

Windows into Children's Thinking



From the Head of the Early Learning Centre

This journal is the sixth in the series entitled "Windows into Children's Thinking". It recounts many stories of the research undertaken by the children and teachers during 2011. The value of time and listening continue to be at the forefront of our teaching and learning. Documenting what has been observed in our work together with the children is fundamental to our philosophy. It represents a tool for exchange, for sharing and the valuing of different points of view. When we talk about making the processes of learning visible we are constantly aware of the importance of reflection, analysis, interpretation and discussion by the teachers as a rich source of professional development. For children (and adults) the search for meaning both within and outside of school is essential for life.

"Children know this and initiate this search right from the beginning of life" Rinaldi 1998. When reading the documentation, you will have the opportunity to notice the many languages the children are using when describing their theories and making sense of their world. The words of the children are written in italics, and many of the articles are prefaced by the words of the children. The Italian philosopher Remo Bodei once wrote "Suspend obviousness and keep alive the ability to discover the fact that there is always a surplus of meanings." We hope that in reading this journal you (the reader) will be able to construct your own meanings and questions as active participants of this process.



Daphne Gaddie

From the Assistant Head of the ELC, Head of Arts (Early Years)

The igniting of all senses is very much part of our belief and is inspired by the now well known poem by Loris Malaguzzi, 'No way the Hundred is there'. The poem, focussing on 'the hundred and a hundred more languages of children', bears witness to the challenges we as educators face in our role in making children's thinking visible, reflecting the depth and research of young children. The investigations which shaped our year also highlight our values as a school; respect, empathy, perseverance, integrity and responsibility which we strive to convey each day in and beyond the classroom walls. We are daily inspired by the children's rich questions and the testing of their theories with evidence and in turn rejoice in celebrating their learning. In all areas of learning we seek to ensure that the acquisition of skills is embedded within authentic learning experiences and not taught in isolation.

In 2011 new languages continued to emerge and strengthen as we empowered and challenged children to not only learn new skills but to be inventive in their applications. We see children as documenters of their learning through their use of a number of tools and techniques, alongside the power of words as part of our focus in promoting multi literacies. The image, the word, the sound and the imagination are always present and constantly offered for interpretation. Within the investigations this year, the children wove their theories and shared their thinking in many forms. Many of these investigations were strengthened by a 'sense of place'. The outcomes of these investigations once again have revealed that children's learning should not be constrained by age.



Helene Oberman

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The conventions in this book

A number of styles have been used throughout *Bialik College Early Learning Centre Journal 2011 – 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



3 Year Old Kinder

I am who we are

“

Our team of educators began the year determined to place great importance on fostering relationships, to build a strong community which would insist on positive interactions. We hoped these interactions would uphold the values of acceptance, tolerance and inclusion. We set out to do this with an awareness of how the children's sense of identity (the condition of being oneself and not another – dictionary definition) impacts on the relationships formed.”

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia is a national curriculum guideline which has a fundamental view of children's lives as characterised by the words belonging, being, and becoming. **“Belonging is knowing where and with whom you belong and is integral to human existence. Being recognises the significance of the here and now in children's lives”,** and **“becoming relates to amongst other things, children's sense of identity and the formation of relationships during childhood (p7)”**¹.

Loris Malaguzzi stated that, **“there is no possibility of existing without relationship. Relationship is a necessity of life.”** (The Hundred Languages of Children p.287)². (Fig. 1, 2 & 3)



In Italian, “Io sono colui che siamo” – **“I am who we are”**, or **“We are who I am”** (Insights p.156), says it all. When we looked at relationship, we decided to look through the lens of gender and gender equity, remembering that the group consists of individuals within the group, not a group of individuals, and that the group is a central to our lives.

Gender equity is an important issue in education in Australia. **“The main value of gender inclusive curriculum is that it helps both sexes to develop skills such as communication, decision making and negotiation, and it improves their self-esteem as they come to see that their opinions are valued.”** – (Equal Play, Equal Work – An Early Childhood Gender Equity Resource Booklet –Office of Preschool and Childcare 1993)³.

Since our year began, we have been observing the children's developing relationships, while asking ourselves how we could gain more knowledge about gender, and use this knowledge to confirm our pedagogical practice.

We asked ourselves; did gender affect how the children interacted with each other, and does gender affect how the children interact with the materials provided for them and encountered by them?

Within socialisation theory, **“the process of gender construction is said to occur from exposure to models in the child's environment, from which the child gains an understanding of desirable ways to think, act and feel. Such models include parents, peers, media, siblings and other influences with which the child comes into contact.”** (Yelland and Grieshaber, 1998)⁴.

Mummies don't cook, Dads cook.

Boys can't do ballet. Boys aren't allowed at my ballet.

I know I'm a girl because I wear pink every time I go out.

I know I'm a girl because mummy says I am.

Boys like to play outside.

Boys love scary things like monsters.

Girls can't do motorbikes... only we can.

Boys like to play with dinosaurs.

Girls can't play with dinosaurs because girls are afraid of dinosaurs.

Girls like to play in the dolly's corner. We change the baby's nappies, and wipe the bottom.

Boys nights are passé.

Outdoors, it seemed that many groups of two children playing were often two children of the same gender. However when groups were larger than two, for the most part, the groups were mixed gender groups. (Fig. 4, 5 & 6)

We looked in particular at the mud patch and the large wooden blocks and wondered. Who would be drawn there? How would they play there? It was great to see girls and boys involved in play in both these areas, although in the mud patch, most of the boys were happy to sit or kneel directly in the mud, while some of the girls perched on the wooden surround while they dug. We wondered why?



I saw somebody sitting in the mud. I didn't want to sit in the mud.

Because we didn't want to get our bottom's dirty.

Boys like to get dirty.

Mums have to hold the baby. The babies might go in the mud if the mum doesn't hold it. (Fig. 7)

Children involved in role play indoors and out used home based and action themes, but in both cases boys and girls were involved, and the children appeared to be engaged in a mixture of gender stereotypical and non-gender specific play. (Fig. 8 and 9)



Within our kinder environment, we chose materials and areas of our environment to observe interactions. We wanted to look at open ended non gender specific materials.

An area with blocks was offered to a group of girls, which was chosen by our kinder team. They seemed immediately drawn to a basket of small coloured wooden blocks. They then only used the plain wooden blocks once they had used up all the coloured ones. One child said, *I'm building a tower*. The other girls decided they were also building towers, but they continued to build on their own. Three of the girls worked without speaking. As their constructions spread, they touched each other, but still they worked alone, and one of the girls said, *Hey, that's mine*. (Fig. 10 & 11)



A group of boys, who worked in the area, spontaneously set about working together in pairs, and interacted with each other more than the girls had.

We're building together. We're building a city. (Fig. 12 & 13)



Their interest however seemed to change from their initial intent, and they changed their ideas often. They also used the wooden blocks first, rather than the coloured ones.

In one area of our classroom, the children are exploring non gender specific natural and found materials, and boys and girls have been working alongside each other. **“The goal is to allow children to become fluent with materials, as if the materials were a language.”** – Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini (1999)⁵.

It would appear that the girls may be more interested in pattern and more careful placement of materials, whereas while some of the boys have seemed aware of pattern and placement, many of them have enjoyed filling cylinders with the materials, or piling them up as part of their work.

We continue to offer many learning opportunities for our children.

As part of our observational investigation, we invited our parents to be part of a discussion on how they view gender stereotypes and whether the issue of gender equity is important to them. We

had a rich, authentic and stimulating conversation which certainly highlighted the complexity of looking at gender, with many variables, and its impact on choices we and our children make, and the relationships we form.

From our observations and interactions with the children, we wonder about whether there is an alternative way of thinking about gender. In post structuralism, **“gender is viewed as a process of construction undertaken in collaboration with others, rather than as a phenomenon imposed on children by ‘culture, biology or ideology.’**” (Wilson-Keenan, Solskan and Willet, 1999, p.35)⁶. Here gender is seen as a construct that is continually being defined and redefined, as children participate in daily interactions, and suggests that children may learn gender role flexibility outside home.

Through this investigation, it has become clear that the gender equity issue in school settings is a very sensitive one, but **“early childhood educators can be optimistic about, and more able to facilitate diverse gender discourses.”** – (AJEC Vol.30 March 2005 p.25)⁷.

“The words of Carlina Rinaldi and Peter Moss give us courage to continue the dialogue. They state, “Research is a habit of mind, an attitude that can be developed or neglected. It is a response to curiosity and doubt. It constructs new knowledge, makes for critical thinking and is part of citizenship and democracy... research is not a solitary activity, but a process of relationships and dialogue”⁸.

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3. Office of preschool and Childcare, *An early Childhood gender equity resource Booklet*.
4. Yelland and Grieshaber, *Blurring the Edges. Gender in Early Childhood*.
5. Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini – *Beautiful Stuff* (1999)
6. Wilson-Keenan, Solskan and Willet, *An early Childhood gender equity resource Booklet – Office of preschool and Childcare, 1999, p.35*
7. AJEC Vol.30 March 2005 p.25). 7.
8. Alma Fleet, Catherine Patterson and Janet Robertson, *Insights –Behind Early Childhood Pedagogical Documentation*.

Kinder 3L

“... man would not have built anything at all, if children had not learned to build when playing.”

Jacob Bronowski

A sense of place

“... don't go to Orrong Road, all my stuff has been taken to my new house.”

A relatively large group of children in our class showed a keen interest in sets of blocks, large and small, that were placed in different areas of the classroom – indoors and outdoors.

In the beginning the blocks indoors would be erected in many different configurations, some on tables and some on the floor. Many of the structures balanced for a short while and some would fall over almost immediately. (Fig. 1, 2 & 3)



According to Duffy, 2002 **“the way materials are presented to children will determine how creatively they can use them.”**⁹. There were a few children who seemed to be able to construct quite intricate, stable structures. This was evident through observing and recording how they used the blocks, indoors and outdoors, over a period of a few weeks with the addition of new materials.

The large blocks outdoors were almost immediately used as *buildings* or *rocket ships*. The children assembled stable constructions which could also accommodate a relatively large number of children within them. This led to great social interaction amongst the children and in depth discussions on how to construct such structures. (Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8)

We observed how the children used the blocks, indoors and outdoors, watching how they familiarised themselves with the materials. We wondered about the strategies they would use to show the values and principles of respect to individual and group constructions.



After many weeks of piling up blocks and block constructions collapsing, we decided to add a few additions to assist in the construction areas. The children were constantly seeking out additional materials for their constructions by saying to us and to one another *we need more stuff*. We collected materials that were open – ended, allowing each child to use the materials in a way that was meaningful to them.

“... man would not have built anything at all, if children had not learned to build when playing. The Parthenon and the Taj Mahal start in play, the cupola in the Sultan’s Palace and Watt tower and Machu-Picchu...” writes Jacob Bronowski in the *Ascent of Man*. 1974.²

One child persisted in his structures, always telling us that he was building a city. This opened a discussion amongst the children who were working nearby.

A city is where there are very tall buildings and some people talk and do meetings there.

It is a place with lots of buildings – sometimes high, sometimes low. My daddy’s office is in the tallest tower of all. It is in the city. Well usually it is.

There are princesses in the city, there is Disneyland city.

The city is where people go and do something with their mummy and daddy and Joely.

Hong Kong is a city in China.

You can live in a city in North America.

Whilst this was taking place another child persisted in telling us that he did not live in the city but that he lived in Doncaster East. He also told us *I do see some fairy trees that look like rocket ships to me.*

This led to further responses from two other children.

Well, there are a lot of houses in a suburb.

I live in a house in Israel, on Princess Highway.

It was becoming evident that the children were connecting their understandings of place and space, as they were beginning to verbalise their thoughts. It was then time to re-introduce something back to the children to help this discussion along. At the beginning of the year we had asked the children to collect some items from nature, from around their home, and to place these items in a small box.

Once these came back to kinder we discussed the contents of each box. Comments such as *I also found that in my suburb* or *that’s what my house has got* or *I found those things around my house too*, became part of a discussion about where we live. One child stated, *but I live near the beach and I have shells in my box.*

The discussion started with *I found these things around my house*, then changed to *I found this in my neighbourhood* and then *I found this in my suburb*. This quickly led onto some children being curious about *where* their friends lived. So the children began asking one another, *So where do you live?* and *Can you come to my house ‘cos I live up the hill.*

We had also asked each family to bring a photo of the facade of their house. It was time to introduce these visuals as we were trying to establish a sense of place, a sense of belonging. Home is so central to their being and understanding of space. As the philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote, *“our house is our corner of the world... our first universe.”*³

Using these photographs we discussed where each house might be.

I live up the street.

I live in the next door to Poppa’s house.

I live in Toorak road, up the hill.

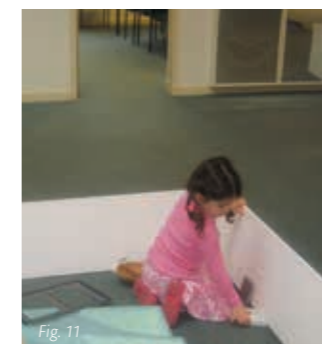
We all live in Melbourne.

The farmers need a map.

McArthur Street is near my house.

Then one child stated quite categorically, *don’t go to Orrong Road, all my stuff has been ‘tooken’ to my new house.* We also wondered if this was the time to introduce the idea of discussing that each house had an address? We felt that the children would enjoy knowing that their street had a name as many of the children already knew the number of their house *‘cos it is on my postbox.*

During all these discussions a multitude of building works were happening in many different areas of the school. (Fig. 9, 10 & 11)



This is my play section

I’ve connected my building to Tilly’s house. This is downtown, where you do some trading with the work stuff, and this is uptown where they do all the sleeping.

This could be my neighbourhood, my neighbourhood is called number 4.

On hearing this discussion we asked... so what is a neighbourhood?

It means that you have to have a house on it to live in. And a village to live in, which country and which team.

No, but this is a town, a forest town. It is number one. (Fig. 12)



“

Children thrive when they have significant amounts of time to pursue their own ideas through play, using open ended materials. Children who initiate their own play and who work well together, and keep at it for an extended period of time become ‘master players’ according to Elizabeth Jones and Gretchen Reynolds (1992), where they assert is one of the most crucial outcomes for early education, since master players are motivated and successful learners.⁴”

References.

1. Duffy, B (2002), *Supporting Creativity and imagination in the Early Years*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
2. Bronowski, J (1974), *The Ascent of Man*. BBC television documentary series.
3. Bachelard, Gaston (1994), *The Poetics of Space: The Classic look at how we experience intimate places*. Beacon Press.
4. Reynold Gretchen, Jones Elizabeth (1992), *The Play’s the Thing*. Teachers College Press. New York. NY.

Oh, no, we've landed on planet Earth!



“

Play is seen as children's work, the way they learn about each other, themselves and their world. Twenty three years ago, we lived in Israel on a kibbutz. I observed the children at play in their kinder yard. My initial impression was one of disdain as I watched them in their 'Chatzer Grutaot (Junkyard). I asked myself, how could children play with this junk? Was it safe and why was nothing ever painted? It wasn't aesthetically pleasing, or so I thought.”

But this was no ordinary junkyard. I was soon to discover there was a purpose and place for every item; there was much thought and consideration behind the organisation of this yard. There were planks, old stoves, bicycle tyres, wooden spools, pipes, poles, household items etc. This 'junk' was sorted into categories – metal, plastic, rubber, material and so on.

