



Windows into Children's Thinking

BIALIK COLLEGE, EARLY LEARNING CENTRE JOURNAL 2020

Bialik. *Be your best.*



From the Principal of Bialik

Shalom Kehilla,

It may seem ironic that our theme of 2020, Crossing Boundaries, comes in a year in which the global pandemic has resulted in the closure not just Australia's borders, but also of Victoria's and even metropolitan Melbourne's.

Never have we felt so physically confined. At the time of writing, travelling further than 5km from one's house is not permitted, and children have spent the majority of their school year at home.

Yet Crossing Boundaries is nevertheless a wonderful theme for us during this time of great challenge, since it is also a time of great opportunities. Our parents have crossed boundaries in their home and work lives as have our educators, who through Digital Bialik have ensured a full on-time, real-time on-line learning environment for every lesson and curriculum area from Prep through to Year 12. Our children from Creche through to Year 12 have had a window into their teachers' home lives as they experience learning and growth delivered from a teacher's home office, lounge room, garden or bedroom.

During the Digital Bialik period, interruptions – or should I say further opportunities for thought and discussion – have come in the form of pets, delivery people at the door, other family members and so many other changes that have assisted our children to be flexible, independent and creative thinkers.

The boundary between home and school has been crossed daily. As a school inspired by Reggio Emilia, our 'three teachers' are parents, educators and the environment, Digital Bialik combined

with on-campus learning for many of our Creche and Kinder children throughout the pandemic has ensured that our third teacher, environment, has never played a more important role.

As you leaf through the pages of this journal, I urge you not to look only for your child but to explore the journeys of other children. Consider the multi-faceted nature of learning and growth in 2020. Be inspired by the creativity, resilience, independence, elasticity and positivity of all of our community, from our youngest children to our oldest grandparents, and from our educators in our kitchen, maintenance and digital teams through to our educators in and beyond the classroom.

Celebrate also the growth of our beautiful new Creche in the Judith Hellen Children's Centre. This has been our first full year of operation and over sixty children; we have been thrilled with the leadership, ingenuity, passion and care of our incredible educators.

Kol ha kavod to our Creche, Kinder, Prep and Year 1 teams for a magnificent year and journal, woven under challenging circumstances but making the most of the joyous resources and community that we have the privilege of being a member of.

B'Shalom,



Jeremy Stowe-Lindner
Principal



From the Head of the Early Learning Centre

“CHILDREN CAN GIVE US THE STRENGTH OF DOUBT AND THE COURAGE OF ERROR. THEY CAN TRANSMIT TO US THE JOY OF SEARCHING AND RESEARCHING...THE VALUE OF RESEARCH, AS AN OPENNESS TOWARD OTHERS AND TOWARD EVERYTHING NEW THAT IS PRODUCED BY THE ENCOUNTER WITH OTHERS.” (Carla Rinaldi)

The idea behind the whole ELC immersing themselves into one overarching research question is because of a willingness to create relationships and connections amongst the staff; to develop an even stronger community where everyone has a sense of belonging. It is also to recognise school wide research as professional development.

Our ELC investigation this year “Crossing Boundaries” was chosen at the end of 2019 long before the challenges of 2020.

During this Covid-19 pandemic, there will always be a before and after. This experience has strengthened our awareness of how deeply we value relationships, of the jobs that are now recognised as essential, and of how we can come together to act in the best interests of all.

The professional development for educators, which results from the reflective practice of observation and documentation, provides the possibility for critical thinking and constructing new knowledge.

We have had to consider what is different? Are some of the processes we would have commonly used before, now calling for reflection? What changes are we noticing among the children, other educators, and families? Are we noticing things that were not evident before that we might want to investigate further? Are we documenting with different questions in mind?

As the context of teaching and learning changed with Digital Bialik, teachers had to rethink processes, and, in kindergarten, teachers learnt to accommodate changing groups and COVID safe protocols.

This journal, one of a series which started in 2006, is highlighting the voices of the teachers in the Kindergartens and Creche during the changes which occurred while under lockdown. Each article covers a different perspective – teachers, children and the environment. The articles from the Prep and Year One classes are not investigations in their entirety but rather small vignettes,

part of the process, from each level as well as cross-class groups. One investigation may have spanned a few weeks, whilst another may have continued over many months and may still be ongoing. Each investigation is documented through the recording of discussions and reflections by the children and their teachers, through photographs and other ‘languages’. This documentation is fundamental to our work with our children. It makes their thinking, often very complex, visible and open to evaluation and interpretation.

The words of Malaguzzi resonate when he said **“when ideas and feelings turned towards the future, seemed so much stronger than those that called one to halt and focus on the present. It seemed that difficulties did not exist and that there were no insurmountable obstacles to overcome”**.

As we move out of lockdown we feel optimism and a sense of hope. In publishing this journal we have given a voice to our educators and children in the E.L.C.



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 2020 – ‘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

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Creche

Connectedness through uncertainty evoked reassurance and security



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Early Childhood, known as a community of learners, supporting, and providing quality care for families all year round, was turned on its head when confronted by COVID-19. There was the potential of altering the raw beauty and warmth of a nurturing environment, with government directives that could change the way we conducted ourselves. ”

Inviting and comforting social cues were needed during conversations with our families. Our interactions now distanced and covered by face masks, hygiene practices tested and observed with a fine-tooth comb, and our welcoming drop offs in the mornings changed to a quick goodbye and exchange at the door.

How would our children, families and educators respond?

The children's development did not take time to pause, nor did the need to support the children, families, and educators. In fact, it was more important than ever, as outlined in the *Guide To COVID-19 And Early Childhood Development*, developed by the Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University. The richness of our pedagogy and knowledge with young children prevailed; inspiring wonder, interactions and learning experiences.

Observing and relating to our families' concerns, whilst working thoughtfully through routines and communication, we upheld and honoured the Creche as a place of connection, collaboration, and inclusion. We continued to deliver our service to the families in need, against all odds. In order to keep our doors open to our children, we were challenged with protocols and procedures that changed as the pandemic created new potential risks and moved



Fig. 1

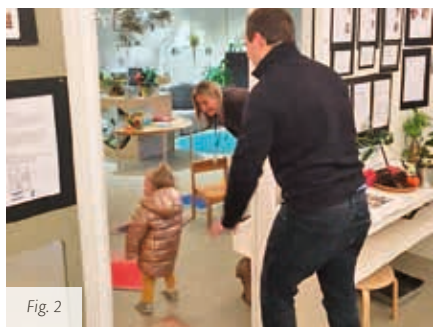


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

with steadfast pace. The physical boundaries did not inhibit our Bialik community's ability to adapt in order to continue to provide a secure, safe and healthy environment.

The educators were able to keep in contact with our families at home, by creating an online presence and ensuring the children continued their relationships with them. They experienced a connection from afar that bridged a gap, one which had the potential of seeing children and families go through another settling in period on their return. In reality, the opposite to what was expected occurred. We observed children running back to the Creche willingly, after almost 8 weeks away. Waving, hugging, or hi-fiving their parents to farewell them and to start their day with peers and trusted educators.

New families joined us throughout the pandemic, allowing us to support and reach out to the wider community. During these uncertain times, the changes for infants born into this period were highlighted. One child, a 10-month-old, was oriented into our supportive environment, and presented a reality that I was not anticipating. This child, a mere 3 months when the first lockdown was upon us, his life presenting very differently to one that he may have had in 2019. He entered a lifestyle of change; one of closed local parks, banned mothers' groups, and no visits from family or friends.

For this child, when it was time to emerge back into the community, there was trepidation and a strangeness to what would once have been a normal way of being. He had precious time with his first teacher, namely his parents, familiar environments, sounds he could rely on and only a few areas of difference. Now, joining a childcare service with groups of children out numbering educators, sounds and distractions a plenty, he had sensory overload. Meeting other adults one on one, caused responses of insecurity, holding onto his mother that little bit tighter and nestling his head into her neck.

Our orientation process required many protocol changes; enabling one family member to play with him whilst he observed the environment. They spent precious time together, exploring materials and experiences. He watched his mum and others around him and became relaxed and inquisitive in her presence.

