

# Windows into Children's Thinking



*Celebrating 70 years of  
educational excellence*

**BIALIK COLLEGE  
EARLY LEARNING CENTRE  
JOURNAL 2012**

# From the Principal of Bialik

Great schools unite thinking and learning with happiness, wellbeing, relationships and creativity. This year's 'Windows into Children's Thinking' is a celebration of greatness at Bialik College's Early Learning Centre.

I urge you to read this journal in a quiet space at a quiet time. The Reggio Emilia-inspired approach of documenting the learning of Bialik children enables us to glimpse into our children's minds.

Loris Malaguzzi who initially led the renowned early childhood educational project in Reggio Emilia said that **"Creativity becomes more visible when adults try to be more attentive to the cognitive processes of children."** This is precisely one of the key aspirations of Bialik College's Early Learning Centre. By placing the child at the centre of the experience, and by supporting and encouraging children to place exploration and investigation at the centre of their own learning experiences, the outcomes are quite simply breathtaking.

This journal provides a 'window' into the wonder of childhood and the innocence of unconfined learning. Through the documentation approach, we are struck by the capabilities, wonder and resilience of our children as they investigate topics as diverse as environment, relationships and identity.

Thank you for taking the time to read 'Windows into Children's Thinking'.



Jeremy Stowe-Lindner  
Principal

# From the Head of the Early Learning Centre

**"Our intention is clearly to help children search for and discover parts of their world that may risk remaining hidden. Moreover, we want to be sure that the desires, interests and intelligences, and capacity for enjoying and seeking – which are a child's inborn resources – do not remain buried and unused."** (Malaguzzi 1997:32)

Our teachers are viewed as researchers, facilitators and learners who constantly evaluate and reflect on their interactions with the children and each other. Listening is integral to developing an understanding of how children learn. Time and space are created to encourage and facilitate big questions, thus valuing the ability of children to ask questions, invent strategies and build complex understandings. This research based approach keeps the learning for both teachers and children enriched and dynamic with the child being a 'producer' not a just a consumer of knowledge. Research is regarded as part of our daily life within an environment which encourages intellectual curiosity and an eagerness to learn.

**"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. Like everything else about Reggio, research is not a solitary activity but a process of relationships and dialogue."** Rinaldi and Moss 2004

This journal is the seventh in the series entitled 'Windows into Children's Thinking'. It recounts many stories of the research undertaken by the children and teachers during 2012. This research has focused on questions of environment, identity and relationships.

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. What follows are not investigations in their entirety, but rather small vignettes from every classroom in the ELC.

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

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### The conventions in this book

A number of styles have been used throughout Bialik College Early Learning Centre Journal 2012 – '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



# The chickens are greedy. They want their food and our plants

“

One of our goals in starting the year with a new group of three year old children was to develop a class community with children, parents and teachers. Our intent was to use the outdoors as a catalyst for creating this community where all felt comfortable and connected to each other and part of this group.”

How might we create an environment outdoors that would be inviting for the children and their families?

“We believe that natural play spaces can be justified in terms of play opportunities and potential, physical and mental health benefits for children and adults, enhanced connections with nature and the promotion of sustainability. Nature connections made in childhood are instrumental to the construction of values (and the development of the ‘ecological self.’” (Sue Elliott, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

In discussion with our teachers, we decided that each family would be given some seeds to plant and grow at home. When these seeds had grown into plants we would have a communal planting ceremony. Each family would plant their plants in a special space thus creating a vegetable garden together.

In order to support this process we had many conversations and discussions with the children. We watched a parent clear the plot for us while we discussed why the soil was being dug and how the plants would benefit from the sunlight that was created from branches that were pruned from the surrounding trees. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

One of our teachers had also spent time with the children growing cress and alfalfa which connected the plants’ growth with the festival of Shavuot. This festival is associated with the harvesting of grains and vegetables. As cress and alfalfa grow quickly it would highlight the process of growing and harvesting for the children. The children also made the association with the sun, the watering of the plants and the warmth of the cotton wool as factors that helped the plants to grow. With these understandings they would care for their seeds at home until they brought them back as plants to kindergarten.

Parents and teachers shared their reflections.

“Now that some of the plants have grown, we are continuing the building of our community by connecting it with our parents’ Kabbalat Shabbat.” (teacher)

“This was a very rewarding and empowering undertaking for the children and mirrored what was happening in their lives. Like the seedlings, the children have been “transplanted” from their known home and family situation into the kindergarten and we, as parents, have been fortunate enough to be actively welcomed and encouraged to be a part of this process.” (parent) (Fig. 2 & 3)

Our planting ceremony was indeed a celebration and the children and parents are now watching the plants grow. The children have been encouraged to observe and measure the plants’ growth and to water and care for the plants.

“Whenever Jessie and I do something together, I enjoy watching her. It makes me feel warm inside and my feelings grow, just like the seeds she planted did, when I see her smile. I know she was very proud of the fact that all her seeds grew from the soil and I was proud of her for being so good at remembering to water the seeds each day.” (parent)

“My child was so excited to watch his plants grow. When the plants became too tall, together we made a hanger out of strings to support the plants. He was so excited. He said, it’s a jungle, mummy!” (parent)

The planting of the garden encouraged friendships and created learning opportunities for the children.

“Young children need exposure to, and experience in, playspaces that provide learning opportunities in and about the learning environment. The constant change, variations in texture, sound and terrain challenge children to approach each interaction with the natural playspace in new ways. Such interactions are fundamental to learning about resilience and risk taking, skills



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

that cannot be acquired without ongoing practice.” (Sue Elliot, Page 76, 2008).<sup>2</sup>

*I planted with my friends and our mums helped us.*

*Look how big the plant is. But I am still bigger. Look at my (measuring) string. It is too small.*

*I put the seeds in (the ground) with my mum and she put my name on it so I know my seeds. We planted them with the others and they grew together.*

*It was fun (planting the seeds). We did some digging, then we put the plants in and gave them some water. Some children dug and other children did the water.*

The children’s comments reflected an understanding of the need to collaborate together and to take risks in order for something to grow. Each child focused on the growing process and the value that the playspace played in nurturing the plants. (Fig. 4)

One of the children brought in an egg from his garden. There was much discussion as to what was inside the egg and how it got there.

*Is it gooey inside?*

*What will come out? A duck or a chicken?*

*Is there a chicken inside the egg?*

*The duck egg is bigger and the chicken egg is smaller.*

In thinking about their questions, we decided to take part in an egg-hatching program. As the children’s interest was still heightened we were then given an opportunity to have two chickens for our kindergarten. (Fig. 5)

# Shadows don't get hurt because they don't have feelings!

“

Children above all when together with other children, are inventors, “safe crackers” and re-builders of theories and behaviours that elude any presumptuousness or predictability of methods.” (Loris Malaguzzi)<sup>1</sup>

Why do shadows interest children? Throughout time shadows have intrigued people of all ages. Different cultures have different religious beliefs, magical myths and superstitions which refer to shadows. We have all played with shadows. Shadows change their shape and size according to the direction of the light and this makes the shadows magical and keeps us wondering, “What if... the shadow is playing hide and seek?”

We get the morning sun in our classroom. The children gravitate to the mat area where they can see the shadows of the windows and the small translucent blocks of different shapes. These reflect colours along with the shadow of the blocks. The children begin to dance and jump around to see how their shadow moves with them. They laugh and giggle as they move around and try to step on each other's shadow. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1

What opportunities would the chickens create for our class community?  
 Would the chickens continue to strengthen the bond of our class community?  
 What would we research?

Our intentions were to provide the children with the unique and special opportunity of observing and caring for animals first hand. We believed that not only would this strengthen the bonds between the children. It would also connect them with animals and make them aware of animal behaviour.

**“Perceiving nature as an internal rather than an external component helps us to demonstrate a view of the natural world as part of the human experience, something worth protecting. An exploration of the four elements-humans, the land, plants and animals-and their inter-relatedness are vital to feeling connected to the natural world.”** (Sue Elliot, page 45, 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Our first encounters with the two chicks were inside the classroom where the children had opportunities to make observations about them. As the chickens grew, we gave the children more ownership of them. They voted on names for the chickens, encouraged the chickens to come out of their coop and were happy to observe or play alongside the chickens.

The chickens encouraged our children to develop a relationship with the other children. Small groups of children spent time with us observing and discussing the chickens. Groups of children from each kindergarten discussed details such as why we called them Mango and Chocolate, or conversations about the behaviours of the chickens whilst out of their house. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6

Whilst some of the children enjoyed having the chickens as part of our group, other children in our group were upset that the chickens had eaten the plants that they had planted with their parents in the garden.

*We planted those plants with our mums and dads and now they are all gone!*

*Why did the chickens eat our plants? Elise puts their own food in their house every day!  
 The chickens are greedy. They want their food and our plants.*

After much discussion with the children, some of them put forward their theories about what we could do.

*We can plant some new plants  
 But the chickens will eat those plants too.  
 We could say, Chickens, stop digging and eating our plants!  
 But chickens don't listen.  
 Some animals listen. When my mum says “sit” to my dog it listens.  
 Yeah, but the chickens like the plants too much. They won't listen  
 Maybe we could cover the plants....*

We listened to the children's thoughts and after much discussion we invited back one of our parents who was a plant expert, to help us replant our vegetable garden. The children also had many theories as to how we could protect our plants from the chickens. We decided to cover the plants with recyclable containers that would let the elements in, but not the chickens. The children worked in small groups to create an edible garden.

**“It is utterly part of nature to want roots, to need roots, to struggle for roots, for a sense of belonging, for some place that is recognised as mine, as yours as ours.”** (Coles, 1970).<sup>4</sup>

“

We are now waiting in anticipation for our chickens to mature and lay eggs. When this process happens we would have come full circle in our intent to make connections with the outdoors and to create a community.”

#### References

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3. *The Outdoor Playspace naturally for children birth to five years.* Elliot, Sue. Pademelon Press. 2008. p.45
4. *Uprooted children.* Coles, R. Harper and Row, 1970

#### Figures

- Fig. 1 Clearing the plot.
- Fig. 2 Parents planting seeds with their children.
- Fig. 3 Parents planting seeds with their children.
- Fig. 4 Looking after the plants.
- Fig. 5 Egg hatching program.
- Fig. 6 The chickens 'Mango' and 'Chocolate'.



Fig. 2

*Shadows don't get hurt because they don't have feelings. They don't have feelings because they don't have brains.*

The children were showing an interest in their own shadows.

How could we explore this further?

What understandings do the children already have about shadows?

*Shadows can't talk.*

*Shadows don't get hurt because they are not real. Shadows are pretend because they don't have eyes, a nose or a face. We can't be friends with a shadow.*

*Shadows sleep at night so we can't see them.*

*There are shadows at night because my mummy showed me. When the sun goes down and the moon comes out and we turn on the light inside the house, then I saw the shadows on my deck near the swimming pool.*

*Shadows go inside you when it rains because they don't want to get wet.*

*When I sit my shadow sits and when I do the star jump my shadow does it too.* (Fig. 2)

*You need sun to see the shadow. Without sun there won't be any shadow.*

What did the children do when they saw their shadows?

When the children were tracing each other's shadows outside on the concrete, they discovered that the shadows looked bigger than themselves. They tested this theory by measuring their shadows with twine.

The children also tested their theories about shadows and colour. The translucent blocks on the window ledge looked the same shape in the shadow. It was easier for the children to identify these blocks with their colours. They began to match the block to its shadow. Once they moved the block the shadow disappeared.

*You got to put the block back if you want to see the shadow. If I put my hand on the red shadow my hand becomes red. When I put the red block on top of blue, the shadow is purple.*

We also have some rectangle paper shapes on the door. Whenever we open the door these shapes change their shadow to diamond



Fig. 3

shapes. The children were intrigued and confused as to where these diamond shadows were coming from.

*Shadows are like magic and they can change.*

Together with the children we observed that during the day the shadows were moving from one place to another. They would trace the shadows and go for lunch. When they came back the shadows had moved.

*The sun is making the shadows move because the sun moves.*

*How does the sun move?*

*The sun goes around the world and that is why things change.*

With colleagues we discussed how to further challenge the children's theories about *the moving sun*. In our studio we set up a table which was covered with white paper. Two lamps were placed on the table. We added some figurines and some clay shapes that the children had made. The children began to move the lamps backwards and forwards. (Fig. 3)

*When we moved the lamp this side the shadow moved to the other side and when we moved the lamp to this side the shadow went to the other side.*

*When we moved the lamp close to the shadow the shadow shrunk. Moving the lamp away made the shadow bigger.*

*When we moved the lamp sideways the shadow of the square clay shape became a rectangle.* Did this exploration help the children understand why the rectangle shapes on our door changes its shape during the day?