The children would come out to play and select from the various piles the items that they needed. Some children worked on the same construction for an entire year, redesigning, remodelling, and making it bigger, smaller, and more, or less complex. The levels of creativity and complexity were astonishing. What I also noticed was that the children very seldom hurt themselves as they had learned how to navigate around these items of junk. There was a degree of resilience and risk taking, both universal life skills.

The environment of this kinder had a significant impact on me and changed my practise. I asked myself why it had such a profound effect on me.

When we left Israel I was passionate to continue the enormous learning potential of the 'junkyard'. Reflecting on what Mark Church (2011) says, **“An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that just exists.”**¹

We see children as competent with a strong image, with their own knowledge and experience. How would the addition of materials that were no longer needed or in use for their initial purpose create more learning possibilities, and the need for collaboration and decision making? (Fig. 1 & 2)

Would combining all the recycled items with open ended materials such as pipes, plastic reels, wheels and tyres provoke the children's



thinking and challenge their curiosity and play? Could we create a sustainable environment, one where we value materials that no longer have a use for others, like pool pumps and keyboards? Could we find a new use for them, and in so doing encourage self directed play and communication? (Fig. 3)

We had many questions. Was there sufficient space in the playground? Where could we access enough of these materials? How could we involve the children in the planning? As Claire Warden says, **‘Young children should participate in decisions and actions affecting their outdoor play.’**²

We consulted with the children. We needed to listen to and honour their voices, and value their contributions, as children are co-constructors of knowledge. We had a 'meeting' in the playground with a group of children and asked them what they would like to see or have in their outdoor area. (Fig. 4)

All flowers around and trees,

To have a rabbit

Colourful magnets

How about some swings

Monkey bars

Let's have two playgrounds

A microphone because I love singing

I think glasses and they turn different colours

I'd like to see a water fountain

I like to have colourful things.

Did these comments reflect the children's prior playground experiences? Was it because this is what they were familiar with? We wondered would their perception of playgrounds change and would their play change, given there are so many possibilities with open ended materials?

We thought about what the children said and together with their parents, families and companies who have sourced and donated recycled items, we are slowly building up our 'loose parts' outdoor area with tyres, planks, steering wheels, hoses and reels.

The idea of loose parts was originally expressed in the 1930's by a Danish Architect C. Th. Sorenson as **“a sort of junk playground in which children could create and shape, dream and imagine, and make dreams and imagination a reality.”**³

In the 1970's an architect, Simon Nicholson spoke about **“loose parts that could be moved, stacked, lifted, and carried by children as a way of promoting creativity and critical thinking skills.”**⁴

Plumbing pipes and lengths of plastic hosing become *a breathing machine – it needs fuel to make it go. You have to press a button. Then you have to breathe through. Then a voice comes out of it, and it says, Fire!* (Fig. 5)

We're going in our rocket ship. We're going up to space. This is my computer. This computer helps us to drive. I think we are heading for Melbourne.

Let's go through Singapore.

No, we can't go there. Oh no, we've landed on planet Earth! (Fig. 6)



We built a spaceship just for four people. We can go wherever we want to go.

Where are you going?

To Disneyland.

I'm coming with.

We are going on very special rides – on the Buzz Light Year ride.

Can I come with?

You have to be four. How old are you? Are you four?

No, I'm three.

*You can't come with, you have to be four to come (Shows four fingers)
Actually I am are four.
Then you can come! (Fig. 7)*



Being privy to this vignette highlighted for us once again, how play is the essence of life. Angela Rossmanith says, “**Play gives children the opportunity to explore the boundaries of their world, the laws of nature and perhaps most importantly to develop a sense of self in the context of the world.**”⁵ We observed how this group were totally absorbed and actively engaged in what they were doing, how they experimented with possibilities, how they were able to become more flexible in their thinking and problem solving and how they made up their own rules, roles and plots.

We are doing the computer because we needed to do a show, 'because we needed to be in a band, 'because we needed to do something after the band. We needed to build a rocket ship and after that we needed to play, and we go home afterwards. (Fig. 8)



Has this new and different outdoor area changed the relationship between the child and the materials, the relationship between the child and his environment and the relationship between the child and his peers?

We had another meeting in the playground and asked the children how they felt about their playground now –

It just looks nice

There are new toys, because you bought them

There's lots of things to do

We can jump over every tyre

You can build rocket ships. You can build computers. You can build kingdoms for queens and kings and princesses.

But we still need a microphone!

You can pretend to be mum and dad.

Yes, we have observed a shift in the way the children work and play outdoors. New relationships based on shared interests are

being formed, the children are favouring the recycled and open ended items as opposed to the traditional outdoor toys. The children are now returning to their structures built the previous day and continue to build onto them. They are feeling empowered by making their own decisions. We see the children working collaboratively to make their own play spaces, taking it all apart and then starting over again. As their constructions become more intricate we have noticed increased skills and abilities.

The children are still creating and developing theories about how these materials can be used in different ways, according to their own imagination.

As the children work with the 'loose parts' they become protagonists in their own learning. We have seen how they co-construct their knowledge working together in a group. As Dr. Ron Ritchhart from Harvard University says, “**Learning is a consequence of thinking. Learning and thinking are as much a collective enterprise as they are an individual endeavour.**”⁶ This has been made evident to us as educators as we observe the children in their work and play together with their co-learners in our outdoor area.

“

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1. Mark Church 2011 Cultures of Thinking (Bialik College Conference)
2. Claire Warden 2007 Nature through Nurture Mindstretchers Publishers
3. Caring Spaces, Learning Places 1988 Exchange Press, Redmond W.A.
4. <http://progressiveearlychildhoodeducation.blogspot.com/2010/01/how-children-use-outdoor-play-spaces.html>
5. Angela Rossmanith 1997 When will the children play? Mandarin, Kew, Vic.:
6. Ron Ritchhart Cultures of Thinking 2011 (Bialik College Conference)

4 Year Old Kinder



This is the sound of the world...

“ The sounds that make us. ”

In continuing to develop and foster relationships within our classroom communities and the wider community we seek to uncover what provocations challenge our thinking, understandings, the developing of theories and the implementation of strategies and actions in our responses.

Coming away from an exhibition I visited last year I kept coming back to its title, “**The sound we make together (Melbourne)**” as a provocation of our intent for this year. This exhibition by several individuals and community groups under the coordination of Harrell Fletcher, “each reveal(s) an aspect of contemporary and historical Melbourne, whether it is immigration, art and community, identity, urban agriculture and sustainability, urban history and politics, and even music.”¹ “Fletcher’s primary motivation is based on an openness to the lives of ordinary people... (which) are usually far from ordinary... we simply need to attune ourselves to hear them in the first place or adjust our senses to hear those voices in a new way.”² This was an exhibition that brought together both art pieces and ordinary objects of significance in an individual’s life, reflecting a place’s past and present.

In response to this exhibition, a new focus was proposed for a cross class investigation for the 4 and 5 year old children in their last year of kinder. The focus would explore the concept of ‘sound’ as a reflection of whom and where we are in the world and draw upon some of the following questions:

- How do we relate to the sounds around us both familiar and new?
- How do these sounds reflect the culture and community that we live in?
- What are the earliest sounds children hear and are these sounds revisited in their vocabulary of sounds as they get older?
- What are the sounds children hear in their homes?
- What sounds do children hear within their family and extended family?
- What sounds do children hear in their neighbourhood?
- What sounds do children hear in the ELC?
- What sounds do children know which are reflective of a particular culture/s?
- How do these sounds make you/us feel and how do we respond?
- What do these sounds look like?
- How can you/we represent these sounds?

What we envisaged was that the children would undertake an investigation to encourage the sense of listening, responding, testing and reflecting on both the children’s discussions and representations and the strategies they employ to share their understandings.

We wanted the children to explore this focus in cross class groups from the three kinder classes comprising of between 5, 7 and 9 children in the larger studio near the kinder 4 classrooms or in other areas of the school as the investigation took different paths of exploration. Each group varied in their involvement and interests as the investigation spanned several terms. Depending on their interest, some children participated in several sessions and others preferred to explore specific areas in a few sessions. Some sessions spanned an hour and some sessions up to 2 hours at a time to give those groups who sought further time for discussion and sharing of their thoughts.

Even at the beginning of this investigation some of the children were differentiating sound as noise, sound as ‘human talk’, sound as animal communication, sound as movement, sounds which gave clues, sounds as a communicative tool both verbal and non-verbal.

Initially the children shared their understandings through drawing and many also chose to paint their thoughts. This was followed up with the use of other materials and in turn further scaffolding of their skills as required.

As one child pointed out *you have to think a lot because you need to know what it is that you want to draw about. You don’t just draw anything.*

The children’s discussions and illustrations of the sounds were initially based on the familiar which appeared as a range of sounds based on animal sounds, sounds of the seasons such as weather (wind, rain, hail, thunder and lightning). The children’s focus at this stage was actually more on the animal or the object, and not as much on the sounds and their modality or as a communicative language. (Fig. 1, 2 & 3)

We continued to discuss how sounds could ignite a response and in turn our reaction or relationships with, or because of it.

What do sounds look like? How does our imagination conjure up these sounds and what images can we see? The children began to draw symbols they felt imitated the sounds they considered represented their voice intonations.

On another occasion the groups were asked what colours would these sound be?

One child responded that *sound would not be a colour but only as a sound we hear.* Another child claimed that *sounds could be black like the sounds from a racing car, black and smoke.* (Fig. 4)

We wondered on this occasion if in fact this child recalled seeing this effect in an animated movie where the gestures of movement and sound are depicted as caricatures.

Children began to make analogies with sound via colour. *The sounds of the trees swaying could be blues.* The sound of *Lego falling* was represented in many colours and responded by the group *that Lego has many colours.* (Fig. 5)



Fig. 1

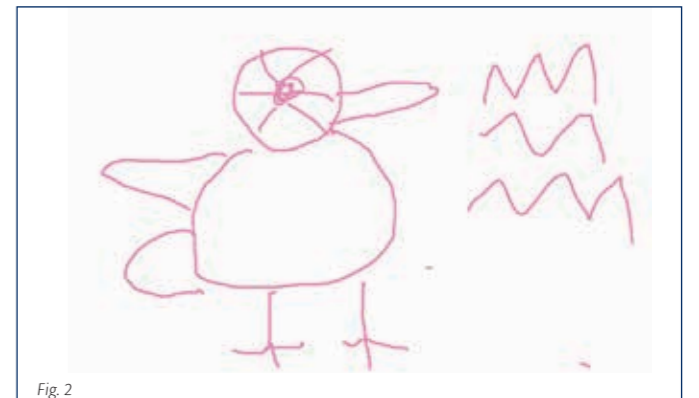


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

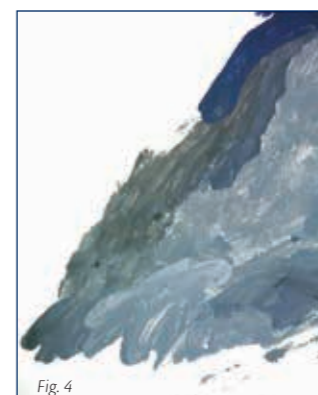


Fig. 4

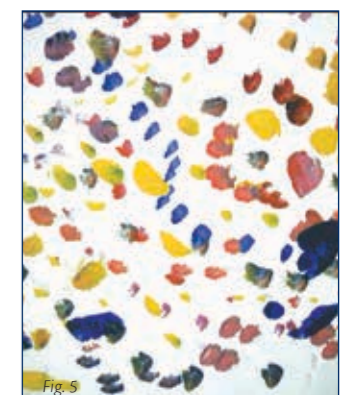


Fig. 5



And one child debated this focus with the comment;

You can't really see sounds.

Others added to this claim.

Sounds come from the brain.

And the mouth.

The lungs, brain and mouth.

In your head you can hear the sounds.

In actual fact the children began to sing the patterns of the sounds they chose to paint as their brush deftly created the imaginative markings of each sound they chose to represent.

The tweeting of a bird as it navigated its flight path. (Fig. 6) or *the sound of a man taking his dog for a walk along a rocky path.* (Fig. 7)

An additional language to represent one's thoughts was explored using iPads. Refocusing their theories using the various applications already available in the children's classroom saw the use of the iPads here for drawing theories, researching, and now using a recording application.

After several weeks, the children were offered a change of focus which challenged their responses to their knowledge of familiar sounds. What if one listened to the sounds of the materials... or rather how would the sound of these materials respond to the children's touch? And how would the sounds of one material change in response to a 'meeting' with another material?

The children took iPads with them on their travels to our "Centre for Hidden Treasure"³. This centre is situated in the undercroft of our school. iPads were taken on this occasion as a tool for children to document by recording each other's newly discovered sounds.

The doors opened and the children surveyed the room. The materials were waiting to be heard. After their many recordings of the sounds they discovered by tapping and shaking these materials, the children sat together in a group and listened as they replayed their recordings and reflected on what had occurred. Sounds became analogies. Some felt the shape of a material determined

a sound as did the type of material. (Fig. 8 & 9) A single sound or a repetitive sound, this was now their focus as they tested their sound making in relation to the sounds that other groups had discovered. Was this now the beginning of the creation of a beat or rhythm in a formal sense? For me, it appeared that the children were truly transfixed and amazed with the material and what they had uncovered in what it had to offer. There was no attempt to build or construct with these materials but perhaps a sense of scientific discovery and physics in the testing of type, weight, length and thickness and in turn the depth and pitch of the sound.



Other groups ventured into the wider school grounds to record the 'sounds of nature' and the 'sounds of the buildings' in our school environment. Walking with their iPads and stopping to listen to sounds that they may have never heard before, such as the sound of their shoes on the bitumen path, and the sounds of Jerusalem stone in the newly constructed courtyard of our school, Kikar Bialik.

They tapped their hands on the metal post of the building supports, the brick walls and wooden decking; they ran a stick against the metal mesh of the fences, backwards and forwards as they followed each other. (Fig. 10 & 11)



There was a sense of adventure, of expectation for those 'undiscovered stories'.

Isn't this what we would wish for in learning?

The children chose to collect and take back several of the materials from their travels and return to the studio together with their iPads. Here they sorted again according to 'kind'; metal, wood, plastic, glass and of course natural materials.

And again they used the iPads as a means of documenting their testing. (Fig. 12)



And what of these recordings?

We revisited one child's response who felt sounds *could only be heard* and not seen nor represented in pictorial sense.

The children's sound recordings were loaded onto an audio editing program. The children opened the studio door to see a series of lines and patterns on the screen of the interactive whiteboard. Given the height of the children, a small platform next to the screen invited them to stand in front of the screen and bathe in the light of blue sound lines and wonder.

The children were familiar with the symbols of play and stop on the program not dissimilar to other electronic devices they operated in their home. The play button was tapped and then they heard the sounds and remembered. The children listened and followed the lines on the screen with their fingers. (Fig. 13 & 14)

Another click and another screen appeared; the children used pens on the touch screen to draw their own lines and symbols in response to their sound recordings they were now listening to. They began to understand other codes in the representation of sound. They explored the audio editing program which could change the sound, stretching the sounds, changing speed and pitch until they found the highest pitch they could find and allowed their ears to listen without covering their ears with their hands and then descended these sounds into the deepest bass sounds. Some children in this group appeared to want to now hold the materials they had collected and recreate the sounds with these materials as they listened to their recordings.