His next visit was for one hour, independent of his family, where he observed from the warmth and comfort of an educator's arms. Noises from other children were strange and foreign to his world and this created discomfort, particularly when the volume increased. Each subsequent visit gave him confidence as he strengthened his relationships with the educators and followed his curious instincts to investigate, touch and discover the experiences in front of him. Within a week he became familiar, reassured, and comforted by his educators, in an environment full of noise, pace and people.

“Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities. This includes their relationships with people, places and things and the actions and responses of others. Identity is not fixed. It is shaped by experiences.”¹

References:

1. Department of Education, Employment and workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years learning Framework for Australia* p 20

Figures

- Fig. 1 New protocols of saying goodbye at the door.
 Fig. 2 Children happily walking in on their own.
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 Fig. 6 Playing with his peers.

Navigating Change



Fig. 5

“

How to navigate a changing world as an educator in a new environment.”

My professional journey at Bialik started in July 2020, filled with excitement, enthusiasm and a natural feeling of anticipation about all the adventures along with challenges that may follow. Added to this was a touch of COVID-19, turning into a pandemic, bringing the world to its knees, adding more layers of perspective to a new work environment.

As a new member of the Bialik Creche team in a COVID-19 world, there were challenges with communication, our approach, interactions and the way we worked with each other throughout the course of a day. We had to adapt to wearing face masks, social distancing, and non-physical contact; changing the way we conduct ourselves physically.

In turn, our relationships with families were altered in order to gain an important understanding about each child. The concerns about wearing masks, hiding what we felt was valuable facial expressions, essential to communicate non-verbal and subtle cues, were very real. But upon reflection, we adapted and crossed boundaries in more ways than one.



Fig. 1

“Educators continually seek ways to build their professional knowledge and develop learning communities. They become co-learners with children, families and community, and value the continuity and richness of local knowledge shared by community members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.” (The Early Years Learning Framework)¹

Mediums we used to communicate evolved, becoming a reciprocal tool for information exchange between us as educators, the children, and the families. This included our reflection books and programs that were displayed outside the rooms, daily journals written in meaningful ways that allowed parents ‘a look into’ their child’s day. The difference during COVID-19 was that the families were required to stay at the door and not enter the room and so to ensure a connectedness there were more phone calls enabling communication, along with online posts that were added to encompass and enhance educators relationships with the parents.

Physically placing a couch next to the door created a place to stop and converse with families. This became an inviting space, responsive to the limitations we had to adopt over this period of time. A way of bridging the gap between COVID-19 protocols that eliminated family presence in the children’s room. This strategic move also met with the children’s natural curiosity and self-initiation to crawl through the door by themselves, enabling valuable time to nurture relationships in what felt like a closed world.

Despite the feeling that we were living in sadness and seclusion, we felt fortunate to have beautiful memories and experiences of playgrounds and outdoor environments, that were off limits to our wider community. The school grounds gave us the opportunity to explore the vast and ever-changing grounds of the Bialik College campus, while the rest of the community was in lockdown. We witnessed the changes of the seasons, celebrated learning and discovery, all in what felt like our own little bubble. It gave us the freedom, safety, and the assurance we all needed, despite the world around us and its fast-paced changes. It demonstrated kindness and beauty.

“All conditioned things are impermanent. When one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering.” (Gautama Buddha)²

References:

1. Department of Education, Employment and workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/National-Quality-Framework-ResourcesKit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
2. Dhammapada, verse 277 translated by Daniel Gogerly (1840).

Figures

- Fig. 1 Adapting to COVID protocols; wearing a mask when engaging with the children.
 Fig. 2 Changing the way we showcase the children’s learning and family collaboration; Rosh Hashanah family wishes on a tree indoors.
 Fig. 3 A welcoming space for families and the children; Couch placed by the door.
 Fig. 4 Our little Bialik world: Experiencing nature and seasons changing even during lockdown.
 Fig. 5 Excursions: Giving the children the space to roam freely and safely on Bialik grounds.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

How Bet transformed into something larger



“

In January this year, we welcomed our children with open arms, ready for relationships, growth, and connections to the Bialik community.”

Creche Bet, notorious as being the youngest group of the college, caring for children as young as three months and up to 18 months old. We crawled, we rolled, we were balancing, showing signs of walking, learning about independence; all within a secure and safe environment. Our sleeps were varied, and new families joined us in the room becoming familiar and comfortable with their surroundings.

Just as we were sharing knowledge, learning, and celebrating our development and growth with families in a highly anticipated information night, the reality of the rapidly growing pandemic altered our path.

From this point on, we went through a service closure, uncertain times as educators and for our families and children. Reopening with limitations, and working alongside a new set of protocols, all defining our new normal.

As children left, returned, and left again, we focussed on the children’s wellbeing, ensuring they felt safe and secure to return to trusted educators and environments.



Fig. 1

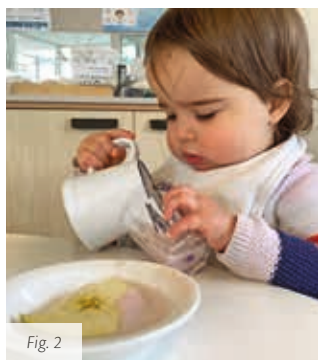


Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

We crossed boundaries in more ways than expected with the realisation that our young babies were getting older within a space that was initially designed and set up for infants. Children spent prolonged periods of time at home, returning with new skills, interests, and development beyond the intended age group for this environment.

We asked ourselves this: How could we move alongside and respond to the escalating growth and dramatic change that was upon us? Does our environment upstairs, designed for a young group of crawlers and unsteady walkers, offer the children a place to grow?

We noticed children's sleeps aligning, gross motor skills bursting, language blooming, peer relationships building and creativity escalating. Out went the cots, in came the atelier; out went the first steps equipment, in came obstacle courses; out went the secure baby chairs, in came a dining experience fit for kinder-aged children.

The Third Teacher turned out to be the hero in this story. As educators, we observed the children closely, documented and responded. Thinking deeply before making any changes to the room, making sure to empower an image of the child as one that is capable.

Through research, trial and error, observing and responding, the environment changed as well as our way of thinking. An environment developed that invites interaction, dramatic play, collaboration, research, laughter, excitement, and more complex thoughts and outcomes.

“Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before.” (Loris Malaguzzi)¹

The room took on a life of its own. Collaboration ensued between peers and educators, our educators transformed into the

beginnings of atelieristas, walking through experimental times with paint, clay, drawing and evidencing new grounds.

Our world is changing and adapting to a new normal. Our doors are open, the community is out and enjoying life as we know it. It is time for the Creche Bet children to transition into the next room as we welcome younger ones into the fold. This change came with a thud; one we were not prepared for. We were on our own journey with a group of independent and inquisitive children. The transitions are seamless. We watched the children once in our arms, running with older children in new environments. We watched with pride and a sense of achievement at how adjusted and excited they were with new educators and new challenges.

Witnessing the Creche Bet children moving and leaving the fold forced us to reflect on the many unexpected challenges we conquered personally, professionally and as a team. Through the trials and tribulations, the children and families seem unaware but extremely grateful that their children have excelled in so many ways during a time of upheaval and uncertainty.

References:

1. Malaguzzi, L. (1998). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia approach – Advanced reflections*. (2nd ed.) Westport, Connecticut: Ablex Publishing, p.82.

Figures

- Fig. 1 First step equipment at the start of the year.
 Fig. 2 Pouring smoothie.
 Fig. 3 Paint exploration in solitary play.
 Fig. 4 Progression throughout the year.
 Fig. 5 Establishment of a dedicated studio space.
 Fig. 6 Dramatic play.

Crossing Boundaries



Fig. 1

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As a team, we recognised that the children would have outstanding benefits to their learning and development by expanding our connections to the wider Bialik community.”

This became a focus for our Quality Improvement Plan. We endeavoured to discover the Indigenous Garden and the Kitchen Garden in order to build connections with the natural world around us and with the original owners of our land.

“These spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education.” (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations)¹

As we welcomed new families, children, and teachers to our Gimmel room at the beginning of 2020, we considered how we could achieve this goal. Our days were spent creating secure and important relationships within the Creche environment.