The children added some wooden blocks to this table and observed the shadows of different shapes and how they changed when the lamp was moved. The translucent coloured blocks were added to the table. The children wondered why the shadows from the translucent blocks were coloured and why coloured opaque blocks, only had grey shadows. One of the children made a building with opaque blocks and put the translucent blocks in front of the opaque blocks. (Fig. 4)

*Look I made the blocks look coloured!*

We now added a torch for the children to further their exploration. The children now moved the torch and noticed that as the direction of the torch changed so did the shadows. We discussed

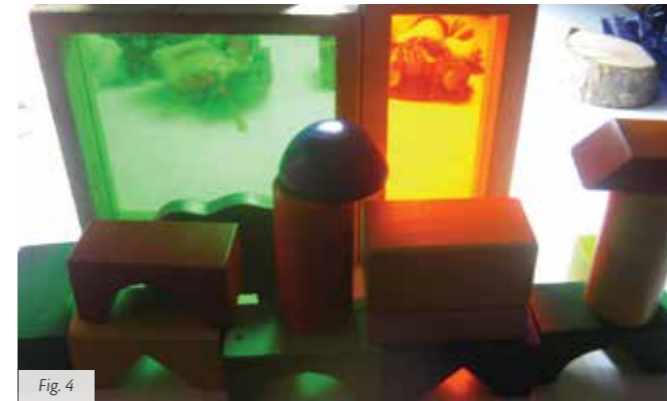


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

with the children their findings and decided to visit our 'Centre for Hidden Treasures'. The children chose new materials e.g. paper, plastic, aluminum, steel and cellophane to further test their theories to see which objects the light could pass through and which objects that the light could not pass through.

*The light has to go through things to make the coloured shadow and the shadow will be only the colour that is in there.*

While the children were experimenting in the studio with the lamp and the torch they inadvertently shone the torch on the disco ball that was hanging in our studio. They saw two shadows from the ball. One of the children quickly turned off the lamp and then there was only one shadow.

*There are two shadows because there are two lights.*

We added another lamp to the table and the children turned the three lights and pointed it to the disco ball.

*Now we can see three shadows.*

We posed some questions to the children;

If there were more lights would we get more shadows?

If we moved the lamp up and down on an object, where would we see the shadow?

“ We have now set up a shadow theatre in our class where small groups of children are making shadow puppets and further constructing their theories about shadows.

” (Fig. 5 & 6)

#### Reference

1. Louis Malaguzzi. <http://bd058.k12.sd.us/pagelinks/ubd%20lesson.htm>

#### Figures

- Fig. 1 The children are playing with their shadows.  
 Fig. 2 A child is observing his own shadow.  
 Fig. 3 The children are moving the lamp to see where the shadow will fall.  
 Fig. 4 Making opaque blocks look coloured with the shadow of translucent block.  
 Fig. 5 The children are making shadows with the shadow boxes.  
 Fig. 6 The children made their shadow puppet theatre.

# There is Pink in the Rainbow

“

It is through the rainbow that we have begun our journey. We have taken many paths and we still have not come to the end. This is reflected in the rainbow itself. Have we ever met someone who has found the end of the rainbow? ”

We began with a conversation with a small group of children in the studio. The children were mixing colours and painting. The children created mixtures of pink, green, purple and grey with the paints. One child was painting her paper pink. (Fig. 1 & 2)

**What are you painting?**

*A rainbow.*

**What are the rainbow colours?**

Another child answered

*Blue and green aren't rainbow colours. I saw a rainbow, there is no pink! Pink is not in rainbows!*



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The children to whom the question had been posed responded.

*There is pink!* (Fig. 3)

Is there pink in the rainbow? The child who emphatically told us there is pink in the rainbow has become the protagonist of this investigation. Through one comment we have embarked on a multi-faceted exploration.

We took the question of the rainbow colours to the whole kindergarten group. Some knew the colours and some did not.

**How can we find the colours of the rainbow?**

*Look on the computer.*

We found a song 'I can sing a rainbow' which mentioned pink as a colour in the rainbow. Would this satisfy the children? We asked the child, who originally made the statement regarding pink; her response was "no" we must continue searching for the pink in the rainbow.

We found prisms and crystals to conduct our research from a scientific base of discovery. The family of the protagonist lent us 'sun catchers' to use in the classroom, as they had also been involved in discussions about rainbows at home. But like a rainbow in the sky, we had to wait for the right conditions for a rainbow to be produced in the classroom. (Fig. 4 & 5)

*Look a rainbow*

The children noticed during mat time that there were rainbows scattered on the walls. I held up my hand, there was a rainbow on my palm, I closed my hand.

*No, you can't catch a rainbow.*

Again we became engaged in the wonder of the rainbow. The children were delighted to see the rainbows dance around the room and across their faces. We continued the researching of the rainbow. We discussed how to catch a rainbow? The camera would not capture the colours, it faded them out. The children and the educators were learning alongside each other and from each other. Collaborating with each other to develop an answer. We did not find a solution.

Again the rainbow surprised us by appearing on a wall during a music class. It was a large rainbow and its colours were very clear. We called over the child who believes that pink is in the rainbow.

The child considered the colours closely and pointed to a band of colour somewhere near the end of the red. She did not speak.

Reflecting on what we had previously learnt from our colour mixing exploration where the children discovered red and white when mixed together made pink we asked;

**How can there be pink if there is no white?**

There was still no answer. Her words came later when we were back in our classroom.

*White is not a colour.*

How does she know this? Where does this knowledge come from? When a child comes to kindergarten each day, they bring with



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

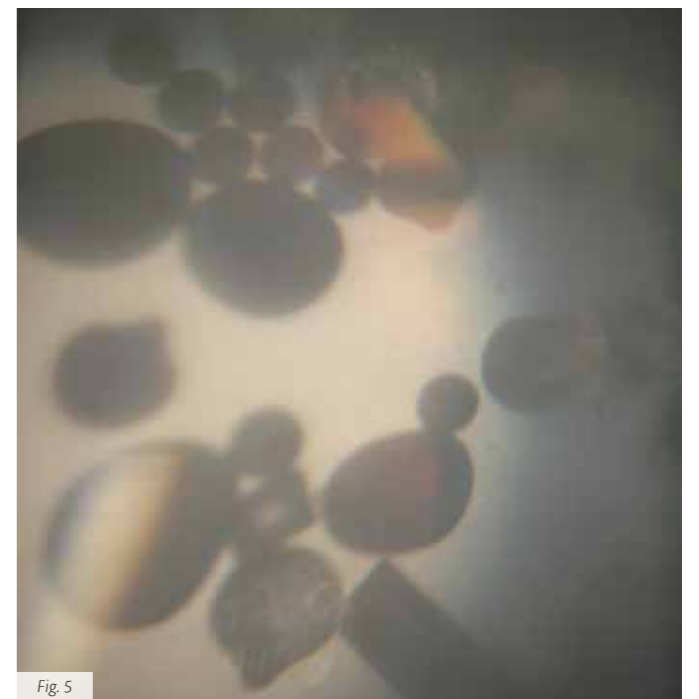


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

them a wealth of information gathered from their families and their environments. **“Children acquire this knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which they live through playful interaction with objects and people.”** (Bredekamp, 1990).<sup>1</sup>

It is our role as early childhood educators to acknowledge this and build on it. With this in mind we approached the child's family and asked about where this knowledge on colour comes from. They were not aware of discussing what a colour is and what it is not. Is the child correct in her statement? We wondered what the definition of colour is.

We looked up the definition of colour and discovered that in physics colours are defined as **refractions of light, a rainbow is a refraction of light** (The Free Dictionary, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

We cannot underestimate the depth of knowledge a child brings and as early childhood educators, it is our role to facilitate their learning, as the child can facilitate our learning.

We now understand that white is not a colour and there is possibly pink in the rainbow but where to from here? We have had children in the class who wish to construct their own rainbow and through discussion they have decided to create one from recycled materials somehow fastened to a large canvas. We do not believe this will conclude the investigation as there are more questions to be answered; each child presents different ideas.

We have had a child approach an educator to say that people can make rainbows.

*People can be a rainbow. They can be stuck together. You can be all blue, even your legs. Only blue.* (Fig. 6)

“

What is it about the rainbow that delights us? Is it the surprise of the occurrence? We all view the rainbow with our own history and some histories are longer than others, but all views have value. We will continue to reflect on where we have been on this journey and wonder where it will go. ”

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1. Bredekamp, S 1990, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth Through Age 8*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, DC, viewed August, 2012, <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/earlycl/ea11k1-1.htm>
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## 4 Year Old Kinder



# The Story of the Waiting Tree. Sometimes a story only begins after you close the book...

“

In 2011 our intent was to build relationships so that we could develop a strong kinder community. One way of doing this was by each child and educator having part of their story waiting to be told, in a specially chosen box, and contents which would enable us to learn more about each other through our uniqueness and possible similarities. We called this investigation ‘Who’s in the Box ... The stories of Us.’ ”

In 2012, it was a natural progression that our big idea would be stories, and we set out to make room in our classroom for storytelling voices to be encouraged and heard. Our intent was multifaceted. One goal was to read and expose the children to as many stories as possible through story boxes in which we provided stories with props and dress-ups to enable the children to dramatize their favourites, whilst reading many storybooks. Ultimately the children would write and illustrate their own stories. Little did we know at the outset that a very special and unique story was about to spontaneously unfold.

The children listened to a story written by Margaret Wild; ‘A Bit of Company’. In the story, Christopher’s mother is too busy with triplets to play with him. He doesn’t know it, but the neighbour Molly MacNamara, is also feeling very lonely. One morning she screams from loneliness, and Christopher comes to her rescue. They discover that all they both need is a bit of company and a friendship develops...and so the book was closed...and was the provocation for the beginning of our story of *the tree we love*.

The story of Christopher and Molly provoked a wonderfully rich conversation about loneliness, and the children realised that one can be lonely sometimes, but friendship is often close by. What followed was a discussion about what you could do if you were lonely during the kinder day. The children had many suggestions.

*There needs to be a special place to go.*

One of the children spoke about a specific tree in our kinder garden. (Fig. 1–4)

There was unanimous agreement that under the tree would be the place to go if one was alone and needed company. In order for

everyone to know this special place, the children decided the tree needed a name. Three names were suggested (*The Rescue Tree, The Happy Tree, and The Waiting Tree*) and voted upon, and in doing so, the children learnt about a voting process. The name of the ‘Waiting Tree’ received the most votes.

Next, rules were put into place as to how the special area under the tree would be used;

More than one child sitting under the tree would become a group that could play together.

If a child sees someone alone under the tree they should go and invite them to play.

If the adults notice a child under the tree, they can alert the other children to this.

*If you ‘want’ to be alone, you can’t go to the Waiting Tree.*

*If you are under the tree and someone comes to take you, you can’t say you don’t want to play with that person.*

Since this time, children who needed a friend to play with would be found sitting and waiting for company under the tree. The children had found a solution for feeling lonely. At this point the tree was a place to go for comfort and we wondered if a deeper relationship with the tree would develop.

The Jewish festival of Tu B’shevat (New Year of the trees) followed and the children listened to the story of ‘The Giving Tree’ by Shel Silverstein. Another discussion evolved about what gifts trees give to us. The children wanted to thank our tree for its gift of ‘shelter’ and a ‘comforting place for us to be’, by giving it gifts, such as *flowers, ladybugs, photos of us, water, fertiliser and spray for the bugs that hurt the tree*.

This was the beginning of a shift in the children’s thinking, now attributing human feelings to the tree. We talked about what the tree may hear or feel during the day, and the children shared their theories and made predictions...

*During the day, the tree may hear cars, motorbikes, children screaming, the wind, aeroplanes, music, chimes, birds, thunder and lightning, at night it may hear snoring, owls, bats, the leaves swooshing, witches flying on their magic brooms, and the tree may feel the wind and the cold ground.* Next the children and their teachers lay blindfolded under the tree to see if their predictions were correct. (Fig. 5)

Autumn came and the children watched the leaves change colour and fall to the ground. Finally after many weeks there were only 3 leaves left and the children checked every day to see when they would succumb to the wind...and winter finally came and our tree was *naked*. The children now started to be aware of and notice other trees and nests in the kinder garden. We shared the investigation with Teacher Helene. She listened to these stories and spoke about the sharing of these events through other languages including the language of film.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Our special 'Waiting Tree', now having lost all of its leaves, became a living, dynamic example of the transition from one season to another. Simultaneously in Jewish studies, discussion revolved around what seasons in Israel accompanied the festivals. It was noted that here in Australia these seasons during which the festivals take place are different.

We began to notice the children hanging things off the branches of the tree, and we wondered why.

*Because it's special and we don't want it to look naked, we put things on the tree. We want it to be dressed.*

What followed was daily concern that the tree was cold because it had lost its leaves. A group of children used the movable parts in the garden to make a house for the tree around its trunk, so that it would be warm.

We looked at many projects around the world where trees were wrapped in wool or fabric, and one of the children found a tree in the school grounds that was wrapped in knitting...and then other children found another wrapped tree in the kinder playground. It was decided that we would wrap our tree, and the children wove a piece of fabric, and made chains of finger knitting to help 'warm' the tree.

Then one of the children said; *Tomorrow is the 'Waiting Tree's' birthday.*

How do you know that?

*Because it's on my calendar at home.*

The children wanted to bring gifts for the tree, and so our collection of succulents planted in old shoes began, and the children seemed happy that our tree would have company too. One child planted a 'friend' for the tree in the ground under the branches. Some children cared for the tree by spontaneously watering it. (Fig. 6–8)



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

The children wondered how old their tree was. They thought that a tree would have to be cut down to see how old it is, and that if we loved our tree we wouldn't want to do that. They also wondered about the new group of kinder children coming into this garden when they were in Prep, and no longer able to look after their special friend.

*How will they know it's the tree we love?*

The children decided that we needed to make a permanent sign explaining the importance of the tree and its special place in our garden and our hearts, and they have created the words that will be on the sign.

