

Te Toi o te Ako: The Art of Learning

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand Conference

Date: 4th and 5th of July, 2026

Venue: Te Pae, Christchurch

Programme

Saturday 4th July, 2026

Te Toi o te Ako: The Art of Learning

Time	Stream	Programme Item		
8:00 am		Registration Opens		
9:00 am	Official Welcome	Mihi Whakatau		
9.30 am		Morning Tea (Break for 30 minutes)		
10.00 - 10.30 am	Official Welcome continues	Conference Welcoming Address, Presentation of Awards		
10.30 am - 11.30 pm	Biculturalism Keynote <i>Therese Ford</i>	<p>Celebrating Fifty Years of Progressive Shifts Towards a Treaty-Honouring Education in Aotearoa</p> <p>This keynote presentation explores the decades-long journey of New Zealand education evolution, highlighting significant positive steps taken to give active expression to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The shift from assimilation and integration policies to the era of biculturalism, beginning in the mid-to-late 1970s, heralded progressive shifts that learners and whānau have benefitted from. There have been several legislation and policy changes in recent years which have caused teachers, leaders and boards to critically consider the status of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in classrooms, boardrooms, and their wider communities and in many instances these have been health conversations that have resulted in some constructive actions. This presentation affirms and celebrates these practices and the immense collective effort undertaken by thousands over half a century to advance a Treaty-honouring education in Aotearoa.</p>		
11.30- 12.30		Lunch (Break for one hour) Banquet Room		
Workshops	0-3 Years	3-6 Years	6+ Years	0-18 Years
Presenter	<i>Sara Brady</i>	<i>Liza Davis</i>	<i>Prabha Narayanan</i>	<i>Anita Croft</i>
<p>Workshop One 12.30 pm - 2.00 pm</p>	<p>Introduction to the psychology and learning style of the child under three</p>	<p>Montessori, Trauma and Chronic Stress, and the Whole Child</p> <p>Discover how Montessori's vision of education as a force for peace aligns with current research on trauma and healing. While examining the impact of chronic and toxic stress, we will also explore the essentials of safety, connection, and empowerment in creating environments where children can thrive.</p>	<p>What is Joy and where does it come from?</p> <p>What does joy truly mean in the Montessori classroom? This opening workshop invites educators to unpack the concept of joy as more than happiness or entertainment. Through reflection and discussion, participants will explore joy as the natural outcome of purposeful work, autonomy, and mastery. By examining their own experiences and observations, teachers can identify how to create environments where children find fulfilment in meaningful engagement.</p>	<p>Developing skills for life through gardening</p> <p>Gardening activates all the senses and can provide a sense of fulfilment when a seed we have sown turns into a flower or vegetable to enjoy.</p> <p>Engaging in gardening activities promotes the well-being of tamariki by connecting them with nature. The garden can become a therapeutic outlet, enhancing emotional intelligence and resilience. When tamariki are involved in the whole process of gardening, not only do they learn how to grow things, they also learn competencies such as patience, responsibility, and teamwork. This workshop will look at the benefits of gardening for the health and well-being of children, as well as examine the wider benefits for their learning and development and provide practical ideas for engaging tamariki in gardening.</p>

