



Windows into Children's Thinking



From the Principal

As Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia schools said, 'What children learn does not follow as an automatic result of what is taught. Rather, it is in large part due to the children's own doing as a consequence of their activities and our resources'. At Bialik College's Early Learning Centre, we strive to provide a learning environment conducive to such a process.



In this journal you will read of learning adventures such as 'Possibilities through Paper', in which three year olds discover the extraordinary creative possibilities of a very ordinary item - a serviette. Seen with wonder through the eyes of a child, this simple everyday item triggers the children's imagination and results in many wondrous ideas and possibilities. In this exercise, as in many others we enjoy each day in the ELC, the children learn from one another and we learn from them. This is the process of shared learning that we treasure in our ELC.

I am proud of the dedication and diligence with which our teachers have thoroughly documented the many learning experiences shared by our ELC children this year. By documenting this important process we are making the thinking visible. We hope this journal will provide you with an appreciation for the richness of the journey that our children travel on through their years in the ELC. The text, graphics and photographs on these pages is evidence of the curiosity, potential and collaborative nature of children. We see children constructing, deconstructing, drawing, painting, playing, socializing, questioning, admiring, observing, negotiating, exploring, discovering and learning all the while.

Our four year old children have focussed on the concept of 'time'. They have pondered how we store, use and mark time. In a world in which 'time' seems to go by faster and faster and the pace of change is seemingly impossible to keep up with, it is fascinating to reflect on how our children see time: 'the museum has the olden days' said one child, 'with a slide like at the park you can slide into another time'.

Time, today, has certainly become a precious commodity. Despite the fast pace of the world we now live in, or perhaps because of it, I urge you to put time aside to explore the pages of this journal, and to travel with us through a year in the life of our children, whose experiences today will shape them for an unknown and fast approaching future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Gerassi'.

Joseph Gerassi

From the Head of the Early Learning Centre

“

Dialogue is of absolute importance. It is an idea of dialogue not as an exchange but as a process of transformation where you lose absolutely the possibility of controlling the final result.....to get lost is a possibility and a risk, you know.”

Carlina Rinaldi. In *Dialogue with Reggio Emilia* 2006



This journal is the fifth since we started in 2006. The diverse investigations in this journal have taken place during 2010. They focus on the environment, the exploration of materials and relationships amongst others, and deepen the thinking beyond the literal. It is real and authentic inquiry which challenges both the learning of the teachers and the children.

We see the educational process as being reciprocal and view research as integral to the thinking of both the teachers and the children.

An investigation may continue for only a few days or over many months and may still be ongoing. What follows are not investigations in their entirety but rather small vignettes, part of the processes from every classroom in the ELC. When reading the journal you will observe the many languages the children are using when describing their theories and making sense of their world. This documentation is fundamental to our work. The words of the children are written in italics and many of the articles are prefaced by the words of the children.

The learning does not take place by means of transmission. It is a process where each individual constructs for himself or herself the reasoning behind the meanings of things, events, reality and life. The learning process is intertwined and dependent on not only the individual's interpretations but also on explanations and interpretations from others. This idea of learning with others, known as the social construction of knowledge, allows for children and teachers to work together, to ask questions without knowing the answers and to revisit ideas in different ways. Working together allows for multiple perspectives and different interpretations.

“Pedagogy implies choices and choosing...(it) means having the courage of our doubts, of our uncertainties, it means participating in something for which we take responsibility.”
Carlina Rinaldi. In *Dialogue with Reggio Emilia* 2006

Daphne Gaddie .

Daphne Gaddie



3 Year Old Kinder

Unsquaring a serviette.....08

Kinder 3J

Nicholas Baring, Layla Dvir, Benjamin Felman, Tiara Givoni, Chloe Gold, Hanna Goldberg, Jake Golshevsky, Jordan Keddie, Mia Levy, Rafael Lifszyc, Abigail Mayer, Gabriel Miller, Zoe Munz, Bailey Nussbaum, Noa Poratt, Mia Priester, Millie Rosenberg, Shaalev Ryan, Bradley Shostak, Lyla Southwick, Romy Szmulewicz, Noy Tirosh, Mia Waislitz, Ella Wilson, Joseph Zayontz

With

Julie Hertz, Orit Gil, Rosemary Barry

I am going to blow them away. Do you think it will fall?..... 11

Kinder 3R

Amielle Asseraf, Dana Bagle-Zevin, Sharni Blumenthal, Tashi Federman, Jasmine Filer, Aiden Gelbart, Mark Genin, Georgia Gobbo, Sarah Greiman, Ella Holzer, Aaron Kulawiec, Charlotte Kuperholz, Abby Levin, Raphael Liberman, Lily Lyons, Ariel McGillivray, Rebecca Paratz, Aaron Patishman, Tiger Robenstone, Anoushka Russell, Ricky Schwartz, Sienna Shostak, Jack Szulanski, Ethan Tanner, Jemma Wise

With

Ranjna Najat, Ilana Cohen, Rajitha Subasinghe

Developing relationships with the possibilities of clay..... 14

Kinder 3E

Darielle Alter, Sivan Barsheshet, Ashley Birner, Peaches Cohen, Josh Davies, Mika Erenboim, Tyla Fibishenko, Noam Gil, Stephanie Hadad, Tiffany Hadad, Nathan Held, Lexi Herszfeld, Adam Kallenbach, Taylor Levin, Bailey Lewin, Sunny Perelberg, Zac Podlubny, Jemma Seligmann, Joshua Shaw, Jasmine Spiegel, Joshua Spiegel, Lisa Vainer, Woody Weissman, Jesse Wrobel, Jason Zufi

With

Elise Rotstayn, Bev Carmel, Julia Levine

4 Year Old Kinder

Marking time, Marks of time..... 18

Kinder 4J, 4L, 4Z

With

Helene Oberman

If you can cut it in half, it's symmetrical..... 24

Kinder 4J

Marcus Abramson, Jem Attar, Mischa Beaconsfield, Bella Black, Ruby Blecher, Jennifer Broide, Daniel Carmeli, Elly Dodge, Milla Gardy, Elliott Gaspar, Benjamin Gelb, Zac Hamersfeld, Toby Hearst, Harry Hendel, Isabella Israel, Isabelle Joffe, Tali Kaplan, Charlotte Kleytman, Joseph Klotz, Noah Lust, Ariel Shtern, Jake Symons, Jesse Weller

With

Judy Blumberg, Lilach Levy, Arlene Meyrowitz, Leh-Anne Engel

It all started with a circle..... 27

Kinder 4L

Aaron Berman, Michelle Brover, Nathan Buchman, Pippa Davis, Kayla Eben, Toby Grodski, Skye Hadad, Felix Harris, Dean Jacobs, Cara Jacobson, Layla Joske, Alicia King, Hank Kister, Charlie Klein, Tye Marabel-Whitburn, Emily Ovdav, Jack Roper, Eden Rubin, Seth Ryan, Oliver Sormann, Oscar Strauch, Georgia Troski, Jennifer Troski, Amalia Wise, Beau Worth

With

Lindsay Miller, Aliza Deutsch, Megan Jay

Is there a princess who doesn't need a prince? – Is gender bias in children's literature changing?..... 30

Kinder 4Z

Samuel Abramson, Cassie Chizik, Emma Dejong, Leehy Eylon, Bronte Feldman, Danielle Feldman, Alex Frenkel, Carter Graham, Jake Joseph, Jack Karro, Asher Klissman, Joel Krongold, Nathaniel Leighton, Aviv Levy, Dalia Miller, Benjamin Nathan, Laura Nayman, Ava Star, Ethan Star, Mia Vardi, Noah Vardi, Sammy Volchek, Maximilian Wolff

With

Zia Freeman, Miri Sheffer-Watson, Ortal Erez

Prep

Learning Lab; the purpose, benefits and possibilities.....34

Prep N

Dean Allen, Dean Alter, Raphael Berezin, Jordyn Birnbaum, Aviva Broons, Ellie Bursztyn, Brooke Davis, Isabella Deane, Max Engelman, Samuel Eydlish, Jenna Felbel, Dustin Feldman, Joseph Gold, Joshua Gomo, Joel Green, Amber Hamersfeld, Ella Heelan, Maya Herszfeld, Benjamin Joffe, Ezra Justin, Jamie Mooseek, Joshua Papo, Raphael Poratt, Ashlee Priester, Poppy Smorgon, Olivia Zukerman

With

Natalie Kluska, Sigal Tirosh, Sandy Sher, Robyn Winograd

To equip the children with values... both a privilege and an uncertainty..... 37

Prep E

Aaron Birnbaum, Chloe Bursztyn, Benjamin Davis, Kiera Erenboim, Joshua Feldman, Jasmine Felman, Bailey Levin, Ruby Lorkin, Daniel Maisner, Zara McGillivray, Nathan Needleman, Seba Negri, Eli Perelberg, Sammy Pila, Adam Pincus, Daniel Rosenberg, Ruby Rosenberg, Jasmine Sweet, Dan Tadmora, Hayley Taylor, Luke Thurston, Kai Upiter, Noah Warwicker-LeBreton, Jake Wrobel, Pia Zayontz

With

Emily Minter, Desre Kaye, Deb Braitberg, Sylvia Brover

Relationships – Inside and Out..... 40

Prep K

Madeleine Better, Asia Carp, Ethan Carrick, Amy Dodge, Shoshana Feldman, Ashley Fisher, Natasha Fried, Jesse Gaspar, Eden Gelfand, Skye Givoni, Joshua Kallenbach, Aiden King, Phoebe Lambert, Ray Levin, Devon Melzak, Julian Munz, Daniel Posner, Jade Rosenberg, Benjamin Shaw, Charlie Sheezel, Amy Smith, Oz Tirosh, Thomas Troski, Nathan Vainer, Joesph Waislitz

With

Kathleen Georgiou, Ruth Pojer, Anne Budlender, Sandy Sher, Talia Levy, Amy Goldenberg

The conventions in this book

A number of styles have been used throughout *Bialik College Early Learning Centre Journal 2010 – Windows into Children's Thinking* to designate different voices.

Serif Italicised Font

Indicates the voice of a child

Serif Bolded Font

Indicates the voice of an adult

Year 1

A Fine Balance44

Year 1L

Nathan Bickford, Tia Black, Jack Brott, Indiana Chizik, Summer Cohen, Hayley Eben, Sam Frenkel, Sacha Hanegbi, Nicholas Hershan, Jessica Irons, Brett Jacobs, Oliver Joske, Daniel Kazakevich, Paris Kister, Benjamin Lipshut, Harry Robenstone, Jamie Sobol, Jade Stern, James Thurston, Sara Zayontz

With

Linda Baise, Helene Oberman, Sigal Tirosh, Lynette Raiter

We change because we grow a year older..... 47

Year 1R

Lucca Attar, Zoe Better, Talia Birkett, Jessica Bloom, Ella Botvinik, Ayden Carp, Chloe Chizik, Eva DeCarvalho Koch, Cooper Gardy, Sidnee Goda, Amelie Graham, Coby Gunn, Arianna Hearst, Marley Israel, Toby Kanat, Daniel King, Eliza Klotz, Isaiiah Liberman, Leon Paratz, Alexandra Patishman, Rachel Rockman, Ella Roper, Tye Samuels, Henry Wise, Ariel Yanay

With

Roz Marks, Helene Oberman, Desre Kaye, Mandie Tepperman, Deanna Korman, Brittany Meyerowitz

If people don't know your language, you can still learn from them and you can teach them..... 50

Year 1J

Edward Ades, Elle Amira, Max Bardas, Allegra Baring, Ari Barsheshet, Amber Besser, Shai Chabat, Byron Davis, Georgina Davis, Yasmin Dvir, Rebekah Fink, Ben Kuperholz, Jessica Levine, Remy Lissek, Yael Meltzer, Hannah Miller, Zac Nissen, Ron Pogrebisky, Joshua Rosenbaum, Mitchell Sharp, Raphael Shtern, Daniel Super, Reid Trakman, Jasmine Vardi, Mitchel Weller

With

Nicole Huxtable, Helene Oberman, Ester Azikri, Ruth Pojer, June Kamenetzky, Jeff Klyne



3 Year Old Kinder

Unsquaring a serviette...

As educators in a world that is changing fast, we are constantly thinking about what skills do the children of today need to carry them forward positively into the future.

Possibilities through Paper

We wanted paper that could easily interpret the children's movements and yet still challenge the children's intelligence. The educators of Reggio Emilia often talk about the extraordinary in the ordinary and we wanted something ordinary that would endear itself to the children by tickling their imagination and hold hands with their creativity.

A serviette is easy for small hands to bend, fold, scrunch, tear and roll. It does not suggest drawing; it stands uniquely individual, gentle and offers many possibilities.

Also a serviette is a familiar item to the children.

You wipe your face with it.

We began by asking ourselves some questions to set a framework for our research.

How will the children's hands introduce themselves to the serviette?

How will the children construct connections with each other?

Can a serviette provoke ideas, experiments, games and stories?

Does a serviette have the intelligence to make visible the children's creativity?

But will the children see it in a new way when they engage with the serviette through their hands and imagination.

We wanted all the children to be involved, to introduce themselves to the serviette in their own way but in relationship to others. Where ideas can be shared, borrowed, adopted, rejected and adapted. It means that learning is socially constructed.

Tearing, scrunching, folding and twisting were the common ways the children's hands began to explore the serviette.

By observing carefully and documenting the children's exploration we were able to highlight our image of children as learners, as adventurers, as curious, children capable of concentrating and children learning from each other.

Rafa begins by waiting and watching, but already the serviette introduces itself to his hands. (Figure 1)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 4

Bailey explores through tearing and is aware of Rafa observing him and acknowledges Rafa through his eyes and a smile. (Figures 2–3)

Rafa also begins by tearing; his introduction to the serviette has been influenced by Bailey. He tears and tears, serviette after serviette. Although his thinking has been influenced he takes this idea and makes it his own. He could be testing his theory and wants to confirm that serviettes tear easily. (Figure 4)

Bradley begins by folding his serviette and Mia begins by feeling and scrunching but at one point she becomes aware of Bradley's folding. It could have been when Bradley stated, *I've made a boat*.