Our 'Waiting Tree' went from being a place of comfort for the children, to a special friend, to a living representative of nature and the seasons. (Fig. 9)

“ At this point, we wondered how we could immortalise this special story, whilst incorporating the children's paintings, drawings, and clay representations of the tree... ”

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#### Figures

- Fig. 1 Tree in Summer.  
 Fig. 2 Tree with yellow leaves.  
 Fig. 3 Tree bare.  
 Fig. 4 Tree in Spring.  
 Fig. 5 Children lying 'blindfolded' under the tree.  
 Fig. 6 Planting a friend for the tree.  
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 Fig. 9 Our tree in full blossom.



Fig. 9

Kinder 4Z

## Moving images... stories retold...

“

Back and forth they went. Initially it was the trunk of the tree they painted as if it was suspended on the page. They were encouraged to sit under the tree and touch the ground around the tree noticing exposed roots and feeling the soil, both of which anchored the tree to the ground. ”

And then their paintings began to include the tan bark around the base of the tree, some fallen leaves and dark soil which offered us further insights on how the children were including the tree in relation to the earth, not in isolation of it. Is this not a metaphor for the many ways of seeing? One is dependent on the other. Can anything be seen in isolation? We were encouraging the naming and noticing of the dependency on the 'other', the changing seasons, the elements that impact on our environment and in turn on us. Some explored how they could share through their paintings such as discussing the wind blowing the leaves off the tree. Some chose to pick up leaves and clip them to their easel to look closer as they experimented with how to make the colours and shades of the tree and its leaves. (Fig. 1–4)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



At each session the children painted, drew, modelled their view of the tree at the time, and they were keen to let me know how many leaves were left. I was also to be reminded by the group that there were a few but very important tiny green apples (crab apple tree) in their painting of their tree. (Fig. 5–7)

Strong winds had swept up the leaves of this tree and other trees, whooshing and dancing around the garden, finally resting like a carpet on the outdoor verandas of the kinder classrooms. Excitedly the children called me to see this marvellous sight.

For some, the response was the need to sweep up and remove the leaves. However a group of children gathered large amounts of leaves, bringing large bundles of multi coloured leaves into the studio. The children delighted in retelling me the story of the forceful winds and the enormity of leaves blown into their garden. (Fig. 8)

The idea of the kinder children creating an animated story based on their growing fondness and respect for this tree was the offering of another rich language for children to explore their stories. Stories which they continue to weave and to this day revisit and embellish, as they care for this tree on a daily basis. Their concern too, with what would become of the tree when they moved into the next class level was becoming for them another important focus. I spent many sessions together with their kinder teachers. I listened to their own excitement with continual surprise at the insightfulness and suggestions of the children as well as their own personal responses to this tree and recollection of their own childhood experiences, memories and stories. We compared our scribed conversations of the children during this investigation and used our photographs as another tool which would direct our intent and further focus.

We were keen to continue the children's surprise and curiosity as they witnessed daily new phenomenon that they were keen to share for others to experience.

Within our centre we often discuss the importance of documentation for both children and teachers. How does documentation, observations through photographs, film, scribing children's and our own conversations deepen our understanding of actions and thoughts of the children and ourselves always with the anticipation of taking this thinking to a deeper level.

For me with this group it was the thinking about the first forays into the moving image. Many years ago I had written a thesis about the importance of photography within art history and the early inventions of the combining of a sequence of photographs such as those by Eadweard Muybridge. The revelation of still images coming alive still evokes much excitement today, as with this group of children who took both families and visitors to observe the ongoing changes to this tree and their growing affection and relationship with it. The children were then able to watch the still photographs of their leaves moving when pressing the play button on the screen. The camera could create a number of stills each displaying a different movement and when seen on a film strip...

The children carefully crafted coloured leaves out of modelling clay retelling the story of the seasons as we watched the shades of green turn to oranges and yellows, and back to green and the blossoming.

The story of the three green leaves began as a short story where we could offer the language of animation as a rich possibility for the children to engage in a collaborative venture based on a shared and experienced story. As the group sat around the table touching and commenting on the leaves suddenly lifting the large pile of leaves into the air they explained the huge wind and watched as leaves floated back to the surface of the table. One child commented that now there was only one green leaf among the other autumn leaf colours. Two other green leaves were discovered and the story began. (Fig. 9–11)

*Once there were three green leaves. They wanted to play with the other leaves. They didn't have the colours of the other leaves. They tried to get back on the tree. They thought if they did this they would change colour. They fell off. They were still green. Everyone is different. It's like children. It doesn't matter what colour you are. We can all play together even if we are different.*

The children's exploration of these leaves through colour, shape and size and with closer introspection of these details became critical factors in determining the moral of their story. What was significant for us was the children's references to the leaves and themselves. We had over time seen a change in the children's responses when asked who were and would be the tree's friends. After all the tree was as the children phrased it *our friend* who waited with them until another child came to play with them.

In creating this initial short film about the three green leaves this group of children were able to share with others skills they had learned and further groups explored this new dimension in their story telling.

The introduction of a new type of modelling clay which in actual fact was specifically used in Claymation techniques, offered the children a new medium to create further reflections of their experiences. The modelling clay was able to be moulded and changed just so slightly as each movement was captured. The children were encouraged to also refer to the other documentation they had collected to assist them in their representations using this new medium. It was also important to note that the group were becoming accustomed to mentoring, supporting and assisting others in the group sharing their knowledge in creating these new images with this medium. The intent of creating a film was very much an outcome all were excited to participate in. Some children repeated an action or a position as other children drew and modelled images of them, sitting under the 'Waiting tree'. Some made models of children adding their weavings to the 'Waiting tree' for when it was cold. Others captured on film, the taking of another's hand who was waiting under this tree.

The creation of a film was not just to explore new techniques to show the skills achieved. We are most aware that new technologies can become a fad for a period of time in isolation, until superseded by another programme or app. or new hardware. For us the creation of this short film was so purposeful on several levels. In looking at the Early years Learning Framework entitled 'Being, Belonging and Becoming' together with our practice inspired by the Educational



project from Reggio Emilia, in both instances the reference to the environment is an important attitude, layer and tool for learning. Also too the developing of relationships and time as major factors for us in both the children and teachers research in our investigations.

During preparation and research into which method of film making we would embark on with the children we decided it was important to explore those which offered experimentation and to some degree an effect which would not take years in the making as we are aware of in many of the films we watch. For my own interest I participated in a short course workshop of oil painting on glass as a filmmaking technique with a well known film maker. Inspiring in its concept it was also an emotional revisiting for me with a background in using this medium as a material for painting and how materials have the ability to evoke an essence of a thought through the strong relationship developed with the materials used. For me oil paint as a medium of fluidity and its transformative qualities was another technique of film making to explore with the children in a sense similar to the modelling clay they would use which was in a permanent modelling state. And so the use of oil paint and the constant changing of the painted subject was captured using a webcam. The children delighted in truly feeling and witnessing their story and the seasonal changes in their tree. Wiping away the painted brilliant green leaves to be overlaid with their oil painted mixtures of autumn colours, carefully using their fine brushes and with the touch of the tip to indicate the gradual changing of shades, we could see that the children were mesmerised by this technique. Again a wonderful sharing with staff who were intrigued with this process. (Fig. 12)

The children explored in small groups. Some chose to use the computer to record the movements whilst others chose to move the models in clay while their friends used the webcam and computer to capture each movement. Others created additional props. Some children would be the narrators, recording their voices and observing the visual audio line as their voice was raised or lowered as they shared their story about the 'Waiting Tree'. (Fig. 13–17)

And others chose to compose a soundscape for this story. How would one capture the essence of the wind, the changing seasons,

and the delight of the children as they gathered under the tree to assist the tree in some way?

Other children chose to be the models under the tree as some of the children drew them sitting on the logs waiting for others to come to play with them. Some redrew their observations of the tree in order to make sure they would know what it looked like when they went to the studio to fashion the tree and its leaves out of modelling clay. Over the first few months the children discussed how the story of the tree might unfold. Many ideas flowed, and the children often changed their minds during the course of the many months they spent observing the tree, becoming attached to the tree as a landmark and their friend in their kinder garden.

*One day the waiting tree was a little seed. Then it grew bigger and then the grass grew bigger and the plants grew. When it rained the water came onto the seed and the seed grew and grew. Leaves came on the tree, green leaves. Different colour leaves came, yellowish and brownish. They fell off. The tree felt cold and sad. We made it warm. We wrapped it in with our weavings and finger knitting. After more water new leaves grew on the tree. An apple grew on the tree. They picked it and put some water on it and ate it. New apples grew. This tree was in the kinder playground. All of the children discovered it. They tried to put the leaves back. They tried to tie the leaves on the tree so they would never fall off. But new leaves grew back. The kinder children liked this tree. The children were the friend of the tree. If you go to the tree someone will pick you up and play with you. The children needed to name the tree. The tree wanted to be named because it was lonely. The tree was also sad because some of the children picked the crab apples off the tree and it couldn't grow. We gave the tree a name and it was happy.*

“

The patience and focus of this group of young children in the making of this film through the many layers of this investigation was for us as a result of the deep and authentic involvement of both the children and their teachers over a lengthy and purposeful period of time.”

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Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Kinder 4L

*Some people don't live in houses. They live in caves or apartments...*

While reflecting on two years of exploration, discovery, trials and tribulations associated with young children working with materials and sustained play I continue to think about a quote by Loris Malaguzzi. It is Malaguzzi (1994) who defines the image of the child as rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and most of all connected to adults and children. Malaguzzi recognised all the many different ways in which children interpret the world and represent their theories. (cited in Thornton & Brunton, 2005).<sup>1</sup>

**“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’.”** (Reynolds & Jones, 1992).<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1 & 2)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Children interpret ideas and represent them through the ‘hundred languages of children.’ The ‘hundred languages of children’ depends on three things according to Millikan (2003). **“... resources and experiences, opportunities to express in different ways their thinking and adults who take children seriously and listen to them respectfully.”**<sup>3</sup>

With this theory in mind we observed, watched, listened and waited.

It was evident from early on in 2011 that within this group of young children, the idea of building and construction was a strength. Our classroom was often filled with remarkable structures. Constructions, towers, houses and buildings were made out of blocks, tins, Duplo, wooden frames and loose parts.

Structures were made on the floor, on tables in small trays, indoors and outdoors. Structures were left in spaces where the children were able to continue working on over a long period of time. Many structures collapsed on a regular basis, and this led to arguments, disappointments, resilience and tenacity. We continued to encourage the children not to give up, but to continue to rebuild if necessary.

The culture within the room revolved around respecting one another's work and enabling small groups to work out problems together.

**“Materials are the text of early childhood classrooms. Unlike books filled with facts and printed words, materials are more like outlines. They offer openings and pathways by and through which children may enter the world of knowledge. Materials become the tools with which children give form to and express**

their understandings of the world and the meanings they have constructed.” (Cuffaro, 1995, p.33).<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 3–8)



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 6



Fig. 5



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Whilst working in the studio with a small group of children, they were trying to establish a technique to build their houses out of clay. There were many points of view, particularly by some of the children who had attempted to construct houses on previous occasions, using a variety of construction materials. They were using their prior information that had been established to test their theories when using clay. Once their ideas had been discussed they proceeded to “build”

First the floor then the walls. (Fig. 9 & 10)



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

As the children continued to work with the clay the following conversation was recorded.

*My house is 22 Victoria Street.*

*My number is 25.*

*I live in Camberwell Street, but I don't know the number.*

*I live in Lesley Street.*

*We have houses because we have to live somewhere. Not everybody lives in houses.*

*No, creatures don't.*

*Some people don't live in houses. They live in caves or apartments.*

*Only on olden days they lived in caves and hunted dinosaurs.*

*People can live outside in nature.*

*Yeah, they can live in camp world.*

*When we were never born do you know what happened? The people on TV were in this world.*

*A jail is a house for robbers. (Fig. 11)*



Fig. 11

*G-d designed the houses.*

*No, builders did. The mountain has lots of rocks on the top, so my house doesn't need a roof, because the rocks will fall down on the house and make a cover. (Fig. 12)*

The children were continually making connections to their homes, buildings in the city and their understandings of rules about stability, size, composition and placement of materials according to their own logic. They also drew their interpretations of houses using fine liners. (Fig. 13 & 14)



Fig. 13



Fig. 12



Fig. 14

The big foam blocks were particularly conducive to constructing structures such as houses. The foam blocks were solid and made it possible to make a base that was very stable.

*If it is stable that is good. Then it won't collapse.*

*I am making windows for the house.*

*But we need a garage*

*Well, this could be the cubby*

*No! You have to be the mum.*

While the children were building they also discussed who would be in the house and what their tasks would be.

*The other side is the garage. I don't want the mum to die*

*Well if I be the mum then I will be old.*

*I am trapped*

*Guys, I need a rectangle*

*I don't need a square*

*This is what we need.*

*Then it will be bigger.*

*If it is a big garage then we can have a big car. Two rectangles can be the car. (Fig. 15)*



Fig. 15

*I can be the baby.*

*Then I can be the big mum*

*But some mums get old and start to die.*

*But I started the game and built it so...*

*Maybe I will be a little mum...*

*Not a little one, a big one.*

*I made a carpet.*

*THAT IS NOT GOOD ON THIS SIDE. It was easier before. It was steady. Guys, I need you to help me. Something is wrong.*

*I can tell you something? Bailey, this could be the kitchen where I am standing. (Fig. 16 & 17)*



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

*Something is not safe in the garage.*

*No, over here on this side.*

*That is the trampoline.*

*So what is this?*

*The building is breaking in a minute. The garage is not stable. We need something to attach. See guys, it is really bad. It is not working. The whole building broke now. If we don't make it bigger then we can't all fit.*

Together this class community have been building constructions, relationships, partnerships and stories. Ideas were woven around possibilities, assumptions, calculations and hypotheses.