Without notice, a most unprecedented pandemic was upon us. Along with the concerns for the health and wellbeing of our community, came positive and enlightening opportunities. Whilst it was a sad reality for the students of Bialik to be learning from home, the environment beckoned for us to explore.



Fig. 2

“Going for a walk” became our new normal. During a period that families and the community stayed apart and navigated their own risk appetite, we saw fewer children attending crèche. In a time where playgrounds were no longer accessible to children, the need to expand our horizons beyond the crèche gates was beckoning.

As a group of explorers, we walked with purpose and created wonderful consistent visits that saw us interact and be with the school rabbit, chase butterflies, meet chickens, observe bees, run freely, eat herbs and observe and touch water features whilst basking in our freedom.

“Children need the freedom to appreciate the infinite resources of their hands, their eyes and their ears, the resources of forms, materials, sounds and colours.” (Loris Malaguzzi)²

To our surprise, the biggest boundary crossed, was witnessing the children in the primary school playground. With its high fort, large climbing walls, wobble bridges, tunnels and giant rock steps, the challenges were endless.

How would eighteen-months to two-year olds navigate this highly complex series of physical obstacles?

Well, they did this with ease, confidence, curiosity, enthusiasm, courage, and an amazing sense of agency. We understood immediately that children’s capabilities are endless. We used verbal cues to assist them through challenges, gave them freedom, space, and time and trusted them implicitly. One child in particular, climbed atop the fort. After successfully completing, it was time to come down. With some trepidation the educator offered suggestions. “If you turn your body around, you will be able to climb down feet first.” After listening carefully, he turned himself around in a full circle, which placed him back in the same position as before. With a giggle and further assistance, he navigated his way back down slowly but surely.

From the eyes of an onlooker, this seemed dangerous and risky. However, the children proved us wrong by returning the educators trust in them and displaying their confidence, ability, and resilience to keep trying and mastering their skills.

References:

1. Department of Education, Employment and workplace Relations. (2009). *Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf
2. Reggio Children. (1996). *The Hundred Languages of Children Exhibition Catalogue*.

Figures

- Fig. 1 “It’s wobbly” – Leo. Braving the wobbly bridge, becoming aware of balance.
 Fig. 2 “Yay” – Ethan. Gliding down the slide, expressing joy.
 Fig. 3 “Well done, Lauren” – Lauren. Navigating the giant rocks, congratulating personal efforts and achievements.
 Fig. 4 Admiring the view from up high, considering risks.
 Fig. 5 Extending climbing and gross motor skills alongside friends.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Crossing Boundaries: Outdoor sleep



Fig. 5

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Our exploration of children’s wellbeing through routine began as early as October 2019.”

We developed a strong focus on agency and choice throughout mealtimes which encouraged further exploration into sleep environments. The sleep routine as a whole, and how children could respond to rest with positivity and excitement was explored. We asked ourselves how children’s decision making could play a role in an often tricky routine for dynamic two year olds.

In our minds, as professionals, **“They deserve our respect for them as partners – as people who have the right to take an active role in their own lives.”** (Anne Stonehouse)¹

One teacher ignited our ability to consider the outdoor space for sleep, rest and relaxation; a place of wonderment where a child can be a quiet and silent observer.

The unlikely events of a global pandemic catapulted us into crossing an important boundary, once established by tradition. The outdoor environment, if chosen by the child, became a soothing bedroom, a place of ultimate ventilation, exposing them to the calming effects of nature.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

It has been intriguing to listen to the children express their opinions and voice, their thoughts and experience. We wondered how the children felt being on their beds outside.

Jemiah, *“I like sleeping outside”*. A few minutes later Jemiah spoke out loud and said, *“It is too noisy, I hear people”*. Then fell asleep.

Elliot, *“What is that noise?”*. He took a moment to listen and observe, *“I think it’s a helicopter, yes it’s a helicopter”*.

Xander said in a quiet and reserved voice, *“It’s a bit windy”*.

“I like sleeping outside to talk and lay in bed with my friends. I can see the clouds, see” She pointed to several clouds, observing what was happening in the sky – Layla.

We were curious, deliberate and purposeful about how we felt as professional educators about creating this way of being at rest time.

Melania: **“The environment relaxes educators and gives them permission to participate and relax in a larger group of children at sleep time. It relieves the pressure of having to conduct the routine of where and when the children sleep. When we are outdoors the children only require rest, solitude, calmness and tranquillity and can participate in quiet experiences that recharge their bodies. The noises that can seem loud and disturbing indoors are elevated outdoors because of the sounds of nature”**.

Jamilla: **“By providing the children an opportunity to be soothed and calmed by nature, they strengthen their ability to self**

sooth, regulate their emotions and deepen their mind and body connection. The moments of stillness outdoors invite the children to wonder, think and imagine as they drift to sleep or rest their bodies. Outdoor sleeps have enabled educators the same opportunity, to enjoy the sounds of nature, stillness of the environment and shared time to observe and ponder”.

Shuli: **“When confronted with this practise, in the beginning I was in disbelief. How was this going to work? It’s loud, windy, light, a big space and will they get sick? After witnessing children sleeping, relaxing and dozing in the outdoors instead of indoors, I observed them embracing the noise, weather and light. The space gave the children resting a quiet play environment, whilst others slept”**.

References:

1. Stonehouse, A (1981). *In Their Shoes*. In Their Shoes. Available at: www.in-their-shoes.com.au [Accessed on 27 October 2020]

Figures

- Fig. 1 Playing peek-a-boo.
 Fig. 2 Connecting during rest time.
 Fig. 3 Shoes off ready for sleep.
 Fig. 4 Working together to prepare for rest time.
 Fig. 5 Child choosing to play quietly whilst others sleep in nature.



3 Year Old Kinder

Because there is Coronavirus...



“

Who would have thought the year 2020 would present a year so different to any other year before? When we entered into this year, had any of us heard the words global pandemic, Covid-19, or Coronavirus? Had the children, or ourselves, ever been exposed to words and experiences such as lockdown and curfews? How would this time of uncertainty impact us?”

Our world seemed to be in a crisis. Did this mean an educational crisis for our children or an opportunity to cross from one mindset into a new, more positive one? When World War Two ended in 1945, Loris Malaguzzi and the residents of Reggio Emilia, Italy created an opportunity for new beginnings within their education system. The community of Reggio Emilia had survived four years of war to emerge with the thought that they could change their future and the future of their children. (Reggiochildren.it)¹ (Fig. 1)

“It forced everything back to the beginning. It opened up completely new horizons of thought. I sensed that it was a lesson of humanity and culture, which would generate other extraordinary events. All we needed to do was to follow the same path.”
(Malaguzzi)²



Fig. 1

As with every other kindergarten in Victoria, we began the year as normal. A new group of three-year-old children entered the kindergarten room with anticipation and with some trepidations. By the end of March 2020, we had heard the words Covid-19 and pandemic and our normal school year changed dramatically. We had crossed the boundary into uncharted waters, something none of us had experienced before, both educators and children alike. (Fig. 2)

We had government directives on how our world would present itself. Kindergarten was reduced to those who needed us. Those whose parents were working to support our greater community in beating the Coronavirus. The children were combined into one smaller class with children from the other three-year-old classes and with educators from all the classes. The transition to this new situation was important for both the children and the educators; we were all unsure of our futures. It was paramount that any fear, felt by the educators, was not projected onto the children. The children had to trust the educators and we had to acknowledge their trust and empower them to feel safe in this new environment.

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace.” (Kofi Annan)³ (Fig. 3)

One of the new protocols of the 'Corona Kindergarten' was that the children be brought into Kindergarten by one adult and dropped off at the classroom door. There was to be no settling the children, by the parent, in the Kindergarten room. The children were expected to say goodbye and go straight to the bathroom for handwashing, which was the second new protocol.

With new routines, new peers and new educators how would the children respond? How was the best way for us, the new team of educators, to look after the children's wellbeing and build their trust? We know that play is a key factor in children's wellbeing (Fronczek)⁴. So, we let the children play. From the moment they said goodbye to their parent to the moment they decided they required morning fruit snack; the children had uninterrupted play. There were no tears, no long goodbyes just calm, engaging play.