Mia captures this idea but she does not know how to proceed, so I suggest she ask Bradley to support her. Mia makes visible her courage; it is not always easy to ask for help. Bradley acknowledges her courage through his respect for Mia and her request, by eagerly sharing his ideas and skills with her. (Figures 5–6)

Time is given to the children as a gift to explore, make discoveries and revisit. Through this friendship with time, the children have the opportunity to get to know the materials. Time is also given for the children to accept an invitation. If they decline an invitation on one day they will have the opportunity to come another day. We believe that children have the right to make a choice but this does not mean we allow them total freedom. We have strong structures and expectations in place to support children in their learning journey. Expectations that build their concentration, patience and courage. Structures that say it is okay to make a mistake and that it is not okay to not do your best.

Time is also given for a child to sit, observe and stay close to an adult as the serviette is left silent on the table. Time is the ingredient that allows us to fold back the layers, to go deeper and to test our theories and knowledge.

The children enjoyed exploring and experimenting as they eagerly introduced themselves many times to the serviette over several weeks. We became aware of how the children remembered previous encounters and often began with the same movements.

The children tore, scrunched, twisted and folded the serviette, but at times the serviette challenged the children. As the stubbornness of the serviette refused at times to hold the children's shapes it became visible that the children required persistence and creativity to trick the serviette into compliance.

During a project we take moments out to reconsider and look at which way we might go to extend and challenge the children.

After the children were given time to get to know the serviette we wanted to take the relationship to another level. We decided to see what would happen if we introduced fantasy to the serviette.

We invited a group of children to revisit their experience by asking them what they had discovered. As I observed the children I was searching for a moment to challenge the children to pick up the thread of a game. I was amazed by what the children remembered and when one said

I made a tiger, ROAR

We immediately saw the power in this memory, picking up a scrunched piece of serviette discarded by the children I twisted the end and asked could my elephant be friends with the tiger?

Elephants, tigers and birds were born from the serviette and all interacted and the children straight away took over and made the game their own.

It was the tiger's birthday and we all went to the party. It was night time and we all had to go to bed. It was the elephant's birthday and so another party with cake and candles was organized and enjoyed. All through only



Fig. 7

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, but imagination encircles the world.”
(Albert Einstein.)



using pieces of discarded serviette, no longer seen as just a serviette, but transformed and brought to life by the children's imagination. (Figure 7)

Observing the games unfold it was interesting to note how easily the children accepted a piece of serviette as an elephant, a birthday cake or a tiger. The themes the children brought into the game are common themes that I observe in all areas the children play.

In the sandpit birthday cakes are always made and eaten.

It's your birthday.

In the home corner bed time is created as everyone lies down to sleep.
Shhhhhhhhh

We have learnt to see children as capable through documenting and interpreting each child's creative and intelligent thoughts as they interact with the materials and each other. We can never really know if our interpretations are right, we must remember that they are just that, interpretations. The role of the adult is to watch, listen, capture moments and extend children's discoveries. As educators we do know that children are powerful learners, they are already;

Scientists, as they test theories on flight and sound. (Figure 8)

Mathematicians, as they explore measurement and size. (Figure 9)

Creative, as their imagination transforms the serviette.

It's a dancing princess.

It's a bed. (Figures 10–11)

Curious, as they explore the serviette.

Making visible the culture of their childhood as the serviette takes on the power of Ben 10.

This is the wonder of childhood, the wonderful ability to see the world in a completely different way to the adult.



I am going to blow them away. Do you think it will fall?...

“

In our ELC we are researching our understanding of the 'image of the child'. This research has raised many questions such as, what image do we have of our children? ”



In our ELC we are researching our understanding of the 'image of the child'. This research has raised many questions such as, what image do we have of our children? How do we see them? Do we see them as competent individuals, and focus on their strength or do we focus on what they cannot do? As teachers we try to find a balance between these two concepts. How do we test these theories? If we are providing an environment to make the learning process interesting for the children will this scaffold and strengthen the child's learning?

We noticed that there was a set of small blocks that no matter where we placed them, they never got used. We began to wonder why the children were not using these blocks. We were surprised as these small blocks had so much to offer to the children, texture, shape and size. Would the children not find these smaller blocks easier to work with? Had the group dynamics influenced the decision to play, or not to play with these blocks? In my previous experience, with the three year olds I had noticed that the children somehow always used the bigger blocks and not the small ones. Did they need someone to facilitate their play in this area? To test this theory we set up a provocation in the block area. We decided to be more explicit. Our intent was to explore the possibilities of language and maths with the building blocks and also to observe the collaborative learning experiences. We created an area intended only for these small blocks. I took a picture of the blocks to show the children that there was a way they could use the blocks as a puzzle by copying the picture and placing the blocks in the tray. I also wanted to be a facilitator as opposed to only an observer. We invited a few children to this area and asked them if they could follow the plan of the shapes and rearrange the blocks in the tray. I noticed that the children were not as interested as I had thought and began building their own construction as opposed to categorising shapes. Was this because the blocks were 3D and they used puzzles as 2D? We were happy to follow the children's interest in using their imagination. (Figure 1)

Over time the children continued to explore the blocks and their qualities. Did the children sense the challenges with my presence or did they feel supported?

*I need that from your tower
That is mine and I am using it
But I need it!*

“ This is the wonder of childhood, the wonderful ability to see the world in a completely different way to the adult. ”



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

I helped the child find another piece that was exactly like the one she wanted. They experimented with balance and weight in their constructions and used the blocks to explore patterning and design concepts. We gave each group time and for many this time led to an extended period of over a week. Blocks were also used in dramatic play. The smaller blocks were used in smaller areas e.g. making a palace for a doll or having an enclosure for farm animals or simply building a tower. The outdoor space was used for the bigger blocks which also gave the children a larger area in which to build e.g. building a bus and going on a field trip or making a drum and playing a beat of a favourite song. Some children were still not interested in the blocks but were only interested in trucks. For us it was not just about the blocks but rather being challenged to take a risk and to try to use other materials with which to play and experiment. The challenge for us was to provide an environment for these children which maintained their interests but also challenged their problem solving skills. **Would you like to bring your trucks to the block area and see what you could do with them?** They began making a garage which required measuring the distance of two blocks that could hold the roof on the top. (Figures 2a & 2b)

We observed that the children who came into the block area were able to communicate through the blocks, without needing the verbal language to express them. The children's understanding of balance, problem solving and spatial relationship was developing and observed through the stages of block building.

Can I put this triangle on top of your block? (Figures 3 & 4)

A child asked the group for permission and took care not to destroy the

building that she was going to add onto. The children were developing the sense of belonging and acknowledging others achievements together as a group.

Yes! Now that can be 'our' tower because you are putting fancy things on my tower. I like fancy things.

I noticed a child join in the play and then begin building, by himself, a structure with the wooden poles, bringing maths and science into his experiment. *I am going to blow them away. Do you think it will fall?* He blew the whole structure until it fell down and he shouted *I blew it and it did fall!* Building with dowel rods provoked the children's attention and brought further elements into their constructions. Some children were happy to be able to connect the dowel rods and count them. Others used the dowel rods to alter their imaginative play. (Figures 5–7)

I am building a princes' castle.

The introduction now of other types of wooden pieces engaged the children to establish a plan to make a track. One of the children observed a basket full of icy pole sticks and began working with them. Soon others joined in. Building this track meant that the children had to work collaboratively to achieve a particular pattern. (Figure 8)

You need to follow me.

I am copying what you are doing.

It looks like a pattern.

You need to count how many you need to put.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

No I don't. I can just follow what you are doing.

The children were learning from each other and from the repetition of their play. The children compared their constructions with each other and now felt confident in the sharing of their own construction and ideas.

“Our expectations of the child must be very flexible and varied. We must be able to be amazed and enjoy like the children often do. We must be able to catch the ball that the children throw at us, and toss it back to them in ways that make the children want to continue the game with us, developing, perhaps, other games as we go along.” (Loris Malaguzzi – Founder, Municipal Schools Reggio Emilia, Italy.)



Our expectations of the child must be very flexible and varied. We must be able to be amazed and enjoy like the children often do. We must be able to catch the ball that the children throw at us, and toss it back to them in ways that make the children want to continue the game with us, developing, perhaps, other games as we go along. ”

(Loris Malaguzzi – Founder, Municipal Schools Reggio Emilia, Italy.)

Developing relationships with the possibilities of clay...



“ We began with a new three-year-old group. Even though the children were coming together as a new group many of the children were familiar with the centre through older siblings. However in this context they were coming together in a new context as a new class. ”



We began with a new three-year-old group. Even though the children were coming together as a new group many of the children were familiar with the centre through older siblings. However in this context they were coming together in a new context as a new class.

We wanted to encourage the children to make connections with the teachers and each other from their first initial meeting.

As a staff we were also researching what the image of the children in our centre was and how this image could be reflected in our interactions with children. We considered what this 'image' meant to us as educators beginning with a new group of children.

We were eager to meet the new children and to extend a warm welcome. We had written them a letter and told them about ourselves, and at our initial meeting we shared our stories. Words were exchanged, the small gift of a precious stone was given to the child and the parents responded by sharing small details of their children's lives. And the initial connections were made.

After our first meeting with the children we gave great thought to how we could set up the room to create more meaningful interactions. We considered many possibilities. We also considered the materials that the children would encounter including clay as a pliable and flexible material, which lends itself to conversation, exploration, imitation, observation and other possibilities.

We asked ourselves some questions in relation to this material:

Can clay support beginning relationships between teachers and children?

How can clay connect the children with each other?

How could clay support our collaborative view of the image of the child?

We wanted the whole group to be involved and so we invited the children into the studio in small groups. Initially the children's visits to the studio involved lots of exploration with the clay. Small groups of children would use their fists and hands to pound or hammer the clay into various forms. Other children enjoyed the sensation of feeling the clay on their hands or rolling it into snakes. (Figure 1)

However, we observed that as the small groups of children spent longer amounts of time with the clay, their interactions with the material and with each other became more involved.



A child was invited into the studio to explore the clay. Her immediate response was, *No, I don't want to*. She then stood by the door watching the other children's explorations with the clay. One of the children saw this child watching and he suggested, *you can sit and watch us*.

The child watched the others use the clay for a long time. After observing the others, she slowly began to roll the clay and eventually joined the child who had invited her in.

We considered this encounter.

Was it that here was a child who was curious, capable of making her own decisions and interested in engaging in social interaction? And the other child as being very open to friendship and supportive of the child who was totally reluctant? Both children began to build a sense of belonging to the group. (Figures 2 & 3)

When a group of girls sat together an idea was borrowed and it captured the imagination of the others. This idea was picked up and used in each child's own way. The idea of making a cake with the clay was the catalyst that offered possibilities for the relationship to begin. The children were aware of this game they had created and the focus moved from "I" to "we". (Figures 4 & 5)

Children's imaginations are so flexible and inventive. When children take on someone's idea they have to fit that idea with their own thinking. This deepens the child's thinking as it changes his idea and sparks off other ideas, which extends the child in other ways.





Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Two children were using the clay side by side.

Look, the clay stands up. If you push it down and hold onto the top it stands up.

How do you do that? Show me

Take the clay in your hands and roll it like me. Make it long. Not too much, just a little bit. Now push it together like this. Now do this (push it onto the board) (Figures 6–8)

The child giving the instructions is familiar with the possibilities of clay. She knows that it can be transformed within her hands. The learner is not as sure, and she asks for help from her friend. The first child is confident enough to use the clay to construct and she is willing to lend a skill and share her knowledge of the process with her friend.

“All children, each one in a unique way, have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in engaging in social interaction, in establishing relationships, in constructing their learning while negotiating with everything the environment brings to them.” (Hendrick, 2004,1. Page 72)¹

Fig. 1: A group of children exploring the clay

Fig. 2: Tyla observing Zac exploring the clay

Fig. 3: Tyla begins to explore the clay alongside Zac

Fig. 4: The girls use the clay and pretend it is a cake

Fig. 5: The girls pretend that the low table is an oven

Fig. 6: Mika uses her clay to construct

Fig. 7: Mika shows Lexi how to roll her clay

Fig. 8: Mika observing Lexi using the clay

References

1. Hendrick, 2004, *Next Steps Towards Teaching the Reggio Way*. Pearson Education Inc.

“ All children, each one in a unique way, have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in engaging in social interaction, in establishing relationships, in constructing their learning while negotiating with everything the environment brings to them. ”

(Hendrick, 2004,1. Page 72¹)



4 Year Old Kinder

Marking time, Marks of time...



Timelines, time travel, clues of time, symbols of time; universal, cultural and spiritual. Time of an event, family, anniversary, recording of events through paintings, photography, social media, newspapers and technology. We see the changes in time and how we store time, time in our lives and the marking of time. Archives of time retrieved via albums, books, phones, iPods, BlackBerry devices, memory sticks and storing time in the 'clouds'. Reflecting on time and change. ”



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

This rock is old I know... it has these lines, lots of lines. It is old. I counted seventy two lines.

Children are taught the days of the week, the names of the seasons, and the months of the year, however when it came to children sharing their birth month one child exclaimed after much thought *I don't know when I was born I don't know the month.* This begs the question what are we teaching and what are the children hearing? How does the teaching affect or engage children in what they might bring to the discussion.

What does time and space mean to children? What symbols or images do children use to identify these concepts? Does time look the same to every child? Whose time and what space/s? How do we live our lives by time and space?

In welcoming children back after the summer holidays they described places that they had visited, including the landmarks of these places, and the modes of travel to these places. (Figure 1)

Within these conversations time became a major focus.

What previous experiences are children overtly asked to contribute to beyond a quick response? A memory, a response from the past takes time to go back into the archives of our memory storage banks. How are these collective memories formed? Who is involved? How were they passed on? How many times did these 'memory stories' collect another layer along the way?

Where and how does time indeed travel?

Beyond the literal marking of time and with quick retort by the children, *the clock it tells us the time* which then prompted their description of the types of clocks in each of their homes, and in specific rooms and that of their relatives. (Figure 2) *My grandmother has a grandfather clock. Grandfather clocks are old like the olden days.*

We could ask, what of the pendulum chiming? What does this mean for the children? How many years and generations has it swayed, marking time of both tragic and celebratory events? Clocks that relied on the sun and shadow, clocks that had no numbers but symbols, clocks that went beyond twelve digits. And what of both religious and cultural aspects of time? Listening to a panel of three members from different cultures and spiritual observances share their stories evoked the imagery and the calculations of numbers and cycles relating to guiding these individuals and their community's lives. They shared some insights as to how time and change are



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

reflected and understood. Elements such as linear time using the clock and calendar as well as spiritual stories were shared.¹

The children's conversation continued about shape and the size of clocks. I offered images a little less known, perhaps unfamiliar, wondering how the children might relate these images to their own context.