The children did in fact create a beat in time with the sounds that they had recorded and asked for additional objects such as bells and tapping sticks to add to their recordings, however the analogy of linking sound to an experience was still for the children a focal point. (Fig. 15)

"I had in mind widespread perception that music devolved into noise as the Twentieth century went on as armies of ugliness and strangeness invaded this wonderful utopia of romantic music... more than a few peoples shut their ears upon hearing that abrupt



transformation but what may sound like chaos on first hearing may reveal hidden beauty if you giving it a second chance" (Alex Ross)⁴.

What are the sounds that make us?

As one child explores the iPad further and discovers an image of earth on the screen she exclaims *this is the sound of the world.*

"Wherever we are what we hear is mostly noise when we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it we find it fascinating" (John Cage as quoted by Alex Ross)⁵.

Some of the children have offered definitions of sound as opposed to noise.

Noise is heavier than sound. When you have a lot of people talking this is noise.

The power of the investigative mind will not stop as we continue to reflect on past experiences, consider the present and current views and project the unknown of the future. This investigation offered another provocation to the children who continue to accumulate their knowledge and skills and to draw upon them at different times as they determine them to be. We recall reading about teachers who would ask how the rich experiences of learning witnessed in the Early Learning Centres in Reggio Emilia could continue with the young children as they went on to schools with a traditional curriculum. The educators there spoke of Loris Malaguzzi's conviction that what the young children experienced would be in their pocket wherever they go to be accessed when they needed.

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Dance Speaks to us without Words



The children have many ways of expressing themselves; in Reggio Emilia they say “the child has a hundred languages (and a hundred, hundred, hundred more)” (Loris Malaguzzi)¹. We have found by offering the children different mediums and ways of expressing themselves, it supports understanding. By confronting the children with more questions than answers their learning goes deeper and so understanding spreads. ”

Who am I?

“This question asked so often and suggests that there is actually a plausible answer, almost as if our being were a fixed thing. Our identity should be seen as an ongoing process. Rather than a static snapshot, we should embrace a flowing sense of self whereby we are perpetually reframing, re organizing, rethinking and reconsidering ourselves.” (Mel Schwartz)².

We grow and look different, we have different coloured skin.

Our eyes are different colours.

I have blue eyes and you have blue eyes.

We have different hair, I have curly hair.

I have short hair.

I have long hair.

Because I have gold hair.

Straight away we noticed how the children saw themselves in relationship to each other. Already they are aware that you cannot see yourself in isolation.

The children’s comments in the beginning discussions only referred to their physical attributes. This linked with the children drawing and painting themselves which focused them only on the physical but we wanted to go deeper.

Who am I like an onion, layers and layers some offering transparency and others closing tightly around.

How do we peel back the layers?

How do we take the children on a ride, mounting hidden corners and going under and through the onion?



As educators we continually grapple with ideas to identify powerful questions, ones that recognize the children’s intelligence and ability to theorize and predict.

I got three sisters we all have brown eyes, we all have brown hair but we have different names.

I learn how to dance.

I like watching shows like ‘Ben 10’.

I like making up games.

I can ride my bike.

When I tickle myself I laugh.

When we analysed the children’s thoughts we found we were able to collate these under the three titles

Physical attributes: *I have brown hair.*

Preferences: *I like to ride my bike.*

Competencies: *I can swim by myself with my floaties on.*

We wanted to challenge the children to see themselves in a new and different way.

Dance is an ancient, cultural way of storytelling; traditional dances have been passed from generation to generation. The present is connected to the past. Culture is passed on and created. Dance speaks to us without words. It involves the whole body as ideas from the children’s intelligence are passed through and interpreted by the body. Dance is one of the hundred languages available for children to express themselves and their understanding.

We presented this provocation to the children, the provocation to ‘dance the story of me’

How would the children approach this provocation?

Would the children play the game?

How would the children communicate through their bodies?

What stories would the children share through dance?

In the beginning the children showed shyness, uncertainty, we use oral language so much not only in education but also in society.

Savion Glover (a tap dancer) says. “Dance allows us to speak with our feet and (body)”³ The children’s hesitation showed they were not used to letting their feet and (body) tell their story. However the children could not be still for long, their intelligence flowed through their bodies and connected their ideas with their feet and excitement carried them forward. (Fig. 1)

Children move naturally, their bodies are full of energy, their muscles and joints have not shortened and stiffened with time and age. They are flexible, fluent, always searching for ways to challenge and stretch their bodies. There is delight in the body, in movement, and in space. The movements are similar but different, individual but collective.

Movements at times were deliberate and controlled and other times free and wild. (Fig. 2 & 3)

Children celebrated each other in the way their learning is constructed together. Ideas borrowed and shared yet always interpreted individually. The dances are individual and yet there is a visible thread that ties them together.

There is a feeling of enjoyment and fun. The body is given time to connect with the head.

We initially thought the children had not connected with the idea of ‘dancing their story’. As we watched and reflected, we realized that you cannot dance or move through space without connecting to your heart and your spirit. You cannot dance without silently saying this is ‘ME’

It is not the different colour of our eyes or hair that makes us who we are it is our heart and our spirit.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

As the children watched each other's dance we wanted to expand their observation powers while at the same time freeing them from being a passive participant. (Fig. 4)

We asked the children to interpret each other's dance through drawing.

You have to look at Millie to know how to do it. If you don't you won't know how to do it.

As the children drew we challenged their interpretations with words. Not to tell them how they should represent the dance but to deepen and introduce 'conflict' into their thinking.

On reflecting and analysing the children's drawings, we were able to interpret their thinking.

The children approached this opportunity in two ways.

1. The use of symbols for the movements.
2. Drawing the person dancing.

Many of the children used symbols to represent the movements, letting us see their understanding that symbols could be read. We saw that the children understood the significance of symbols long before they could read or write. What is reading and writing if it is not understanding the code of the symbols.

This ability to represent ideas through symbols is ancient; we can see it in hieroglyphics and cave paintings of old and present civilizations. (Fig. 5)

There was a commonality between the symbols, spirals for twirling and zigzags for jumps. There was a sense of movement as the pencil glides across the paper.

Other children began by drawing the dancer and soon found the limitation as their strategy was unable to capture a dance. They then adapted their original strategy adopting symbols and on some occasions connecting them to the dancer to represent the movements. (Fig. 6)

One child began to draw the dancer, the dance finished before she does. She began the next dance the same way and the same thing happened. She becomes frustrated. *I haven't finished.* When we begin with a strategy we often have to continue to the end before we can evaluate, reject and formulate a new strategy. Recognizing her need to finish we asked another child to support her by

modelling. Time is given so the heart can feel satisfaction. A model stands still and gives time to the drawer. Her strategy is satisfied, made visible and her determination holds hands with perseverance.

The figure is given life; through drawing she has captured the movement of dance. (Fig. 7 & 8)

Having been given the respect to complete her strategy we wondered would her strategy change if she revisited this experience?

What do you think?

To say that we are different means we have to have something to compare and reflect upon, to understand ourselves we have to see the other. Identity cannot stand alone it is linked to a sense of belonging. Can we ever find the answer to the question who am I? As Mel Schwartz stated we are continually transforming and changing, different in different settings. Identity is an ongoing process.



Creativity on the other hand is born from the child, carried with the child, visible when the heart and intelligence skip together. When the box of a hundred languages is open and given to the child as a gift, identity emerges, spreads its wings and wraps around the children framing the moment.

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Kinder 4E

Stories come back again and again because you can tell the story again and again



As teams of teachers in three classes of four year old kinder children we discussed how we were each going to explore the big idea of communication. In my team we asked ourselves what we thought the children knew about stories. What is a story? And how is it shared?

Stories come back again and again because you can tell the story again and again

It's somebody's thinking in their head that they write and you can read it

It's good things that you remember that you want to share with your friends

Sometimes there are only pictures and the pictures tell the story

They can be happy or sad or funny

Sometimes they are real and sometimes they are just made up

We encouraged the children to record their stories and each child was given a journal to do this. This comprised of a small book



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

with blank pages in it. In small groups children were given the opportunity to share their stories. Some chose to illustrate, others recorded by writing. (Fig. 1 & 2)

We observed how children created characters and events.

One child knew the text of the fairy stories. He asked, *now you write all my words down so that I can read them later when I draw.* He gave his journal a title, All the stories in the land of make believe fairy stories. (Fig. 3 & 4)

After one child shared his story with the group, that idea sparked similar narratives from other children. Joanne Hendrick (2004, page 132) elaborates on this idea of social constructivism, **“Children are rooted by their self-understandings and relationships to others. They take in the culture around them and weave their own autobiographical narrative to find a sense of belonging.”**¹

Three children came together in the studio. One child excitedly shared an experience at a restaurant that he went to in Adelaide for special occasions.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

This is my grandpa and my grandma and me and my mum and my sister. We are at the table where we had lunch and dinner and breakfast. (Fig. 5)

I'm going to draw my family... my family getting ice cream. My brother says, I would like more ice cream. (Fig. 6)

One child understood that the structure of a story has a beginning, middle and an end. He shared this structure with the other children. *Lion is a lion cub. He is walking to his mother because he wants to ask her if he is going to school tomorrow. He found his dad. He said, "Am I going to school tomorrow?" Then he found his mum and dad. They played together and he went to school the next day. And then he was happy.*

Many children were now making decisions about what featured in their stories.

There are lots of things that are important to me. That's why I like to come and tell my story.

If something is important to you, you feel it in your heart that you have to do it (share her stories).

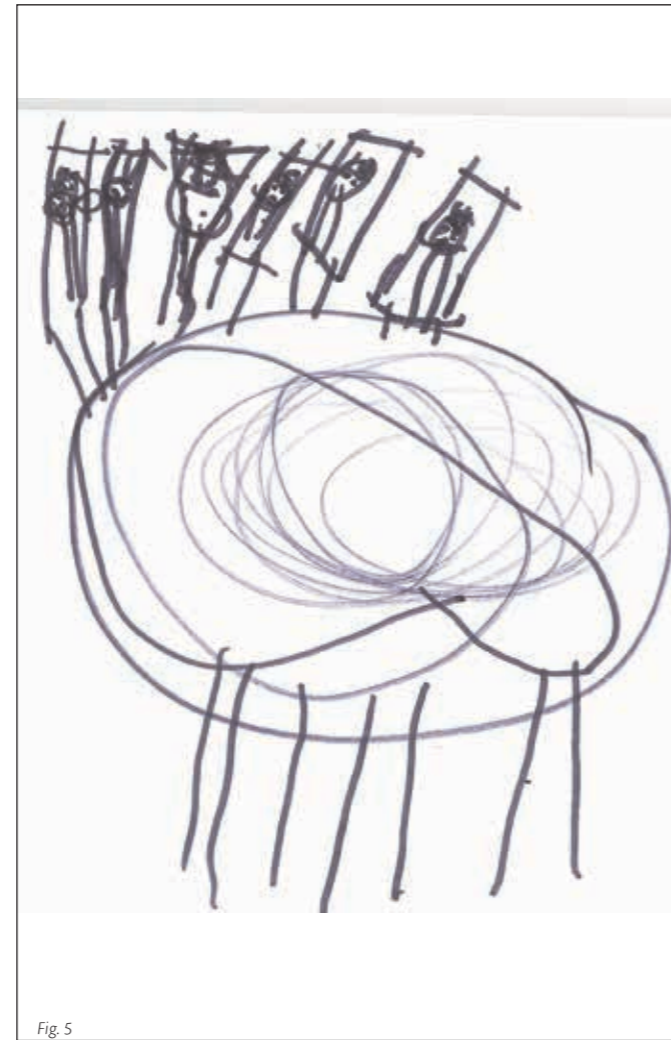


Fig. 5

Our storytelling has excited the enthusiasm of the parents in our classroom and now they continue to weave stories of their own.

In fact the parents came to us with so many creative ideas that we encouraged them to share oral stories with the whole group so that all their stories could be heard. Many parents put a lot of planning and effort into making and collecting props for their stories. Children's imaginations have been sparked by stories of myth, of courage and of fantasy. (Fig. 7 & 8)

The parents have also reflected on sharing their stories with us.

I loved the way the children gave me their full attention when I shared my story with them.

When I shared our holiday trip with the class, it gave me an opportunity to reflect on our experiences away.

I enjoyed sharing a story with the children that had been told to me when I was the same age.

Through the stories we have learned about their families and what is important to them and their imagination.

On reflecting on the process of journal writing, we believe that the children have further developed an understanding of what a story is. We observed that the children recognised that stories had a beginning, a middle and an end. They also realised that a story could represent their thoughts in many ways; a memory, a tale about a character or an image that had been drawn.

“

Vivian Paley (1990, Page 18) writes, “Why not allow children to handle such matters in childlike ways, through storytelling of their own making? In this way you will build a literature of images and themes, of beginnings and endings, of references and allusions. You must invent your own literature if you are to connect your ideas to the ideas of others.”²”

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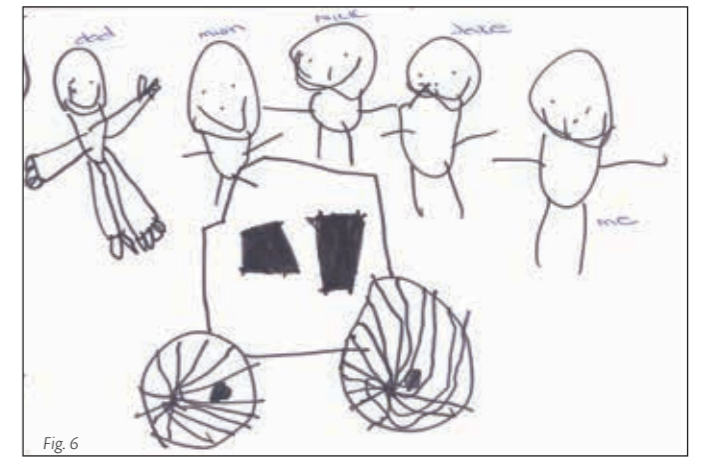


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

My shoes can make me run faster because they have wings

“

Ferrari has a horse and Audi has circles. My dad loves the racing cars and takes me to see the Grand Prix. Michael Schumacher is my favourite one and he has a Ferrari.”

A group of children were talking about racing cars and we wondered what was it about the race that interested the children? What did they know about races? The children enjoy the big playground where they have different spaces to run around, play games and have some exercise. This area has running tracks marked out on its surface. We had noticed on many occasions that the children arranged themselves on the tracks for running a race. They appeared to be making their own rules. We decided to find out what was in the race that the children were interested in. We wondered what the children know about the races. How do they define a race? Which rules do they follow? Will the different surface make a difference in their running? We wanted to know what factors the children felt may influence their running races. We came back from one such race in the big playground and had a discussion:

My shoes can make me run faster because they have wings

My legs are long and they make me go faster

I am five and that's why I can run faster

I am tall and I can run faster

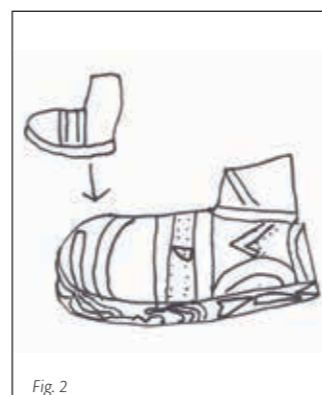
One child pointed to the logo on their shoe and said *the animal (Puma) makes me run faster.* (Fig. 1 & 2)

The children excitedly asked if they could have this race over and over again.

