



January 27th 2015

Dear Parents,

Re: Barrenjoey Multicultural Statement

We hope that you have had time over the holiday period to enjoy some wonderful family time and are ready to embrace the new school year.

As a staff we have been discussing the BMS Multicultural Statement over the break and have realised that there are many perspectives on this issue and it would be prudent to provide all parents with an overview as both cultural and religious events are embedded in our approach.

If we are to follow the Montessori perspective in the 3 – 6 classrooms we would be looking at the demographic of our Montessori as in the 'school community' and sharing these traditions/customs practised by students and their parents with the other children. We would be alerting other parents as to the demonstrations and they would then have the opportunity to involve their child or not. In the primary program the 'Fundamental Needs of Humans' study includes the study of cultures and religions of the world.

However in Avalon we have a very limited diversity of practise and often the only multicultural insight that children are exposed to would be when it is introduced by the teachers or others. We then have the problem of stereotyping and choosing what are perceived to be the majority of religious or indeed celebrations practiced by each culture.

If we look at our demographic there are some very obvious celebrations that could be actively demonstrated and indeed are at many schools (e.g. Christmas /Easter /Halloween) but this seems to include religious and cultural customs that do not embrace diversity that reflects even Sydney's demographic.

Dr Montessori was a Catholic and indeed created some presentations for children attending religious services but made it very clear that Montessori schools should adapt to the demographic of their community and to the era of time. This is clearly demonstrated with the appropriate introduction of computers initially in the 6 - 9 and then more so in the 9 - 12 classroom when children have a greater ability to access this information and are developmentally able to do so.

The 'Fundamental needs of Humans' study introduced in Primary presents children with the concept of religion and its diversity but then children of this age are able to abstract and reason - they are able to consider.

The 3 - 6 child needs to see all concepts as a reality.

Why are we writing to you?

To let you know that we honour your values and varying perspectives but to alert you to the fact that other students at the school have different perspectives and without judgement we will be

presenting those traditions / customs -hopefully by the students /parents /grandparents as part of our teaching curriculum. Our least preferred option will be by the teacher and a book.

We will be looking at customs on days of festivals and noting why the day is of significance. The explanation will be factual and delivered in a non-judgemental manner limiting the pictures to photographs of the actual event or drawings depicting the event.

Typical celebrations that are discussed might include Hanukah, Diwali, Chinese New Year, Reconciliation Day, Easter, Christmas, Halloween, Ramadan and as mentioned any others that might be celebrated by members of the school community.

We cannot state at this point in time when these presentations will be happening other than on or very close to the day of the celebration but if you would prefer to give a general instruction that your child not be involved in any such 'lesson' we can arrange for an alternative activity.

If we do not hear from you by February 15th we will presume that you are in agreement with your child being present during these mini lessons - always supervised by a teacher.

We are aware that this is a very sensitive issue and it is our intention that no child should ever be confused or query their home instruction. We are just trying to find a respectful balance and would appreciate parental input and participation.

Please do come and see me with any comments or questions.

Thank you for your consideration

Take care

Fiona Campbell
(Principal) (Jan 27th2015)