The children's play was not encroached on by the adults, the educators were not looking for teachable moments. We were allowing the children to teach us. How could we, the adults, be calm in the middle of the pandemic, just like the children? (Fig. 4)

“Children's play is always purposeful even if we can't tell what that purpose is and it's always educational even if we don't know what they are learning.” (Teacher Tom)⁵

The time taken for the children to play was important for them to work through, making new connections and to work out what was happening in their world both in kindergarten as well as beyond.

Teacher Tom, from Seattle, believes that educators should be in partnership with the children.

“Our job is to be with them when they're crying and when they're cheering, speaking truth and creating space for them to feel for as long as they need to feel it.” (Teacher Tom)⁶ (Fig. 5)



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Each day the educators reflected on the children and their ability to be resilient in the face of the adversity of this global pandemic. The children were asked how they felt about the new procedures at Kindergarten.

Happy... Because I have a kiss and a cuddle and we go here. I gave my mummy, at home, a big kiss and cuddle.

Happy because I happy to come to school...

Excited because I learn everything...

Why are your parents not allowed to enter the classroom in the morning?

Corona is spreading germs everywhere

Because of the virus...

Because there is coronavirus...

Nobody wishes for a global pandemic. But when presented with the situation, can we use this as a catalyst for transformation? Malaguzzi believed so.

“Uncertainty can be turned into something positive when we start to test it and see it as a state of ferment, a motor of knowledge.” (Cagliari et al.)⁷

The children have shown us what we need to focus on to move into the future. We need to reflect on their willingness to move forward with hope, happiness and play within these trying times and it is our duty as educators to move with them. We would now maintain this new morning routine to give the children time to “be”, without the influences of the adults around them. (Fig. 6)

As Claudia Giudici stated in 2019, before the global pandemic:

“We who are working with children, we have a duty and a responsibility to work with the idea of hope. It is only hope that will induce people to action, with a desire to change things.”⁸ (Fig. 7)

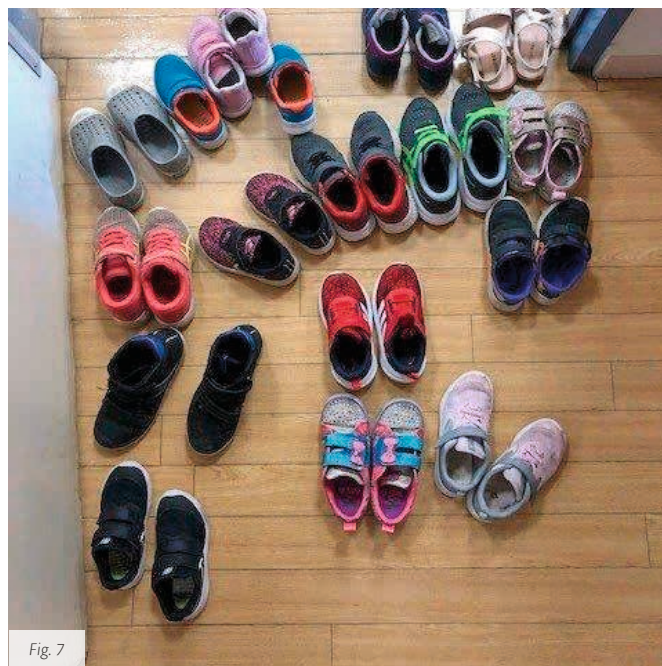


Fig. 7

Let's hope all the boundaries we have crossed over in 2020 due to Covid-19 and continue to cross (we are in stage 4 lockdown as I write), can be used as positives. We don't need to look back and lament, but to look forward with the same attitude of the children and ...

Be excited...

Let's play...

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Megan Miller 2020

This is the new Corona Class!



Fig. 4



Fig. 1

“

We began our Kinder 3 year with great intentions for our umbrella topic, ‘Crossing Boundaries’. I had a once in a lifetime opportunity to travel with other educators to Israel before the kinder year began, which inspired me to create an edible garden in our playground with our class community.”

At one of my morning meetings I shared photos with the children of my experiences collecting fruit and vegetables, and cooking with them. I then asked the children if they would like to be involved in the same process. The children’s excitement was palpable as they discussed plants to grow, opportunities to be involved in, and working together with their parents and grandparents in the garden. Our vision of ‘crossing boundaries’ at that stage was to encourage the children to meet new challenges, to be open to new experiences, to grow both socially and emotionally through our gardening opportunities. We also wanted our wider Bialik community, such as grandparents and extended families to be active participants in our garden project.

And then, Covid-19 arrived, and all our views about the world, about children’s learning and about education were turned upside down. New challenges and confusion meant that the children faced many situations that they had not encountered before. Our vision of ‘crossing boundaries’ changed from moving between known to unknown territory, and sometimes hovering somewhere in between.

Some children, particularly those of essential workers, were at kindergarten as part of a mixed class of 3-year-olds, and others were in lockdown at home. Protocols such as parents dropping off at the classroom door, educators wearing masks when teaching



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

and mixed combinations of teachers working in the classroom meant that the children were faced with changing and challenging situations every time they came into the ELC.

We wondered how the children felt about the masks. Did wearing masks impact our interactions with the children?

I can't see your smile when your mask is on.

I think your mask is funny. You look like a ghost because I can only see your eyes.

It's scary because of the holes. If you cough then it (Corona) will go through the holes.

I was no longer working with my team, and now collaborating with the other kindergarten staff to create a new and everchanging teaching team. Our questions were:

How could we best support the children through this challenging time?

What strategies could we use to ground and reassure the children when so much around them was changing?

What cultural forces could we put in place to create connections and relationships between the children and educators?

This year our Professional Learning Conversations with other Prep to Year 12 educators in our school focused on researching the environment as our cultural force.

Ron Ritchard writes, **“The constructed environment sets up and facilitates certain ways of acting and interacting. It sends messages about what is valued, important, expected and encouraged. As a student walks into a classroom, the physical space is part of the hidden curriculum, conveying messages about how learning will happen.”**¹

It seemed apt that, during the time of Covid-19, the environment would help the children to develop resilience, courage and stability at this time. We thought carefully about the different children entering our room. How would they be feeling? How could we reassure them that we were there for them and that our classroom was a safe place to be?

Stefania Giammuniti quotes, **“How can we give children the time to consider the threshold? How can we value their need to experience, entering as a ritual? How can we create spaces that**

welcome them, that honour this transition of entering, that invite them to belong to a community? Entering is a transition that leads to a new place, a ritual laden with meaning and feeling.”²

We ensured that there was always more than one educator from the cross-class teams greeting the children so they would see a familiar face when entering the classroom. The room was set up in such a way that the areas available for the children to use would have been familiar in all three classrooms. They included sensory experiences such as clay and water, a role play and imaginative play area, opportunities for graphic representation and puzzles and games. These areas gave the children opportunities to develop new friendships, to work together and to act out any emotional feelings they were experiencing during this time. Songs, games and name games in both English and Hebrew united the children with their familiarity, and they provided opportunities to get to know each other and the educators.

It felt nice. I played with Ariah and we could move into different sandpits.

I like this class. It is different because it has different things to play with. When Corona finishes I go back to my class.

I am happy to come to kinder and see my friends.

I played with Nati. Now I still play with him even if he is in the other kinder.

With all this uncertainty and confusion, we decided to use the garden project as the environmental force binding us all together. With our team of educators and changing groups of children, our focus crossed boundaries from collaborating with the wider Bialik community to focusing inwards to the community we had created within our classroom.

Stuart-Smith writes, **“A garden can be an “in-between” space that allows the inner and the outer worlds to coexist simultaneously; a meeting place for our innermost, dream-infused selves and the real physical world. This is evident not just in a garden’s power to distract and inspire, but in its power to console through its cyclical replenishment.”**³

The children navigated the way as we used their questions and interests to develop intentional experiences for them:

Why are some plants big and others are small?

Can we taste some of the parsley?