You have to stand in a line for the race to start.

Race means you do it together with other people. Sometimes you get a trophy and other times you don't but it is still fun.

You get a trophy only if you win.



People race against each other

In a race you know you have finished because you stop at the finish line where the checkered flag is.

“We saw you were all standing in a line waiting to start the race, what were you waiting for?” (Fig. 3 & 4)

We had to wait for everyone to get on the mark and for someone to say go.

It would not be fair and it's not a race if you start at different times.

The children were aware that races do have rules.

The rules tell you to do the right thing.

Ready get set on the mark.

Bend your knees.

You can't go unless someone tells you to go.

You are not allowed to cheat by making a short cut.

You cannot pull someone back so you can go faster.

The finish line is to finish and the start line is to start.

If you win you don't say na na or ha ha to others.

You must run within the lines.

If you win the race you have to be nice to others.

Based on the children's understanding of their rules we decided to see if they could test several of their theories.

Let's have a race and ask the winner if they are four or five.

One side can be four year olds and one side can be five year olds.

But we have to remember our rules too.

Together with the children and their teachers, different groups were organised to test the children's ideas about what makes them run faster.

Race 1: Four years olds versus five years olds – The children made two groups, one of four and one of five year old children. In this race the child's theory was confirmed. A five year old won the race on this occasion.

During the second part of this race the children wanted to run in a pair, one four year old and one five year old running together. Once again a five year old won this race. (Fig. 5 & 6)

Race 2: Runners versus Boots – In this race all the children wearing runners organised themselves into one group and the children wearing boots and all other types of shoes into the second group. The theory they were testing in this race was whether wearing runners makes them run faster. However in this race the children discovered that those wearing runners were behind the children who were wearing boots. (Fig. 7 & 8)

Race 3: Differences in children's height – This group was made of eight children. First they all ran together and then they ran in pairs. The children were also wearing different clothing and different shoes from each other and this was now an important point in the children's discussions. On this occasion the taller child won the race.

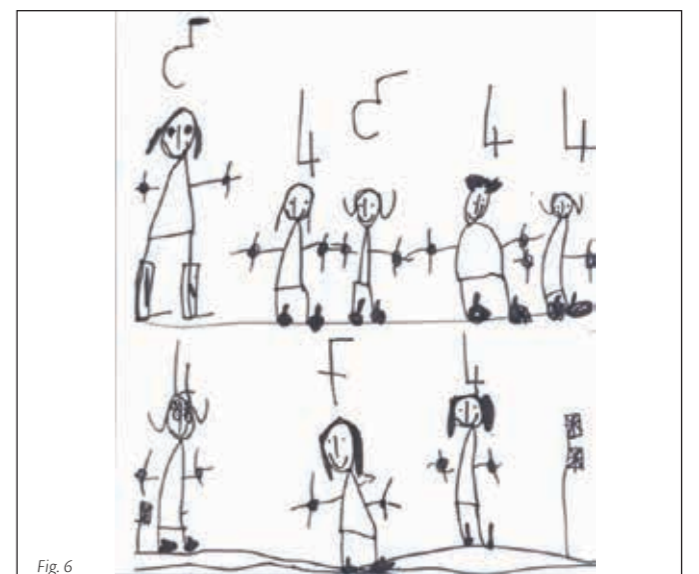




Fig. 7



Fig. 9



Fig. 8



Fig. 10

Race 4: In this race all the children ran together. For this race the children made new rules because they decided that there were so many children running at the same time. They had discovered from the previous races that they needed to be a distance from each other when lining up at the start line. In this race the taller children won. (Fig. 9 & 10)

Some children expressed further theories, including the fact that they could not run because the surface was wet from the rain and that they were tired having the race later in the day. Bringing these discussions back to the class, the children were surprised to see the photos and the videos of the race that were recorded. This footage proved to be very helpful as they made their claims based on their theories.

We noted in the video another race where some children were running the group race and others had decided to cheer for those who were running. Other children now gave themselves a job by saying *get set on mark* and then began to count *1, 2, 3 Go*. In one of the group races a child fell over and began to cry. All the children who were running the race stopped and came to the aid of the distressed child and began to comfort the child. To care and to comfort each other is an important value that we instil in our children and now the race was no longer important to them. While the children were testing their theories we found that they were quite comfortable running with their own groups according to their age, height and if they were wearing the same or different shoes. There was no hesitation or question asked. But when the children were running a class race they began to express

their doubts by saying *but he is taller or she is wearing runners, it's not fair if they are running with us because then we won't win*. We encouraged our children to take risks and explained to them that it is not about winning or losing but having fun together. These lessons became very important to them. There were no winners or losers and everyone had fun.

During our discussions we found out that the children had an understanding of starting, finishing and following the rules in the race and the factors that may influence the race. While testing their theories children reminded each other about the rules. It was important for them that *no short cuts* should be taken. They all cheered for each other, celebrating their accomplishments and said:

It doesn't matter who wins the race. It's all still fun

These discussions continued to be debated by the children.

“

I know what makes me run faster. It is just not the shoes but it is energy that makes me go fast.”



Prep

Because I am my name... That is who I am



Day One. A new chapter in our lives.

It happens every year, but this was the Prep class of January 2011. What were their expectations?

We knew their names. We also knew their Hebrew names. Who were these children?

We wanted to explore this concept of identity. We wanted to find the link they made to their own identity as well as to their Jewish identities (Fig. 1).

We wondered... What does your name say about you? Does your name actually reflect the kind of person that you are? If your name was different, would it affect your character? Is your name your identity? Does your name define the person that you are? If two people have the same name, does that mean that they are the same person? What is 'identity'?

In the Book of Genesis God's words reveal that Adam was given the task of naming the animals. **"Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field."** (Genesis 2:19, 20)¹.

Our school's name, Bialik College was the provocation. Who was the man Bialik and what connections do we share? Who he was is paramount to our identity (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

We began by using a series of different photos and poses of Chaim Nachman Bialik. We asked the children "What do you see?"

I see an old man

Perhaps he is someone's grandfather.

He is writing a book.

I see him holding a pen.

I think it's not a pen but a feather.

It is a feather and you put the tip in ink and then you can write with it.

That's what they did in the olden days because they didn't have pens.

What are you thinking about in this photo?

I think that he is writing a book.

I think he stayed up all night writing a book because his head is being held up and his eyes are a bit closed.

I think he is actually thinking about what he is writing.

We asked the children if there was something they were still wondering about.

I'm wondering if he lived long long ago.

I'm wondering if he is writing a prayer book.

I'm wondering if he is the boss of the school or maybe he runs a country.

I wonder why it is a really old photo and why he looks sad.

I wonder what his name is.

The children did not know much about this person and we asked them how we could explore this further. The children suggested using the internet. During this research we discovered that Chaim Nachman Bialik came from a strict religious orthodox background and that he loved nature and Israel. Even though he did not have

any children of his own, he loved children and many of his poems were about children playing.

After watching a video clip based on one of his poems, 'Ken la'tzipor' (A bird's nest) the children shared their thoughts (Fig. 3).

'What does this song tell us about the author?'

He loved nature.

He loved writing songs and poems. He was a poet.

What is a poet?

A poet is a writer – a poem writer. Poems are like 'hey diddle diddle...'

The children were asked to draw their thoughts about the song, many of them included Bialik's passion for nature. We explored more of Bialik's poems like; Nad ned; (A see saw) and 'Parasha' (a horse rider) (Fig. 4 & 5).

The children then made the connection that their school was named after this man. The more we discussed this man, the more the children were aware of why the school was named 'Bialik'. They came up with some interesting observations and questions.

Did Bialik actually build our school?

This question kept coming up. We decided to explore where the vision for a Jewish School called 'Bialik College' came from and who were the founding members of Bialik College. The names Israel Kipen and Shmuel Rosenkranz surfaced as sole survivors. We decided that we wanted to meet them. A small group of children went with their teachers to Israel Kipen's house. We were warmly welcomed and immediately we felt as if we were caught up in a time-warp. We felt the richness of history in his house, especially when he told us that he had personally met Chaim Nachman Bialik. Israel Kipen was only thirteen when he met Bialik and



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



didn't actually talk to him, but he says 'Bialik talks to me every day through his poetry' (Fig. 6).

We visited the Emmy Monash apartments as a whole group and spent a Shabbat with Shmuel Rosenkranz. The stories that he told us about his association with the man, Bialik were an inspirational and emotional account. In 1934 he went with his uncle to visit Bialik in hospital in Vienna. His uncle explained that you need to say a special berachah (blessing) before you meet a very wise man (Fig. 7).

"ברוך אתה השם אלוקינו מלך העולם אשר נתן חוכמתו לבשר ודם"

I was named after my grandfather who died.

My Hebrew name is the same as Bialik's first name. (Chaim) – I don't think that my mum knew him, but 'Chaim' means life.

Another class, after being introduced to the poem, 'ken latzipor', went along a different pathway. A group of children made a nest with branches and sticks from the playground.

We made it out of sticks that we found outside.

Did you see any birds on the nest?

We tried to get the birds to come yesterday.

The children then decided to make the nests out of different materials, eg. straw, bark wood, leaves; even play-dough and clay.

After a period of time, it was clear that the children were thinking of different ways of making a nest in response to Bialik's poem.

We have noticed on many occasions that children have a way of becoming 'fixed' on exploring one single aspect and we were trying to focus on the topic of 'identity'. They go off on a tangent... and we keep bringing them back. Were we shaping their responses according to our own expectations of what we wanted to explore. We need to remember that **"the child is made up of one hundred; one hundred languages... and a hundred hundred more..."** (Loris Malaguzzi)².

Do we have the right to reshape their thinking? They see it differently and we need to give time for the child to ponder and to scaffold their learning. We could have moved the children away from the making of the nest to refocus on 'identity', however it was

evident that a story of identity was taking place in the making of the children's nest.

Dr Seuss (a well-known children's author) said: **"Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind."**³.

And so we didn't mind.

We asked the parents to send their thoughts to school about who their children were named after (their Hebrew names, in particular.) Some of the parents gave quite an in-depth explanation about how they chose their children's names. Some of their explanations...

- We named her 'Chaya' after her Great Grandmother who passed away the year before she was born. Her name means 'life'. From the day she was born, Chaya enriched our lives.
- We named her 'Lielle' – It is made up of two Hebrew words, 'Li' which means 'for me' and 'El' which means 'God'. Together it translates as 'God is for me' or 'I have God'. We chose that name not only for its translation, but for the journey we had travelled to have the twins.
- We named Jack, 'Yaakov' in Hebrew after our forefather in the Bible, 'Yaakov' We thought that it sounded like the name of a strong, rugged and handsome boy just like Yaakov who was the son of Isaac.

After sharing this information with the children we asked them what they were thinking.

I never realized that our mums and dads thought so hard about our names.

I thought that I was born and my mum just liked my name. But everyone was named after someone in their family or after someone in the Bible.

Maybe the story person is a good person.

Maybe he is really strong.

A lot of children were named after someone.

Some of the children were named after a person in a story.

The children had many theories. All of them were important and significant, however one profound comment took this discussion to another level (Fig. 8).

Our names are important because you are like your name.

What makes you say that?

Well, I look like Danielle, because I am Danielle. Imagine if my name was Milla?

I am my name. It is Danielle – that's who I am.

My name is important because everyone can wear it.

What do you mean, Beau?

You spell it differently – a bow – you know what that is? If you put Tye's name and mine together you can get a bow-tie.

I found it interesting to see the humour in the children's associations...

My name is the story about the boy who was loved more than his brothers, Joseph.

At this point my colleagues and I had decided that we wanted to now concentrate on the characters in the Bible, what kind of people they were and were they in actual fact role models for the children.

My name is from the Bible, actually my surname, 'Abrahamson' from 'Avraham'. He was the first Jew and the first person to believe in One God.

I think that I am your wife – remember the story of Avraham and Sarah from the bible. My Hebrew name is Sarah.

The name 'Avraham and Sarah' appears in the Book of Genesis 17:5

Neither shall thy name anymore be called Avram, but thy name shall be Avraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee;¹. (Genesis 17: 15/16)

... And God said to Avraham: As for Saray, thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Saray, but Sarah shall her name be... And she shall be a mother of nations;¹.

At this point we introduced the story of 'Avraham' because he was the first Jew and we read some of the stories about Avraham to the children, mainly depicting his character. Avraham was the first Jew

and the founder of Judaism, the physical and spiritual ancestor of the Jewish people who rediscovered Monotheism. The children were asked to note the kind of traits that Avraham portrayed.

He was kind.

He was kind to the visitors (Fig. 9) – He didn't even know them.

He was kind to the stranger, but my mum told me not to speak to people that I don't know.

How were we to explain this dilemma to the children? Do we begin with different cultures, different times, a leap across generations depicting a different time and place in History?

We have now reached the point of 'where do we go from here'? Our objective is uncovering 'identity' ie. Personal identity and identity within our community. – Who am I? What are my origins? How does my identity shape my character? Or vice-versa. Who chose my name? These are the questions that we continue to ask the children.

“

As part of our investigation on 'Identity' we will continue to explore the children's heritage through their names. Who were their ancestors and do they have significance in stories from the Bible? We have already covered some of the Biblical stories of their Hebrew names eg. The story of Avraham, Yitzhak and Ya'akov. (Our Jewish forefathers). What were the values of these characters and are they reflected in the characters of the children who were named after them?... Our journey continues... ”

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It means you belong where you think you belong

“

The feeling of belonging and feeling connected, is this determined by people, community, culture, place, i.e. environment? Is it about a sense of responsibility? If so what can we do and how do we maintain this connection and feeling of a sense of belonging?”

Our intention was to begin by gaining insight into how the children viewed their place in their family.

What was the sense of place within their own family?

The children were asked to bring in a photograph of themselves with their family. We looked at these photographs and the children shared their thoughts on how they felt in relation to being the youngest/middle/oldest or only child in the family.

Our focus was to help the children explore similarities and differences in the structure of families and the relationships they experience within their family.

I like having older brothers, but sometimes when my biggest brother has friends he doesn't let me in his room. My other brother lets me join his friends when he has a sleep over.

It's good to have my younger sister but sometimes it's not so good because she doesn't want to play with the same things I am interested in. She likes dolls and jewellery and I don't like playing with them.

I like not having to share my parents with anyone and I like having my own room. There is no-one to annoy me either. I see my cousins every week and I like playing with them and I play cards with my grandpa.

Listening to a conversation between three children discussing new born babies in their families, we observed how the children began connecting with the new baby in their own family. We noticed their understanding about the needs and development of their babies as a process involving time and patience.

My sister holds my finger when I put it in her hand which is really nice.

I will have to wait to play.

Babies have to learn.

She will have to learn to crawl when she is older.

“Children have the right to be recognised as subjects of individual, legal, civil, and social rights; as both source and constructors of their own experience, and thus active participants in the organization of their identities, abilities, and autonomy, through relationships and interaction with their peers, with adults, with ideas, with objects,



and with the real and imaginary events of intercommunicating worlds” (Malaguzzi, 1995) 1.