*L: A house has big walls and small bricks. You make little bricks flat.*

*B: You also make the floor flat. I can make a door without using any other materials. That's the way you do a door. It can't be too big otherwise it will collapse and break and the walls will pull it off.*

“When you try to understand how children learn, you realise it takes place in a multi-disciplinary and multi-sensory way, a way that is already inherent in children. Observation and documentation show how children seek beauty through many languages that are empathetic to each other not separate and sequential: how they seek an aesthetic of expression of their ideas and thoughts.” (Atelierista: Sabot, Stony Point).<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 17 & 18)

“

Theories were tested and retried using a variety of materials and very often success was achieved. What does that mean? Well, when the children concluded their discussion and work there was always a sense of satisfaction and pride amongst the class community and very often these achievements were shared in a variety of ways. ”

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“We often forget that WE ARE NATURE. Nature is not something separate from us”

(Andy Goldsworthy).<sup>1</sup>

“

Last year we investigated the possibilities that exist in our outdoor area with the introduction of the concept of ‘loose parts.’ ”

As a result of this, the interest in the outdoor environment has continued and reveals for us the wonder and curiosity in the environment. We look at learning opportunities within the natural materials that surround us in the garden.

“The pedagogues’ belief in the child as competent, the environment as the third teacher and the place of creativity in learning to enable the multiple possibilities of interpretation are all closely connected to the outdoor space- nature.” (Claire Warden).<sup>2</sup>

We listened to the children’s thinking as they explored and played outdoors. We realised how important it is to listen to them as they develop relationships with their environment.

This year was our second year with our kinder group. They were approaching their fifth birthday. Together with Teacher Helene our Head of Arts, myself and classroom colleagues we began with the following hypothesis;

Natural materials do engage children in rich learning opportunities. If we give similar time and value to the outdoor environment as we do to the indoors, there will be sustained learning, collaboration, theories tested, co- construction of knowledge and problem solving.

How did we begin? Together with Helene we had many and regular long conversations and emails, about the learning that had taken place the previous year and what elements we might revisit, and what questions and provocations we might present to the group.

We have seen deep engagement with sensory materials such as sand, mud and water. These materials were used in imaginary and sensory play; mud soup, *chocolate cake*. (Fig. 1)

Would these experiences be seen as activities and how could we research deeper learning possibilities in addition to sensory play? Did the children see or wonder about these elements and did they connect these materials with the environment or could these sensory materials have been replaced with other activities?

“Children are resourceful and look for materials that will give credit and enhance their play, making it richer and meaningful, and transporting them into their own world. This also requires time. Children need time to think, to explore and assimilate.” (Claire Warden).<sup>3</sup>

During term two of this year, I was part of an international conference in Reggio Emilia to experience their renowned

educational approach. My experience there left a lasting impression of the deep engagement of teachers and children as they researched together, even the youngest children. “Our starting point is that each child has enormous potential for constructing their own knowledge.” (Maddalena Tedeschi).<sup>4</sup>

Together with Helene we reflected on the following questions:

Why is the outdoor environment more or less engaging for some children and adults?

Do we consider and value the rich learning opportunities in the outdoor environment?

How do we see engagement of children in the outdoor environment and is this dependent on age?

What role do the educators play?

As Maddalena Tedeschi says, “Having curious adults, capable of amazement, working with children creates the element for children to see that the adult is amazed like them, interested in learning which is a great motivator”.<sup>5</sup>

In listening to Marc Armitage an international play consultant talking about the “hidden curriculum outdoors”, Marc made the correlation between countries where the greater the amount of time spent outdoors was linked to the higher attainment of learning.<sup>6</sup> We invited small groups of children to a designated space in our playground, similar to an invitation to an area in the classroom. The space was an area defined by a low wooden border and a dried earth base.

How would this meeting be different from the children’s previous encounters in our outdoor area?

We sat with the group of children in this space and posed some questions, challenges and problem solving possibilities.

Our intent here was for the groups to explore the natural materials heightening an understanding that these materials offered rich and different learning opportunities from the indoor environment.

“We need to model respect, care and appreciation for our natural environment.” (Janet Robertson).<sup>7</sup>

We asked the children to look in the kinder garden and bring back some of the natural materials they had discovered. The children collected, leaves, twigs, rocks, pebbles, seed pods, tree roots and brought them to the wooden platforms in this area. The different shapes, sizes and colours of the rocks were a specific focus of some groups as they ordered by classification. Colour became another strong focus as one group discovered that by immersing the rocks in water the colour and pattern of each rock became more vivid. Weight was also another discovery as they organised and reorganised their rock collection according to size. (Fig. 2)

*Put the stuff that is the same next to each other.*

*When you find something that is the same you put it together.*



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

This space in the outdoor garden became a serious area of investigation and research with the children. The children decided that they needed a sign for others to be aware of and respectful of their work.

*How can we tell people not to touch our work?*

*We could make a sign with one of these stuff.* (Fig. 3)

Small sticks and twigs were also collected and arranged both in patterns and as a means for some to create visible representations in letter formations. Other groups brought back materials for discussion wondering if these were in fact natural materials and where had they come from.

Each material had a story to share when it encountered the eyes, hands and minds of the children, revisiting and reimagining.



Fig. 4

We asked the children what they knew about the reference to discovery.  
*It means you found something.*

*You find nature on the ground, like tree nuts and its cool when it grows big it falls on the ground.*

*I discovered a leaf, a sunflower.*

The children were becoming more observant of nature and growth.

The adults listened to the children and documented the conversations and actions between the children and the materials. We observed new relationships being formed, children collaborating, listening to one another. We noted the complexities of the children's placement of the materials and their thinking behind them. Each group approached the materials in a different way. We shared with each other photos and conversation that had occurred with each group and this furthered our research and projections.

We decided to use some of the rich resources in the library where non-fiction books about different landscapes within Australia might also be of interest to the children and foster a greater understanding of vastly different environments. At the same time one of my colleagues in the class had visited the Northern Territory and told the children about the area.

The children were fascinated by the colours of the landscapes especially of Uluru as the sun set on it. After they had heard stories about Kakadu in the Northern Territory the children went outdoors. I saw a group of children working with rocks, sticks and leaves who told me they were making an Aboriginal flower garden. It was interesting to see how they made connections with this new knowledge. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 5

We saw true relationships and a heightened awareness and sense of empathy developing with the outdoors. One Friday morning the tree loppers arrived to take down some trees on the other side of our kinder fence, with the children watching as the tree lopper was hoisted up by the cherry picker. We overheard the children's comments,

*They're not respecting nature!*

*Nature is growing the trees so no one will ever pick them again.*

*We need to keep the trees growing – if we cut them there won't be enough air.*

Recently we have brought some of the natural materials into the studio. Helene and I discussed how we would facilitate this investigation. We brought in baskets of tree stumps cut into smaller pieces, pebbles and sticks in the studio. We also discussed the surface area that the children might use. Would this be a on a table, or on the floor? We had noted the children's positions both in the garden and at the park. The children often crouched, sat and collaborated in these positions. We decided on some low podiums from our class. (Fig. 5)

We were inspired by the structures of British artist and environmentalist, Andy Goldsworthy who works with natural materials to create outdoor sculptures. Andy Goldsworthy uses photography to record his structures before they disappear in some conditions where they are made in the environment.

We left some photos of Andy Goldsworthy's structures which provided the provocation for further investigation.

We continue to revisit and reflect on our intent, time given and the many ways a provocation could be offered to the children.



Fig. 6

**“The role of the adult is above all one of listening, observing, and understanding the strategy that children use in a learning situation”.** (Filippini 1990).<sup>8</sup> As the children constructed with the natural materials in the studio they discovered more possibilities of these materials. *Look the rocks have different patterns on them. They were made like that. You should show these rocks to the class.* (Fig. 6 & 7)

They continue to test their theories of balance, creating shapes and designs. They have become risk takers and constructors of their knowledge. (Fig. 8)

The children now continue to visit the initial area we had designated outdoors. They have however moved the planks of wood and balanced them on climbing frames, where they have been working with placed rocks, large and small, arranging them in patterns, then re-arranging, moving the planks until satisfied with the outcome. As they picked up the rocks and moved them around, some of which were quite heavy, it appeared as if they were re-establishing relationships with them and building on previous understandings and experiences. (Fig. 9)

**“Children need time to think, to explore and assimilate.”** (Claire Warden).<sup>9</sup>

As a way of extending our investigation we took small groups of children to a park near our school to explore. The children collaborated in small groups of four and sometimes two, making decisions in creating different structures from the natural materials in the park.

Andy Goldsworthy's structures were once again a wonderful provocation. We asked the children what they noticed about his structures.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



He had to make sure it was stable. Let's make a big umbrella with sticks and leaves. I'm looking very carefully. We can add even more sticks and leaves and make it even gooder. (Fig. 10) (The structure fell over) When their structure fell they simply reconstructed and tested another theory.

We need some more support – heavy things like rocks.

Sticks were joined together – It's like we made a connection. Oh, it's got some good support now! (Fig. 11)

“Children create a deep rooted connection to the earth when they are able to connect to it in a variety of ways. We need to allow them to learn through real, meaningful experiences. (Claire Warden)<sup>10</sup> A further group were inspired by the idea of one child who suggested ‘making a cubby’ in the park. (Fig. 12)

With the children's prior knowledge of natural materials two groups gathered what they thought they needed to create the anticipated structure. Children used the fork of a branch as a support for another branch and fallen palm leaves were used to cover the frame.

The learning, peer collaboration and satisfaction for us was a culmination of previous experiences during the year.

We ask ourselves as the year draws to an end what changes have we observed in children's interactions and relationships with the outdoor environment. We have seen a greater awareness and engagement with the natural materials as learning opportunities.

A child found a branch that had fallen down due to strong winds. The child brought it to the teachers and said, *This should go into the studio with the natural materials.*

Would this have occurred prior to our research and provocations?

How might we proceed next year with other groups of children?

How has this research benefited us as teachers and researchers?

“

We are now thinking about the language that we use when referring to indoor and outdoor learning. ”

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#### Figures

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Prep



“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

(John Muir)<sup>1</sup>

“

Our group of Prep children was relatively unknown to each other, coming from three different kindergarten groups. There was indeed a need to establish ourselves as a community where the individual children felt that they had a place; that they belonged.”

To date, the children's fledgling friendships were tentative. They were still unsure of each other so our goal was to help them discover each other and to uncover what it would be that would help them make friendships. This required much thought, time and opportunity. With the following questions in mind, we set out to explore our immediate neighbourhood and to investigate our local park. The children were given no instructions other than that they could play anywhere in the park, as long as they were in sight of an adult and the play equipment was out of bounds.

**How will taking the children out into a natural environment impact on how they relate to each other? How does a differing environment impact on the individual? How does the environment help them to form their identity as a group?**

Over a series of three visits, the teachers and parent helpers observed and documented the children's interactions in the nearby park. On our first visit, several children spent time exploring on their own, either unsure of where they wanted to play or who they wanted to play with. By the third visit however, their play involved others. *I was doing something very unusual. I started to collect some tan bark. I was playing with someone and other people came.* (Fig. 1–4)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

*It was fun when we were making a pretend fire out of sticks. My favourite thing was doing the camp fire because we got branches and leaves and mud and yellow flowers.*

There were also wonderful examples of problem solving when children needed to find common ground. *I don't want to do what she wants to do. I want to build a fire. I want to play Chasey. Well maybe we could collect Nature. Okay. If you rub your hands together on this plant your hands smell nice. I was feeling happy because she was holding my hand the whole time and playing with me a lot.*

Our playground at school offers a different environment with a large area used for ball games and another area with fixed equipment. In contrast, the richness of nature in the park presented a vast and lush open space, ideal for running and chasing and laughing. The park is also interspersed with many areas of trees which are climbable and many which provide shelter and are an irresistible provocation for the use of one's imagination. **“For the children, trees thus become generators of metaphors and narrations that interweave with many voices, creating stories that seek to interpret reality.”** (Luigi Bellelli).<sup>2</sup> Children who are not football players in the school playground made the most of the chance in the park to play with others they would not normally engage with. Their play was imaginative and creative and it drew many other children into these groups as it allowed anyone, irrespective of their physical skills, to participate and belong. Carla Rinaldi reminds us, **“the physical environment in which children learn is central to fostering creativity and imagination.”**<sup>3</sup> A large group of boys decided to recreate the story of the Titanic, boys who at school, play very differently and usually not together. *He was driving the boat. It was a big bush. We don't do this at school because there are no big bushes there. We played Titanic because it had more trees and more space and fun things on the ground we could use.* One of my colleagues observing this group noted **“they liked to play with each other but also liked playing in big groups**



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

**with the other children. Their group play is very imaginative.”** Like the Luigi Bellelli Project, our project at the park, was **“to open up insights of knowledge into the strategies, creativity and imaginative qualities of children by letting their fun loving, playful and imaginative ways of seeing give direction to ours and amaze us for these days.”**<sup>4</sup>

Before our visits to the park our children were tentatively reaching out for friends. The open spaces of the park and the presence of the trees allowed them to be bolder. There were no limitations set by areas or equipment, rather they were free to play alongside their peers using their imagination and **“all their senses to delight in nature.”** (Claire Warden).<sup>5</sup>

Warden talks about the affordances that nature gives us, “the opportunities that arise from the interaction between the environment and the interests, ideas and intent of the individual.”<sup>96</sup> She tells us that “children who play in nature are imaginative because the stimulation is constantly stimulating the brain.”<sup>97</sup> Her thoughts that “the rhythms of nature seem to trigger behaviours and patterns in young children that adults need to be mindful of...”<sup>98</sup> are in accordance with our findings of the effects our park visits had on the relationships of the individuals within our class community. She further states that “affordances are unique to the individual playing child or group of children and are to some extent unpredictable. Children play in an environment and have an effect on it, whilst at the same point the environment is affecting the child.”<sup>99</sup> This unpredictability is part of the magic that nature holds for we were unaware of how friendships would be affected by the park spaces until we interacted with them.