A clock face carved in stone, or a series of melting clocks in the painting, 'The Persistence of Memories' by Salvador Dali.²

That's ridiculous. It is not how a clock looks! Clocks are not bent and stuck over a tree! It is still a clock. But it is melting.

The children's interest in numbers which for some related to their age and for others *eight o'clock that is when I go to bed.* The night and the day, the numbers marking am. and pm. engaged some of the children who relayed their recent holiday travels to other countries, *It took a whole night and a day. We were so high up in space.* Now travelling through time became another focus for some of the children.

But what of the watch as a marker of time. *My father has a watch that talks to you.* I listened to a recent discussion by Sir Ken Robinson as part of the 'Teddalks'.³ Sir Ken relates the story of how many young people do not wear watches and perhaps the not so young too. He recalls his daughter, who does not wear a watch, and who responded to her father that the watch has only one function, it is not multifunctional, whereas time can be found on many digital devices. This example although humorous is also a reminder of the 'times'.

We should continue to think about how many different paths learning may take over time and how many strategies we can encourage our children to explore to develop their thinking and learning.

This is not necessarily time in a linear fashion.

Do you know that you have a clock inside of you that tells you when you are hungry. Dogs do too. They know when it is time to eat and sleep.

Well I saw a possum walking very slowly during the day. Do you know why? Because possums sleep during the day and are awake at night. That's just like my cat. She will not sleep at night only during the day!

And so beyond the watching of time on a clock the children were asked, **how might we find time outside?** Without prompting, leaves, branches

and twigs were collected, as were stones. One child picked up part of a metal opener from a can and a few beads on a string. My initial response could have been to request that the child put these items in the bin however I watched as this child continued to find and select these types of objects which were added to the collection and which would be brought back to the studio for further discussion.

The children walked down a long and winding trail of sand and stones which travelled under two small bridges. This is a simulated dry river bed in the playground and over time the rain would create a small rivulet. Did this remind the children of what time might reveal in these beds of exposed sand? (Figures 3 & 4)

How many of us have seen the beach at low tide or a dry river bed and what did time reveal?

One child noted a tree supported by a stake with strings attached. The child was quite concerned by this. He pointed to the change in colours on the branches.

There is an old skin and a new skin. Is the red the new skin?

The skin of the tree is coming off.

If you look there, they are the roots of time. Time and its roots.

Returning to the studio the children sorted what they had collected. A pile of stones, another of leaves, other natural materials and lastly a pile of assorted pieces including the broken string of beads, the metal opener from a drink tin, a piece of balloon and a weathered ten cent coin.

The changing colour of the leaves as a determinate of age *that was time* one child responded. The use of the word *rotten* was also associated with age. Seedpods both open and closed were also studied closely.

And the stones? *The stones were different colours perhaps when a volcano erupted a long time ago* another responded. *Maybe they were from the moon, moon rocks, they look the same colour as the picture of the moon.*

The children discovered the differences in textures of the rocks and compared them to other collections in the studio. They discovered the coolness of the smooth rocks as they pressed them to their faces. In a discussion about the colours of the rocks a child also discovers the sound rocks can make when tapping together, first with like rocks and colours, then with different size and colours of the rocks. How did time shape these rocks? As one child had theorised that *the colour of the rock could be related to a region.*



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

This one looks like an asteroid that fell from the moon. An asteroid came from the sky.

A world is in this rock!

These natural materials were further observed. Some chose to trace the materials and others drew from observation. The children were interested in the patterns and lines and the subtle changes of colour. The exploration and experimentation during this process further highlighted when and how the acquisitions of skills are really attained? (Figures 5 & 6)

And what of the collection of other found pieces. *I think this balloon was when I went to a fair here a while ago with my family I remember the balloons. This balloon was from a long time ago. That means a few days ago... no I mean a lot of days ago a long, long time ago.* In reference to the string of beads? *This belonged to someone once but it broke. I wonder whose it was?* And the ten cent coin? The child continued to flip the coin over and over... *I found money. It has numbers on it like the time. If you turn it over and over that tells you what number it is. Can you see the ten on it?* Using a magnifying glass the children looked more intently at the coin and noticed more numbers on the other side of the coin *and it is brown it is very old and look at the other numbers that means it is really old.* (Figure 7)

And lastly a yellowing card one child felt was very precious... *I think it is a letter from a long time ago, maybe an invitation, it is very special.* And so these stories continued where consideration to time seemed to permeate all that was found.

This last story seemed to trigger the relaying of further thoughts about time and travelling back or through time periods.

If not the watch as a reminder of past, present and future what other indicators are on offer?

After listening to the knowledgeable recall of the concept of time travel in a time machine by one child and added to by the other children in this group I wondered where such vivid and technical information was acquired.



Fig. 7

How do you know so much about time travel? The response was from a well-known cartoon series which offered such adventures! This of course highlights the age and time of our generation where the social media has made such inroads into offering possibilities to explore our past more immediately. We could ask whether the faster acquisition of facts and experiences would speed up our processes for exploring and making new discoveries to help future generations?

A long time ago before you were born there were no computers, no projectors and no electric things.

There was fire but no lights like we have today.

There were candles.

They used to wash themselves in the rivers.

No showers or baths.

But they are not alive now.

When was a long time ago?

1880's, 1950's, 1960's ...

The concept of a time machine was from the same child who had relayed much information about time travel. He spoke with such vigour to the group. What would it look like? How would it be built, and who would travel in it? After lengthy discussion the group began drawing their ideas of such a machine. (Figures 8–10)

After several discussions one child asked if it would really travel back in time as he was anxious about this. This brings to the fore and what we see from time to time as teachers is the enthusiasm with which children embrace adventure, and within the social media sometimes the embracing becomes the acting out and living the characters of these cartoons and their adventures.

We could build a time machine! (Figure 11)

A time machine of the future. Where the rules are in the future. Where the children give the rules and not the adults.

Maybe everything is the opposite in the future?



Fig. 8

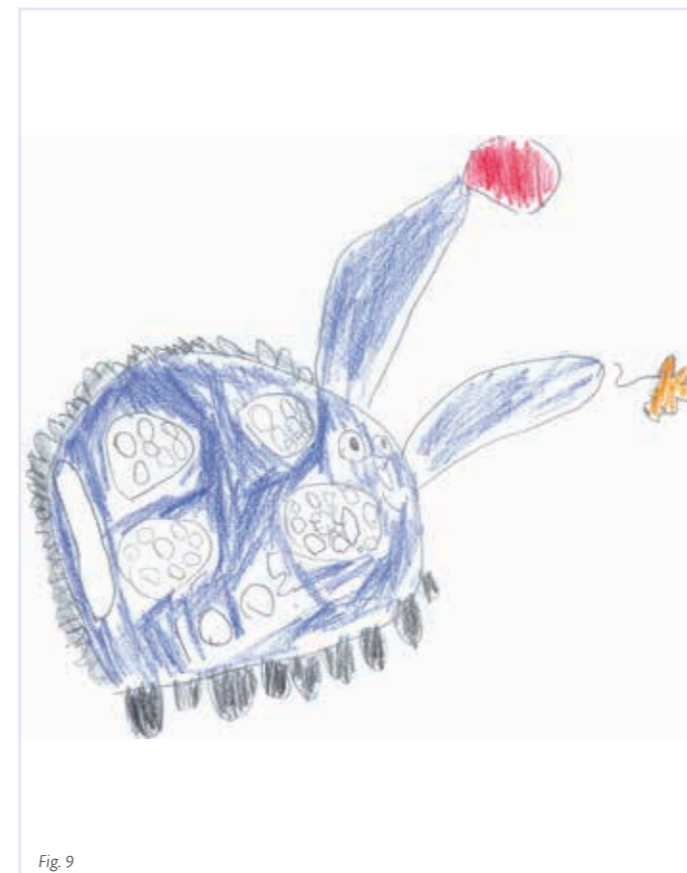


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

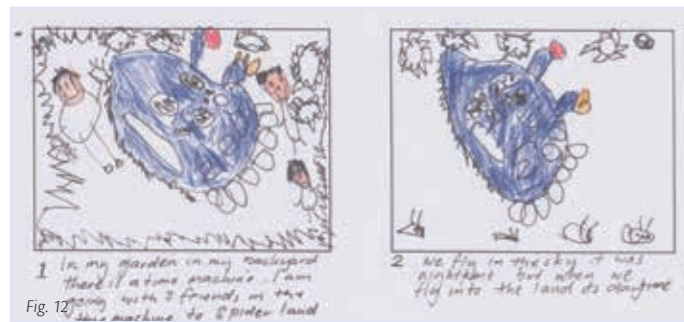


Fig. 12



Fig. 13

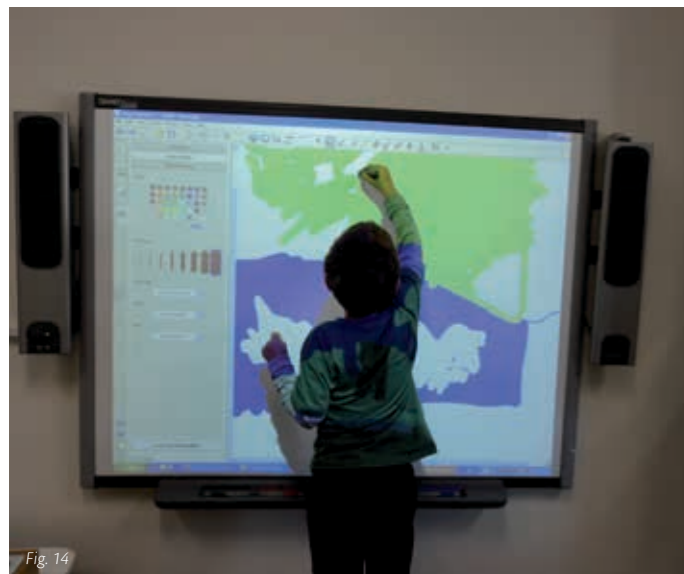


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

*Maybe people will never die in the future.
But no person dares to go into the future, only if they are brave!
With a slide like at the park you can slide into another time. The museum has the olden days. There is a spooky house there with spider webs and it is scary!
You could press a button and go to 'Spooky world!' or 'Superhero world.' or back to 'Cave world.'
But don't press all of the buttons or you will end up in 'Nothing world' But if you press the reverse button you could go back to your own land, I mean country.*

For some of the group making a time machine that was a static object did not seem enough. For others, who were not as aware of the concept of time travel and what such a machine might look like, they were still happy to be part of the adventure. (Figures 12 & 13)

With the use of media to play games, to watch a television series and the use of other technology to simulate these adventures one could travel back in history. Not necessarily in a truly factual sense, the children simulate an adventure in time in the studio which would not escalate the fear of one child but would accommodate the others who were captured by the idea of time travel and re-enacting the event. Interactive whiteboards and scanners were the tools used as this group of children manipulated their images and drew the land in time that they would like to visit. Their imagination was palpable. (Figures 14 & 15) Who could travel to a land that had not yet been discovered? Was it a land of the past or a land in the future? A land of shards of ice, or a land where the sky was the ground and the ground was the sky!

For others the sense of time was an interest in cycles and creatures within different lands. A book about the life of animals during a twenty-four hour period captured their imagination and they shared their knowledge from previous experiences. The idea of animals and their sleeping patterns, distances they travelled for water and food and the migration of these animals to different areas depending on climate, was the provocation for further research.

*You can listen to the birds. They make more noise during the day when they are awake but they sleep in the night.
The owls are awake in the night too.* (Figure 16)

Many of the children had travelled widely and some of these images provided a response to what they had also seen in these countries. To recall these experiences once again new technology brought back their travels and research engines were used to rediscover the animals or areas they had seen and visited.

A recent photographic exhibition at our National Gallery of Victoria entitled **TimeLines**⁴ related stories both from the photographer and the subjects point of view. Time as a marker of an event in history, time as growth and comparison, time in reflection of one's life, time in objects passed on from one generation to the next, time as a portrait study in the lines and expression on a face, the foreboding or anticipation.

This investigation with the group of kinder children was as much about them as it was about their families. A letter sent to the parents shared the direction of this investigation, with the anticipation of the family's contribution of their understandings of time and change in their lives and within their families. How was this marked, valued and retained? What did these concepts reveal to the children beyond the classroom and the school and how were they made visible and how were they stored? We asked families to take some 'time' to consider this as a family and give time for their child to listen to their thoughts. How were one or all of these concepts reflected in their family? How was it made visible? Could they select one object, a photo, an artefact that was discussed and kept in their family's time line?



Fig. 16

These contributions would stand beside their children's investigation. (Figure 17)

Time is a value which depends on the cultural expectations as to how time looks in our lives. Time never goes away but time passes on and we may reflect on these times. Many expressions such as 'never look back', or 'learn from past mistakes', or 'time means many things to many people', as well as other expressions about time can guide us and also empower us to make the most of our time in the present and for the future. I recall a Talmudic story about an old man planting seeds to grow into a carob tree. When asked why he would do this when in fact he knew it might take seventy years to see the fruit of this tree he responded that his parents planted a tree to bear the fruit for him and he would do the same for his children.

This investigation has captured the children's imagination but also their skills of looking at time through different lenses and the effects of time on their surroundings and in turn on themselves.

The future is still there, forever and ever.

"Many a trip continues long after movement in time and space have ceased." (John Steinbeck)⁵

Fig. 11 – A group of children interested in the concept of a time machine used clay to construct a model based on their drawings. This offered more opportunities to 'look inside' the time machine and then to return to their original drawings to develop their ideas,

Fig. 12 & 13 – Some of the children chose to use storyboards to draw and speak about the adventures in their time machine.

Fig. 16 – Some of the children used one picture to share their story.