In relation to the child's sense of identity, ability and autonomy; what is it about family that brings about feelings of security, trust and a sense of belonging, where the child has the confidence to venture towards independence?

A strong image of the child as capable, competent and trustworthy helps to scaffold the child towards risk taking. This can be viewed from a child's perspective when he shows appreciation of the way his family demonstrates their trust.

The vital balance of time and how it is spent, through the nurturing of needs, physical, emotional and social, is evident in the children's thoughts that are shared.

They look after me and make me feel good.

We spend time together.

We do fun things together and play together.

As part of looking at the family we decided to raise the question about a favourite place. This came about as a result of our exploration into the works of the Author Jeannie Baker as we focussed on her book called “Belonging” and “Where the Forest Meets the Sea”.

Was there a favourite place where they loved to spend their time?

We wondered if they would choose a place that would include others –family or friends, or if this would be a private place just for them in their home or elsewhere.

The whole garden, I dig and jump on the trampoline. I like the huge peppercorn tree. At different times I want different things; sometimes to be on my own and sometimes to be with my Mum.

We saw that there was a need to sometimes have a time and place where reflection and solitude can occur.

Beside my bed, it is a warm place. I feel happy because it is peaceful. My family don't know that I am here especially my baby because she cries a lot. It is more peaceful than my baby crying.

The importance of connecting with the family is highlighted as the children seek the ‘togetherness’ in moments of time created – enhancing the feeling of belonging.

In the kitchen, I make stuff and help cook. I make muffins. It is calm and noisy.

I have picnics in my favourite place in the garden with my Mum, Dad and my sister. I am happy. It makes me feel good, because I am with my family.

Their interest in sharing their favourite place offered many possibilities for the children to represent their thinking. Through the use of poetry the children used their senses to explore their sense of place.

My favourite place

I can hear nothing

It is quiet

I smell a granny smell

I look at the colours of the box of textas

I choose my favourite colours

Pink, purple and red

The heater is warm

I feel happy in my favourite place

My Granny's room.

Through discussions and drawings a sense of place was highlighted by the use of colour and detail (Fig. 1, 2 & 3).



Fig. 4

From these examples of their favourite places we were able to consider the following questions (Fig. 4, 5 & 6).

How is our favourite place determined and represented?

Is it by a certain object or the connection to people?

Is it created through an experience, a memory?

The sense of belonging and defining of one's favourite place led to the posing of the questions...

What defines one's place?

When you are there you feel that you want to be there.

A special place to you is a place that you can be whenever you want to be.

What does the word belonging mean to you?

It means you belong somewhere.

It means you belong where you think you belong.

What is the significance of the sense of place?

As we look at the sentiments of the author Jeannie Baker (2004).

"In my mind we could call any place home whereas the word 'belonging' implies an emotional connection. If one wants to really belong to something one has to work at it and contribute to it. The main idea I'm hoping to communicate is the wonderful potential for positive change simply through individual and community effort." 2.

We continue to connect, extend and challenge our thinking about Identity, culture and community and our responsibility towards people and places.

Asking the questions...



Fig. 5

“

What can we do to protect what we have? How can we remain connected?

How can we continue to foster a sense of belonging? ”

”

References

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2. "Belonging" (Part of an extended review of 'Belonging' in Magpies Magazine, Volume 9 no 3 July, 2004).
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Fig. 6

Prep N

We click together like Lego

“

A collaborative environment where meaning is co-constructed. ”

How can we embrace children's natural curiosity? What makes a dynamic learning environment? How do we facilitate the capabilities and competencies of life-long learners in a democratic society? We began by exploring the concept of team.

A team is when you make friends and you can make a team of friends and help people. Everyone wants to be in a team. Some people are teams: your family, friends, Bialik and your class. The whole world is a team as we are in the same world, even if they talk a different language.

We are a team and a family because we are in a classroom together. We talk about the rules so we don't argue about games. Sometimes we get really upset when someone hurts themselves or someone gets in trouble. It hurts everyone.

“To learn new information, ideas or skills, our students have to work actively with them in purposeful ways. In collaborative learning situations, our students are not simply taking in new information or ideas. They are creating something new with the information and ideas. The collaborative learning process models what it means to question, learn and understand in concert with others. It demands responsibility, persistence and sensitivity.” (Smith, 1992)¹

We listen (Fig. 1). We don't talk over anyone and we tell the truth. If you say you are going to do something and you don't, you are lying. Respect yourself, look after your body and don't hurt others. It's your fault for yourself.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The set-up of our classroom is purposefully sectioned into different learning areas where children are encouraged to explore, hypothesize and discuss their thinking with others in small groups. All materials are aesthetically pleasing and readily available for students' use. By doing this we are empowering the students to choose the way they learn best through their own interests and what is real to them. (Fig. 2)

The children are given time and the responsibility to discover varying areas throughout the day or to focus on one in-depth project or learning outcome. As they are able to learn at their own pace and abilities, they feel more comfortable in their environment and their passion for learning is noticeable. They are starting to recognise that learning is not about one off activities. It is about deepening their understanding, revisiting it and discussing their thoughts with others.

At the beginning of the year it was evident that a large group of children had a strong interest in AFL and the idea of teams was real to them in that context. To enhance that passion and curiosity we discussed and decided upon various learning opportunities that could come from their keen interest. From expanding their thinking about teams, goals and fair play, to chance and data in tipping, graphing using differing materials and I.T., writing sports reports and creating models of footy fields, the learning opportunities developed. The beauty was that the AFL is a topic of social and cultural interest in Melbourne and the children's learning extended far beyond the classroom walls. (Fig. 3)

Teams are about goals, you need goals. A goal is like an obstacle course. If you make a goal it's not only your goal, it's your team's goal. Because you are not the only one that set it up. They helped you to get that goal.

"In collaborative endeavors, students inevitably encounter difference, and must grapple with recognizing and working with it. Building the capacities for tolerating or resolving differences, for building agreement that honours all the voices in a group, for caring how others are doing – these abilities are crucial aspects of living in a community. Cultivation of teamwork, community building and leadership skills are legitimate and valuable classroom goals." (Smith, 1992)²

Through close observation we have found that children encounter around six disagreements an hour. In a safe, secure environment like the classroom with teachers present to facilitate, it is a brilliant opportunity to learn and practice dispute resolution strategies. Along with our school values, we've focussed on the specifics of conflict resolution; the importance of eye contact, everyone having a chance to speak, the importance of listening, starting sentences with 'I' instead of 'you' to reduce accusations and the general understanding that everyone has different backgrounds, experiences and understandings of the world. When given the autonomy and responsibility to deal with their own grievances, children become more successful in working in a group situation. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 3

Everything is difficult until it is easy. It's like when you do something in learning labs you get better and better and better. Keep going and going... and growing.

I have noticed that this is now evolving onto the playground where the children are starting to take responsibility for unfair and unsafe play amongst themselves such as 'time out' for those tackling. They are now discussing new rules that could reduce these incidences and vote on the favoured solution. They are also organising meetings with the relevant teachers to facilitate these discussions and rule reviews. The understanding of compromise and democracy is being uncovered in coming to a resolution.

To further enhance the learning opportunities we found that making time for the children to share and reflect their findings was powerful and invaluable. During these sessions others were exposed to varying projects their peers were undertaking and were inspired to join projects, further their own learning and challenge their own assumptions about their understandings. The children are essentially becoming peer tutors who value themselves and others.

“

You have to tell lots of people when you know stuff. If one person can't work it out then someone else can and they can tell you. If there is no team it could never be worked out. I want to be in a team with you because then we can go faster. You get it done quicker in a team. It's more organised. (Fig. 5) ”

References

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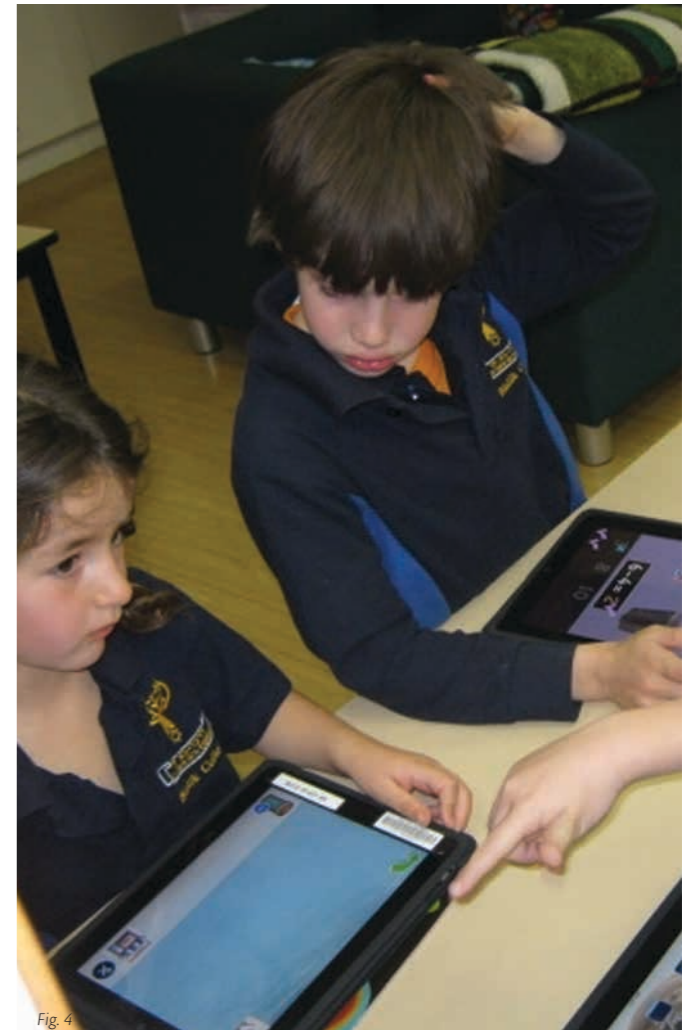


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

It could be a mouse...



Before the children began the school year the teachers sat as a group and decided on an umbrella topic that all three prep classes would undertake. We chose 'Identity, Culture and Community' – Connections and Links. ”

At the same time I decided to bring a pet into the classroom as I was very interested to see if having a class pet would make a difference to the children. We wondered whether it would change the way the children interacted with each other in a new classroom.

We were interested to see if the children would discover more about their own identity if we looked at the identity of the guinea pigs and the links and connections the children discovered and made as their journey progressed.

Identity is your personal life and experiences that make up who you are. Belonging is how you interact with groups to become a "part" of that group, either directly or indirectly.

We began our journey at the start of the year by presenting the children with a series of clues. We wanted to entice them into the mystery and excitement that comes with having a class pet. We believed that the guinea pigs would be a vehicle for making the children's learning authentic and provide them with opportunities for real experiences.

As a provocation we placed a table in the corner of the room with a sign that said "What do you think is going here?" Then each day we brought in one clue. The first thing we noticed was the way the children were fascinated by the table and eagerly rushed in to see the new clue.

I am excited by the table, and all the clues that keep coming. (Fig. 1)

Straight away we could see the positive impact on the children as they were already so excited to come to school each day.

After the children had pieced together the various clues the majority of them decided that we were getting a class pet. They excitedly discussed what the pet might be and why, and we recorded their ideas on the interactive whiteboard.

A guinea pig because they eat broccoli and live in a cage and like to play in straw.

It could be a mouse.

No it's definitely a guinea pig.

We noticed the relationships already forming between the children during these discussions and related this back to our beginning



Fig. 1

wonderings as to how the children would settle into a new class and how they would interact with each other.

When the guinea pigs finally arrived at school the children had many questions to ask and comments to make.

We placed the cage on the table and sat as a whole class, and so began an interesting and thought provoking discussion.

When are we going to give the guinea pigs names?

Are we going to give the guinea pigs Hebrew names?

Very quickly we discovered the links the children made to the importance and necessity of having a name in order to be identified.

Why is the one so big?

How many vegetables do they eat in a day?

Do they like to be patted a lot?

Can you pat it on the face?

Why doesn't it have a tail?

It was evident in this investigation that there would be many learning opportunities.

The children wanted to name the guinea pigs straight away. They all had ideas about what to call them, and as a group decided to name the black and white one first.

How are we going to choose the name for the guinea pig?

We could choose the name we like the most

Choosing is like voting. The name that gets the most is the name we should choose for the guinea pig.

So that is what the children did. They voted for the name they wanted and we began to narrow the choices down until we were left with two names.

We used the interactive whiteboard and the program Note Book to record the results.

Chocolate got 9 votes and Milo got 13.

Milo won because it has more votes.

It has four more votes than Chocolate.

The next day we followed the same process to choose the brown, black and orange guinea pig's name.



Fig. 2

It came down to three names, Cherry, Tiger and Sausage.

Cherry got eleven votes.

Tiger got seven votes.

Sausage got four votes.

Cherry won because it has more votes

Cherry has four more votes than Tiger and seven more votes than Sausage.

Through these discussions the children made us aware that they already had an understanding of number, chance and data, and tallying, and that they understood the need for democracy and that they weren't always going to have their choice.

The children were very keen to hold the guinea pigs and we noticed how gentle and caring they were towards the guinea pigs and each other.

When I feed the guinea pigs I am gentle and I make sure I feed them the right food like carrots so I am being responsible.

I show Milo and Cherry respect because I hold them very carefully and I am quiet when I am next to them.

I show respect to my friends because I play really well with them.

I show empathy towards nature because I care about our environment.

It became apparent through the children's observations and comments that they were already living the school values both with the guinea pigs and with their friends and family. This provided us with the opportunity to link the language used; 'Empathy, Respect, Responsibility, Integrity and Perseverance'.

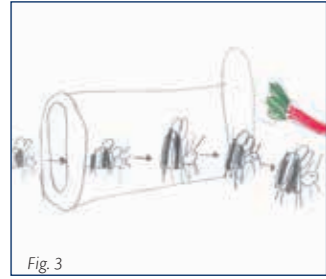
When a group of children were feeding the guinea pigs and they only had one piece of carrot, we wondered what the guinea pigs would do. Would they fight over it? Would the dominant one just get the carrot?

Well neither happened. In fact the Guinea pigs shared the carrot. What a wonderful teaching moment it was. Two small creatures teaching a group of children how to share and how to respect each other. (Fig. 2)

The guinea pigs have provided and continue to provide the children with a myriad of learning opportunities. These have allowed us to integrate all areas of the curriculum within our investigation, something that is not always easy to do.

The children have hypothesised, drawn and tested their theories in relation to various aspects of our investigation.

They found recycled materials which they proposed could be a playground for the guinea pigs. (Fig. 3 & 4)



Another area we looked at was emotions.

I think they don't have emotions because they don't show it in their face and you can't see their eyes.

I don't agree because the guinea pigs can show emotions in another way like by hurting someone if they are angry or letting you pat them if they are happy.

Yes I agree because when people hold the Guinea pigs while their cage is being cleaned and they eat a carrot on my pillow they are happy.

What makes you say that?

Because they purr a lot and purring means they are happy because I read in a book that if they purr many times they're happy

I think they do have emotions because they have emotions in their head.

Do the Guinea pigs show other emotions?

I think Guinea pigs can be sad.

Why do you say that?

They can be sad when they're scared, they show it in their face because their face makes the emotion

Guinea pigs don't cry. They don't have tears they don't have salt so they can't have salty tears.