How do you know when the plant is ready to eat?

Will the carrot grow if we put it in the garden?

Many of the children expressed an interest in what was growing there already as they had watched our groundsman prepare the soil for the trees and plants earlier in the year. They took on responsibility for the garden by checking on the plants and watering them.

The educators in the room showed a willingness to collaborate together. Some of the educators were keen gardeners themselves, and they brought their own interests and skills to the classroom. After a conversation about how plants grow, one educator introduced the children to the joy of growing carrots and celery by putting their tops in water. This investigation was a whole process as the children observed and recorded the growth and eventually planted the offshoots into the garden.

The capabilities of the children became obvious when they shared their thoughts about growth and their drawings of what they had observed. The children supported each other as quiet children were encouraged to speak, and other children were supported in their endeavours to represent the plants and carrot tops:

It will do this (child stretches out his hands wider and wider to show the other children) *It will grow tall... taller than the trees. It will grow in the ground.*

They are going to be giant. We can eat them. They will grow with the rain and water and sun and soil.

You have to make circles for the carrots and then you have to make them orange. See there is a lot of orange and a tiny bit of green. Those are the little leaves.

Here is the sky and here is the ground. Here are the plants for the bees.

The garden gave the children the opportunity to ground themselves by immersing their hands in the soil and planting plants, feeling the splashes of water as they watered the plants, and observing and recording the lovely space around them. On the many days when Corona numbers and anxiety levels were high, our small community would spend time outside enjoying the space, reflecting on the beauty and watching new life appear before their eyes.

Warden says, **“Because in challenging moments we are at the forefront in our thinking – we’re pushing ourselves right to the edge of our capabilities.”**⁴

Throughout this time the children have shown us how capable and resilient they are. They have noticed and acknowledged the bad but have moved forward in their motivation to make connections with other children and their environment:

I play with all the friends. It was good.

I liked it when Abby and Ayana would read ‘Nat Fantastic’ and I loved it.

I made some friends outside and we just started a game.

As we moved towards the end of lockdown and the possibility of the children going back to their original classrooms and team of educators, and as we move to 4 Year Old Kinder next year in our



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

groups, we need to consider some questions for the community we created and the boundaries we will continue to cross:

How do we continue to bring the children together to tend to the garden?

How do we include those children who have been in lockdown and not involved?

What other possibilities are there for moving on with this investigation?

How do we offer opportunities for new friendships and connections to continue?

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Figures:

- Fig. 1 We wondered how the children felt about the masks.
- Fig. 2 The environment gave the children opportunities to develop new friendships.
- Fig. 3 The children took on responsibility for the garden by checking on the plants and watering them.
- Fig. 4 The children were supported in their endeavours to represent the plants and carrot tops.
- Figs. 5 & 6: The garden gave the children the opportunity to ground themselves by immersing their hands in the soil and planting plants, feeling the splashes of water as they watered the plants, and observing and recording the lovely space around them.

From little things big things grow

“

What does it mean to cross boundaries? How can crossing boundaries help us become stronger individuals? Crossing boundaries is daunting. One feels challenged to face the unknown. Generally, our boundaries are our comfort zones. To cross them certainly requires some challenges, which needs courage. Our school motto gives us the motivation to “Step Forth with Courage”. I strongly believe that crossing boundaries needs courage. The question was, as educators, were we physically and emotionally ready to step forth?”

At the start of the year, during our parent night, we asked the parents how they would like to see their children crossing boundaries. We asked them, ‘how could the children come out of their comfort zones to do something differently?’ The general response was that they wanted their children to be risk takers, to try new things, help others in need, be kind. This was, of course, pre Covid-19.

For years we have always worked in our own classrooms. During Covid-19 lockdown, three classes became one to cater for essential service worker’s children only. The educators from three different classes were asked to work together. How early learning professionals all over the world are responding to Covid-19 is history in the making.

Diane Kashin expressed what has happened by saying “**Covid-19 is a wall**”¹. She went on to explain that, at the time when the Hundred Languages of Children Exhibit was in its first incarnation, it was named *When the Eye Jumps Over the Wall*. According to Malaguzzi, inside the original title of the exhibit there is a message “**that the eye, when it looks beyond the wall of habit, of custom, of the normal, of the non-surprise, of assumed security, will find the possible. When the wall of old habits and customs is broken down, the quest for the possible can begin.**”¹ Malaguzzi’s message is that “**beyond the wall there is always a beyond**”¹. Kashin suggests that teachers can choose to erect the wall that Malaguzzi calls the wall of the “**finite**”¹. “**If the impetus for change comes from within, teachers instead can have a sense of the infinite... Covid-19 is like a wall that we must look beyond to what is possible under these extraordinary circumstances. If we hold within each of us the desire to rise to this**



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

challenging time, to all that is before us, we can see possibilities rather than limitations and restrictions.” (Kashin)¹

We were faced with some challenging questions. How do we cross the boundary of our comfort? How do we look beyond the wall? How will this work? How will the children react? Will the children from our class play with the children from other classes? Will the children settle or be unsettled to see new educators and children? How will the parents react to not coming into the class before starting kinder or at the end of the day? Will new relationships blossom between the children and will they continue after we go back to our own classes? With these questions in mind we began our journey, not knowing how this would work. Different educators brought different strengths and shared knowledge to the group. Loris Malaguzzi stated that **“Ensuring that every child feels a sense of security and belonging within the school enables each child to accept and participate actively in transforming situations that are part of learning experiences.”²** Upon arrival, the children said goodbye to their parents at the door and this gave us a staggered and smooth start to the day. The children began their day without any interruptions. We had more time in the day. I used to think this change would be hard, but what I saw made me think this change was as smooth as it could have been. We asked the children about their experiences:

I made new friends. I played with my old friend from the crèche. I had fun playing with them when we were outside. They helped me dig for treasure. I played with my new friend in the sandpit. She was not from our class. We noticed that the children were resilient. They knew what Covid-19 was; from hand washing to not touching each other had become a part of their daily lives. To foster this new beginning, we introduced some changes to our routine. In the dining room, rather than eating in our own classroom groups, the children from the three classes could choose to sit wherever they wanted.

For those children who were at home things were different. This had become a daily way of life for many, children, parents, and educators. We were living in difficult times, and because of these difficulties we wanted to have connection with our class community. How could we cross boundaries to build relationships, connect and support the families from our class? Zoom meetings were organised, once or twice a week, where the educators met with families and read a story, played games, or sang songs. This provided some normality for the children and their families.

In Term 3 we planted sunflower seeds that one child brought to Kinder. The seeds began germinating within a few weeks. (Figs. 1 & 2)

The children took a keen interest and responsibility for watering the seedlings and observing the growth. We used the seeds as a metaphor for crossing a boundary and changing into something different. We asked the children: **‘do you think that the seeds have to be brave to grow into plants?’**

You need to be strong to grow big

There is a door in the seed

The door will open and the plant will come out

The plant is shy and hides inside the seed

The plant is sleeping inside the seed

The plant has to be brave to come out

When it comes out it can see many friends and they all look the same because they are all from the sunflower seed

One day, while the children and educators were together in one classroom, we read a book called *Have you filled a bucket today?* By Carol McCloud. This book talks about being kind to others. We discussed the idea that by sharing we can show kindness to others. Referring to the sunflower seeds planted, and having noticed that

the seedlings looked very crowded in one pot, we discussed with the children the need to take some seedlings out. We asked the children if they would like to share the seedlings with the other classes and with our school gardener. We agreed to invite our school gardener, teachers, and children from the other classes to take some seedlings. (Figs. 3 & 4)

The children from our class took ownership of choosing the seedlings to share. If we have something more than we need then why not share it with others? This was an opportunity to learn that by giving something to others it brings more pleasure than keeping it all for ourselves and at the same time showing the care and responsibility for the seedlings by giving them more room to grow. (Figs. 5 & 6)

I will tell you which one you can take, you can have four. Having the ownership of the seedlings empowered the children whilst accomplishing the act of kindness. The children have built new relationships with children and teachers from other classes. We crossed our own boundaries in the creation of deeper relationships with the experiences of Covid-19. Each experience became part

of a larger learning community. We also took the opportunity to analyse the boundaries that we encountered, or indeed created as a community, in getting to know other educators and children. **“How we confront these boundaries may define our future, which is unpredictable. We were presented with opportunities to create new relationships with the community of students and educators, as well as strengthen existing ones.”** (Susan Burshan)³

We have stepped forth with courage.