A particular group of children were drawn to each other on the third visit.

*I sometimes play with them and this was fun.*

*I sometimes play with her at school but not this person.* (Fig. 5)



Fig. 5

These two boys found their friendship on these visits where they discovered they were both inspired by the open spaces to run and explore and to date they remain firm friends. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6

Several months after our visits the children revisited photos of themselves playing in the park. They were asked to remember why they played those games and why they played with those children. *Cos I wanted to play with them for a change. We had just learned the people's names. We got to learn more about them.*

*There was more area and you could meet more people and new people. I thought they were playing a fun game. It was so fun over there. It was a round place. I could go in a tunnel in the trees. The park had more space and more hiding places in the trees.*

Being together in nature has indeed sown the seeds for the future of our class friendships and as we continue our journey together, the question will be whether the opportunities which were presented at the park have been transplanted into the ongoing friendships the children are continuing to forge. While many of the friendships appear to be enduring, the type of play the children engage in has also broadened. The boys play is far more imaginative, affording all in the group their place. Then recently, a fine-looking wooden boat, was added to the school playground and has provided much inspiration for this group.

As we have these children for a second year, we plan to return to the park for another series of visits to allow us to re-examine our initial questions and observations.

“The child within nature will be the guide of what will or can happen and that whatever happens is the way it should be. And we should trust that.” (Lynn McNair).<sup>10</sup>

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#### Figures

- Fig. 1 Pondering who and what to play with.  
 Fig. 2 Building a fire together.  
 Fig. 3 More friends come to help.  
 Fig. 4 More friends join in.  
 Fig. 5 Discovering new friends.  
 Fig. 6 The joy of friendship.

Prep E

What are my strengths?  
 What are my challenges?



“Growth is inevitable. Throughout our lives we continue to grow both physically and emotionally, constructing who we are and creating an identity for ourselves.”

Through our life's experiences, we develop a “sense of self, of one's own self, which is a vital component of self-esteem, learning and development, even if it is a part of a never-ending process, it is a quality that the child must set in motion, with adult help and cooperation, as soon as he can” (The Hundred Languages of Children, p.35). Through constant reflection, a person spends time molding and changing themselves to become the best they can be. To achieve this, honest personal reflection needs to be practiced in regards to things we are good at as well as challenges we face, to make markers of who we are now and who we want to become, to make observations of where we have come from and what progress we have made.

As children, we experience many opportunities to view ourselves in different ways through many different languages. We experiment by 'make believe' we are someone else, testing behaviours and interactions, telling stories, elaborating, mirroring and trialing many different representations of ourselves. As educators, we teach the children how to reflect in different ways such as how to share their thinking about stories, what processes they use to solve problems or how to reflect on their recent experiences. We also encourage them to reflect on themselves; their actions, their achievements, their strengths and their challenges. In doing so, we create opportunities for them to develop, using the skills and personality traits that they have as well as being able to persevere with the challenges they cross and hope to eventually overcome.

This year, as part of our ongoing investigation into 'identity and community', we felt that it was important for the children to develop a good understanding of who they are now. We wanted the children to consider what type of person they are, how they relate to others and what things they may like to become better at. In considering our research, we wondered whether the image the children had of themselves would be the same as how others viewed them. Would the qualities they considered strengths or challenges be the same? In addition, how would the children cope with the challenges that were identified? Would they become overwhelmed by the critical nature of difficulty or would they strive to become better at the challenges they face through practice? What choices would they make in regards to their personal growth? Our hope as educators is that we are able to encourage the children to persevere, as well as identify goals to focus on and work towards.

As a provocation, we asked the children to consider the qualities of their peers. What were the things that they thought their friends were good at? During many discussions, the children shared with one another the qualities they viewed as strengths.

Many began with physical abilities, commenting on who was a good runner or good at sport...

*He is good at football because he always gets the ball and kicks goals.*

*He is good at running because he runs really fast.*

Some observed abilities in relation to their academic learning...

*He is good at reading because when we practiced the play he never made any mistakes.*

*She is good at listening because every day I look at her and she sits quietly.*

Others began to notice more intrinsic qualities...

*He is good at being funny because when I am sad he always makes me laugh.*

*He is a good friend because he always helps me.*

We then asked the same question of the children in relation to themselves. What do you think is one of your strengths?

*Basketball, because when I am running with the ball, I can run really fast. Some people can't do it.*

*I think I am good at reading because I can read a lot of words and I like to do it.*

*I'm the best at running because I can run faster than my daddy and little brother and mummy.*

*Playing with my brother because he always includes me to play with him and he always makes me have fun.*

*Swimming because I am good at kicking my legs while I am paddling.*

What we observed was that most of the children were describing visible attributes, things they could measure and compare against others, except one...

*Helping people because I help people in the playground and they always feel better.*

This statement identified a part of who this child is inside. This is how we wanted the other children to reflect upon themselves. We wanted them to think about the qualities that make each of them unique and what their intrinsic strengths are. What are they good at that cannot be measured physically, that makes them the person they are? Who is the person that they demonstrate to others in their interactions? Being told by someone else how they see you is very valuable, however being able to also recognise this in yourself through personal reflection builds confidence and self-worth. It also creates the opportunity to consider if this is who we in fact want to be or what changes we might strive to make, leading to personal growth.

This began a discussion with the children that required them to think about their strengths in relation to their peers. To assist them in considering different qualities that we each may possess, we used 'Strength Cards' (Fig. 1). Each card illustrated a different trait. The

children were asked to choose one card that they thought most suited them, and give reasons why they chose that particular card (Fig. 2). Using various languages, the children had the opportunity to respond during small group discussions, with drawing and written reflections. In doing so, we hoped to strengthen their skills in self-reflection as well as their understanding about themselves, about one another as well as their place in our community.

For the children to be able to honestly reflect upon themselves was a difficult task. Some chose quickly, sure of their self-image; others took their time, unable to pin point one strength or challenge. Upon observation of the children's reflections, it was quite significant how the children's choice of cards revealed their character so well.

*I am fair. When I brought my footy to school, I made good choices for who was on each team that were fair for the people playing.* (Fig. 3)



*I help others. Sometimes when I'm in the playground I help my friends when they get hurt.*

*I am honest because when I hit someone I tell the truth to the teacher.*

*I can be trusted because I never share people's secrets.* (Fig. 4)

*I tell people what I think. Once when I was in front and someone pushed in I told them that I was first and said 'can you please go behind me?'*

We also observed that some children chose strengths that were not necessarily in correlation to what we would have considered to be their strongest quality. We wondered whether some of the choices that the children made as being their strengths, were in fact qualities that they would like to have. Were they traits that the children actually found challenging and wanted to be better at? This led to the children being asked to reflect on what traits shown on the cards they found challenging. What did they want to get better at?

*I am not always full of energy. Sometimes I don't eat all of my breakfast. I want to finish it so I have more energy.*

*I am not always brave because I don't always try new things.*

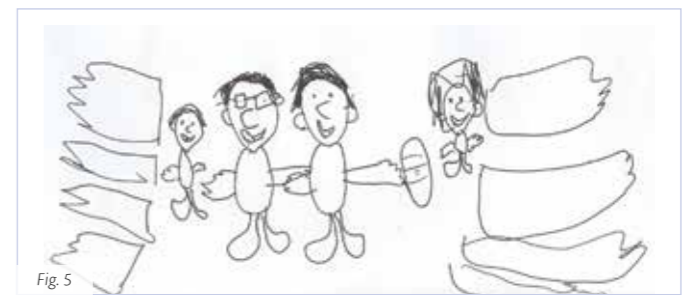
*I want to be better at looking after other people because in footy I always want to get the ball and I tackle and hurt people. I don't really want to tackle.* (Fig. 5)

*Sometimes I don't care about other people's feelings because it's hard for me to do that but I want to get better at it.*

*It is sometimes hard to forgive my friends when I am angry with them.*

*It is hard for me to wait in the classroom when it is time to go out to play.* (Fig. 6)

Now that the children have reflected on both their strengths and challenges we would like them to explore each further. We would like the children to take on mentoring roles. Those who chose a specific strength card would become the mentor of others that identified it as a challenge by assisting them to become better. To do this, we



must ask the 'mentor', what makes this trait a strength for them? How might they encourage others to demonstrate the trait better? For those practicing, how can we measure their growth? How will they know if they are getting better? In what way will this be made visible to them? In continuing to explore the children's abilities using various other languages, perhaps their strengths and challenges will be revealed in different ways.

We would like the children to understand the importance of continuing to develop their sense of self through personal reflection, by recognising challenges and persevering in turning them into possible strengths. We would like them to be resilient learners, facing challenges bravely and using their strengths in overcoming them. We would ultimately like the children to develop a sense of expectation for themselves. What is it that they value about themselves, in their interactions and their behaviours? We want them to continue to reflect on themselves and grow as individuals.

“ We would like them to value their place in a community and know that they are also valued for who they are. ”

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## I had a dream...

“

Being your best is not so much about overcoming the barriers other people place in front of you as it is about overcoming the barriers we place in front of ourselves. It has nothing to do with how many times you win or lose. It has no relation to where you finish in a race or whether you break world records. But it does have everything to do with having the vision to dream, the courage to recover from adversity and the determination never to be shifted from your goals.”<sup>1</sup>

Our investigation has focused on individuals having strengths which contribute to a team. The Olympics in London has been a wonderful opportunity to explore this in depth. We watched as many of the successful Olympians being interviewed discussed how they had ‘dreamt’ of this moment all their life. Many had been training from a very early age to get to this point. This provoked an important question – what are the dreams of our children? As a school, Bialik College sets high expectations because we believe that all children are capable of achieving whatever they set out to accomplish. The world renowned Reggio Emilia approach sees “each child as unique and the protagonist of his or her own growth”.<sup>2</sup> As educators, our role is to listen to and engage the children in an intellectual dialogue. We play a supportive role in the construction of children’s learning – we aim to extend their understanding and increase their range of techniques and strategies so they are equipped and can move on to the next question.

How is this related to dreams? In class, we read the book “I want to be an Olympian”. The story is of a little boy aged six who is watching the Olympics. He is inspired to become an Olympian and the book ends with him, aged in his twenties, representing Australia in track and field. It led to our discussion about what is a dream. Some children said *it is something you have at night while you are asleep*, others suggested *a daydream* or *thinking about something*. One child said; *Dreaming of something and then it comes to life. You really want to do it so you practise doing that thing and then when you get older you achieve it*. When asked what their dreams were,



every child spoke about a career. Footballers (Fig. 1), artists, dancers, doctor (Fig. 2), racing car driver, dog trainer, singers (Fig. 3) and working with computers were some of the responses. By contrast, I asked a small group what they thought their parents’ dreams were. *They dream about doing nothing, relaxing, for us not to be naughty, about having hundreds and hundreds and infinity of money, so it never runs out and I think mums dream about going out for a coffee.*

When they were asked how they would achieve their dreams, many cited hard work, training and practice would help them to achieve their dreams. Will this be enough? By the time this class graduates in 2024, they will be entering a world that will be vastly different to what it is now. Are we equipping children with the ‘right’ skills to achieve their dreams and face the challenges of the future?

Ken Robinson, a leader in the development of education, creativity and innovation, believes that creativity should be as important as literacy. “Our task is to educate their whole being so they can face the future. We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it”.<sup>3</sup> Creating opportunities for creative and thinking skills within the classroom will be as important, if not more, than teaching more traditional subject content for these children.

I asked the class what dreaming looks like. Almost all of the children drew themselves. *This is me dreaming. When you dream, you have a picture in your mind. Then it might happen.* (Fig. 4) *It’s something invisible that no one else can see. You do it anywhere. I am dreaming when I am playing and I dream of winning.* (Fig. 5) *This is a picture of inside someone’s brain when they are dreaming. They’re dreaming of being a scientist – there is a pot exploding because they blow stuff up.* (Fig. 6)





Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Robinson defines creativity as “**The process of having original ideas that have value, more often than not, come about through the interaction of different disciplinary ways of seeing things**”.<sup>4</sup> Children need to be given the opportunity to discuss and work collaboratively. In class, they share their thoughts and work together to solve problems. Opportunities are provided to provoke, question and challenge what the children already know and to look at ideas in a different way. Howard Gardener supports this notion and expands by describing five minds for the future – three relate to intellect (the discipline, synthesizing and creative minds) and two emphasize character (the respectful and ethical minds). He believes that as the world continues to change, so do the ‘minds’ we wish to cultivate and prepare.