So how do we know they are sad?

So when Milo's sad she creeps into the corner and is very quiet.

When they're frightened they get scared. When they are scared they are sad, they don't want any company and they want to be alone.

When they're frightened sometimes they go very quiet.

They run away and they hide.

When the Guinea pigs are surprised or excited they squeak very loudly.

They also jump up and down when they're excited. (Fig. 5 & 6)

Do we have the same emotions as the Guinea pigs?

Yes, we can feel happy and sad and angry and scared just like Cherry and Milo.

I get angry when someone takes my toy away. I feel sad inside. Anger is red because it's a colour when people get angry, their faces get red.

From the children's comments and drawings we were able to see the links they made between the emotions of the guinea pigs and



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

their own emotions. The children made connections between their uniqueness and the uniqueness of the guinea pigs. This understanding provides them with the ability to celebrate the uniqueness of each other.

We have discovered so much about how a pet impacts on a group of children, and yet each day we continue to discover the effects of this. We have seen so many positive aspects and have marvelled at the effect a small creature can have on a class community. From what we have observed and recorded we continue to discover what children already know and this allows us to provide opportunities for them to deepen and extend their thinking and learning.

“

Our story is an ongoing one, filled with adventure, mystery, excitement and imagination. Where will it take us next? We aren't sure, but we are excited by the endless possibilities it presents us with. ”

Figures

Fig. 3 & 4: The children tested their theories on how to get the guinea pigs to go through the cardboard tubes.

Year 1

“When you create an identity for something you have a greater ability to empathise with it”

Angela Barozzi

“

Our journey began in 2010 when 75 children ventured upstairs in our ELC to begin their Prep year. Our colleagues in Kinder shared with us that this group of children had a passion for nature and an enjoyment of being in the outdoors.”

”

Our own experience tells us that a significant change between Kinder and Prep is the limited direct access between our classrooms and the outdoor environment. Consequently, we wondered how we could continue to engage these children in their passion for nature whilst simultaneously supporting them with the transition into Prep and the adjustment to a new environment. We wondered how we could create a link between our three newly established Prep classroom communities and the outdoor environment. We also wondered how we might bring the outdoors in to support us.

As written in the article titled *'Relationships-Inside and Out'*, 2010 provided us with an immersion into the environment that surround us (Fig. 1). We began this research looking at the ways the children engaged with a diverse range of natural environments both within our school and our local community. We observed and documented the children's interactions. The more we watched, the more we wondered about these relationships.

The advantage of having the same group of teachers and children together for a second year in Year 1 gave us the opportunity to delve deeper and continue our research.

- How could we encourage these children to connect to nature when there are so many factors that pull them in other directions?
- How could we create a stronger connection to the outdoor environment within our school?



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

- How could we create a sustainable connection to the outdoor environment where children are empowered to make a difference?
- Would creating an identity with nature engender and nurture a greater sense of empathy towards it?
- How would our relationship with the outdoor spaces engender a sense of community within and between our classes?

During a teacher professional development session in November, 2009, we were fortunate to meet Chris Joy, Education Co-ordinator of the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG), Melbourne. When Chris shared her story about the development of the Ian Potter Children's Garden we were struck at how similar our beliefs about children and education were. We discovered that the RBG had worked on partnerships with schools in the past and we began to imagine the possibility of a collaboration between our school and the RBG. The group of children would have to be the 'right' group and it would have to be the 'right' time but the possibilities were exciting.

After a year in Prep with our current group of children who, as expected, proved themselves passionate about nature and the outdoors, we couldn't help but revisit the possibility of a partnership with the RBG. This would involve 10 weekly visits to work with the volunteers in the Ian Potter Children's Garden. The prospect of visiting over an intensive period was such a unique opportunity. Our collective experience working with children highlighted the power that such an opportunity to revisit and reflect regularly in this manner could play in the lives and learning of children.

“... it's like being reunited with an old friend, one with whom the friendship intensifies as the visits become more frequent and the relationship becomes more complex.”³

The planning process to develop a partnership with the RBG began. Over a period of months, various meetings were arranged between our own staff as well as the staff and volunteers of the RBG. Together we discussed and made conscious decisions about how this experience would work:

- We wanted the encounter to extend beyond the Ian Potter Children's Garden and into the Royal Botanic Gardens as a whole. This would require much research and planning on our part to create a program that would be rich in experience and possibility. However, before we could even introduce the children to the gardens we needed to visit them ourselves many times to develop our own relationship with them.
- We made the conscious decision to take all 75 Year 1 children to the RBG each week. We felt this was essential in providing the children with a collective experience that would build on the relationships within our community and transfer naturally between the RBG and our own school environment.
- We decided to put the children into cross-class groups (Fig. 2). Although this process caused many logistical complexities we felt that this would provide the children with the opportunity to really extend their community – to work with other teachers and children, to develop greater independence and greater respect for others, to truly get to know one another and further develop their skills of collaboration.
- We consciously made the decision to involve as many different staff members as possible. This included classroom teachers, assistants, our art educator, our Hebrew and Jewish Studies teachers and our specialist teachers. Although not every staff member was able to join us for each of our visits they all played an important part back at school in listening to the children's stories and supporting the learning that was happening (Fig. 3).
- We decided to invite parents to join us in this process so that they too were part of the experience of developing a relationship with the gardens (Fig. 4). The power of having parents on our journey – learning, documenting and collaborating with us provided a rich insight into the impact that this experience was having on the children and their families.

- Each child was given an A4 visual diary to document their personal learning journey. These diaries were taken with us on each of our visits and the children recorded their experiences and reflections. These have become a vital tool for the children to share their stories with others.
- The children were also given a calico bag which became their 'briefcase' for each visit to the gardens. They used this bag to collect evidence, hold their diaries and keep all the necessary materials for these experiences.
- Children were invited to bring cameras of their own to document their experiences (Fig. 5). Once again this was a risky decision but we felt it was essential for the children to have the responsibility of documenting their learning journey using another 'language'.
- With support from our Hebrew and Jewish Studies teachers, our Celebration Day was planned to coincide with the harvest festival of Shavuot. This was planned in order to deepen the connection between our investigation and our Jewish Studies program.

The partnership program began on March 8, 2011 and was followed by nine subsequent visits to the RBG, culminating with our Celebration Day where family members were invited to join us and the children excitedly shared their experiences. Along the way, the teachers continued to meet and interpret observations and documentation. The children also met regularly in their cross-class groups to reflect on the experiences that they were engaged in, as well as plan for the subsequent visits.

Each of our visits to the RBG provided the children with new perspectives and experiences. Every third week each group visited the Children's Garden and worked with the volunteers. In the other weeks they were involved in experiences in the wider gardens that were specifically planned to further their understandings in relation to our investigation. The children learned about and listened to the stories of some of the trees that live in the gardens. They zoomed in on nature to discover the intricacies of the flora surrounding them (Fig. 6). They explored different landscapes and viewed the gardens from many perspectives.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Our last visit to the RBG as a community was on June 3, 2011, but the impact of our visits and the experiences that we had continue to permeate throughout our actions and interactions.

After their experiences at the RBG we cannot help but be excited about the possibilities and potential within each child to truly identify with nature.

There is no doubt that the collective experiences that we have shared live on within each of us. However, as we now watch the 75 year 1 children venture down the 51 stairs to our own school playground, there are still more questions and theories being formed.

“ Like each of the trees that we encountered along the way, each of us has a story to tell and a memory to share. ”

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2. *Windows into Children's Thinking*, Bialik College, 2010
3. *Parent reflection of the Bialik partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens*, 2011

Figures

- Fig. 1 The children exploring the natural environment at John Gardiner Reserve on one of our walks in Prep.
- Fig. 2 One of our cross-class groups listening to the volunteers in the Children's Garden.
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Year 1

What makes a Children's Garden?

“

Ten years ago, the Royal Botanic Gardens created a children's garden. “The garden will be a place where the children can delight in nature and discover a passion for plants. It will be a garden that celebrates the imagination and curiosity of children and fosters the creative nature of play.”¹ ”

The staff at the RBG spent much time observing children, listening to them and designing with them a garden that reflected this vision. This garden is now a central part of the RBG, offering children the opportunity to play and create a “**bridge between the world of nature and the world of others.**”² We wanted a garden like this one. Our children already held a passion for the outdoors and it became important for us to continue to foster this further, especially as their progression to new classrooms upstairs in the ELC limited the direct contact they had previously had with their outdoor environment in the kindergarten classrooms.

There are many children who have a natural affinity for nature and the environment and whose experiences with the outdoors have been nurtured and encouraged. There are also many children who have not had the privilege of developing their senses and their association with the outdoor elements. Or simply put, have not had the “**hands on experiences... of getting their hands dirty.**”³ As teachers, we continuously wonder how we can assist in developing the next generations' 'real' love of life and the world around them. This idea presents us with an ongoing need for our children to develop a deeper connection and involvement with their outdoor environment. This year, the RBG offered itself as a rich source in which to do so.

Each week as we accompanied the children to the RBG we overheard the excited whispers being passed from one child to another about where they were going and what they were going to experience with their group. Within our visits to the Children's Garden, the children had rich opportunities and engaging spaces to explore. Each week the children experienced a new part of the gardens, they listened to and created different stories and they stood back and observed their hard work in the Kitchen Garden take on its own life. They became their own researchers and began to form a close connection of wonder and empathy for a place that will now live on in their memories.



The children used all their senses and imagination as they loved discovering this place.

“The children were so captivated by new and sometimes familiar experiences. Like making ochre paint and using a stick to paint, crunching up gum leaves and smelling the oils, counting the stamen on a grevillea flower, listening out for the crow family, staying silent for a sleeping possum, sharing eating time together, wondering why the wind moves leaves and not rocks. Many of which cannot be practised, felt, sensed, touched or seen in its true form sitting in a classroom.”⁴

We observed the children find secret passageways, *let me show you, it's awesome. It's a secret path*; discover gold; construct adventures, *follow the rope trail, you'll find the secret entrance* and run. They rolled around on the hills where we sat perched each week for a picnic lunch, *Will you time me as I run around the hills?*; They drew their observations in detail and they smelled the different plants, *I have a strong sense of smell*. They hid amongst the rushes spotted around the gardens; spent time photographing their discoveries and experiences where the children asked for their cameras even when their hands were covered in dirt, *I need my camera!* They returned to the pond to explore, collect and identify its organisms, delighted by their discoveries, *I didn't think I'd find anything, and then I did. It's a backswimmer. It's wriggling its bum. That's how it moves!* (Fig. 1)

They felt the wind chilly against their faces and the warm sun on their backs. They felt the different textures of the plants and compared them to one another. They practised giving one another directions using their maps and viewed the gardens from different perspectives where the lookout gave the children a bird's eye view of the gardens and to which they kept returning, *Let's go to the lookout! Look at the view! I can see the whole gardens from here*. They made meeting points, *meet us at the hut*; shared stories with one another such as where *'The Ancient Grandma Tree'* came from; explored nature through the third eye of a microscope in the discovery shelter, *the leaf looks like a spider web*; and returned to old favourites such as the bamboo forest, in the furthest corner of the garden, *It's dark and the trunks are skinny. You can run*

around them (Fig. 2). The volunteers also shared with us a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the Kitchen Garden where the children

“themselves planned and planted the seeds guided by the RBG volunteers. ... they gradually became competent in the art of cutting with secateurs. They learned how to identify certain seeds, plants, herbs, leaves and trees.”⁵ (Fig. 3)

They watered their produce, *the earth is pretty black so I think that's enough water*. Each week they saw the necessities of weeding, *you've got to pull the green bit with the roots, but not the soil. If you don't, another one will grow*. Completing all their hard work, the children harvested the produce they had grown and cared for. They also learned about worm farms and making 'worm tea' where some children had previously no experience, *I've never seen a worm farm, or been to one*. The children now continue to transfer their knowledge from these areas to our playground at school and specifically the vegetable gardens, compost and worm farms where they have found, **“an appreciation for recycling and composting.”⁶**

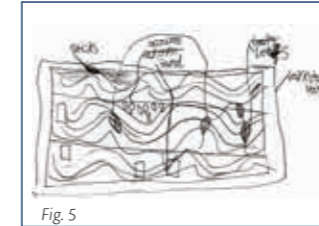
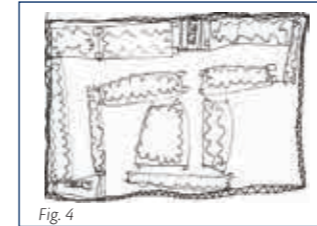
Their delight and wonder was continuous even as they fell, exhausted onto the open spaces of lawn.

Throughout our visits to the gardens, the parents also became involved in the excitement and the experiences taking place. Their reflections have become just as important as those of the children's, where they have witnessed and come to appreciate the time and space in which the children relished being allowed to run freely and confidently.

“The children were exposed to a subject matter that ideally will cultivate a lifelong love and respect for the importance of the cycle of life and sustainable living.”⁷

“The groups of children I worked with were happy and so contented to be amongst nature. Reminding me so much of my own childhood in country Victoria. Planting plants, picking vegetables, having leaf-boat races down the water channel, getting lost in the bamboo forest, wondering if magpies were ready to swoop and tadpole fishing in the pond; all of which were taken for granted in my youth, yet in many cases sadly absent from little lives today”⁸

We have now begun to envisage what our own playground could look like which was our initial intent (Fig. 4 & 5). While there were many places within the Children's Garden for the children to explore, we noted that monitoring them was not easy due to the large number of hideaways. However, if the children are positively engaged, should this matter? These hideaways also offered the children a sense of mystery, secrecy and sometimes safety that the somewhat vast and bare environment of our current school playground may not be providing them. We therefore wondered how we might be able to replicate concepts from the environment at the RBG, its garden, to our own playground spaces while still keeping children engaged and leaving a timeless footprint for future groups. What is it that the children feel they require to make a Children's Garden?



From the hands on experiences and opportunities that the children have now had over the last two years we have found that they are now more imaginative and creative in their play.

We have witnessed the children transferring the experiences they have had at the RBG into their school environment. We have observed them hug the trees, *if you put your ear to its trunk you can hear it talking to you*; chase and run with one another; spin; roll and slide up and down the hill; make up games; cook in the sandpit, *we pretended it was a bakery. We made cakes and ice-creams* (Fig. 6); pretend to fly; explore the motion, sounds and shapes of water in the puddles; make *bonfires where you sing songs* (Fig. 7); collect *leaves and we washed them and hung them in the cubby and tree house*; search for ochre and grind rocks to make paint; climb and balance on rocks and walls; play in small groups and large; use natural resources to *make stuff for each other and if we broke it we fixed it and we made stuff together like necklaces and bracelets, flowers and miniature trees*; dance on the stage; perform gymnastics on the oval; dig holes; make rain from the trees, *if you shake the tree the water comes down like it's raining*; create birds' nests for the birds and their families and search for bugs and insects with care and consideration. We have noted a definite shift in the ways in which the children interact both with their environment as well as with one another. They are aware of having to take care of the plants and species living within their space and are respectful of their environment responding in kind and sharing their knowledge about how our environment reciprocates their care with many benefits for us, to the other children and adults in their world. They use all their senses to explore new spaces and their understanding and knowledge is spilling over into their conversations, wonderings and daily interactions. Their observations are detailed and purposeful. Their interactions with one another have also developed where the children have become increasingly respectful towards one another, inviting others to join in their games and communicating thoughtfully.