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Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



4 Year Old Kinder

‘Everything we do needs to prioritize relationships’

(Maggie Dent)¹



“

Crossing Boundaries Together: The Voice of Three Kindergarten Teachers” (Fig. 1)

Global Pandemic, March 2020, Melbourne Australia, the first lockdown. School opens its doors to support children of essential workers. One mixed class, out of three groups of four year old children. Teachers are on duty to serve the community. New teams of educators are formed in the light of this structure, getting ready to cross boundaries.

How will we brave the silence? What should we consider about ourselves that will help us ensure our own self-care is in place? How are we going to bring our most calm, peaceful, and mindful selves to the children during this time of COVID-19?

Having the need to share responsibilities for one group of children required us, the teachers, to think constructively about our own practices, roles, and relationships with each other. What kind of doors were each of us willing to open? What possible changes would we make to improve these relationships, and to provide experiences that the children and families would encounter? How would this period of time, under tough restrictions from the government (by now stage four lockdown) impact our thinking, our views and our practice? How would we bridge the differences between us, the team? How will we shift our lens of focus, our pedagogy, through this constant changing reality and how could we possibly follow our educational philosophy during this uncertain time?

We started off with the belief that for the children, this new group provided more than a motivator that energised their overall social and emotional wellbeing. We worked with our assumptions on what the children’s emotions represented, and we integrated these into the new relationships between different children attending school.

The Reggio approach to early year’s education prioritises the development of high quality and enduring social relationships among both children and adults and has been described by Loris Malaguzzi as ‘a pedagogy of relationships’². Furthermore, Carla Rinaldi stated





Fig. 2

that **‘the definition of the teacher’s professional identity is viewed in contexts... in relation to her colleagues’**.³ (Fig. 2)

With these ideas in mind, we found ourselves reflecting on our practice more than ever before; we recalibrated and refocused on who we are in the matter of early childhood education and our role as teachers. Thus, a plan **‘can never be accepted once and for all, but instead constantly undergoing revision, as circumstances change...’** (Carla Rinaldi)⁴ Our involvement in this process of pedagogical reflection included possibilities for navigating within new and unfamiliar pathways, an attempt to look through new lenses and a determination to find potential steps to move us forward. This evolving time has been an opportunity, yet a challenge, to think of our children, our families, ourselves and our communities in ways that help us listen, hear, honour and value what matters the most as we found ourselves crossing new frontiers in our lives.

Working with young children means working closely with their parents. Under the pandemic restrictions we knew that our moral and ethical obligations were to focus on somehow keeping all our kinder families, on and off campus, connected. Through zoom meetings, phone calls and emails we discovered that many children were getting the opportunity to connect with their parents in ways they had not done before. Whilst parents were never expected to create school at home, they were supported with ideas for daily activities and a digital social space to share with their child’s learning at home.

Our faith in the children helped us to understand the smooth transition of those attending school due to their parents’ status as essential workers. All along we believed that the children were not going to see the pandemic as ‘earth shaking’ as the adults did, because they are able to absorb new and changing information all the time. A child’s world is all about ‘firsts’ and they respond to change pretty much through the lenses of new ‘firsts’ every day and the responses of the adults to these changes. We knew that, and

the children knew that. However, being placed in the forefront, not by choice, we agreed with the notion of not casting our fears and frustrations onto the children. It was up to us to choose whether this journey was an adventure or a tragedy. We had concerns but we refused to allow our fears to take what were merely inconveniences and turn them into what our lives, or the lives of the children, were all about. We knew that for most children, this experience has been whatever the adults in their lives have made of it.

As a team, we were doing the best we could within the restrictions that were set for us; keeping what worked and tossing what was unreasonable, whilst supporting each other in developing an alternative attitude to negativity. We became a cohesive group of understanding, no egos nor power struggling, rather sharing responsibilities and committed to providing the children and parents with a safe and supportive environment, both physically and emotionally.

In his 2020 presentation, Alan Seale talks about teacher’s transformation as a **‘shift of their way of thinking’**⁵ which starts from the inside core belief and rolls its way out. His idea of looking at everything with ‘soft eyes’ made a lot of sense to me.

What made this work for us? How could we, three strong and independent-minded teachers, rostered to care for only one group of children, make it work?

We suddenly understood that despite our diverse backgrounds and personalities, we do share common grounds. The priority of caring for children and being passionate about their wellbeing connected us as teachers. It kept us above the troubled water and guided us through. We were functioning from our heart, reaching far to gather information, and using our intellect to organise this data into a day to day plan. Our relationships have been, and will always be, at the heart of all of this, and that is what we hope the children have taken from us.

‘What children need has not changed, it’s just the world around them that has changed’. (Maggie Dent)⁶

Whilst researching the effect of the lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic on our ELC community of children we came upon this article. It was so well written and it resounded with us that we decided to include it in its’ entirety, as part of our article.

Teachers have an expression. MASLOW BEFORE BLOOM. If you are not steeped in educational jargon it might be easy to miss the point but it is an important one, particularly within the context of Covid-19.

Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist best known for his “Hierarchy of Needs”. Maslow theorized that humans have a prioritized set of needs that need to be fulfilled, in sequence, in order to achieve their full potential. At the foundation of his pyramid shaped model, Maslow placed basic physiological needs, food, water and shelter followed by a sense of safety and security – both prerequisites for advancement to higher levels of learning and self-actualization.

Fellow psychologist Benjamin Bloom developed a similarly famous pyramid model known as Bloom's Taxonomy that orders the complexity of learning outcomes, from the most basic (facts committed to memory) to the ability to analyze, evaluate and ultimately create new knowledge.

So before complex learning can happen in our classrooms children must have their most fundamental needs met. Children entering the classroom without regular nourishment and shelter for example are unlikely to engage in deeper learning.

The same holds true in environments where children do not feel safe. And that presents an unusually vexing challenge towards the next few weeks at school.

It is hard enough to create a psychologically safe learning environment in which students feel the freedom to take risks and make themselves vulnerable to new and challenging experiences. But when distancing and wearing of masks and online learning is put in the mix we are living through an unusually scary time where we need to focus on the creation of a safe and nurturing learning environment and support necessary to foster real learning during an extraordinary period in our history. (Siddiqi, J)⁷

However it must be noted that one parent noticed the following... "I feel like they ignore it most of the time. They accept the situation and do not address it directly. It comes up through comments every now and then, but given the immense affect it has had on their routine I expected it to be more present in their behavior. They don't even address the fact that everyone is wearing masks all of a sudden."

Children's relationships are critically important as highlighted in *Belonging, Being and Becoming*. Emphasis is not only educator-child relationships but also children's relationships with each other.

"When are my real friends coming back to kinder?"

We need to ask ourselves, "What do these children need now to flourish and grow?"

What can we do to really show these children that we believe in them and want to see what more they can do now?

How do we let the children know and feel that they are safe and cared for unconditionally now?

Kindergarten teachers are skilled and well-practiced in helping build community and establish interpersonal connections to help young children adjust to new environments.

Children often communicate their feelings through behavior, and they rely on the adults around them to acknowledge and interpret the behavior and then to provide a safe, secure and predictable space for them.

"Mum, I feel like I'm wasting my life – we haven't travelled anywhere all year."

Max to dad, *"Dad, when the Corona Virus goes away, is it going to come back?"*

"Why do we need to go back to school? We can stay at home and have hot lunches and pat Oscar the cat in every break."

We have found in the last six months the children have settled into a new routine with total acceptance, even with a different mix of children and staff and environment. How was this possible under such marked differences?

The investment of creating a sense of safety and connectedness for children can only pay off dividends in the long run.

When it comes to learning...it is Maslow before Bloom.