Fig. 17 – The Roper family's contribution to this investigation

Kinder 4 Crossclass investigation
With the children in 4KJ, 4KL and 4KZ Together with Helene Oberman

References

1. Forum: **The wheel and arrow of time** – Timelines Speakers Swami Atmananda, Brian McKinnon, Indigenous Project Officer, NGV & Dr William Johnston, academic. Introduction Dr Isobel Crombie, Senior Curator, Photography, NGV International 180 St Kilda Road 18 July 2010
2. Salvador Dali. Spanish artist (1904–1989) **'The Persistence of Memories'** 1931.
3. TedtalksDirector. May 24, 2010 – Sir Ken Robinson – **Bring on the learning revolution!** http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LeLxa3U_I
4. **Timelines – Photography and Time**–NGV International 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. 7 May – 3 October 2010
5. John Steinbeck. 1902–1968. American novelist and writer. Nobel prize for Literature 1962.



Fig. 17

“
Many a trip continues long after
movement in time and space
have ceased.”
(John Steinbeck)⁵

If you can cut it in half, it's symmetrical...



Fig. 1

“Children possess a natural openness to the potential in materials.”
(Topal and Gandini.) (Figure 1)

It all started with a box of brightly coloured plastic balls that had been donated to the class! We put the balls out on the mat for the children to explore and examine – where would that lead us? We envisioned endless possibilities with these balls. They were shiny, fitted into the palm of a child's hand, and were both visually and tactilely inviting.

They were thrown up into the air, passed around from friend to friend, used to describe colours in Hebrew, and as a concrete material to promote numeracy skills. We saw the emergence of repeating patterns as the children used sheets of a recycled plastic mould as a base for their patterns followed by the constant repetition and interplay of pattern making.

The children took great delight in creating their own designs which were then copied onto another sheet. During one of these games with the plastic balls the children created designs which resembled symmetrical patterns. We wondered whether the concept of symmetry was something that should only be introduced when the children were a bit older. Was it too abstract to introduce at this age? However does this depend on the context? Should we not follow the children's interest? Was this just an observation of the children's understanding of pattern and order? We chose to challenge our thinking and the children's thinking. I discussed with my colleagues what had occurred. Had the children made a connection with this pattern? (Figure 2)

We spoke about the word 'symmetry'; we showed the children objects and

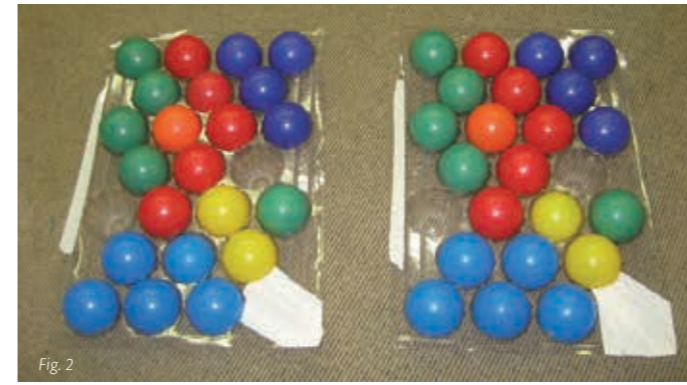


Fig. 2

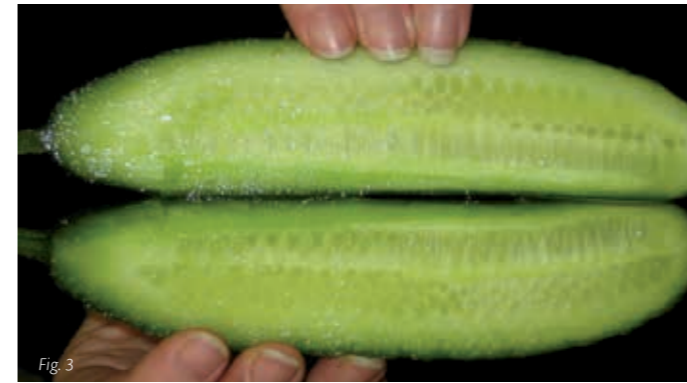


Fig. 3

asked them if they were symmetrical. We realised, as did the children that symmetry could be found in all aspects of our daily lives.

A butterfly, you are symmetrical, a flower, the tusks of an elephant.

This led us onto a discussion on what is symmetry?

The same things on each side. When you do a thing on one side and you copy it on the other side. When you do one side and you don't do different things on the other side.

During incidental everyday routines such as cutting the fruit and vegetables, the children discovered symmetrical patterns. Of course not all things are symmetrical. Therefore we discussed the concept of asymmetrical.

It's not symmetrical, I can't see seeds on both sides, they are different from each other. We looked at the cucumber, It looks like a butterfly. It's got green on each of the halves. It's symmetrical. From the back its green and it's green on the inside. (Figure 3)

On one of our weekly Shabbat walks we noticed the children very closely examining some leaves. *We are looking for symmetry!* There seemed to be a heightened awareness and appreciation amongst the children of what could be found not only in their indoor environment but outdoors as well. (Figure 4)

“As children manipulate objects they often arrange them symmetrically, in radiating configurations, and in compositions that depict real things such as landscapes, machines, people and animals.” (Topal and Gandini!)

As the children worked with the various materials in the room, we noticed spontaneous symmetrical designs becoming more and more apparent. Had this investigation into symmetry sparked a new interest or was it something innate in the children themselves? Was it a need to create order in their lives? (Figure 5)

The children discovered that a mirror could be used to create symmetry. (Figure 6)



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

“Children possess a natural openness to the potential in materials.”

(Topal and Gandini.)



Fig. 7
What other possibilities could the mirrors offer? We put mirrors on the painting table to see what would transpire? (Figure 7)

In another area we noticed two boys were busy with the magnetic blocks – we watched with great interest as they arranged, then re-arranged their blocks. What were they trying to achieve? Were they using the magnetic strip as a guide to divide their design in half? Were they investigating symmetry? We needed to understand their thinking at this time. *We just used all the blocks to make a square. We were connecting our squares. Jake said we couldn't connect but actually we did connect by putting the other blocks on Zac's side. I was just showing Zac how to make it very neat. It's symmetrical. No, it's not because we didn't have the same colours.* (Figure 8)

“Bringing materials into the classroom and discovering their potential for learning involves many of the same process skills used in maths and science and interpreting literature. It's a way of thinking about things. It helps both teachers and children become more aware of how they think.” (Topal and Gandini² P:9)

This investigation has opened up so many new avenues of expression, discovery and collaboration as the children work in pairs to share their expertise. We have seen their designs becoming more complex as the children seek to challenge themselves. Some children are attempting to draw symmetrical pictures even drawing a line down the middle of their page as a guide.

Our research into symmetry has taken us out of the classroom into the wider world – as far as India. During a discussion we spoke about the Taj Mahal and saw how perfectly symmetrical the magnificent building was. The children were enthralled by the story behind this building; this led us onto a discussion about symmetry and its relationship to culture, symbols and traditions. This in turn has piqued the interest of our parents and grandparents, who have contributed photos, their time and input to further, extend our thinking and learning.



Fig. 8

Symmetry seems to be the new buzz word in our kinder room and beyond – there is an ongoing interest in creating symmetrical patterns with recycled materials, the children are noticing symmetry in shop signage and even in the way their food is presented at home.

What is it about symmetry that has made such an impact on our class? That could be the next investigation!

References

1. Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini, *Beautiful Stuff! Learning with Found Materials*. Publisher: Wyatt Wade 1999 (p28)
2. Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini, *Beautiful Stuff! Learning with Found Materials*. Publisher: Wyatt Wade (p9)

It all started with a circle...

“Children learn more deeply when they have the opportunities to represent their thinking in multiple media”

George Forman¹



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

When children ask for help we have discovered that there is more than one way to support them.

We have all been on a journey of discovery together. We found out that we are all unique with different ideas and thoughts but managed to work together towards a common understanding and all the joys and discoveries of being curious were shared, and it all started with a circle.

It began when a child who was interested in drawing circles asked for some help. She had tried over several weeks to draw circles free hand but she was not satisfied with the outcome and was quite frustrated. I had made several observations of her attempts and despite continual encouragement and support in her efforts by me, she was still not satisfied with the outcome. She explained to me at one stage that *they needed to be round like a circle*. A few days later I overheard her asking my colleague to help her and I heard my colleague reply **I have an idea, if I give you this shape you can try and trace around it and then you will be able to draw the circular shape you need**. I felt that at that stage it was important to scaffold her thinking by providing support according to her level of competency. This child would then be able to move on to a stage that she was eager to explore. She was actually keen to draw and paint designs within the circles she had tried to draw. The child liked this idea and she proceeded to trace around the edge of the cup to form circles. She repeated this process many times over. Her interest in circles attracted other children to the idea and the shape called a circle, and she lent this new skill she had just learnt, to her peers who were interested. After a short period, many of the children became interested in tracing and drawing circles. Some children struggled with holding a pencil and an object to trace around but were encouraged to try and draw a circle free hand. We often overheard the child who had initiated this interest offering to lend her new found skill to others.

“After weeks of scribbling children make the discovery of art: a drawn symbol can stand for a real thing in the environment. Circular form becomes a universal symbol for almost anything. Later symbols become more complex, reflecting child observations on the world around him. Drawing circles develops after the initial stages of scribbling. A circle is one of the first shapes children persist with in their drawings.” (Betty Edwards²) (Figures 1 & 2)

“What is it about symmetry that has made such an impact on our class? That could be the next investigation!”



Fig. 3

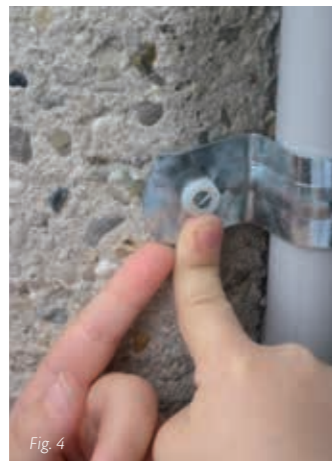


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

*Circles are easy to draw, because they are round and you just circle them.
Big circles look after all the little ones.
When circles are tiny they are cute.
Because your face is a circle – circles are good because a lot of things are made out of circles.*

This became a task that for many of the children who were not particularly interested in drawing, were suddenly finding a way to express themselves. In order to support this interest we placed materials of a circular nature in different areas of the room. The children then discovered many different types and shapes of circles, large and small, that they could trace around. Not all the children chose this option but we noted that many of the children were drawing many, many circles, in all sizes, shapes and colours. The idea was to give them the time to discover the possibilities of the materials and to let them use the materials for drawing with and in installations around the room. Forman (1994) suggests that **“children learn more deeply when they have the opportunities to represent their thinking in multiple media.”**¹

*The sun is round but you can't touch it like a circle, 'cos it's hot.
Circles make things go fast.
My coin is round, my Shabbat coin.
A circle is special because it makes train wheels.
A circle is a shape of eyes, and part of your nose here. (nostrils)*

We spent time feeling circles, playing with circles, using circles, looking for circles – indoors and outdoors. (Figures 3–5)

Some of the children were interested in painting circles on paper and the questions I asked myself were...How, Where, Why and What? How could we enjoy this experience individually but within the context of the group? Where would we set out the paint? Why would we paint circles on individual pieces of paper? What colours would the children choose?

I realised that many of the children were beginning to understand the concept of working together and co-operating with one another as we had developed this skill over an extended period of time. They were ready to disclaim ownership of 'their' work, and realised that they could work with one another, alongside and that what they were about to embark upon was 'a collaboration'

Collaborative group work help feeds the creative dynamic by each and every child being able to offer his/her own perspective. The communication and interaction stimulates a new way of thinking. A large sheet of paper was placed on the table and we proceeded to discuss the process we were about to embark upon. The children were excited about painting circles but wanted to use *lots of colours*. I did mention to the children that we would be moving around the table and that many different children would have the opportunity to contribute to the painting. I then realised through the discussion that the children were very receptive to working like this because we had developed an understanding of co-operation, collaboration and inclusiveness in other areas of our room.

Hey look. Our circles are touching each other, now what can we do? (Figure 6)

In conjunction with the intense interest in painting circles we decided to look for round shapes in nature and were not particularly successful until a huge branch fell in our yard and we had it cut up into small logs. We placed the small circular logs in different areas of the room and the children started to build small totems and were so excited to discover that the small logs consisted of lots of small circles. The discovery of the wooden circles of the wood grain further fuelled their interest in anything circular. They were so excited by



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

this discovery, for them it was all about the circular rings, and now when the children use the small wooden logs they first count how many circles there are before they use them in their installations.

“Great art picks up where nature ends.” (Mark Chagall³)

Once we had explored the beauty of a circle by drawing it, looking at it, feeling its' roundness and painting it in all its forms we had a small group discussion and it was decided that we should find materials that we could use that were connected to circles. We found a large container with small cardboard circles in it. A child picked one up and showed it to us and then a girl standing next to him said that we should try and weave wool through the circle. Her eye had caught a container of wool with so many beautiful colours near the cardboard circle container. She had made a connection to a previous activity we had done using a frame and wool for weaving. After collecting the materials the children had chosen one boy turned to me and said *can I have this circle, because I don't have any like this at home?* I briefly pondered over what the next step could be. But first I wanted the children to explore the weaving of a small circle as was suggested earlier on.

During a class discussion we decided that it was a good idea that each child weaves wool around a small cardboard circle in any way they knew how. After each child had woven the wool through the small cardboard circles I remembered the request from the one child. We then decided that each child was going to take a large cardboard circle home with their choice of wool so that they could weave a circle at home with their families. This was an opportunity to transfer the children's ideas from school to home and vice versa.