While there is no doubt that the children have developed a deeper connection and relationship with their environment, where their concern and respect for it is demonstrated on a daily basis, our continuous challenge is how to transfer these experiences into our school playground. How do we continue to capture the imaginations and creativity the children continuously share with us? How can their thoughts and ideas be reflected upon and validated in our own school environment? How will these be passed on to the children who follow?

“

We maintain that “when you create an identity for something you have a greater ability to empathise with it.” (Angela Barozzi).⁹ Perhaps this is to be an ongoing goal which each new group in the future will need to take ownership over and leave their own mark, a piece of their collective memories that can be revisited and shared as a legacy for others to explore and enjoy. Perhaps that is what really makes a Children's Garden... ”

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3. RBG Volunteer reflection of the Bialik partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, 2011
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The Story of the Trees

“

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.”

As teachers and researchers, we spent many hours in the surrounds of the Royal Botanic Gardens and we were continually struck by the magnificence and uniqueness of its many beautiful trees. They seemed to be beckoning us to join them in some way, to bring them to the notice of our children.

“Trees do give a real sense of place. Being surrounded by objects that are older than you, that will be here long after you have gone, actually provides an amazing grounding for all human beings.” (Claire Warden)²

During one of our visits, Chris Joy told us several ‘true’ stories of some of the trees, such as the story of ‘The Lightning Tree’ and ‘The Lady Loch Tree’. The children listened, enthralled by the history of these trees so we decided to expand on their interests. Upon returning to school the children were given the opportunity to retell these stories in small groups.

It was a dark and stormy night. All the trees were falling over and it was a big mess. ‘The Lightning Tree’ said “I’m not afraid of the big storm.” So ‘The Lightning Tree’ stretched out its head and roots and stood strong. Every time it felt like it was going to fall down, it said “I’m not afraid”



Fig. 1

and stretched. ‘The Lightning Tree’ didn’t fall down. Lightning bolts came down and were cutting trees into pieces. It split ‘The Lightning Tree’ in half. The gardeners came the next day and saw the big mess. They saw ‘The Lightning Tree’ had split in two and rang the tree doctor and asked him to fix the tree. He came and with some help they pulled the tree back together with two ropes. ‘The Lightning Tree’ is still standing and has a big scar in the middle from the lightning.

The idea of forming a relationship with the trees, these statues of nature, had now become a possibility. We also realised that our intention of the children forming a connection with this verdant and enticing environment appeared to be a possible vehicle that would foster the children’s innate sense of fantasy and imagination.

On a subsequent visit, one group of children was immediately drawn to a particular tree for its unique appearance. We spent a long, joyful time with this one tree, exploring its shelter and playing under it. It appeared to them to be sad and prickly and all alone so they aptly named it ‘The Grumpy Tree’. (Fig. 1, 2 & 3)

Its branches are very curly and bendy and twirly and some other trees said to it “You’re so messy” and when he heard them it made him mad and grumpy.

When there were floods maybe it wanted to look after the animals and keep them safe. It became really sad then. Maybe ‘The Grumpy Tree’ tried very hard to help lots of the animals by getting them to come inside the tree.

During this session the children’s focus was intense and their ideas flowed. They hugged it and drew it. They spoke to it and painted it. They photographed it and played around it. When it was time to leave they farewelled it with wishes for it to have happier times, *maybe if some animals came and lived in it and in its branches it would be happy.* They also wrote to it with questions and ideas.



Fig. 2

Dear ‘Grumpy Tree’, What are you grumpy about? I think you need a friend. I hope you are not sad anymore.

They had spent the day with it as one would when making a new friend and it is now treasured in their memories and their fondness for the RBG for they now felt they truly knew its story. (Fig. 4 & 5)

Several parents commented on the children’s relationship with this tree.

“The time went so fast I hadn’t even realised we had spent the whole day with one tree!” (Parent reflection)

“In the holidays, I returned to the gardens with my child, and he strode through the pathways as if they were his own backyard, pointing out landmarks, stopping to notice the flora, and relaying legends and tales of the various trees and structures to his little sister, weaving his acquired knowledge into lengthy and interesting stories. His classmates had named one enormous tree ‘The Grumpy Tree’, for the way that its gnarled branches dipped to the ground. His sister decided that she would like to try to make the tree happy, and so the two of them ran around its trunk, seeing it anew”. (Parent reflection)

The metaphor of ‘The Grumpy Tree’ and how we can try to make its life easier has assisted the children in becoming increasingly conscious of the environment and has developed their desire to care for the outside area which they inhabit at school every day.

We have become increasingly aware of our own towering and much loved tree in the Early Learning Centre playground which is constantly used in all manner of play. This tree is very tall and from its great height it sees most of what is happening in the Early Learning Centre playground. (Fig. 6, 7 & 8)



Fig. 3

It's like a home to us. We use it for our goals. I use it to look for ladybugs and other animals I've never seen before. I can sit under it for shade. Lots of people sit there for a chat with their friends. You can sit there and have a little rest. I can draw in the dirt. You can sit under it with a friend and think of its story.

It is a meeting place for parents to gather at the end of the day. Its canopy gives shade and shelter on those days when the weather is unforgiving. Children play under it, using its soil for their car tracks and imaginative games. It provides the ideal area for the goals for the football and soccer matches that many of the children love to play.

We need to work with our tree to discern ways we can help and care for it and enhance its bearing and stature for the whole of our school community to recognise and take enjoyment from. The intent now is to discover the personal story of this tree, in our own environment. To spend time being silent with it, to explore its rhythm and to pass our awareness of this rhythm on to others to also enjoy.

Reflecting on the children's relationship with the trees at the RBG Claire Warden's words "that the connection to nature is intuitive rather than cognitive"³ ring true. She talks about the importance of silence, how it is a useful teacher, a silent pedagogy. Warden states, "In silence the brain can process, reflect, consider, assimilate or discard ideas and then store pertinent information. There are many complex issues going on in silence."⁴ When the children spent time with 'The Grumpy Tree' and the other trees, they did exactly that. They were silent with them for such a long time and there was a tangible sense of respect as they focussed their thoughts on their new friends.

“
You can sit under it with a friend and think of its story.”

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2. Warden, Claire (2010) 'Nature Kindergartens', Mindstretchers Ltd pg 15
3. Warden, Claire (2010) 'Nature Kindergartens', Mindstretchers Ltd pg 50
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Figures

- Fig. 1 Arriving at 'The Grumpy Tree'
- Fig. 2 Looking up into the tree's canopy
- Fig. 3 Getting to know 'The Grumpy Tree'
- Fig. 4 Painting of 'The Grumpy Tree'
- Fig. 5 Drawing of 'The Grumpy Tree'
- Fig. 6 Early Learning Centre tree
- Fig. 7 Drawing of the ELC tree
- Fig. 8 Spending time with our tree



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Cross class

Who would care if I was not there?

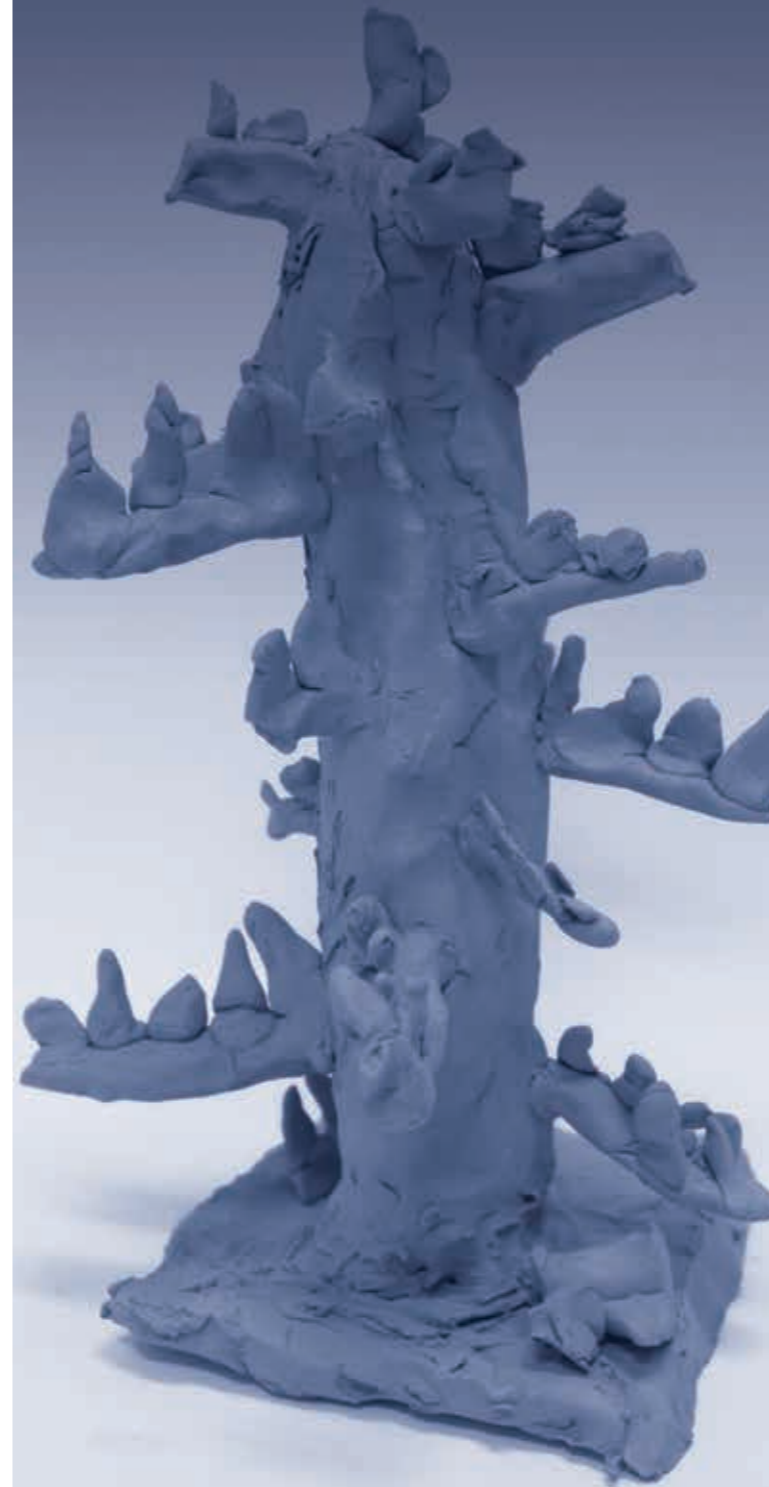


Fig. 11

“

Who tells the story? Thinking readers understand that there are different layers that contribute to the richness of stories as a narrative of experiences. Stories we imagine, hear, feel, see, touch, smell; stories as memories, stories to share and reflect on with others, stories with a moral, a problem, a challenge.”

Within the year one investigation 'Relationships inside and out' we marked the start of the ten week exploration at the Royal Botanic Gardens with an introduction using one of the lenses from our intent when visiting the National Gallery of Victoria at the Ian Potter Centre. We began here by exploring the stories of the Australian landscape. We wondered would comparison be made with some of the Non Indigenous paintings of the Australian Landscape made by the colonial artists through to artists of the present day from their perspectives and then other paintings, weavings and artefacts from both traditional and contemporary Indigenous artists. The gallery provoked rich discussions and thinking about how we document our understandings of making meaning through our own experiences, cultural traditions, and creative possibilities.

“The painting is another vehicle” as stated by a gallery education officer in reference to his Indigenous roots “in naming parts of the land and recognising past people.” (Brian McKinnon 2011)¹.

The children together with some of the parents and their teachers engaged in these discussions focusing on the relationships between colour, shape and image from their experiences as well as sharing their theories about the intent of the artists. Given the richness of relationships with the environment these children had already established in their previous year the context of Indigenous culture and traditions compared with a collection of early and contemporary images by Non-Indigenous artists provided further provocations and challenges and heightened strategies for children to scaffold their learning and understandings.

The aim at the gallery was not to redraw these images or use this experience for the creation of a product but rather for the children to document their thinking in relation to transcultural interpretations through colour, line, country and in turn identity via writing or drawing in response to what they saw and thought. We wondered if they would make a comparison with the use of symbols and patterns as opposed to realistic interpretations of the Australian landscape and surrounds from different historical periods and cultures but nevertheless sharing of stories.

Where, when, how and why?

You can make up a story by the pictures. Once there was a fish and he wanted water and he didn't have any so he just had to lie in the sun.

Artists know a lot about science too. There are a lot of lines and stuff inside it. Whoever made these has a lot of experience.

Maybe a hunter painted it. Hunters carry sticks and straw and collect things. When they go into the desert first they rub sticks together and rub off into sand and let it dry and it stains and stays. Is it real or not?

You can tell something is old because it doesn't have much colour in it, it is old fashioned.

It makes me think about the desert.

The diverse portrayal of the Australian landscape evoked many wonderings and theories by the children as to the intent and the story. The children were particularly drawn to the different representations of the trees in many of these paintings and the techniques and materials used to create these representations such as impasto brush marks dabbing the surface...

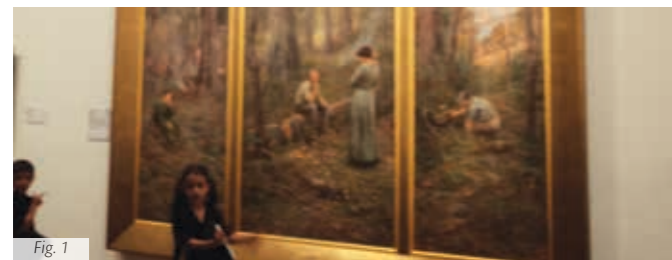
I wonder what it is... a wonder is when you want to find out more about something... Are those trees dead already. They all look like 'brokenness', burnt down...

All the dark mountains are actually on earth and the trees are dead and mouldy.

That was in the 1940's.

In response to the well know Australian triptych 'The Pioneer' by Frederick McCubbin 1904, the children pondered over the enormity of its size and sense of place in history.

The sun is setting. There are three pictures. It seems to be a bit far from Melbourne and it is across a bridge and a lake. I think this painting was made when I was one year old. (Fig. 1)



In these paintings the children were encouraged to think about the different layers of these stories, not all visible to the eye.

In response to the image of a darkened tree trunk in a painting by Australian artist Russell Drysdale the children saw this tree as resembling another image.

Dinosaurs swallowed lava. I wonder if it is a long time ago. Maybe it is in the outback in the desert where there is no electricity.

The children's sense of time and place, meaning and purpose were heightened during this visit.

Another story unfolded as the children and their teachers were invited by Trevor Gallagher to be part of a smoking ceremony (Tanderrum) with the symbolism of welcoming us to the ancestral land of the Kulin

nation.² The wafting smells of gum leaves as they smoked in the small but significant fire, marking land and identity. (Fig. 2)



The continual elements of intrigue beckoning the children to explore and discover further, permeated the many experiences the children were engaged in within the Royal Botanical Gardens and fostered strategies that they employed in creating their theories during this ongoing investigation. The constant refocusing of one's perceptions from a wide angled lens to 'zooming in' both literally and metaphorically was ever present. Walking along the myriad of pathways in the gardens and with every step our eyes were encouraged to not only look ahead, but downwards, across and above. One became a detective, a scientist, a storyteller, a reporter and a researcher.