We often point to childhood play as evidence of the resilience of children, and they are resilient, but we make the mistake when we point to their play as evidence that they are "fine."⁷

One child went for a walk on her property around about May this year, and according to her father, she found something everybody has been searching for- the origin of the Corona Virus. According to his daughter *it comes from this tree*. (Fig. 3)

"Children play with or without toys, they play alone and together, they play when they are sad, afraid and even confused. Play is their business." (Teacher Tom)⁸

Children don't play because they are fine. They play because play is how children process the world around them.

Tom pretended he had a weapon in his hand and said, *"I am going to go outside and kill all of the Corona Virus."*

Play is the child's attempt to answer their own dilemmas, and by doing this show their resilience. They are processing strange events around them and most of them are coping, and some are even oblivious as to what is going on. It all comes down to their individual personalities.

After Corona Virus I am going to grow up and I am going to another house, and then I am going to find many acorns. I am a collector, I need to find some more.

One child walked in to kinder morning and she was holding these pods in her hand. She stated:

These look like Corona Virus because they have little sticks sticking out and they look like the shape of the Corona Virus. I saw it on the TV. (Fig. 4)





Fig. 5



Fig. 6

One Friday morning whilst sitting around the table for Shabbat one of the children said, *I hate Corona Virus because it makes so many people sick.*

This was an opportunity for us to listen and record, and allow the other children an opportunity to contribute. And they did. (Figs. 5 & 6)

Child 1: *Do you know about Curious Kids?*

Me: **Tell me about it.**

Child 1: *There are ones about Corona Virus. One's about hair and some is about time. There is so much I can't even explain it. The Corona Virus is shaped like a crown. Oh yes, it is from animals. They drank them and then they got sick.*

Child 2: *No, it actually started in China.*

Child 1: *Yes, it did start in China.*

Child 3: *When we do Corona Virus we need to be careful and then you can't kiss and cuddle someone.*

It appears that that the children have an inner resilience and have developed the emotional skills, the coping mechanisms which helps manage life stressors.

It was all delivered in a matter of fact way most probably because they are in a safe, secure space.

With our new COVID style kinder, some of the children found themselves in a new class environment with a different class culture, a different mix of children from three kinder classes, and with a team of teachers who they knew but not as their teacher.

'Our experience of time and space is individual, but it occurs in a cultural context.' (J. Greenman)⁹ Each kinder class has their own

'class culture' that encompasses the environment, the routines and educators. Just as everyone worldwide has had to adapt and accept our new reality, this would need to be the same case in our kinder.

The new normal meant that some areas, routines in particular, needed to change, but the environment both indoors and outdoors was going to be a constant. Our constant was the children's right to be in a quality environment. We were reminded of Carla Rinaldi's thoughts about the children's environment and it being **'the third teacher... the right to contribute to the construction of this environment, this idea of beauty, a shared aesthetic.'**¹⁰

Would our expertise, skills and pedagogy ensure that each child felt secure and comfortable in their new and unknown surroundings? Would they be able to explore with confidence and develop relationships not only with their peers but with the spaces and materials?

As Ron Ritchhart says, in *Creating Cultures of Thinking*, **'When the children walk into the classroom, the physical space is part of the hidden curriculum, conveying messages about how learning will happen. It sends messages about what is valued, important, expected and encouraged.'**¹¹

Each kinder class has the same or similar toys and materials but in each room the layout and the way everything is presented is often very different. Having to adjust to these differences did not appear to phase the children at all. In fact, it stimulated and steered the direction of play in a myriad of ways.

The children did not disappoint – they embraced and engaged with the many different spaces, often choosing the same favoured spaces each morning. A common thread ran through the way they engaged with the materials, whether it was with recycled construction materials through to figurines, manipulative toys and art media used for imaginative and role play.



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

One of our challenges was to ensure social distancing, as much as possible, bearing in mind the slogan, ‘Staying apart keeps us together’. We used the outdoors whenever possible and set up play scenarios where the children could interact in a safe yet social way. The children took ownership of these specific areas and establishing their personal foot print. (Figs. 7 & 8)

‘Young children learn from action. Whether children *construct* their world as Piaget maintains or *actively absorb* it in Montessori terms, it is action and interaction with people and things that count.’¹² Having the freedom to explore and move, unbroken stretches of time, with minimal interruptions and with acceptance and support, facilitated the way the children responded to one another and their environment.

We found that the children took the ‘new normal’ school day of temperature taking, immediate drop off at the classroom door and waiting outside the building at the end of the day for parents, in their stride.

When asked how they felt about the morning drop off...

We love going into kinder by ourselves

We feel happy and very excited

I feel like I’m big and going to Prep

I like coming into kinder by myself because I can do it on my own.

I can play with my friends

I like coming in by myself and I like my parents not doing stuff and I can do things on my own.

I like mummy and daddy not coming into kinder with me because then I get more time to play with my friends.

We found that the children needed an extended period of time to settle into their play patterns and interests for the day. This period could often run for close to an hour and a half. In the majority of the children we saw self-directed learning, and intense engagement and focus in their play. As we know play is children’s work, it is their job. For Elkind, **‘play is nature’s way of dealing with stress for children.’¹³** We needed to ‘read the class’ and be flexible with our routines and at the same time maintain consistency and in doing so provide security.

We had to be mindful that the children were now having to adjust to new and different routines and we made sure we informed the

children each day about the program, as we sat at our morning tea. There were times, however, when there needed to be a change of direction and this required flexibility on the part of the children too. The specialist session days and times, morning tea and lunch times, rest and story times all changed, but as the days went by we noticed how the children became more resilient, coped with and celebrated these changes.

This period could have been challenging but we saw the very many positives that arose. The children had opportunities to build on their social and emotional skills as they learnt to get on with others. The children learnt to conform to the rules of the group they were in with this new complex social order.

For us as a team of teachers it has been a collaboration; an exercise of trial and error and about being flexible both within the physical environment, the routines and with one another.

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Figures

Fig. 1 From left: Gali Sommer, Judy Blumberg, Lindsay Miller.

Fig. 2 *When teachers talk, one is thinking, and one is saying stuff...* (Syo)



Prep

‘...let them see the world from your window...’

(Mehmet Murat Ildan)