We are at the start of the journey with our class. We are starting to discover their unique talents and strengths. We will revisit over the next eighteen months this idea of dreaming and how it looks. Will their dreams change? Will their ideas of what dreaming looks like evolve?

“

How will all the influences in their life contribute to their developing minds? Are they on their way to having the necessary skills to guide them in the future?”

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# Confronting learning

*Achieve (sic) is like a goal. You're trying to find something.*



“

At times we forget that young children come into the classroom with unique backgrounds, cultures and talents. These influences form the cornerstone of who they are today, how they define themselves and who they will be tomorrow.”

Other than looking at which skills we, as teachers, would like to impart on them, we decided to look at what knowledge, skills and experiences they have brought into the classroom themselves to be shared with others and how this impacts on their personal identity, sense of achievement and learning story. Where do their current skill-sets and strengths lie? How is their personal identity developing, and what has influenced this?

On a visit to a park outside of the school-grounds a child surprised me by picking a plant and explaining that it was edible. He started to share with me his understandings of the surrounding plants and their various uses. This made me question what depth of knowledge the others have to offer that had yet to be uncovered. I also pondered, are we asking the right questions to find out what they are really capable of? (Fig. 1)

During a further discussion with the class we found that we had a wide variety of hidden strengths, passions and skill sets within our class and the broader year level. We started to explore these and investigate where these passions had come from.

We found that our classroom alone contained competent skiers, dancers, computer literate children, a cellist and speakers of different languages. We also had one child that had learnt to box from his uncle and a budding footballer that had started *kicking with a soft toy* at two years of age.

The children began by researching their own histories to see what they felt has helped shape their current identity to date. They drew on their learning experiences and recorded these milestones such as; learning to crawl, walk, bike ride, and bake or even overcoming their fear of boats.

**“Development is not something that exists within the child, but rather takes place as the child interacts with his or her cultural community. It is the relationship between the child and society.”** (Hedegaard, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

By exploring and graphing how the children currently spend their time on both a general weekday and weekend they noted the



Fig. 1

similarities and differences in their interests and family routines compared to others. They found that different homes provide different family routines and opportunities.

We discovered that many of the children's interests stemmed from an inherent admiration of their family members. From learning *how to write because I was watching my brothers. I love drawing and making stuff because I want to be like my mum* was a very common thread.

Besides their mentors that had ignited their interests, we established that most of the children grew their passion for their strengths or skill sets through times given to investigating such as; *I like that you can draw anything that you want, I discovered things and I just think of things I want to do.*

Their once hidden passions, strengths and skill sets were now in the spotlight and the room brimmed with enthusiasm. The children suggested that they would like to mentor others in their given strength.

Reflecting the varied and diverse learning styles, they chose to share in their own way. Through drawing, mind maps, timelines, writing, performances, discussions and various technologies, the children ignited their inner passions and shared themselves and their strengths.

By allowing the time for these strengths to be explored and shared, with the goal to mentor others, they realised what their peers offered. This sharing and positive peer reinforcement (facilitated by the teacher) enabled a greater sense of empowerment in the classroom, and the process of self-assessment helped to build self-awareness among individuals.

We also found that through the sharing of these skill sets and passions, children who did not perceive their strengths to be in traditional classroom curriculum visibly grew in confidence. They discovered that they too had other strengths that were respected by their peers. As Malaguzzi (1993) suggests, children have a hundred and a hundred more languages to be explored and appreciated.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The flip side is that those who were usually not risk-takers in academic areas have been stretching themselves in preparation for their mentoring. Some are now writing pages of directions for dance moves and our 'resident gardener' who had recently shared his knowledge about plants, has found a strong determination to pass on his knowledge.

These opportunities have created an environment where the children are challenged to look within and outside their own understandings of the world and explore and appreciate the strengths of others.

As MacNaughton (2009) states, "When we work with children we cannot help but recognise that they are cognitively and socially competent learners from birth."<sup>2</sup> Linking these insights to the concept of passing-down knowledge and understanding, we questioned: what advice would they give about learning?

The responses the children shared displayed their innate understandings of their own learning journeys and one quoted that you need to *always be brave and try new things, even when you think it is hard. By thinking first... you get better* and what I believe to be one of the hardest to accept, *mistakes are how you learn*. They found that it was important to *start early even if it's hard, you need to practice a lot and we need to learn or we can't do as many things*.

I was also surprised to find that the children were acutely aware of the importance that other's played in their lives, their history and their learning and they expressed that: *good learners know how to make friends. They teach you things*.

It was interesting to see how children arrive at different points with different skill sets. As the Reggio Emilia Approach suggests; "every

child is a protagonist. They are born with a connecting mind and are capable of constructing and building their own knowledge." (Malaguzzi, 1993).<sup>3</sup>

Throughout this investigation we continue to discover that through acknowledging one's history and achievements, the children's self-confidence and willingness to try has flourished.

“ We are finding this fundamental in broadening the perceived scope of learning opportunities available and defining what constitutes achievement and success. ”

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Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Year 1L

## A journey of learning through experiences, relationships and one's own identity

“

Relationships develop from the way we relate to others and others relate to us. Sharing new experiences and reflecting on the interactions and experiences we have, contribute to forming a sense of personal identity and an identity within a group. ”

What is my story and how do the connections and experiences I have been a part of, benefit and enhance the relationships and responsibility I have towards others?

The school day offers many opportunities for reflection on the experiences and interactions that are encountered. The children engage in skills of observation, modelling, discussion, risk taking, negotiation and problem solving. This may be with or without adult facilitation.

Children come to the social setting with their own set of past experiences, using what they have learnt or internalised through their interactions with children and adults, which may either enable them or disable them, when coping with social situations.

“Although we can learn about ourselves through introspection and self-perception, we can also learn about ourselves by comparing ourselves with other people.” (Festinger, 1954).<sup>1</sup> “People need to be confident about the validity of their perceptions, attitudes, feelings and behaviour, and because there is rarely an objective measure of validity, people ground their cognitions, feelings and behaviour in those of other people. In particular they seek out similar others to validate their perceptions and attitudes, which can, to some extent, be read as meaning that people anchor their attitudes and self-concept in the groups to which they feel they belong, comparing behaviours and opinions with those of others in order to establish the correct or socially approved way of thinking or behaving.” (Graham Vaughan & Michael A. Hogg).<sup>2</sup>

In our class, when children seek the support of the teacher in helping to solve, make sense of, or share a perspective, it may take various forms. These include group discussions, role plays, one on one conversation or drawings of the experiences or interactions, providing a social story and context.

When ascertaining what past experiences had impacted on social interactions we asked the children;

Who are the friends, family, adults or teachers you love to spend time with?

What will you remember and keep that will become part of you from the experiences that you have shared with these people and what have you learned?



My dad told me to look out for my team and to never give up and this is what I do. Not just playing so that you can be better but helping the team to win the game.

You have to be a good friend to get a friend. Friendship is someone who listens to me and I listen to them.

I share with others because we have to be fair to each other. Friendship is looking after each other.

My teacher teaches me not to be scared and to stand up for myself. I feel warm because the things that she says make me feel grateful and warm. I can teach other people to stand up for themselves and I have learnt from my teacher to believe in you and to be proud of yourself. This experience has changed the way I think because I used to not believe in myself and now I believe in myself. (Fig. 1 & 2)

Through these discussions the children became aware of 'stepping inside someone else's shoes' and observing the interaction from another's point of view and listening to what they had said. A sense of empathy developed when the children communicated their feelings and thoughts so that different perspectives could be viewed and reflected upon.

The children used drawings and verbal communication to negotiate and express their point of view.

Each morning as the children enter our classroom we begin the school day by welcoming each other. Our bowl of 'Feeling Stones' is passed around the circle, giving each child an opportunity to take a stone, hold this stone in their hands and if they want to, share their feelings. The 'Feeling Stones' provided a sense of time, to think about what is in their hearts and on their minds. We say, "The 'Feeling Stones' help the messages travel from our heart and head into the stone, giving us the courage and confidence to share and listen to each other". Over the two years with the same group of children we have noticed how this time is valued by children and teachers. The children take turns and have learned to really listen to each other and ask questions. Many times children will express their joy for each other as they notice the personal challenges that are expressed.

I was so proud of myself because I have been trying to skip a bar on the monkey bars and today I did it.



I know I saw her do it; she practised and practised until she got it right, she was really good.

At different times in the day we come together, reflecting on social interactions. In this way the children share their accomplishments or resolve conflicts through discussion.

We noted the following dispositions: the importance of having a go, never giving up, helping the team, integrity, fair play and feeling safe, reciprocity of respect and empathy, kindness, listening, caring and the exchange and acceptance of ideas.

These dispositions highlighted for us the children's sense of active involvement in engaging, extending and forming connections. They link and identify with the significance of community in forming a personal identity.

We also saw the children internalise and demonstrate our school core values including perseverance and responsibility;

To look out for my team and to never give up. We saw the taking on of collective responsibility; Not just playing so that you can be better but helping the team to win the game, and from the child's sense of fairness, I share with others that we have to be fair to each other.

The values that emerged were not material values but rather the values gained from learning opportunities that are lived every day, as children adopt strategies and approaches through social interaction. We see how children develop a personal identity and responsibility to others by reflecting on and internalising the norms, values, behaviour and social skills that help to protect the connections made, instilling a sense of belonging and responsibility to others as well as oneself.

We have something in common. I like that I can be myself and that I don't have to pretend. Anyone can have a good time together if you like the same things. Friendship is helping others.

You can't buy friendship, like saying "I will give you a footy card if you be my friend."

I have learnt not to run away from my friends. If I run away from my friends I will not have anyone to play with. I stay with my friends and we play fun games that we all agree on.



As friends we share our experiences. (Fig. 3 & 4)

These following thoughts encapsulate the outlooks of the children:

Knowing you can be yourself, the importance of helping, the concept that friendship is not bought and the desire to share experiences.

"A child's most sought-after goal is to recognise him- or herself in others, and in others (objects and the natural world as well) to see parts of himself." "The sense of self, of one's own self, which is a vital component of self-esteem, learning and development, even if it is part of a never- ending process, is a quality that the child must set in motion, with adult help and cooperation, as soon as he can." (Cesare Musatti).<sup>3</sup>

The importance of reflection and taking time to revisit experiences shared, have become part of our learning about what we value in ourselves and in others. We will often end our day by taking out the 'Feeling Stones' again. At this time we call them 'Gratitude Stones'. The children pass the bowl of stones around the circle and take a stone if they would like to share what or who they are grateful for as they reflect on their day.

I am grateful for my friend because she stayed with me and helped me when I hurt myself. She called the teacher and she cared about me.

I am grateful for my friend because he passed the ball to me so that I could score a goal.

So perhaps the impact of shared experiences and then the sharing with others is a catalyst for how the child will view him/herself and the world around them? The values that are imparted may then become part of one's identity.

As adults what is our role in promoting a strong image of the child and the importance of fostering and nurturing the child's image of self?

What is my story and how have the connections and experiences I have been a part of benefit and enhance the relationships and



Fig. 4

responsibility I have towards others? What are the values I have adopted and made my own?

These questions that the children have considered are ones that we as adults should continuously ask of ourselves. As we all go through life encountering new situations that call upon our resilience and ability to communicate, engage, extend and connect to each other, what values and dispositions do we choose to embody?

“

We are always experiencing, learning and growing through mutual exchange. It is through reflection and modelling that we have the most influence in determining our actions and the actions of others, which helps to extend and incorporate a sense of belonging and responsibility to family, friends, culture and oneself.”

#### References

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# From generation to generation the passing down of heirlooms connects us to the history, cultural traditions and values of our past

“

As a continuation of our investigation of 'Identity, culture and connections' this year we chose to focus on the cultural traditions, heritage, stories and history of the children thereby linking them to their past. ”

We were interested to see if the children's families continued the traditions from the generations before (especially since the vast majority of these families had immigrated to Australia) and how they did this.

To begin this part of our investigation we asked the parents of our children to email us where their child was born, where they were born and where their parents were born. We plotted these on a large world map using three different colours to represent the three generations. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1

What we discovered was that almost every family had emigrated to a new country and that in some cases the grandparents had resettled to one country and the parents had then subsequently immigrated to Australia.

We wondered whether this factor had any influence on the children's self-identification and their culture.

In a paper titled 'Self-Identification and Belonging: Where and what is home? Country or Culture?' 2004; Dana Mrkich stated **“What is the stronger influence on ones sense of self-identity – country or culture? Where and what is home? Is it the place in which you were born, raised and live, or is it a space that gives you a feeling of belonging? What happens when the two are different?”**<sup>1</sup>

We too were curious to see if this impacted on the self-identification of the children in our class.

Could it be our cultural history, the traditions and stories handed down through the generations or our heritage? **“Something inherited at birth, such as personal characteristics, status, and possessions or anything that has been transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition.”**<sup>2</sup>

We began by asking the children what traditions they had in their family and why these were so important to their family.

Many of them spoke about the traditions associated with Shabbat.