The wool must be different to the small circles, 'cos it must have colours like our painting. (Figures 7–9)

The excitement was tremendous. The woven circles returned to school and we proceeded to play with them, trying to find some form or configuration to connect with our circle painting. The children were able to manipulate the woven circles in a variety of configurations until one particular design was agreed upon **“... in working with children, the primary focus is, and must always remain, the children themselves, with their**

own strategies of thought, their knowledge – building processes and their relationships. So what we need to seek out and apply when working with the children are some processes involved in the creative act, such as synthesis, exploratory tension, the intense relationship with things, symbolic invention, metaphor, evocation and analogy, cultural courage and expressivity. The teacher's role is to be a competent listener to the visual language and the child's individual and group strategies in order to support the children in a way that is in tune with their autonomous expression.” (Reggio Children⁴)

References

1. George Forman. *The Hundred Languages of Children, The Reggio Emilia Approach – Advanced Reflections*, second edition, edited by Carolyn Edwards, Lella Gandini, and George Forman. Greenwich, CT: Ablex Publishing Corp., 1998
2. Betty Edwards, *Drawing development in children, Creative and mental growth.*
3. Marc Chagall – Google quote
4. CHILDREN, ART, ARTISTS. *Reggio Children (The Project. The expressive languages of children, the artistic language of Alberto Burri)*
5. John Warwicker. *These few symbols could mean such gigantic things. Dumbo feather, pass it on.* Issue 10.2007

“
The creative process is just a stream that swirls inside, outside and through us all...it is what makes us human.”
John Warwicker⁵

Is there a princess who doesn't need a prince? – Is gender bias in children's literature changing?...



Fig. 1

In 2009, whilst learning alongside a class of ten boys, we were interested in researching the stereotypical fox or wolf character in literature for young children.

This year with a larger mixed gender group of children, we wanted to continue investigating stereotypes, this time looking at gender. As gender appears to be the first label that a person gets in their life, it seemed only natural to want to analyse how gender is portrayed in literature for children.

Research has shown that, by the age of three, children are able to distinguish themselves from the other sex. Wasserman and Stern.¹

In addition, early research has shown that by age 5 many children have come to believe that men go out and earn the money and women are in the home. Schlossberg N.K. and Goodman J.² When Knell S and Winer G.³ studied 90 preschoolers, there was little evidence to suggest that reading could counteract established attitudes and predispositions about gender.

In 1993 Fox⁴ stated that children's books frequently portray girls as acted upon rather than active and in 1995, Ernst S. B. stated that girls are represented as sweet, naïve, conforming, and dependent, while boys are typically described as strong, adventurous, independent and capable.

Richard A Couch⁵ states that if females do not have strong characters to relate to in stories, then how do they learn to become strong and independent women themselves. The article suggests that when teachers choose the stories they read, they should have strong male and female characters

When reflecting on this research, we wondered if, at the very least, children who were exposed to literature depicting non-traditional roles, develop more flexible, egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles.

At first we wanted to know what the children knew about the Princess stereotype, as we thought most children would have been exposed to the traditional fairy tales. Did the children see the male characters as rough, tough, adventurous heroic fighters and the female characters as the sweet, beautiful, motherly damsel in distress?

Princesses live in castles and have crowns, and they have to dress beautiful with decorations and rainbows.

They have a red cushion that they stay on, and they sit with the prince.

They spend their time riding horses to other princess's castles.

Knights guard the castle, and they have a sword.



Fig. 2

The next step would be to divide the children into four groups, of which two groups would be same gender groups and two would be mixed groups. Each group would be asked to write and illustrate a story. (Figures 1–4) The only requirement asked of the children would be that one of the characters in the story had to be a princess.

The reason we decided to have same gender and mixed gender groups was to see if it impacted on the characters in the children's stories.

From the following discussions, and the content of the children's stories, it was quite evident that what was important to the girls was the outward appearance of the princess, and what was important to the boys was the brave prince, bad dragon and the knights who guarded the castle.

She wore a blue dress and blue gloves and she looked like Cinderella. Female response

She's like Tinker belle from America. She wears a dress and she has a necklace and she's blonde. Female response

She has a sash. There are diamonds and gold on the sash. Male response

The children did seem to put a lot of emphasis on the outward appearance of the princess.

Story One – Mixed gender group

The bad dragon was there. He wanted to kill the princess, because that's what dragons do.

The prince and princess married each other and lived happily ever after.

Story Two – Girls only group

The prince was turned into a bad dragon by the bad fairy. When the prince came back, they got married... The prince, the princess and their baby lived happily ever after.

Next we searched for and exposed the children to stories where the princess was not typical to see if their thinking and perceptions of the gender stereotypes would change.

In *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch, the Princess is not afraid of the dragon and dialogues with him... Elizabeth walked right over the dragon and opened the door to the cave.

Prince Ronald said **“Elizabeth you are a mess. Your hair is all tangled and you are wearing a dirty old paper bag. Come back when you are dressed like a real princess.”**

“

In 2009, whilst learning alongside a class of ten boys, we were interested in researching the stereotypical fox or wolf character in literature for young children.

”



Fig. 3

Elizabeth said **“Ronald, your clothes are really pretty, and your hair is very neat. You look like a real prince, but you are a bum. They didn’t get married after all.”**⁶

In **Princess Bubble** by Susan Johnston and Kimberly Webb, Princess Bubble is a graduate of the Royal University. She wanted to travel to other kingdoms to meet new people and learn about their cultures and differences.⁷

The third and fourth stories were written by the children after we had read these and many other books with atypical characters and plots, and there seemed to be elements in our stories which showed a shift in perception.

Story Three – Boys only group

The princess wore shorts, a short t-shirt, a crown, a necklace and lipstick. She wore really big shoes, because she had to go outside.

Story Four – Mixed gender group

The princess was feeling very sad.....she didn’t have water. There was no water in the pipes.

She burst into tears of sadness, because she didn’t like presents.

After many stories we now have children in the group who say that not all Princesses wear a crown and have beautiful clothes, and there is a general consensus after much discussion that it is more important to be special and caring on the inside, than beautiful on the outside. That said, the children still represent the princess graphically wearing a crown, although one profound question posed by one of the children, which was very hard to answer was, *How do you know someone’s a Princess if they don’t wear a crown?*

This has now led us to link this question to Jewish studies, by posing the question, **how do you know someone is Jewish if they don’t wear a kippah?**

In another story where a mean octopus king keeps all the mermaids as his slaves, the children also linked their thinking to Pharaoh and the Hebrew slaves in the story of Pesach.

We are left with more questions than answers. Can we look at literature in isolation? Gender messages come to us from many sources e.g. movies,



Fig. 4

music, other media, and of course culture and family. For there to be a real shift in stereotypes do positive messages have to be presented to children through all these avenues, or will a slowly evolving world, and shifting attitudes be enough?

References

- 1 *Journal of Psychology* 133, pp.129–137.
- 2 *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, 20, pp. 226–270.
- 3 *Journal of Vocational behaviour*, 14, 78–87
- 4 *Language Arts*, 70 (2), 84–88
- 5 *Gender Equity and Visual Literacy: Schools can help change perceptions.* Richard A Couch 1995
- 6 Robert Munsch. *The Paper Bag Princess* 1980 Annick Press
- 7 Susan Johnston and Kimberly Webb. *Princess Bubble* 2006 BubbleGum Press



We are left with more questions than answers. Can we look at literature in isolation? Gender messages come to us from many sources e.g. movies, music, other media, and of course culture and family. For there to be a real shift in stereotypes do positive messages have to be presented to children through all these avenues, or will a slowly evolving world, and shifting attitudes be enough?



Prep

Learning Lab; the purpose, benefits and possibilities...

“

January, 2010. The beginning of a new school year and the air is filled with possibility. Projections are made as to the directions that we may travel but more importantly our ears, eyes, hearts and minds are open to where this new group of 25 children will take us”

January, 2010. The beginning of a new school year and the air is filled with possibility. Projections are made as to the directions that we may travel but more importantly our ears, eyes, hearts and minds are open to where this new group of 25 children will take us.

The beginning of Prep marks a significant change in a child's life. As they don their school uniform for the first time, it signifies a new found maturity, an eagerness to learn and a sign of independence. Children begin Prep and often put much pressure on themselves to learn 'to read and write'. Several days into this school year, one of the children asked: *'When are we going to learn to read and write?'*

It is our society that 'inadvertently' puts this pressure onto children. So often children are told that in Prep they will learn to read and write. This has caused me to wonder what we want our children to learn in Prep and what messages about learning we want them to share. There is no doubt that basic skills are important but isn't it also important to create a passion for learning, a desire to explore and question, and a confidence to access these skills to enable discovery and research?

With this in mind, we begin the year with many questions. How can we facilitate learning to nurture these values? What environment can we create to provoke a passion for learning? How can we establish a community that supports and encourages learning? How can we support the children to uncover their own strengths as well as recognise the strengths of their peers? How can we ensure that our learning experiences enable each child to explore their interests and passions? How can we assist the children to become more accountable and responsible for themselves as learners? How can we ensure each child is engaged and excited about learning? How can we nurture the construction of knowledge for each individual and the group as a whole? How can we develop a common language that will support and substantiate the learning taking place in our classroom? How can we encourage reflection and deep thought that challenges our thinking and provokes even more learning?

These questions continue to permeate the air and influence our day to day experiences. These questions have impacted on many diverse aspects of our classroom, however, there is no clearer example of this than Learning Lab (Figure 1).¹

Learning Lab refers to a time in our day where children negotiate their learning based on their own interests, personal or group goals, specific target teaching requirements or in response to other provocations in the classroom. Most of the provocations that are set-up in the room for Learning Lab are done so in response to our classroom investigations. The opportunities are shared and discussed before Learning Lab and often extend on workshops that have taken place with the children. *There is always new stuff to do but you can't do everything but we get through things because we change our Learning Lab. There is lots of stuff to do in areas and we can do most of them but you can't do all the stuff in the classroom... what you can do they change – the teachers change it.*

During Learning Lab there will also be small groups of children working with a teacher on a given focus. Another teacher will usually be moving around the classroom to ensure that the other children are on task, to provide necessary challenges and questions to ensure deeper learning, to listen with all their senses, to document learning and to provide other assistance that may be required.



Fig. 1

The term Learning Lab was developed with the above experience in mind. We wanted the children to see this experience for the diverse learning that it could entail. The term Lab (short for laboratory) refers to a place of scientific work. We imagine a place of observation, hypotheses, testing, questioning, discovery, and research. The importance of the process and reflection are vital in this place. These factors were part of the learning experience we wanted to create in our classroom. So the term Learning Lab was coined. (Figures 2a & b)

If one walks into our room during Learning Lab, one would see small groups of children engaged in a range of tasks. You would see a physical space that is set-up with diverse learning areas with specific purpose and relevant provocations to support the learning taking place. You would see the focus, the hypothesising, the questioning, the testing, the discoveries and the research. Upon reflection with the children, you would hear about the challenges that were encountered, the hurdles that were overcome, the successes that were shared and the new discoveries that will change future approaches. Learning Lab nurtures the idea that learning is a process of construction of knowledge of the individual and of a group. Discoveries during this time are shared with the group to enhance the learning for each individual. Although Learning Lab can vary from day to day, some examples from this period of time could include:

One teacher sits with a small group of children engaged in a game of scrabble. A group of children have been asked to work in this area to scaffold their learning needs. (Figure 3)

Another group of children negotiate to work with plasticine to create numbers... an opportunity to develop fine motor skills and gain familiarity with numbers.

A group of boys have accepted the challenge of creating the tallest tower they can make. The roving teacher then sets them the challenge of measuring their work. She works with them to hypothesise how they can approach this task (Figure 4)

Other children are working in the communication area writing in their reflection journals about their learning from the previous day. One child asks another how to spell the word Monday. They walk over to the calendar to find out how to spell the word.

A group of children are engaged in the construction of a space that they find comfortable in response to a question posed as part of our classroom investigation. They have drawn a plan of this space and are now working to create the structure.

Another child brought in a cicada shell and is working independently to discover more about this object. Discussions were had at our morning meeting as to the nature of this object. (Figure 5a) Now this one boy looks



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5a



Fig. 5b

closely at the shell through a magnifying glass and focuses intently on his drawing (Figure 5b). Another child comes over to see how he is going and to make some more suggestions.

With so many diverse experiences happening during this time, the opportunity to reflect on our learning has and continues to play an invaluable part in creating our learning community. When you hear a child say *it's okay to make mistakes because that's how we learn*, you know that you are in a community that values and supports learning. When you see a child move to another child to ask for assistance or a child volunteer to help a friend who they see is struggling with something then you know you are part of a community of learners. When you see children return to a construction on Friday and find that it is still in the same condition as when they left it on Wednesday, you know that you are part of a community of learners that understands and respects each other's learning.

A major component of Learning Lab is the expectation that children negotiate and take responsibility for their own learning. Each session they are expected to sign a 'Learning Journey'. (Figures 6a & b) This document has evolved over the Prep year, however its purpose remains the same; to track the learning that each child engages in over a weekly period. Not only

does this provide the teachers with a clear indication of the areas in which a particular child has engaged, it also assists the children to develop greater responsibility for their learning and helps them to ensure that they are engaging in a diverse range of learning experiences.

It is not uncommon to hear the children ask, *Are we doing Learning Lab today?* Or *Why haven't we done Learning Lab yet?* It is an experience that the children look forward to with enthusiasm and excitement. They are always keen to pursue tasks that have been set-up in the room, return to tasks that they have begun and follow their own passions. We have created an agenda for our 'Morning Meeting' and the children write their names if they have something of interest to share. (Figure 7) This provides them with possibilities to share their passions and make suggestions for the learning that could happen in the class. The children are aware that there needs to be thought and purpose behind the items that they share. In fact, often the children will now ask each other to explain *how this will help our group's learning?* The children themselves identify the opportunities within Learning Lab that allow them to explore individual passions; *if you want to learn about something special... you can do it in Learning Lab.*

In Ken Robinson's book titled 'The Element' he refers to a state of being known as the 'element' where one's natural talents meet one's personal passion. This is in essence what we are trying to achieve in Learning Lab. This learning foundation is certainly providing each child, "a sense of revelation, of defining who they really are and what they're really meant to be doing with their lives."² One of the children captured this idea when sharing their thoughts about Learning Lab; *Learning Lab is when you can do whatever you want and you always find something that you want to do.*

Fig. 1: Graphic representation of the children engaging in Learning Lab.

Fig. 2a and 2b: Children's representations of the room during Learning Lab.

Fig. 3: A teacher and a group of children engaged in a target teaching session.

Fig. 4: A group of children measuring their tower after a suggestion made by the roving teacher.

Fig. 5a and 5b: A child sharing his cicada shell at our morning meeting. He later looks at it intently as he completes an observational drawing.

Fig. 6a and 6b: One of the children signing their Learning Journey at the beginning of their Prep year. An example of an individual Learning Journey contract that the children are using later in their Prep year.