The revisiting of the gardens brought new stories to share.



We looked at the footprints and thought about what animals they were from. Maybe they were human foot prints too, from a long time ago. The footprints in the forest were scary. (Fig. 3)

The contextualizing of events through time became important as the children pieced together their wonderings using the clues that were continually being uncovered.

The sharing of Indigenous stories such as how the black crane became a creature destined to have no colour offered moral dilemmas for the children to debate and a realisation that nature continues to change and evolve as does one's identity as a result of our actions.

"...Leaving one's footprints..." an expression from an Indigenous Elder reminds us of the past, the present and the future.³

The heightening awareness of the children's relationships with their environment around them was made visible through their documentation. This documentation would provide invaluable data for the children and their teachers to revisit.

Together we had many discussions as to the authenticity of the documentation that the children might employ. How would their memories be marked? In our centre the metaphor of **"the hundred languages"**⁴ is constantly in our thoughts. What stories do the materials have as they wait to become transformed by the children?

The pieces of clay fashioned into small round tiles presented another surface for the imprinted memory of what made this area, known as Fern Gully.



Each impression offered the element of surprise as the natural materials collected from this area were shared with others on the surface of the clay as a record of visiting in this area. (Fig. 4)

The black pen, charcoal, fine brushes, the small paint pans with richness of colours, all carefully selected and referenced by the children as they saw themselves involved as serious interpreters of that which they encountered. (Fig. 5 & 6)



The use of digital mediums to document what was observed was an additional language which we encouraged during this investigation.

The more they looked the more they saw, the lens continually refocusing. The digital camera was an extension of their thinking allowing the camera to also contribute to the conversation of uncovering. The children became more familiar in time using this camera as a creative tool for thinking beyond a posed snapshot. (Fig. 7 & 8)



However within the growing world of technology at our fingertips, the small but significant hand held magnifying glass was still marvelled at, as the children hovered over everything they saw. Worlds within worlds were found for the first time! (Fig. 9 & 10)



We continue to foster and keep alive the children's desire to invent, theorise and in turn be active participants in their world. The children's revisiting and spending time with three trees in the R.B.G

developed strong connections which continued as the groups acquired empathy towards their enduring existence and richness of possibilities they offer to all who revere them.

Back at school in the larger studio, clay was again a material of choice the children used in pairs, recounting their responses to the character and personality of the historic tree. Once again the material acquainted itself with the children and their prior knowledge but at the same time the making of the tree in another form offered further reflections and decision making as they collaborated. As teachers we scaffold the children's negotiations. As each group of children noticed the variance in features of each of their structures which again highlighted the many ways of seeing and thinking, each group realised that although observing the same provocation, in this instance the tree, each brought their own thinking to the clay tree interpretation. In the studio I assisted the children to harness all of their ideas to create three stories and later scripts to create three films which were based on some of the groups questions. *What made 'The Grumpy Tree', grumpy? How did 'The Hanging Root Tree', get its roots? 'The Lightning Tree' was a strong tree and it would survive. The children appeared to assume for a time the 'thinking' of the tree. Each spike became another story in the life of the 'The Grumpy Tree'.*

It used to be a happy tree until other trees and animals started to make fun of him. The tree got angry and his spikes stated to get sharper and sharper. At night the tree went to the front of the garden and took its spikes off because he didn't want to be angry anymore but he couldn't stop himself because the animals still kept making fun of him. He told them to stop it! But they didn't. He couldn't stand it so he went to the nice trees but they teased him too! The whole gardens teased him! And his spikes grew sharper and sharper and sharper until they got so sharp that no one wanted to go near him and so he cried and cried. The sharper his spikes the more other trees became scared of him. (Fig. 11)

One child felt that the fact that this tree did not have what he considered leaves but instead leaves that appeared to be spikes were the cause of unhappiness for this tree.

'The Hanging Root Tree' as named by one group was labelled as such because of the enormous imposing roots which presented to the children another story untold which they gave the title, *'Who would care if I was not there?'* A feeling of loss featured in this story where the children felt that the presence of these trees in the R.B.G was so significant that should they be removed or damaged, this would have a profound effect not only for themselves but for all who visited these gardens. We believe that the children's defence of sustaining our environment became for them a right for all. (Fig. 12)





In stating his case for freedom after being taken by a witch who also wanted a tree in her castle 'The Hanging Root Tree' responded at every opportunity;

I am not just a tree. I am a home to the birds, the worms, the snakes, and all the animals that want to use me for shelter. My leaves and branches give people shade from the sun! The children and their parents will miss me because they come to visit me all the time and I have known them for such a long time. Grandparents came here when they were little and I was little too and now they are coming back with their grandchildren. The children know the trees more than anybody. They have picnics under the trees and have fun. They play around me and celebrate their birthdays with me. Some people think I am important because I give oxygen so people can breathe and if there were no trees the world would not be good.

The children's saving of the tree focused on the significance of its roots which although deemed 'ugly' by the witch became the saviour of the tree as the roots grew longer and longer covering the witches castle allowing for the creatures to escape and now at the insistence of the witch the tree was able to return to the RBG The children's understanding and forgiveness of wrong doing offered the opportunity for the witch to in fact have her own tree but one she would plant from a seed.

"...Learn how to take from the land but also to preserve and ensure species still survive..." (Brian McKinnon 2011)⁵.

Another language now introduced was filmmaking. The recreation of the protagonists that featured in the three cross class group stories retold their plight in animated form. This genre offered a medium that further developed the concept of 'multiliteracies' highlighting another layer of storytelling. (Fig. 12 & 13)

The children marvelled in this process using a webcam to capture the progressive movements of each character and replay each sequence as an animated scene. (Fig. 14 & 15) The drawing and creating of models and scenes and the anticipation of the retelling of the story in this form offered another context for critical discussions, decision making and further engaged their imagination and deep learning.

The opportunity for real debate and unpacking many issues we face today was highlighted in such examples where the children's close and continual relationships to the materials they were now using was a true extension of their thinking. This is for us paramount as the children continue to be decision makers in their life and rely on their strategies and skills.

As claimed in this excerpt from the poem "No way, the hundred is there." by Loris Malaguzzi⁶.

"...The school and the culture separate the head from the body. They tell the child: to think without hands to do without head to listen and not to speak..."

We continue to explore and engage children in a 'hundred and a hundred more languages' many which have not been thought about as yet as our world is in continual change.

We are also reminded that it is not the dissemination of knowledge and content that will develop children's thinking but the exchange of ideas and their testing of their theories and promotion and constant dialogue which will support children in the challenges of the future.

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2. Trevor Gallagher(2011) Aboriginal Programs officer at the R.B.G- Welcoming ceremony at the commencement of Year 1 program with the RBG.
3. REAIE Landscapes of the Hundred Languages conference Canberra (2011)- Opening address by Aunty Agnes O'Shea, Ngunnawal Elder, welcome to the land.
4. The hundred languages is a reference to the poem by Loris Malaguzzi Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach- 'No way, the hundred is there.' The use of this expression has been embraced by educators worldwide and has encouraged educators, parents and the community to see young as capable, curious and active participants in their learning and the many ways of making their thinking visible. This phrase was also used in the well know exhibition seen by many around the world entitled, The Hundred Languages of Children.
5. Brian McKinnon- Indigenous Project Officer – (2011) 'Indigenous Art and Culture' Professional Development program- Ian Potter Centre National Gallery of Victoria
6. A poem- "No way, the hundred is there"- by Loris Malaguzzi (translated by Lella Gandini 1998) Founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach

Figures

- Fig. 1 The Pioneer by Frederick McCubbin 1904 -NGV Victoria Ian Potter Centre Federation Square
- Fig. 2 Indigenous Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony- Tanderrum- Welcome to the land.
- Fig. 3 The children take photographs of the 'footprints' they discover on the pathway of the Bamboo Forest near the Fern Gully Rest House Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne
- Fig. 4 Using clay tiles on site at Fern Gully as a base to make imprints of the natural materials found in this area. These tiles were later fired in the school kiln.
- Fig. 11&12 Children in pairs negotiated and constructed a model of one of the three trees that they observed in their cross class groups in the studio at school
- Fig. 13&14 Preparing one of the scenes which was used in the production of a film
- Fig. 15 The children created models such as the witch to use in the production their animated films.
- Fig. 16 Using animation software the children use a webcam to capture movement.

Contributors

3 Year Old Kinder

Kinder 3Z

I am who we are

Benji Better, Noah Burrows, Lexi Bursztyn, Peaches Cohen, Liam Diamond, Lola Fisher, Aerin Gaspar, Asha Goldberg, Dean Gorski, Ariel Janashvili, Noah Klein, Justin Kohn, Hugo Krasnostein, Zak Kutner, Ethan Lakman, Allison Moskowitz, Zoe Reizner, Phoebe Ryan, Sascha Sable, Chloe Schueler, Dylan Swart, Willow Thurston, Ava Wilson, Sophia Wolff

With

Zia Freeman, Miri Waterson, Emily Roberts, Ayana Shavit

Kinder 3L

... man would not have built anything at all, if children had not learned to build when playing

Ryder Arrow, Jaxson Brick, Romy Broons, Grace Brott, Zahara Dvir, Tara Filer, Bailey Freund, Noa Hansen, Jonah Harrison, Tilly Heelan, Charlie Kinda, Ori Kleifeld, Abigail Krause, Rockford Levine, Elon Liberman, Liran Liderman, Jazmin Mahemoff, Jay Marabel Whitburn, Alex Munz, Gabrielle Nussbaum, Adam Weisz, Tali Wrobel, Joshua Zimmet

With

Lindsay Miller, Ilana Cohen, Megan Jay, Yarra Raichenstein

Kinder 3J

Oh, no, we've landed on planet Earth!

Julia Ades, Zara Amira, Joshua Baladi, Noah Bardas, James Degen, Rochelle Fishman, Liam Gaspar, Tali Gold, Ruby Held, Teal Jacobson, Hope Krongold, Jeremy Levy, Ethan Lust, Toby Mooseek, Harry Naphtali, Eva Nathan Valentine, Ethan Nayman, Dylan Sormann, Lisa Vainer, Woody Weissman, Amelie Wheeler, Siena Wheeler, Mia Zilberman, Dion Zukerman

With

Judy Blumberg, Ortal Erez, Zohar Abraham-Golane, Arlene Meyerowitz, Leh-Anne Engel

4 Year Old Kinder

Kinder 4J, 4E, 4R

This is the sound of the world...

With

Helene Oberman

Kinder 4J

Dance Speaks to us without Words

Nicholas Baring, Layla Dvir, Benjamin Felman, Tiara Givoni, Chloe Gold, Hanna Goldberg, Jake Golshevsky, Jordan Keddie, Ori Landau, 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

With

Julie Hertz, Orit Gil, Rosemary Barry, Hagar Kleifeld

Kinder 4E

Stories come back again and again because you can tell the story again and again

Darielle Alter, Sivan Barsheshet, Ashley Birner, 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, Marcel Rose, Benjamin Schwartzstein, Jemma Seligmann, Joshua Shaw, Jasmine Spiegel, Joshua Spiegel, Oscar Strauch, Jesse Wrobel, Jason Zuffi

With

Elise Rotstain, Bev Carmel, Hagar Kleifeld, Julia Levine

Kinder 4R

My shoes can make me run faster because they have wings

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

With

Ranjna Najat, Pazit Landau, Merylin Sternstain, Bella Besser

Contributors

Prep

Prep Crossclass

Because I am my name... That is who I am

With

Ester Azikre, Desre Kaye, Sigal Tirosh

Prep L

It means you belong where you think you belong

Nathan Ben David, Felix Castelan, Cassie Chizik, Leehy Eylon, Alex Frenkel, Elliott Gaspar, Aiden Gelbart, Niv Glazer, Carter Graham, Skye Hadad, Jake Joseph, Layla Joske, Hank Kister, Joel Krongold, Dalia Miller, Benjamin Nathan, Seth Ryan, Ethan Star, Jake Symons, Mia Vardi

With

Linda Baise, Sigal Tirosh, Nikki Kausman, Sylvia Brover, Zohar Abraham-Golane

Prep N

We click together like Lego

Mischa Beaconsfield, Aaron Berman, Bella Black, Jennifer Broide, Daniel Carmeli, Pippa Davis, Elly Dodge, Toby Grodski, Zac Hamersfeld, Felix Harris, Harry Hendel, Charlotte Kleytman, Asher Klissman, Nathaniel Leighton, Aaron Lipengold, Noah Lust, Oliver Sormann, Sammy Volchek, Jesse Weller

With

Nicole Huxtable, Ester Azikri, Rajitha Subasinghe

Prep R

It could be a mouse...

Mischa Beaconsfield, Aaron Berman, Bella Black, Jennifer Broide, Daniel Carmeli, Pippa Davis, Elly Dodge, Toby Grodski, Zac Hamersfeld, Felix Harris, Harry Hendel, Charlotte Kleytman, Asher Klissman, Nathaniel Leighton, Aaron Lipengold, Noah Lust, Oliver Sormann, Sammy Volchek, Jesse Weller

With

Roz Marks, Desre Kaye, Cathy Colla, Mandie Tepperman

Year 1 Crossclass

When you create an identity for something you have a greater ability to empathise with it

Written by Natalie Kluska

What makes a Children's Garden?

Written by Emily Minter

The Story of the Trees

Written by Kathleen Georgiou

Who would care if I was not there?

Written by Helene Oberman

Dean Allen, Dean Alter, Raphael Berezin, Maddie Better, Aaron Birnbaum, Jordyn Birnbaum, Aviva Broons, Chloe Bursztyn, Ellie Bursztyn, Asia Carp, Ethan Carrick, Benjamin Davis, Brooke Davis, Isabella Deane, Amy Dodge, Max Engelman, Kiera Erenboim, Samuel Eydlis, Jenna Felbel, Dustin Feldman, Joshua Feldman, Shoshi Feldman, Jasmine Felman, Ashley Fisher, Natasha Fried, Jesse Gaspar, Eden Gelfand, Skye Givoni, Joseph Gold, Joshua Gomo, Joel Green, Amber Hamersfeld, Ella Heelan, Maya Herszfeld, Luca Jolson, Ezra Justin, Joshua Kallenbach, Aiden King, Phoebe Lambert, Bailey Levin, Ray Levin, Ruby Lorkin, Daniel Maisner, Zara McGillivray, Devon Melzak, Jamie Mooseek, Julian Munz, Nathan Needleman, Seba Negri, Eli Perelberg, Sammy Pila, Adam Pincus, Raphael Poratt, Daniel Posner, Ashlee Priester, Daniel Rosenberg, Jade Rosenberg, Ruby Rosenberg, Benjamin Shaw, Charlie Sheezel, Amy Smith, Poppy Smorgon, Jasmine Sweet, Dan Tadmor, Hayley Taylor, Luke Thurston, Oz Tirosh, Thomas Troski, Kai Upiter, Nathan Vainer, Dana Wagner, Joseph Waislitz, Noah Warwicker Lebreton, Jake Wrobel, Olivia Zukerman

With

Natalie Kluska, Sigal Tirosh, Robyn Winograd, Sandy Sher

Emily Minter, Desre Kaye, Rotem Gam, Aliza Deutsch

Kathleen Georgiou, Anne Budlender

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