2.00 pm	Afternoon Tea (Break for 30 minutes) Banquet Room			
Stream	0-3 Years	3-6 Years	6+ Years	0-18 Years
Presenter	<i>Sara Brady</i>	<i>Liza Davis</i>	<i>Prabha Narayanan</i>	<i>Therese Ford</i>
Workshop Two 2.30 pm 4.00 pm	The Practice of Observation	Regulating Through Rhythm and Purposeful Activity Experience how movement anchors development and fosters calm, focus, and integration. Examine the role of practical life and sensorial as strategies for supporting both children's regulation throughout the day.	The Neurology of Joy — What the Brain Says About Learning This session bridges Montessori philosophy and brain science. Participants will explore how curiosity, intrinsic motivation, and emotional safety are essential for the brain to engage in deeper learning.	Te Tiriti o Waitangi - Understanding the Foundation This interactive workshop provides participants with a critical and foundational understanding of the world views, cultural structures, and historical context that existed in Aotearoa prior to and after the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It will also provide participants with an opportunity to engage with key education policies and documents that educators can draw from to protect and advance Te Tiriti o Waitangi within their centres/schools and community settings.
Workshop three 4.00 pm - 5.30 pm	Cognitive development	Beauty, Creativity, and Belonging in the Prepared Environment Explore how art and music nurture emotional literacy and resilience. Engage in expressive practices that honor culture, imagination, and harmony: key elements of Montessori's design for human flourishing.	The Safe Space — Nurturing Emotional Safety and Belonging This workshop explores the emotional and social foundations of joyful learning for 6–12-year-olds — a stage when children become more aware of their own emotions and the feelings of others. As they navigate growing peer relationships and moral sensitivity, issues such as exclusion or early forms of bullying can emerge. Through guided discussions and simple classroom activities, educators will learn how to build emotional literacy and resilience, helping children name, understand, and regulate their emotions.	10 Reasons Why Connection with Nature is Good for Well Being <i>Tanya Laybourn</i> Anne Frank said "I firmly believe that nature brings solace in all troubles". This workshop will explore the truth in that - our young people are calmer, kinder and more real with themselves and each other when they get a good dose of nature in their lives. It does not need to be an "adventure" - it can be simple and easy and accessible. Tanya Laybourn will facilitate this workshop to explore the power of connecting with nature and how important it is for the well-being and mental health of rangatahi.
5.30 pm - 6.30 pm	Nibbles & Natter Session			

Programme
Sunday 5th July, 2026

8.30 am - 9.30 am	Pasifika Keynote	Tapasā: Shaping Our Craft This session draws on stories from educators and leaders who have reimagined their practice to enrich their culturally responsive pedagogy. Reflect, engage, and consider approaches that can help you further shape your teaching craft and deepen connections with Pacific learners, educators, and their families.		
9.30 am - 10.00 am	Morning Tea (Break for thirty minutes) <i>Exhibitors Area and Lobby</i>			
Stream	0-3 Years	3-6 Years	6+ Years	
Presenter	<i>Sara Brady</i>	<i>Liza Davis</i>	<i>Prabha Narayanan</i>	
Workshop 4 10.00 am 11.30 am	Social development	Belonging, Boundaries, and the Social Environment Deepen understanding of authentic connection as central to development. Reflect on the prepared adult's role in cultivating empathy, trust, and restorative communication within the classroom and community.	The Joy of Reading — Supporting the Reading Mind in Elementary Reading becomes joyful when it awakens imagination and connection. In this workshop, teachers will explore how to support diverse readers through freedom of choice, meaningful literature, and authentic engagement. Participants will discover ways to nurture lifelong reading habits through reading aloud, poetry and song and creating classroom environments that invite children into the world of words with curiosity and delight.	
11.30 pm - 12.30 pm	Lunch (1 hour) <i>Exhibitors Area and Lobby</i>			
Workshop 5 12.30 pm - 2.00pm	Emotional development	Responding with Compassion and Clarity Revisit Montessori's method of observation as a bridge between science and empathy. Learn to interpret behavior as communication and to use reflective observation to respond wisely and gently.	The Joy of Writing — Expression, Imagination, and Inquiry Writing, in the Montessori approach, is a tool of self-expression and exploration. This hands-on workshop invites educators to experience writing as their students do — through pattern writing, poetry, dramatic expression, and research. Participants will learn how to guide children in discovering their own voice and purpose, transforming writing from task to joyful expression.	
2.00 pm - 2.30 pm	Afternoon Tea (Break for 30 mins)			
Workshop six 2.30 pm - 4.00 pm	The role of Self-Reflection	Sustaining Resilience and Stewarding Healing Conclude by centering the well-being of the practitioner. Explore mindfulness, reflection, and collective care as essential tools for maintaining balance and modeling the peace we hope to nurture in others.	The Cosmic Vision and Belonging in the World In the culminating workshop, participants will weave together the threads of joy, purpose, and interconnectedness through Dr. Montessori's cosmic vision. Educators will explore how the <i>going out</i> program allows children to extend classroom learning into the wider world — cultivating independence, empathy, and a sense of contribution to society. Reflection, planning, and celebration will help teachers design environments where children experience joy not only in discovery but also in realizing their place within the universe. Through this integration, educators can renew their own cosmic task — to guide children toward wonder, belonging, and the joy of purposeful living.	
4.00 pm - 4.30 pm	Conference closing <i>(All together for Closing)</i>			