Fig. 7: Agenda from our morning meeting

References

1 © The School: Designing a dynamic venue for the new knowledge environment. This research is supported under Australian Research Council's Linkage Projects funding scheme, project number LP0776578. Bialik College is an industry partner in this research.

2 Ken Robinson, 2010, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, Penguin Press, p. 21.



Fig. 6a

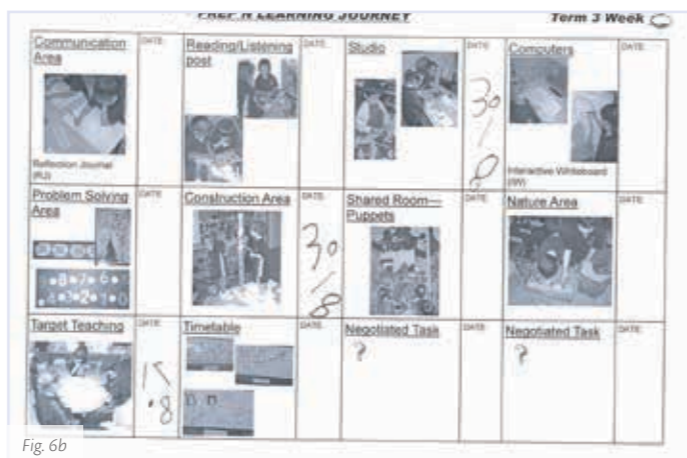


Fig. 6b

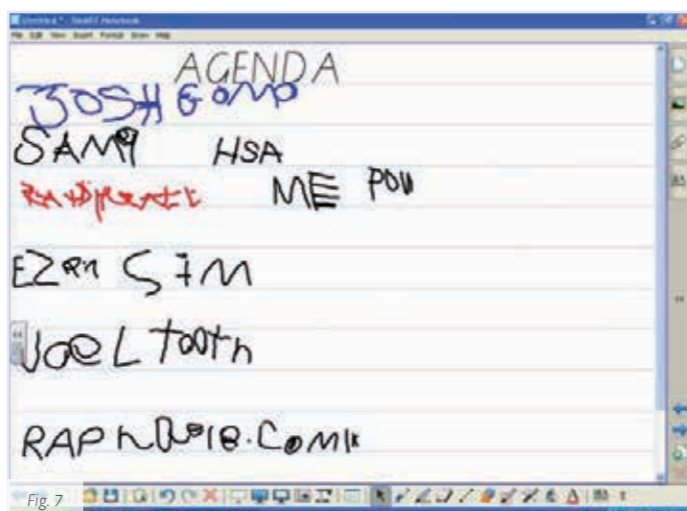


Fig. 7

To equip the children with values... both a privilege and an uncertainty...

“ We have expectations because we need us to learn. Like listening. Then you will know what to do. ”



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

When children move into their first year of school, 'Prep', they are faced with the challenge of becoming part of a new community with different children, different adults, different expectations and the concept of becoming increasingly responsible for their own actions. These challenges can be a mammoth task for a five year old. How then as educators can we facilitate these challenges?

In order for the daily classroom routines to run smoothly, certain values and expectations are established as common understandings among both teachers and children that assist in setting a standard for how a community relates co-operatively. These are generally determined and established at the beginning of our year and further developed as the year progresses. We feel if these values and expectations become common goals and understandings for the entire classroom body, so too will the establishment of respectful and trusting relationships.

With twenty-five children plus teachers sharing the classroom space at any one time, it is also essential that each individual has the opportunity to feel that they are heard and can contribute a unique voice. Our intent therefore this year has been to explore what the community of learners in our class considers to be important in developing a respectful, safe and friendly environment and how best to maintain it.

Over a period of three weeks at the beginning of the year, the children listened to various stories relating to manners and positive social behaviours and discussed how they comprehend these concepts. We discussed values and explored the word 'expectation' and what the children understood these to mean.

The question was put to the children;

What do you expect from others while you are school?

- That people won't hurt me.*
- I expect to make friends.*
- I expect people to wait and not push out of turn.*
- I expect people to let me play games.*
- I expect no one to talk when I am talking.*
- I expect people to be gentle with the lizards.*
- I expect people to not be loud while people are studying.*
- I expect people to help each other.*
- I expect people not to break each others things.*

From their comments, the children demonstrated that they were conscious of ensuring that they are looked after by their friends and peers and are given the opportunity to be respected and listened to. We were however interested in the way the children had expressed some of their thoughts using negative language, as though they expected other children to hurt, annoy or not include them. Were their thoughts portrayed in this way

“ Learning Lab is when you can do whatever you want and you always find something that you want to do. ”



Fig. 3



Fig. 5



Fig. 4

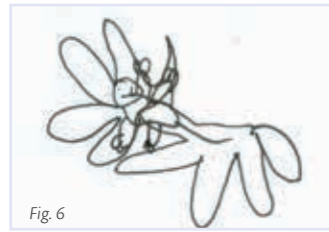


Fig. 6

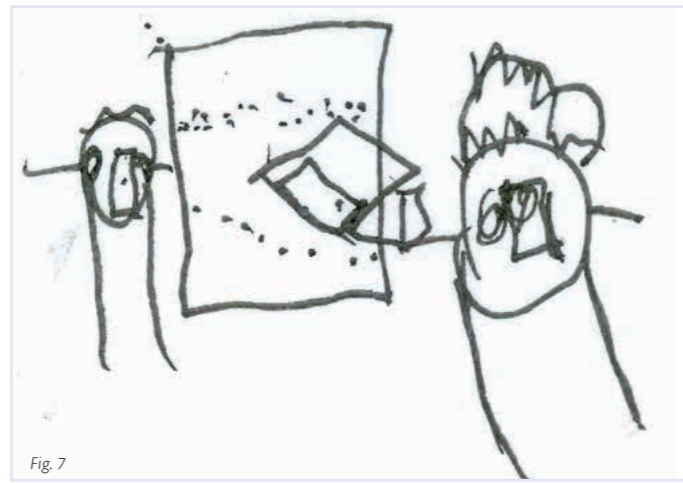


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

because they were perhaps experiences the children had previously dealt with, or simply how they express themselves? After all, they know what socially acceptable behaviours are in regards to what not to do.

In considering the children's thoughts, we also felt there was more to simply facilitating their need to behave in a respectful way towards others. There was a need to help the children build resilience and make them responsible for not only their own actions, but being able to take care of themselves. There was a need to deepen the children's understandings and get them to think positively about what they should be doing to be a socially conscious community member and to anticipate positive outcomes from others rather than the negative.

After further reflection of the children's feelings, we decided to group their thoughts as eight expectations that encompassed their overall ideas for friendship, learning, listening, respect, the environment, the Bearded Dragons (our classroom pets), helping each other and taking care of their belongings. As a result, we continuously visit and discuss these **Expectations**, which are made visible in our room.

In Prep E we expect each other to...

- Take care of others.* (Figure 1)
- Make friends and let others play.* (Figure 2)
- Respect others and their learning.* (Figure 3)
- Listen to each other.* (Figure 4)
- Look after nature and our environment.* (Figure 5)
- Be gentle with the Bearded Dragons.* (Figure 6)
- Help others.* (Figure 7)
- Take care of our own and other peoples things.* (Figure 8)

Taking these **Expectations** back to the children, we further unpacked what these behaviours might look like. To develop a set of constructive behaviours, the children were encouraged to focus on how they might positively demonstrate each expectation.

As the year has progressed, we have continued to question one another in regards to when and how we are demonstrating our expectations. Instead of telling someone they are not respecting the learning of others, we are asking, 'Are you respecting the learning of others?' at a particular point in time. The change in behaviour has been interesting to observe where a child who might be continuously touching or talking to a peer during learning times realises that they have not been mindful of the impact their actions might be having on others. The children are also encouraged to express themselves to one another by directly telling another child that *you are not respecting my learning*.

While the children have a clear concept of what they expect from each other in their learning environment, we wondered whether they reflected on their own behaviours in the same way.

What do you expect from yourself when you are at school?

- I expect myself not to ruin other peoples work.*
- I expect that I listen to my teachers and my friends.*
- I expect myself to be a good friend.*
- I expect that I look after nature and put it back in its home.*
- I expect to concentrate on my work.*
- I expect not to push in.*
- I expect that I don't talk over people.*

The children's expectations of themselves reflected what they expected from others almost identically. One main difference was the inclusion of concentrating on their work and making sure they 'had a go'. The children had identified the importance of having to take responsibility for how they engaged themselves in their own learning. They were demonstrating an understanding of having to independently employ their skills and take pride in their efforts.

Looking again from a broader perspective at our core question, we wondered what the children felt the school expected from them and how these might differ from the expectations we have within the classroom.

What do you think the school expects from you while you are at school?

- To be nice to people.*
- To not leave your bag on the floor for someone to trip over if there's a fire.*
- Don't hurt other children.*
- To not swear because it's bad to swear.*
- Mr Gerassi wants everybody to respect the school. Like if someone breaks something then that's not respecting the things in the school.*
- Listen to other people. And don't talk on top of people.*
- Following the rules of the school. If you don't follow the rules you might get in trouble.*

Interestingly, the concept of 'rules' had not ever been a focus in any of our discussions. In this instance expectations were being viewed as rules, however this is not how we wanted to portray what we were discussing as demonstrating socially acceptable behaviours. Our thought was that a 'rule' suggests that there is a particular behaviour that is expected to be followed without discussion. We wanted rather for the children to have ownership over how they interacted with one another and their environment. We wanted them to explore possibilities and create solutions to problems that arose rather than be told that 'this is how it is' without discussion, thought or understanding. It was only in this instance that one child had chosen to interpret **Expectations** as being 'rules' so we decided to explore this child's understanding further.

Tell me more about the rules.

- Don't snatch other people's things when they're playing with them.*
- Don't ruin peoples work.*
- Don't fight each other and use your words.*
- Look after your things. Like your jumpers and the library and take home books when you're at home. Everything you need to bring to school look after it at home and at school.*
- If you hurt somebody you can't just run away from them you need to say sorry.*
- Say the truth because it means you are a good friend.*

Again, it appeared that the children's thoughts reflected much of what they had earlier identified as being important in establishing acceptable and respectful interactions; however they expressed their thoughts on a much larger scale. They were having to incorporate a community body; a body that includes not only teachers and children on mass, but also *the boss of the school* and perhaps strangers. Certain values such as stealing, cheating and respecting rules together with common values within our society were being brought to the discussion. We wondered where the children had developed these ideas.

After reflecting on our questions and discussions, there is no doubt that the children were becoming much more aware of expressing the expectations they felt were relevant in many different contexts. There are however still so many unanswered questions and as one is answered, another opens itself up for exploration... What do the children expect from the school? What do the children think the teachers expect from them? What do parents expect from the children at home? And, how do the values that we place in each instance overlap and compliment one another or in fact change in different contexts or with different groups? Should we expect a different set of values in different contexts and how do we assume they are learned and valued by all individuals?

For this period however, it has been our goal to develop a deeper understanding of how we, both teachers and students can be more conscious of our actions and interactions towards others and demonstrate positive behaviours. If what we have discussed are the expectations that the children have for themselves and one another, then it is up to us as adults to assist them in being able to successfully develop these skills. It is our responsibility to provide the children with safe opportunities to encounter such experiences and equip them with the strategies to respond to and deal with different circumstances.

Two further questions remain; one which we feel cannot be wholly answered is how are the children's responses to the above questions influenced by other factors such as teachers and parents? If we let the children develop without expectations placed on them from an early age,

would they place the same importance for the expectations they have discussed? How have we shaped their idea of what being a socially conscious community member really is? We accept this concept could be irreversible and unchangeable as in order to interact and sustain the respectful relationships we develop through life, we have already from our first day of being influenced by our environments and those that cross it, with their values, morals and expectations. It is how we demonstrate these to our children that is important in encouraging and developing their resilience towards the interactions they experience.

The second is a reflection of the conversations we have had thus far throughout the year. We wondered whether the children were aware of why we have expectations of one another? Why are they important? In the past we had noticed that there was a lot of discussion about people getting told off, or getting angry or getting in trouble. But we wanted the children to think beyond this. What is the reason that someone, a parent or teacher perhaps would get angry at a particular behaviour? What is the reason that they get into trouble? We want the children to reflect further on how their actions are impacting on and affecting other people... We want them to have an understanding of situations and consequences beyond how they affect them.

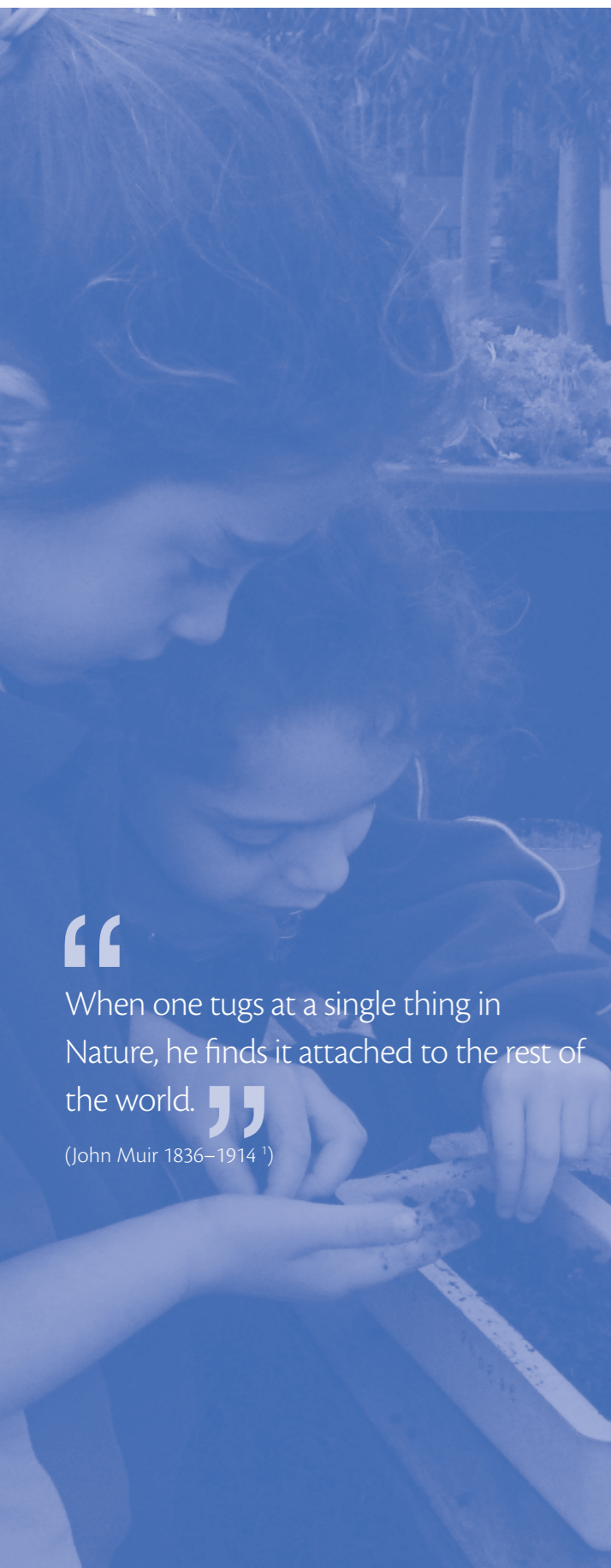
Why is it important to have expectations?