*Every Shabbat dinner we have my granny's chicken soup. I say the blessings over the candles with my mum and my nana.*

*I go to my nana's and papa's. My sister lights the candles. My papa says the Bracha for the wine and Challah. We eat chicken soup, chicken and potatoes and for dessert we have ice cream.* (Fig. 2)

Some of them spoke about a special thing they do with their family.

*Every year I go to America to see my mom's family because they are all in America.*

We wondered if the children knew what an heirloom or artifact was and whether they had any in their homes.

An heirloom is defined as **“a valued possession passed down in a family through succeeding generations.”**<sup>3</sup>

Research on the importance of heirlooms/artifacts in connecting us to the traditions and stories of our past comes from so many different cultures and each of these cultures stress how important these heirlooms are to keeping the history and traditions of one's culture alive.

According to Elizabeth Jameson; **“Jewish women lugged with them the resources to sustain Jewish life and identity: candlesticks, Kiddush cups, challah covers, family photographs, and prayer books. They also carried the knowledge to prepare the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. They braided loaves of Sabbath challah, baked unleavened matzo for Passover, and the three-cornered hamentaschen cookies for Purim. Each family recipe for gefilte fish, cholent, kreplach, chopped liver, kugel, latkes, matzo balls, or borscht carried a particular memory of survival from Jewish communities of Russia, Poland, Germany, or Hungary—a heritage passed through generations of women.”**<sup>4</sup>

The Amish maintain that the passing on of these family heirlooms and traditions is important for children to understand the meaning of family and how they are but one small part of a long and rich history.

As a provocation I brought in some heirlooms from my family. Before I showed them I told the children my story. I was born in Rhodesia in Africa. I came to live in Australia when I was thirteen years old. My family left Rhodesia because of the war. My parents had immigrated to Rhodesia from South Africa and my grandparents had immigrated to South Africa from Germany, Russia and England. Very quickly some of the children made connections to their past.

*My grandparents are from Russia.*

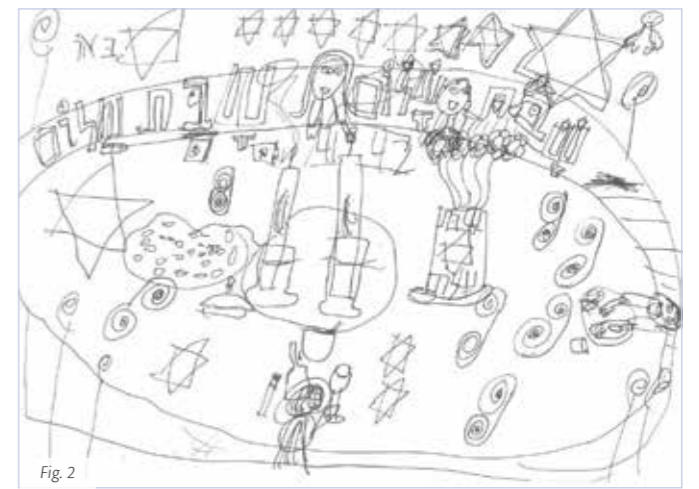


Fig. 2

*My dad comes from South Africa.*

*I go to Scotland every year because that's where my mum comes from.*

*When my grandmother left Germany she was only able to take a few possessions with her. The things that she chose were very precious to her.*

*When my mum got married my grandmother gave these items to her and when I got married my mum gave them to me.*

Once again some of the children made connections.

*At home we have a Kiddush cup which was my great grandpa's.*

After I showed the children the items I had I asked them what they now thought an heirloom/artifact might be.

*I think its something that's old.*

*I think its something that you want to keep for a long time.*

*We have candlesticks in our house that are old. We use them for the Shabbat candles.*

Why do you think your family keeps these things?

*So we can remember people in our family who aren't alive.*

*So we can have something special to help us remember, like we have candlesticks that were my great grandma's and now we have them.*

We asked the children to speak to their parents and find out if they had any heirlooms in their family. For us the most interesting thing was the stories behind the heirlooms that the children brought in and how interested the children were in this history, not only of their own heirloom, but also of other children's heirlooms, such as;

A model of a ship brought to Australia by great grandparents when they fled from Germany in 1939.

*Every time I look at it, it reminds me of my great grandparents because I don't remember them. It also reminds me of their escape from world war two. It is very special to me and it is very precious. I will pass it down to my children because I can tell them the story and I want it to be passed down to a lot of generations because I don't want their story to be forgotten or for somebody in our family to not know about the story.* (Fig. 3 & 4)

A recipe book;

*They started making the book before my Nanny died and it was finished after she died and my mum and me and my uncle got the first copies. It is precious to me because my Nanny's in it and because she died. I like the recipes that are in it and they are special to me because I had them when she made them and they tasted delicious. I think I will still have the book when I grow up and I will make the things in the book with my children.*

A Yiddish Lullaby passed down from a great, great grandmother; *My mum sings this lullaby to me. She sings it to me in Yiddish. When she sings it to me it makes me feel happy and special. My Safta's mum Baba started to sing it to my Safta. Then my Safta sang it to my mum and now she sings it to me. I think I will sing it to my children and then it will be passed down to the next generation.*

A Siddur in the family for 83 years;

*My poppy's Siddur is special to me. It is precious to me because it is my mum's dad's Siddur. He got it a long time ago when he had his Bar mitzvah. My poppy died when I was four and we got the Siddur after he died, the next day. When I grow up I will give it to my kids when I'm an adult.* (Fig. 5-6)

**"In my father's family, there are barely any family heirlooms to pass down. Everything they had was either taken, lost or stolen. That is why this recipe is so precious and so dear to me. It's really a family treasure. I feel that my love for baking is a special gift from my Dad's side of the family. Every time I bake, I am really honouring my wonderful father, my Aunt Rose, my grandmother, as well as my grandfather, aunts and uncles who died in the war. I love to bake and baking is a way of preserving their memory."**

**"If we think about it, our homes are the nation's museums. Our belongings are on the kitchen stove, under the bed, at the back of the shed. These belongings are mementos that tell stories about us and our families and friends."**

The investigation continues. We have looked at some of the aspects that shape our identity, one of them being our cultural traditions, history and heritage. Do we maintain cultural traditions in the same way as our grandparents? How have the family history, cultural values and traditions been passed down to us? How did we learn them? Do we want to pass them down to our children? How will we do it?

“

As we know our identity continues to form, change and be enriched and the passing down of heirlooms further enriches the next generation. ”

References



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

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Figures

- Fig. 1 World Map representing the countries grandparents, parents and children were born in.
- Fig. 2 A child's drawing of Shabbat at their grandparent's house.
- Fig. 3 A child drawing his heirloom.
- Fig. 4 A child painting her drawing of her heirloom.
- Fig. 5 A child's drawing of a set of candlesticks that has been passed down through the generations.
- Fig. 6 A photo of the candlesticks.

Cross class

# The concept of identity and community continues to be explored through the learning of other cultures and traditions

“

Our Year One cross class group's visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens this year to participate in an Indigenous resource trail raised a further awareness of Australia's Indigenous history and stories relating to the land. ”

Trevor Gallagher Indigenous Educator officer at the RBG facilitated this trail. We listened to stories focusing on flora and fauna and what life was like in Australia many years ago. The symbolism of animals and birds was to be an interest which we would explore further during the year. In particular the concept of the nest as symbol of home and community led to an investigation of the birds in our area as well as the spiritual significance in both Jewish and Indigenous cultures. This was explored through many paths and tools of research. (Fig. 1 & 2)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Fig. 11



During a term break I attended a lunchtime presentation by Dr Janine Bourke at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> The title of the presentation, 'Artful nesting' captured my interest in respect to our students and teachers research thus far. This thought provoking presentation and launch of Bourke's new book, 'Nest: The art of birds' was another exciting and new foray into our thinking about birds, nests and our environment and the many shared cultural stories, poetry, paintings and artefacts associated with this.<sup>2</sup>

In addition last year the children had researched the concept of identity in relation to our school Bialik, its name associated with Israel's national poet Chaim Nachman Bialik. Our Hebrew and Jewish studies teachers had shared with the children several Hebrew poems by Bialik, two of which focussed on birds and nests which were later to be adapted by others as songs. One poem 'To the bird' (El HaTzipor)<sup>3</sup> was Bialik's first poem...

"...Sing to me, tell me, dear bird  
from far-off wondrous places,  
there in that warm and beautiful land,  
do evil events and calamities happen too?..."

This extract offered the children one of many metaphors in this instance the vast distances the bird can fly and the wonders and pondering of all that they see.

And too another children's poem by Bialik, 'Bird's Nest' (Ken Latzipor).<sup>4</sup>

"The bird has a nest  
amongst the trees  
and in the nest  
she has three eggs.  
And in each egg —  
Hush, don't disturb!—  
There lies asleep  
a baby chick".

In this poem the children discussed a reference to 'care for family'.

We are of course also reminded of our biblical stories the children explore for example 'Noah and the Ark'. First a raven is sent out and does not return whereas a dove who is to return several times and during one of the last flights brings back an olive branch, which has been interpreted as a message that the flood has receded. Often the image of a dove with an olive branch is also considered a symbol of peace. As teachers we continued to research this focus, now in relation to the eagle in other cultures and traditions in particular Indigenous culture and stories. We were also to find references to this bird within Jewish history and Talmudic references. (Fig. 3)

I was also struck by Bourke's reference to nests and art. In reflecting again on my notes from Bourke's presentation and now reading Bourke's newest publication she questions... **"can we regard nests as 'art' 'when art is something we traditionally associate with museums and galleries, with quiet, aesthetic environments and most importantly, with humankind?"** She asks what does... **"nature offers art and what art offers nature... Art is far from fixed and constantly challenges its own boundaries"**. (Bourke J. 2012)<sup>5</sup>

This was highlighted when our students and teachers viewed an extremely large nest in the foyer of the National Gallery of Victoria Ian Potter Centre last year. This was during an excursion to research contemporary and traditional Indigenous Aboriginal artists' views of the land and their ancestral stories shared with us. The nest, named 'Bunjil's' nest related to the wedge-tail eagle 'Bunjil', the spiritual creator of the Kulin people of Victoria. This nest was a collaborative initiative with the NGV and world environmentalist David Suzuki out of respect for Indigenous culture and history as well as wishes for the maintenance and sustainability of our land and peace for our future. We read messages written on the branches of the nest by students from several schools who participated in creating this nest structure together with the NGV. It was indeed a provocation for other schools to explore their own relationship and understanding of Indigenous history and hopes for the future. As teachers we sought to take this concept back to our school to discuss.

During this visit to the Gallery, the children and their teachers also visited the 'Living Water' exhibition of contemporary art from the Western desert. In this exhibition we saw a painting which was displayed horizontally on a low podium on the floor. It was as if we were also looking from a bird's eye view of a map of the area? In fact on one occasion during a professional learning seminar with an NGV Indigenous Education officer, teachers were given some insight into the symbols of this painting and the story and a reference to a bird as a totem, and in this instance the characteristics of a Willy Wagtail.

Interestingly Bourke refers to the appearance of the aerial perspective in these paintings noting the amazing detail and its similarity as seen when flying over these areas as she has done in a plane (although many of these artists had never done so.) I recall also when flying out of Australia the view from the plane over central Australia of the brilliant red earth and patterns made in the dry salt beds.

During Bourke's presentation she discussed part of her research of nests which could be found at the Melbourne Museum. I visited the museum to look at some of these nest exhibits and then found myself walking along an inclined path which wound its ways through the Forest Gallery at the museum. In front of me was a carpet of blue objects and a fine arch shaped structure of twigs and reeds. It was here I found further information about our bird history and a live webcam link to the routines of the bowerbirds. I was sure that my conversations with the education officer, who was so knowledgeable about the birds in this Forest Gallery and spoke about each bird and their interactions as somewhat of a friend, would add another layer to our research which I shared with children and teachers on my return.

Our children became familiar with this live webcam link at the Melbourne Museum to view the activities of the bowerbirds in the forest gallery. Using the class interactive whiteboard the children watched this webcam daily and saw the routine of Jack, the Satin Bowerbird preparing a bower to attract Brittany, the female bowerbird. This was a constant part of our classroom viewing. The gathering of specific materials; displaying of these materials like a carpet outside the bower, which could be accompanied by sophisticated and lengthy rituals and placement of these materials as to the required size and shape were a source of intrigue and discussion amongst the children both on a cultural and environmental level. (Fig. 4–6)

For the children a twofold message was gleaned from the reading of the book, 'The Best Nest' by Penny Olsen.<sup>6</sup> Two birds, robins, about to embark on building a nest decide to investigate nests built by other birds. For us, the children and the teachers, this story was a reminder of not only the numerous shapes and sizes of nests but also the specificity of each nest to suit each species based on climate, predators etc. Indeed the best nest was a metaphor as retold by the children.

All the birds were proud of their nests. They were the best nests for each one.

The children's conversation at one point focused on the imagining of the children if they were to build a nest and their wonderings. Who teaches them? How do they know how to make a nest? How long does it last for?

Interestingly the children interchanged between themselves as the birds, discussing the strategies in the construction of the nest and thinking about themselves in this position.

