lines contained therein. In severe or repeated instances, the offender's parents may be advised to seek professional help.

In accordance with the Education Reform Amendment (Corporal Punishment Act 1995), and in keeping with the Montessori philosophy, this School does not permit corporal punishment of students and does not support corporal punishment in any form.

Anti-Bullying Statement

Bullying is anti-social behaviour that can affect anyone. It is unacceptable at Hills Montessori School because every student has the right to a safe, caring and supportive school environment.

The aim of the Policy is to ensure that Hills Montessori School is a supportive and safe environment. Every member of the Hills Montessori Community has the right to feel safe and protected. They also have the right to experience positive and respectful relationships between all members of the school community. The promotion of this environment is the responsibility of all members of the Hills community. Adults in this community need to be especially aware of their behaviour, as they are the role models for our children. By empowering members of our community, we hope to achieve a safe learning environment that respects and values individual differences.

This policy applies to interactions between:

- Child to child
- Parent to parent
- Parents to child
- Staff member to parent
- Parent to staff member
- Board to parent etc.

Details of the full Policy are available from the School Office and on the school's website.

School Performance

At the beginning of the year a Strategic meeting was held to discuss operations and ideas for going forward. Our thanks to those who participated. This is very helpful in determining projects and procedures for the following year and the creation of new ideas in programming.

For 2020 these items continued to be identified as the following strengths of the school:

- Commitment to the children
- Community spirit
- Unique environment
- Quality of staff
- Holistic approach to teaching
- Understanding of staff for parent situations
- Class sizes
- Adherence to the Montessori philosophy
- Outdoor facilities



Considerations for the following year are:

- Provide greater opportunities for parents and families to connect
- Information nights covering a variety of topics including Montessori philosophy and program both at school and at home
- Continue with the outdoor environment
- Increase in school size to capacity
- Development of resources for administration staff

Many of these items and more have been included in the Quality Improvement Plan which can be viewed in the office.

Student testing

Our students are not required to be state or nationally tested.

In house testing occurs on an individual and ongoing basis to indicate what knowledge has been acquired and determining the program for future learning. Children are encouraged to look at their progress and compare their work with a view towards improving their skills and knowledge as an open-ended development.

Projects Achieved in 2020

Projects we were able to achieve, other than our Fundraising projects, included;

- Setting up of Teams for staff communication
- Introduced Storypark app for communicating with families

Future Projects

The Hills Montessori School continues to look to developing the school environment for the children and families at the School as well as supporting the local community.

In 2021 we will be focusing on the following projects:

Children's Environments;

- Ongoing development and maintenance of the Food Forest garden
- Development of new garden bed to include aboriginal artwork
- Security system for entry points for additional security and to minimise disruption to classes
- Installation of a Frog Pond in our outdoor environment

Administration

- Full time Head of School
- Support staff for outdoor learning program
- Ongoing development of policies and procedures.
- Overview of our Risk Management and assessment procedures
- Increase website information