- So the school will be happy and safe.*
- So people know how to respect the classroom.*
- We have to have expectations so that people respect the school.*
- If we didn't have expectations this world would be not comfortable. It would be a bad world.*
- We have expectations because we need us to learn. Like listening. Then you will know what to do.*
- To help us do the right thing.*
- So the world can be better.*

To equip the children with values... both a privilege and an uncertainty.

- Fig. 1 – If you kick a ball and it hurts someone you can get them an ice pack (Take care of others).*
- Fig. 2 – To make friends you need to play with them (Make friends and let others play).*
- Fig. 3 – People are keeping their hands to themselves (Respect others and their learning).*
- Fig. 4 – When someone's talking you should look at them. Being a good listener means not talking when someone's speaking (Listen to each other).*
- Fig. 5 – If there's mess, you should help clean it up (Look after nature and our environment).*
- Fig. 6 – Hold the Bearded Dragons gently with two hands (Be gentle with the Bearded Dragons).*
- Fig. 7 – You can help other people with their work (Help others).*
- Fig. 8 – If you find something that's not yours, look for the owner (Take care of our own and other peoples things).*

“ If we didn't have expectations this world would be not comfortable... ”



Our umbrella concept for the new Prep group this year continues to focus on the concept of community and the building of relationships, with the intention of making our community cohesive, caring and strong. Our interest lies in the nurturing of our relationships with each other and our environment, with special attention to the outdoor space. How to foster both? In fostering both, how will our relationship with the outdoor spaces engender a sense of community in our class? How do we bring the outside in? How do we grow a relationship with the outdoors?

When reflecting on these questions I recalled the words of Loris Malaguzzi, **“The aim of teaching is not to produce learning but to produce the conditions for learning; this is the focal point, the quality of the learning.”** (Malaguzzi, 2006.²)

For the past two years in kinder, the children were in an environment which flowed to the outdoor areas. Now they spend the majority of their Prep day upstairs, where their interaction with the outdoors is restricted to set times of the day. As researchers we wondered whether the relationship with the environment would change from their time in Kinder to their time in Prep. Would they still engage in imaginative play?

We needed to appreciate what the children’s understandings of the outdoors was, which led us to pose the question to the children,

What is nature?

It’s wind because if you didn’t have the nature of wind you couldn’t breathe and everyone would die.

It’s like leaves and sticks and trees and lots of stuff that’s from the outside world.

It’s rocks.

It’s like underground animals like worms and ants and then trees and there’s such a thing that there’s over 100 million creatures outside in the world.

It’s insects that live underground and that find food underground.

It means in the open areas, all grass and twigs and trees. It’s really the ground because that’s where all the animals come from and nature holds the ground and everything up.

It’s what you find on the ground and you can pick it up and look at it.

You can talk to the plants because they need air and when you talk to them it helps them breathe.

We need air when we go outside and the trees give us fresh air and that’s nature.



So in order to uncover further the way in which the children interacted with their new outdoor space, we took the children into the playground and we observed their play. We asked them to use this space without using any of the playground equipment. We noticed their use of imagination as they constructed magical stories in the sand pit using sticks, leaves and bark to help their creation. We watched them search for bugs and insects with care and consideration. We observed them rolling on the grass. We noticed how they balanced and how they flew like birds around the playground. We watched their interactions, listened to their dialogue and felt their excitement. (Figure 1)

This investigation has also led us to interact with our local outdoor spaces. The children explored the neighbouring parks and street gardens as well as their own school play area. My colleagues and I decided to take the children on a series of walks to these neighbouring spaces with the intent of answering some of our questions. We researched the parks to ensure they were safe and that they offered the types of possibilities we thought would enhance the children’s experiences. Parents were also enlisted as observers on each walk, where they were asked to record what they saw and heard of the children’s interactions in each of these spaces. (Figure 2)

We had prepared a list of questions for both the parents and the teachers to answer. How and what are the children exploring? Are they creating imaginative stories? What resources are they using? Are they motivated? Are they interacting with other children? In their exploration of the local parks, the children were asked to bring back 3 things that interested them. They were also given paper and fine liners so they could draw their observations. (Figure 3)

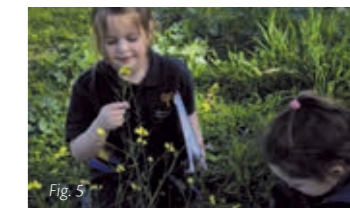
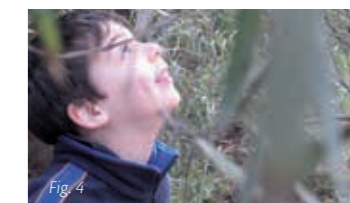
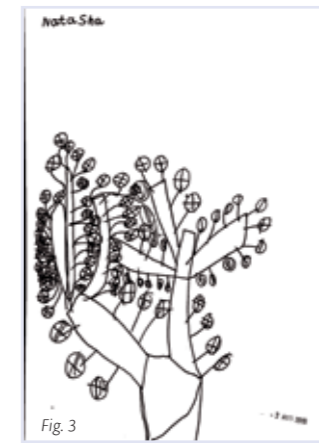
“We went to find nature and bring it back to our class.”

I found a sock leaf which had a curve like a sock does. I liked when we found an ant home. We knew it was an ant home because we saw hundreds and thousands of ants. We put in pretend lights and beds and we made bridges. There was a tunnel in the ant home which led the ants to their beds.

These observations excited us all. For myself, being brought up in the country, the outdoor spaces were a major influence in my childhood and this has continued for me today. I can identify with Jamie Durie’s passion where he believes, **“The simple act of going outside with children has a powerful effect on their energy, actions and feelings...by the natural light, smells and sounds.”** (Jamie Durie, 2005.³)

Many questions arose for us. Do the senses play a part in their interactions and if so, how and what are they smelling, touching, tasting and hearing during their play?

How do they incorporate these into their actions and their games? (Figures 4–5)



The adults were asked to consider and document the sounds the children were making, the textures and smells they were discovering and their physical explorations. What areas were they using and in what way were they using them? This was an opportunity to include parent observations in our research

Some children are quietly sitting and drawing and some are moving around more, enjoying the space and the wind... lots of excited chatter.

They enjoy running through the high weeds and flowers. They decide it is Poison Ivy. It is difficult to walk through but they enjoy the challenge and the possibilities of what they may find there...especially the boys.

Noticing the birds flying in a loop, finding interesting clover and sticks. Walking down the embankment and enjoying the speed of the slope and the long grass. Interesting colours get their attention, white leaves, yellow flowers.

They are interpreting nature with their drawings and at the same time looking around at the different areas and angles to see what’s there, North, South, East and West, Up and Down.

Listening to the sounds of birds, trucks, the wind, children’s voices. Smelling the damp grass, the smelly soil. The crisp air around, breathing it in through their nostrils.

Eating and smelling plants. Tickling each other with plants, sharing plants.

Imitating bird noises. Helping each other with big sticks.

Finding a golden trap door. Opening it to go through. Meeting a man with magic and lots of gold.

That plant doesn’t look familiar. There are so many secret tunnels.

Look what I found. It’s a snail...

Can I hold it? I’m very good with nature.

Most of the children gathered and explored together while a few stayed solo. Some kept digging in the earth to find more. There was definitely a strong element of imaginative play between the children and the natural settings in each of the four parks we had been to, with secret pathways and tunnels and doors that kept appearing and disappearing. In addition, the delight in the freedom to explore was almost tangible; the sharing of their findings with the pimply nuts, the rough twigs and the smelling of the brown leaves. The children became attuned to the sounds that intervened in their play and they attempted to imitate them. They revelled in discovering small creatures, being able to hold them and feel them. They took time and care in their drawings of the trees and the plants they found an affinity with. In fact one could see a continual development in the detail and care they put into their drawings

“

When one tugs at a single thing in Nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”

(John Muir 1836–1914¹)



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

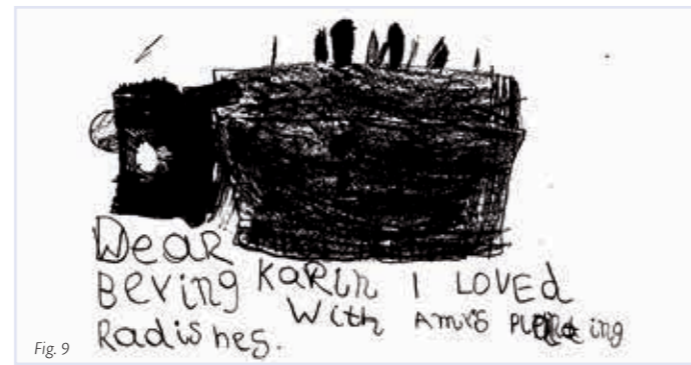


Fig. 9

References

1. John Muir 1836–1914, Scottish–American naturalist and preservationist. (source of quote unknown)
2. Malaguzzi pg 173 'In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia', Routledge 2006.
3. Durie, J. 'Outdoor Kids', Jamie Durie Publishing. Pg 49.

over the time period that we took to take our walks. The children's natural instincts in using all of their senses and the pleasure derived from doing so when they are outdoors are all serving to nurture their relationships with each other and their environment. Many of our questions concerning how the children were interacting with each other and with the outdoor spaces we have placed them in are still being answered through our ongoing observations and our documentation. (Figure 6)

As for bringing the outdoors in, and being aware that the children had had many opportunities in the previous two years to put their hands in dirt, we consulted with our sustainability advisor as to how we could do this. We conferred with her and the children and she directed us to plants that we could successfully grow indoors and at appropriate times of the year. The decision was made that the plants would be ones we could harvest and eat so that the children felt a purpose for growing them. We planted a variety of salad vegetables which we have growing in our classroom. Each child is responsible for watering and observing their plant and each child is also keeping a Plant Diary as a record of their observation.

My plant is growing bigger. I am thrilled. Yes I am thrilled. (Figures 7–9)
I can see green shoots now. It is bigger and bigger.
My garlic is dead. I am sad.

We are enjoying and learning about nature's gifts by growing plants that will return our attention by giving us sustenance. Combined with this aspect of nature we are building authentic relationships with the outdoors and each other.

It is now time for us to reflect on how we grow and respect these wonderful relationships the children have with nature and with each other and contemplate how we take them forward to a deeper and richer understanding of these relationships. We look forward to the next year with great anticipation where we will still be together as a community. This will afford us the time to explore these possibilities further.

“
 With every poke in the dirt, kids begin to make sense of the world around them.”
 (Jamie Durie, 2005.³)



Year 1



“ We are in the second year of our Prep/ Year One class. Our intent for this investigation was to look closely at how the children support, encourage and celebrate the individual strengths of their peers which from previous experience seem to be the catalyst in forming unity and a strong community awareness. ”

We are in the second year of our Prep/Year One class. Our intent for this investigation was to look closely at how the children support, encourage and celebrate the individual strengths of their peers which from previous experience seem to be the catalyst in forming unity and a strong community awareness.

What part does peer acknowledgement and support play in furthering the desire to keep trying and not give up, enabling the child to rise to the challenges created either by the child, or perhaps the challenge set by peers, teachers or parents?

How do the children support each other?

What does collaboration look like?

When the children in the group struggle, how do their peers react?

When do we scaffold the child?

“We must widen the range of topics and goals, the types of situations we offer and their degree of structure, the kinds and combinations of resources and materials, and the possible interactions with things, peers, and adults.”

(Loris Malaguzzi 1993.)

At the start of this year an area in the classroom was planned for the children to explore. Various cylinders of different widths, heights, some hollow and some solid, some coloured, patterned and others plain, were set out as a provocation, with the intent of observing the children's interactions with the materials and with each other, using these materials. The cylinders were used in many ways and for different purposes, such as tunnels for marbles to slide through, and to communicate with by listening and talking. The children also worked together to create a game of “Ring Toss,” applying different numerical values depending on the height of the cylinder and the throwing distance. (Figures 1–4)

They organized the order in which they would play the game, by forming a circle and eliminating each other through a counting song. I noted the support and encouragement for each other to attain the highest points, I noted this through their cheering of one another and sense of fair play in their organization of the game.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Noting how interested the children were in experimenting with the many ways they could use these cylinders, we added different types of cylinders made from sponge, wood, plastic and cork. The challenge was to build a construction using these cylinders and other wooden blocks with a focus on balance and how balance is needed in construction, when using these materials. The children worked in small groups. They decided together what to build and how they would document their construction. They drew pictures, took photographs, and described their construction through writing. (Figure 5)

We found that the columns and cylinders were a spring board for the children's desire to construct a city. Through working together they began to recognize, understand and appreciate concrete representations of their individual ideas. The group's understandings of these representations then became a part of the whole.

Children clearly verbalize their support or lack of support for each other during this process.

Whoa... (A child exclaims while pointing to the stairs another child has built) *That's pretty awesome mate!* Working within a group does not always mean constructing together however collaboration is still evident through dialogue. (Figures 6–7)

The discovery that sometimes working alone can be frustrating and that challenges may lead to co-construction, is highlighted through the following conversation.

This is so annoying I can't do an entrance when the blocks keep on falling, they need to balance.

This admittance of frustration in this instance led to collaboration.

Can I help you? I'll give you the blocks.