*I would use mud as insulation because mud is a very strong material.*

*The bee-eater, it's fun in the dark, it's (nest) is like a cave. It's also very long and it can go very far. Nothing could break it.... The kids could never be caught by others.*

We were to discover in many bird species the male bird creates the nest and waits for approval by the female. Or in the case of the bower birds we have been watching Jack's constant restructuring and changing the look of his bower even to the point of demolishing it and beginning again. The children were disappointed for Jack and their





Fig. 7



Fig. 8

affection for him grew and their annoyance with Errol, the younger of the two male bowerbirds, who continually collects from Jack's bower to create his own. The taking back of the materials from Errol by Jack gave constant interest and conversation with the children who were to become mediators in this process, leading to much debate amongst the children about topics of partnership and collaboration. However we were also to discover that as a younger male bird Errol was in fact learning from elder Jack how to build a bower but also asserting his own position in the group, much to the dismay of the children.

Our continued interest and observations of the bird community extended to our local area where each class carrying binoculars, magnifying glasses and clipboards ventured into two local parks. As spring was approaching the activity of the birds appeared heightened. We witnessed the reoccurring circular swirling of two birds perhaps distracting us from where their nest building was taking place? The aerial display certainly kept the children entranced and if the idea was to distract the children from where the nest was being built it was certainly effective. Another group of children went in search of other nests or nest building. Senses were heightened as eyes strained to look up into the tallest of trees, or within the dark hollows of the tree trunks, and in

the aged twisted branches and dark cave like bush areas. The listening to different sounds, bird calls and what appeared as echoes from one bird to another offered possibilities for the children to make claims as to what instructions were being shared amongst the birds. (Fig. 7 & 8)

The children had so often collected natural materials in our school environment during their time outdoors, fashioning each piece collected, attaching twigs or leaves, joining and winding around reeds to secure. A great sense of satisfaction and admiration from each other as they shared their techniques and discoveries. Beautiful compositions and structures, offered the possibility for each to think about what they would consider the best nest when asked to consider making a nest based on their own design. The challenge was taken on with great enthusiasm and discussion concerning the design and materials to be used. This was debated both within and beyond the classroom. These nest structures would be preliminary models in anticipation of our whole Year level construction of a Bunjil's nest. This was in respect for and understanding of the spiritual land/ region of the Wurundjeri people upon which our school is situated. We also felt our intent and focus during these past two years research including our understanding of identity, culture and community and paths we had explored had resulted in rich discussion. We intended to extend

an invitation to Trevor to meet with the children and teachers at our school to assist us and share his knowledge of the land, here anticipating the deepening of our links and relationship with our broader community and Indigenous peoples. As mentioned our first meeting with Trevor had a profound effect on all of us and reminded us of our responsibility to the land and our respect for the many different cultures, beliefs, traditions and histories that make up our Australian community. Trevor's references to the multiple purposes of a particular plant, flower, tree as well as the symbolism within nature furthered our understandings and the realisation of continued learning and sharing were powerful tools. Our visit to the Botanic Gardens raised an awareness of our Indigenous history and stories relating to the land.

In proposing the idea of building models of a nest, the children discussed what materials they might use to create their nest; twigs, branches, mud, wire, string, wool as part of this research. We were all amazed at the variety of materials used in the construction of a nest and understood that birds used the materials that were available in their environment.

Many of the children were interested in giving an overview of the area in their preliminary drawings as to where one might find their nest rather than a detailed version of the nest itself. Others felt a nest should include more than one space or area, such as an area for the eggs and another for the birds which had hatched and another space for the parents. Other designs depicted a balcony or platform, and a two tiered nest. (Fig. 9–13)

The strategies in joining the materials offered many challenges and at the same time immense respect for the birds as nest builders. When taking a closer look at birds' nests, the intricacy and strength in the construction offered us great insights. Observing how carefully the birds chose specific sizes of materials to cleverly weave their nests or to strengthen their nest using mud.

When one is asked to conjure up an image of a nest would we imagine a circular shallow shape situated in the 'fork' of a tree? For us this thinking once again offers us a time to reflect on what our image of the child and the teacher is? How do we put ourselves or others in a position of strength or weakness? We have discovered during this investigation that the deeper the research and experiences not only through one medium, one statement, one fact but rather a rich plethora of research and exploration which implores to be further developed is a statement for the future. 'Promoting strength in learning'. In this investigation, and as a cross class year level focus, we have sought to redefine what is identity, culture and community and our historical ties.

History of our past, cultural, personal and global influences can support us but as one child claimed; *We are making history now and just a minute ago.*

The culmination of this year's cross class focus is intended as a shared collaboration with children, parents and teachers.

During the last part of our research that included the construction of a large Bunjil's nest with our year 1 children, we asked them to reflect on their understandings and values, their identity, culture and community. They had much to share about the past, the present and the future. Together with their families we asked them



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

to think about messages they would like written on the branches and twigs they had collected for the nest. What do they wish for? What are their hopes and dreams for the future? (Fig. 14 & 15)

Some of the children's messages included;

*I hope people respect nature. I hope that everyone has peace in the world.*

*I hope people will respect each other.*

*I hope that the environment stays healthy.*

*We need to care for each other.*

And from their families;

*We hope for a world with peace, happiness and comfort for all.*

*Look after each other, be kind to each other and take care of our planet, Make a difference and leave the earth a better place to what you found it.*

*We hope for a world where all people are treated equally regardless of race and religion.*

*Of the world, we must take care, in the end, it's ours to share.*

*We are all one.*

During our final term of the year Trevor visited our school and performed a Tanderrum (welcome to country) ceremony with the children and their teachers. Trevor's visit rekindled the children's memories of their earlier visit with him at the Royal Botanic Gardens where he discussed his Aboriginal heritage, culture and knowledge. Most importantly his message of 'only taking what you need from the land' was to be a poignant reminder for us all. As the children and their teachers walked with Trevor through the gardens of our school we listened to his reference to the symbolic and material use of plants and trees growing in this area and at the same time we also visited our Biblical garden planted many years ago in the grounds of our school. A sukkah was also visible in this area its roof covered with natural materials in celebration of the recent festival of Succot (Feast of Tabernacles) an annual celebration and a reminder of our heritage culture and traditions.

“

Together with Trevor we listened to the children's questions and their understandings sharing something of their own identity, culture and community. (Fig. 16–18) ”

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## Contributors

### 3 Year Old Kinder

#### Kinder 3E

*The chickens are greedy. They want their food and our plants*

Darcy Arrow, Dana Blecher, Samuel Brover, Nicholas Bursztyn, Ella Carmeli, Lola Dabscheck, Jason Dodge, Asher Engel, Samuel Engelman, Saffron Fischl, Jacob Hansen, Jonty Israel, Gisele Joske, Harley Karro, Joel Krause, Zoe Lasky, Jessie Levin, Joshua Morley, Albie Munz, Leon Pratt, Leo Shaw, Suede Solomon, Remy Stimson, Eden Voskoboynik, Zac Yates

#### With

Elise Rotsatyn, Hagar Kleinfeld, Ortal Erez, Julia Levine

#### Kinder 3R

*Shadows don't get hurt because they don't have feelings!*

Peri Afranco, Ori Brod, Eden Castelan, Amelie Ciddor, Charlie Davis, Ella Davis, Lara Dodge, Arthur Edwards, Felix Fink, Noah Goldberg, Joshua Holzer, Blake James-Wurzel, Mia Kanevsky, Ella Kapper, Halle Krasnostein, Jaiden Kulawiec, Joshua Leighton, Isabel Levy, Annabel Naphtali, Ashley Podlubny, Benji Rosenbaum, Nick Rosenbaum, Jacob Rosin, Ishan Venkat

#### With

Ranjna Najat, Beverley Carmel, Megan Todd, Emily Roberts

#### Kinder 3M

*There is Pink in the Rainbow*

Lex Amira, Yhonatan Carmeli, Zahara Dvir, Jesse Felman, Toby Gelbart, Hayden Goldberg, Olivia Hershan, Lachlan Keddie, Claudia Kutner, Sienna Levin, Arel Liderman, Asher Lifszyc, Gabrielle Nussbaum, Emilie Posner, Ethan Rabinowitz, Jordan Rose, Nadav Ryan, Raphael Sable, Jonathan Shagan, Alexandra Southwick, Mia Szmulewicz, Tom Tamir, Lola Upiter, Dean Waterson, Ashton Zalzman

#### With

Megan Miller, Orit Gil, Rosemary Barry, Marilyn Sternstain

### 4 Year Old Kinder

#### Kinder 4Z

*The Story of the Waiting Tree. Sometimes a story only begins after you close the book...*

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, Jonah Stowe-Lindner, Dylan Swart, Willow Thurston, Ava Wilson, Sophia Wolff

#### With

Zia Freeman, Miri Waterson, Emily Roberts, Ayana Shavit

#### Kinder 4Z Part 2

*Moving images... stories retold...*

#### With

Helene Oberman and children and teachers in K4Z

#### Kinder 4L

*Some people don't live in houses. They live in caves or apartments...*

Ryder Arrow, Jaxson Brick, Romy Broons, Grace Brott, Tara Filer, Bailey Freund, Noa Hansen, Jonah Harrison, Tilly Heelan, Raffy Kallenbach, Charlie Kinda, Ori Kleinfeld, Abigail Krause, Rockford Levine, Elon Liberman, Liran Liderman, Jazmin Mahemoff, Jay Marabel-Whitburn, Michael Mashchenko, Helena Mazer, Mika Mihalovski, Alex Munz, Adam Weisz, Tali Wrobel, Joshua Zimmel

#### With

Lindsay Miller, Ilana Cohen, Megan Jay, Yaara Raichenshtein

#### Kinder 4J

*We often forget that WE ARE NATURE. Nature is not something separate from us*

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

#### With

Judy Blumberg, Helene Oberman, Pazit Landau, Arlene Meyerowitz, Leh-Anne Engel

# Contributors

## Prep

### Prep K

**In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.**

Amielle Asseraf, Joshua Baladi, Josh Davies, Layla Dvir, Noam Gil, Hanna Goldberg, Jada Goldstat-Joffe, Sarah Greiman, Tiffany Hadad, Lexi Herszfeld, Adam Kallenbach, Abby Levin, Raphael Liberman, Rafael Lifszyc, Sunny Perelberg, Tiger Robenstone, Marcel Rose, Millie Rosenberg, Joshua Shaw, Sienna Shostak, Jack Szulanski, Ella Wilson, Jemma Wise

#### With

Kathleen Georgiou, Ety Azikri, Anne Budlender, Sandy Sher

### Prep E

**What are my strengths? What are my challenges?**

Darielle Alter, Dana Bagle-Zevin, Nicholas Baring, Sharni Blumenthal, Evan Delanoy, Bronte Feldman, Benjamin Felman, Tyla Fibishenko, Tiara Givoni, Chloe Gold, Stephanie Hadad, Aaron Kulawiec, Taylor Levin, Bailey Lewin, Ariel McGillivray, Gabriel Miller, Zoe Munz, Rebecca Paratz, Ricky Schwartz, Lyla Southwick, Jasmine Spiegel, Jennifer Troski, Jesse Wrobel, Jason Zufi

#### With

Emily Minter, Desre Kaye, Deb Braitberg, Aliza Deutsch

### Prep I

**I had a dream...**

Sivan Barsheshet, Ashley Birner, Mika Erenboim, Tashi Federman, Jasmine Filer, Mark Genin, Nathan Held, Ruby Herzel, Ella Holzer, Isaac Morley, Bailey Nussbaum, Aaron Patishman, Zac Podlubny, Noa Poratt, Mia Priester, Anoushka Russell, Bradley Shostak, Joshua Spiegel, Oscar Strauch, Romy Szmulewicz, Ethan Tanner, Georgia Troski, Mia Waislitz

#### With

Julia Padgett, Sigal Tirosh, Robyn Winograd, Claire Poyser

## Year 1

### Year 1N

**Confronting learning**

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, Noah Lust, Oliver Sormann, Sammy Volchek, Jesse Weller

#### With

Nicole Huxtable, Ety Azikri, Rajitha Subasinghe

### Year 1L

**A journey of learning through experiences, relationships and one's own identity**

Nathan Ben-David, Felix Castelan, Cassie Chizik, Leehy Eylon, Alex Frenkel, Elliott Gaspar, Aiden Gelbart, Niv Glazer, Carter Graham, Skye Hadad, Yotam Ishay, 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, Claire Poyser

### Year 1R

**From generation to generation the passing down of heirlooms connects us to the history, cultural traditions and values of our past**

Samuel Abramson, Jem Attar, Michelle Brover, Emma deJong, Kayla Eben, Danielle Feldman, Milla Gardy, Benjamin Gelb, Joseph Goldbourt, Toby Hearst, Isabella Israel, Dean Jacobs, Jack Karro, Charlie Klein, Joseph Klotz, Tye Marabel-Whitburn, Zach Reizner, Ariel Shtern, Ava Star, Noah Vardi, Maximilian Wolff, Beau Worth

#### With

Roselyn Marks, Desre Kaye, Mandie Tepperman, Bella Besser

### Year 1 Crossclass

**The concept of identity and community continues to be explored through the learning of other cultures and traditions**

#### With

Helene Oberman and children and teachers in Year 1L, 1N, 1R



**Main Entrance**  
429 Auburn Road  
East Hawthorn VIC 3123

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

[www.bialik.vic.edu.au](http://www.bialik.vic.edu.au)

**ELC Entrance**  
407 Tooronga Road  
East Hawthorn VIC 3123

**Postal Address**  
PO Box 422  
Hawthorn VIC 3122