It's balancing now it didn't fall.

“Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning how to learn.” (Loris Malaguzzi 1993.)

Children are open to and welcome new possibilities when supported by the teacher and other students, knowing that they are still the owners of their ideas and feel that they are still in control. Collaboration forms the team spirit, developing growth and identity of the individual and the group, initiating a sense of belonging, worth and value. As teachers we are also the learners as we realize and recognize that support can sometimes be more readily accepted from peers, and how this development of trust leads to collaboration. (Figures 8–9)

Given the opportunity to share and impart knowledge through a meaningful context, children are able to develop their strengths, when given recognition by their peers, parents and teachers.

In discussion with my colleagues the idea of balance was picked up in the children's experiences with the columns. A mathematical concept could have taken us down another path. However, the necessity of balance in construction was adapted as the different interests of the children emerged.



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

One of the areas was a marble run and now the children worked together to build a marble run focusing on the balance that was needed. (Figure 10)

We observed that when mastery of a skill is acquired and confidence in sharing the skill is encouraged a strong identity and sense of self is given further impetus to grow.

We can put a wall there so the marble can bounce off it.

We will put it like that.

Here is the marble.

You gave me a great idea!

Yes! I'm the great idea man!

How's it going to work?

Like this...



As part of our many discussions on balance another group of children began to share their experiences of riding a bike and how they had learnt to ride. A story emerged as one of the children shared his story of how he had come home one day and asked if his training wheels could be taken off and how he had felt half nervous and half excited as he thought about how he was going to learn to ride without them.

A group of children decided that they would like to impart their experiences about how to balance and ride a bike without training wheels. We encouraged this group to share their expertise. (Figures 11–14)

The group led a bike day where all the children were to bring their bicycles to school. The parents, grandparents and teachers were involved, and the group instructed, shared and supported their peers in learning to ride without training wheels. (Figures 15–18)

We wondered, whether the children who were yet to ride without training wheels would feel confident enough to trust their peer's judgment and be open to their instruction and support in learning this new skill?

Giving the children the opportunity to give of themselves in helping others to acquire new skills was exciting, relevant and authentic.

Reflections on our bike riding day were conducted by some of the children through interviews.

Brett said it was a bit hard.

Then he did it and it was fun, he said.

I think Brett is good at bike riding.

Were you scared?

Yes.

What did you learn?

To not be afraid.

Nicholas was happy because he could ride a two wheeler!

I was happy too!

References:

1. Loris Malaguzzi 1920–1994, Italian early education specialist. Quoted in *The Hundred Languages of Children*, ch. 3, by Carolyn Edwards. 1993.
2. Loris Malaguzzi 1920–1994, specialist. *The Hundred Languages of Children*, ch. 3, by Carolyn Edwards. 1993.

We change because we grow a year older...

“ At the beginning of the year we were interested in finding out how the children viewed change and how they saw themselves changing. Would they only focus on the physical changes or understand that they had changed in other ways? ”

There are many different definitions of the word change in relation to how we as individuals change, but they all have a similar basis.

The Oxford dictionary defines change as: An act or process through which something becomes different.

Change is to become different; alter; transform; vary.

Change is to undergo a variation.

So how do children understand the concept of change in relation to themselves?

How do they define change in this way?

We asked the children the following question.

What do you think change means in relation to you?

Change means like something's different, like people can change.

Like you change from a baby, to a child, to a teenager, to an adult, to a grandparent and then you die.

We can change in different ways. You can grow taller. You can learn new things. You get older.

You can change from one type of person to another. If you are not a nice person you can become nicer.

“To give oneself an identity is a long and tiring process. It is like being born a second time. It is the need of each one of us to give ourselves a face, a body, gestures, actions, thoughts, words and imagination.

It is the sentiment of being that distinguishes us from others, in order to recognise and be recognised, to recognise ourselves in others and in others to find a part of ourselves. It is in fact a dialogue, confrontation and discussion with the other ways of being and thinking, that the image of oneself takes on an awareness and defines itself.” (Loris Malaguzzi¹)

In order to have the children reflect more closely on how they had changed we asked the children to write about how they had changed from when they were in prep to now and asked them to look in the mirror and draw themselves. We wanted to make these changes more visible for the children and to celebrate these differences. We then asked them to compare their portraits from prep and their portraits now.

What we noticed when the children were drawing themselves in year one was that they focussed more closely on their facial features. They looked at themselves more intensely and drew themselves in greater detail. (Figures 1–3)

What was interesting to note was the fact that the children focussed not only on the physical changes but how they had changed in other ways.

I've become more mature.

Now I can count to 100.

I know a bit more.

I've grown taller.

Last year I had lost no teeth, this year I have lost three.

I have made more friends.

We change because we grow a year older. Last year I was five, this year I am six.

“ We observed that when mastery of a skill is acquired and confidence in sharing the skill is encouraged a strong identity and sense of self is given further impetus to grow. ”



Fig. 1

*My feet have grown.
I can run faster.
I can read and write better and I can read more difficult books.
I've learnt more things.
I have grown up a little bit.
I have found out new stuff.
I have put on some weight.*

As well, we noticed that what they wrote had changed which linked closely with their definition of change.

We wondered if we gave the children different mediums to use to represent themselves if they would find out different things about not only their features, but themselves, that they might otherwise have missed.

During our exploration of wire to create wire sculptures of their faces we observed that many of the children noted that they were now more willing to take risks, persevere with something and were more confident in their own ability to attempt something new.

When writing about the process of making their wire face many of the children commented on the difficulties they faced and how they had overcome these difficulties and completed their face successfully.

It is harder then it looks because when you twist it, it comes apart and you have to do it again, but you keep on trying and then you do it.

I made the face by twisting the wire. The first time it was hard, but the second time it was still hard, but the third time I got it. (Figure 4-6)

We then gave the children the medium of clay to use, which provided them with a further opportunity to explore who they are now. In prep the children had made 2D clay faces. This time we asked them to create their faces in 3D. We wondered whether they would look more closely at their features now that they were a year older and which of their features were important to them when creating 3D rather than a 2D model of their face. What we noticed was that the children studied their faces more closely, particularly their hair, ears and the sides and back of their heads. They looked at the finer details, such as the strands of their hair and the shape of their ears. (Figure 7)

Using these two mediums gave the children an opportunity to further see themselves as competent, confident children with a positive self-image.

Using the wire and clay also gave us an insight into how children see other children's strengths and turn to these children for help and guidance.

We were continuing to see quite clearly that the children were able to see the changes that had occurred in themselves over a year and that they saw these changes as positive ones. We wondered however, if the children also noticed changes in others and whether in this case they noticed only the physical changes.

Do children at this age only see the most obvious changes in others?

Naama Zoran states **A person is a door. Before entering, the only thing you see is the obvious, which is the most shallow and misleading thing. Only by entering you would be invited to reveal the deep and the authentic...you need to keep on knocking, as there is no child who does not want to be discovered.**²

In order to discover what the children observed we placed the children in pairs and asked them to draw each other and then talk about the changes they had seen in that child from when they were in prep to now. (Figure 8)



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

He is really good at maths; he's really quick at working out the answer. That's something I've noticed.

He's much better at soccer now. He wasn't as good in prep, he was just learning, but now he's really good and I like playing soccer with him.

She's become better at drawing; she can draw lots of different things now. I like how she draws animals.

She's always been kind and she cares about everyone, she helps other people tie their shoelaces and she always helps Zoe. I think she's really nice.

The children are currently creating digital stories about themselves and how they have changed not only since prep, but also from kinder and before.

Many questions have emerged as this investigation has unfolded.

Does a child's identity change as these changes occur?

Each time they change do they see themselves as becoming a different person?

When they see the changes occurring in other children do they think these changes have made that child different, and if so, why?

At the start of the investigation the following questions came to the fore.

As the children change will the dynamics of the group change?

Will this make a difference?

As the children got to know each other better and focussed on each other's strengths the bond between the children became increasingly stronger and they became a cohesive, caring group of children. Perhaps having the opportunity to be together for two years gives them time to really notice the changes that occur in other children in our class.

They show respect and empathy towards each other and their environment and the authenticity of their comments and actions is very obvious.

Everyone has something important to offer. Everyone is important in the class. What you say about someone has to come from your heart. You can tell when it comes from their heart.

Fig. 2: Self portrait in Prep

Fig. 3: Self Portrait in Year 1.

References

1. Loris Malaguzzi. *The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition*(Ballarat 2010)
2. Naama Zoran. 2010 Keynote Speaker at the Zionist Federation of Australia Jewish Educators Conference Bialik College Melbourne.

“Everyone has something important to offer. Everyone is important in the class. What you say about someone has to come from your heart. You can tell when it comes from their heart.”

If people don't know your language, you can still learn from them and you can teach them...



“

The teachers are not choosing your life. They are not choosing for you to be happy or safe. You choose what you want to be. You choose to be happy, safe, kind and peaceful. If you listen, they will help you do that.”

”

How do we as a community welcome a new teacher? With open arms or trepidation, friendliness or scorn? What are our values and what do we expect from a teacher?

As I entered into the class as their new teacher mid-way through the year I found that I was both welcomed and challenged. I questioned, where do I start? How do I enter this room that has already been created? And not just as a new team member but, as the new teacher in charge of the class? How do they feel about the transition? How could I enter most successfully?

We started our lessons discussing how the children felt about having a new teacher and what they expected from me:

What do you expect from a teacher?

- I don't like it when the teacher yells.*
- A leader doesn't shout, they speak nicely and help people.*
- I want to be noticed when I'm doing good things.*
- I don't like getting into trouble when I don't do anything wrong.*
- A leader gives a part to everyone.*
- A leader doesn't just be bossy; they let everyone choose something, so it's fair.*
- A leader is a person who lets everyone choose their own job, but he tells them when to do the right thing and gives everyone a turn.*
- A leader is kind.*
- A leader takes the group where the group wants to go.*

Through this, I learnt that they wanted to be challenged, treated fairly but as individuals, steered in the right direction but not ordered. They wanted the freedom to learn in an open, safe, positive environment and be acknowledged more frequently for their strengths. So, this was my challenge..!

We discussed what they wanted from their class.

- I wish that everybody could have a good rest and come to school and work well together. I don't want anyone to hurt other people. I want peace.*
- I wish everybody would respect people. Respect means that everyone is nice to one another.*
- We want to see a beautiful classroom where everyone listens to the teacher.*
- A room where everyone is safe and no-body hurts anybody.*
- I want to learn.*

From these discussions they found six underlying themes:

(Figure 1) Safety, (Figure 2) Listening, (Figure 3) Respect, (Figure 4) Kindness, (Figure 5) Peace, (Figure 6) Friendship

They discussed what these values look like:

- Respect is letting people play.*
- Respect is not rushing in.*
- When you are listening, you are concentrating.*
- No lying or whispering behind peoples back, it is not nice.*
- Peace isn't just sweet. It is feelings. It makes a person feel good. You get peace from your heart.*
- Kindness looks like if someone is playing by themselves and someone joins in.*
- Friendship is compromising.*
- Friends care about each other.*
- It is not always about you.*



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

To develop their skills the children became active listeners and learnt to ask questions about their friends. The children also created fictional stories about a chosen value. They designed their own characters, settings and plots that worked through the chosen 'value' issue in their stories.

An insert from the safety story:

The earth wobbled and shook every day and night. They couldn't sleep. The creatures of the jungle were scared. The rock monster was really just made of a pile of rocks but the creatures called him a monster because he looked so big and scary and he made the earth shake. Everyone thought that this was an earthquake. All of the animals always had to hide. They did not feel safe...

We have to stick up for ourselves and work as a team said the creatures, or we won't get anywhere. The rock monster stayed still and the creatures told how they were not feeling safe. I will try and move slower so that the earth won't shake.

The monster was happy that they had spoken to him and they all became friends.

During this time we had a new student join our class. It was very overwhelming for him as he had arrived from overseas and did not speak English.

Here was the real test. Had the children really learnt these values and could they express leadership and community to a newcomer? The students had another opportunity to explore the values in a different context.

- I feel really good because tomorrow we are getting a new kid in our class.*
- We can get pieces of paper and put Hebrew everywhere and put the Israeli flag up.*
- We could make a poster with us and him.*
- We should respect him – we sit with our legs crossed, and if he is talking, we need to listen to him, it might be important.*
- We have to respect and listen to him even though he speaks another language.*



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

He'll be really sad if we don't listen.

You have to respect him because he doesn't know your language – find a language you both know, like sign language.

We asked the children, what sort of games could they play at playtime that don't require a lot of language knowledge?

Even though he doesn't know English, we can still play with him.

Maybe we could bring games from the classroom because he might know games like connect four.

We can show him the football and he might say yes or no. You have to say ball, footy?

There are heaps of books in the library, so he can borrow the Hebrew books.

You know because you're doing the actions – so we can say in English as well.

Maybe he can be our Hebrew teacher and we can be his English teacher.

The students had a real insight as to how the new student would be feeling.

They showed care and compassion and welcomed him with open arms.

(Figure 7)

Not all people can speak English.

He can still understand what we say.

You can still be their friends and you can still play games together.

Sometimes you can know a bit of every language.

I learnt that you have to listen.

If people don't know your language then you can still learn from them and you can teach them.



Fig. 7

After seeing friendships blossoming so quickly with this new student and the others I questioned myself about how quickly I make friends. Would I have gone to the same lengths these students had to befriend a Non-English speaker into my community with posters, games and non-verbal communication? Or would I have politely smiled and gone on my way?

Our decided common values of friendship, respect, listening, kindness, peace and safety have taken us all on an interesting journey that has extended beyond the classroom walls. It has instilled the importance of values within their lives and has transcended through different cultures, backgrounds, ages, status and even language.

“

Our decided common values of friendship, respect, listening, kindness, peace and safety have taken us all on an interesting journey that has extended beyond the classroom walls. It has instilled the importance of values within their lives and has transcended through different cultures, backgrounds, ages, status and even language.

”



Bialik College

Main Entrance
429 Auburn Road
East Hawthorn VIC 3123

Phone: (03) 9822 7981
Email: info@bialik.vic.edu.au

www.bialik.vic.edu.au

ELC Entrance
407 Tooronga Road
East Hawthorn VIC 3123

Postal Address
PO Box 422
Hawthorn VIC 3122