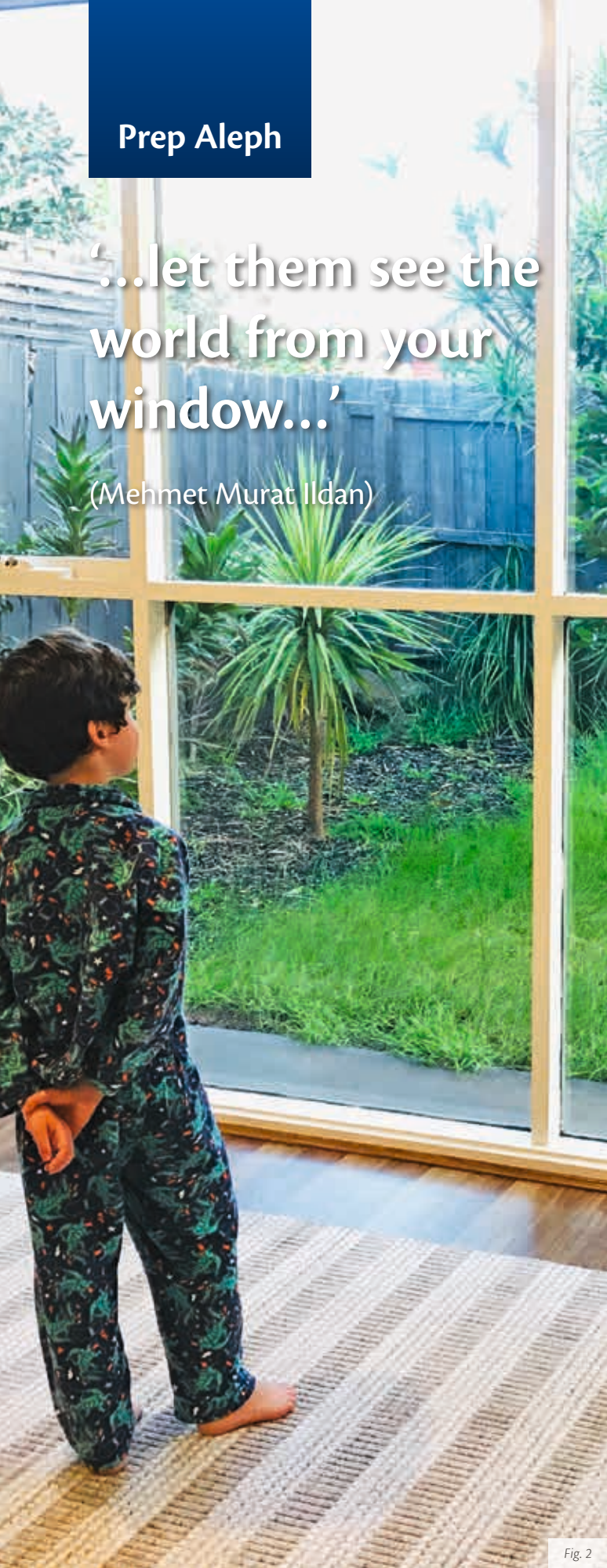


Fig. 2

“

It is the beginning of 2020. A new Prep team, a new group of children. The umbrella idea of ‘crossing boundaries’ has been chosen for the whole Early Learning Centre (ELC) to explore. We wondered how we could authentically explore this with a group of 5 and 6 year olds and we began to brainstorm the boundaries of their world. ”

The transition from Kinder to Prep is a significant change in a child’s life. Although many of the children attended our Kinder at the ELC, the transition ‘up the stairs’ into Prep is a significant boundary (Fig. 1). This seemed like the perfect place to begin.

The children were provided with time and the opportunity to reflect on their very real experiences crossing this boundary. As individuals and as a group, they brainstormed the similarities and differences between Kinder and Prep. How had wearing the school uniform changed them? How will being in a new community of learners help them adjust to Prep? They discussed the new independence of drop off and playtime. The children were keen to reflect on their own experiences and to share the ‘crossing of boundaries’ that they had experienced.



Fig. 1



Fig. 3

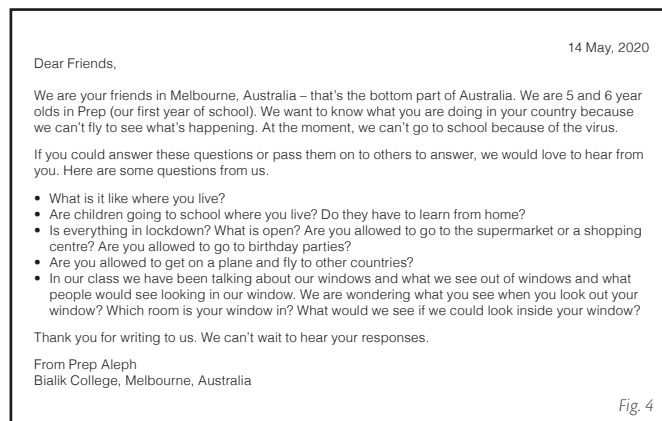


Fig. 4

As teachers, we continued to wonder...

- How can we bring the umbrella idea of 'crossing boundaries' into the worlds of our children and use it to help them see beyond our community?
- Could our children truly understand the concept of 'crossing boundaries' within the greater world when their boundaries were so limited to their family and school unit?

Then it was... the year that everything changed. And it did. In a matter of weeks, the world for all of us had literally turned upside down. The boundaries that we used to cross regularly in our lives were tested and tested again. Laws were changed and the things we took for granted no longer became possible. Boundaries that we had crossed regularly were prohibited and boundaries that we had barely thought about previously were broken down and, in their place, new boundaries were created.

At this point, it seemed serendipitous that the ELC umbrella idea of 'crossing boundaries' was chosen for 2020.

We were literally thrown into a new normality. Within weeks, we were teaching from home. Yes, teaching from our own houses to children in their own houses. Through the use of digital technology, we found a way to 'cross boundaries' and to protect and nurture our learning community in this fast-changing world. We quickly adjusted to this new way of teaching, as did the children, and we continued to brainstorm ways to connect in this online world.

Our investigation was now more important than ever but how could we use this as a way of connection when everything we were experiencing was so different and seemingly disconnected?

At this time, many countries throughout the world were in lockdown. There were memes, videos and posts being shared regularly on all social media about people's lives in lockdown. The hashtag 'view from my window' was created and people around the world were posting a range of images from their windows. We saw many quiet streets all over the world and pictures of wildlife taking over cities. We saw tranquil images, stillness and once bustling cities that were now empty. Many landmarks were

photographed but tourists were nowhere to be seen. The views from the windows were varied, yet they managed to unite a world that was experiencing a pandemic that had disrupted any normality that had previously been shared. People were being told to stay home and the opportunity to post images of the view from their windows was providing comfort to many around the world.

"If you want the people to understand you, invite them to your life and let them see the world from your window!"
(Mehmet Murat Ildan)¹

As teachers, we couldn't help but consider the changing landscape of our world and how this could enhance our students' learning. We wondered:

- How could we use the metaphor of a window to open the children's eyes to the many boundaries that were being crossed this year?
- How could the understanding of the view from someone's window help them to understand more about each other and the world around them?
- What boundaries could we cross in order to open the children's eyes to the shared experience that the world was going through? And could an understanding of this shared experience help them to make sense of what was happening in their world?

We began by asking the children what they saw from their own window (Fig. 2). They drew detailed images, took photos and discussed the various things that they could physically see. They also considered the view from the other side and enjoyed sharing what others may see if they looked inside their window (Fig. 3). This prompted many questions and so the decision was made to write a letter asking questions of others who were also in lockdown.

The children were very aware that the coronavirus experience was one shared by many around the world and so they jointly wrote a letter to others around the world. They told us about their families and friends living in other countries and were keen to send their letter on to aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and friends all over the world. So, we did just that. We sent this letter to their parents and they in turn sent it on. (Fig. 4)



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Within days, we had responses from over ten countries. Families and individuals spent much time responding to our letter. We heard about the birds flying near Heathrow Airport (which was now quiet). We heard about the view of skyscrapers from a window in Bangkok and the swinging monkey seen through a window in Malaysia. We heard about the hot weather in Israel (it was the middle of winter here) and the sunny skies and empty streets in Johannesburg. We heard about shopping centres being closed and shops beginning to open. We heard about cancelled birthday parties and learning from home. We learnt about what was happening in other countries and noticed how similar it was to our experience in Australia. We received letters that were typed and letters that were handwritten. We received letters in English and in other languages. Some people took photos or filmed their children's responses to our letter. We looked at addresses and found them on the map. (Fig. 5) The children noted how so many of our experiences are shared even though we are physically so far away.

The letters we received gave us a strong understanding of the lives of others. The children were surprised by the similarities and enjoyed discussing the differences. The use of the 'window' enabled the children to see the tangible similarities and differences between their own lives and those of others.

Through our letters we connected directly with children in the Arava in Israel and in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The children had the opportunity to ask questions directly on Zoom to the class in Israel and enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their questions 'face to face'. They shared the view from our window at Bialik and we saw their view in Israel.

Regular correspondence with the children at a summer camp in Reggio Emilia opened our children's eyes to the similarities and differences of our current experiences. At that point, they were just coming out of lockdown and for us we were heading back into lockdown. Hearing their stories enabled our children to see the journey and impact that the pandemic was having all over the world. (Fig. 6)

With the second return to home schooling, we were very aware of the social experiences that the children were missing. As we

continued to sift through the letters and share them online, we also wanted the children to connect more deeply with one another.

Once again, the metaphor of a window came into play. We played a game of 'Who am I?' The children asked questions to discover whose 'window' we would open today. We then pinned that child and the class was given the opportunity to ask questions to that person. The questions changed and became deeper over time and as each child answered questions, the others drew windows depicting that child. (Fig. 7) This experience enabled them to look beyond the physical and see what exists – within every individual. They felt valued when they asked and answered questions and they truly appreciated the time and dedication their friends put into their 'window'. It allowed for social interactions and friendships to continue to develop even during this challenging time. The children loved not only opening windows into each other's lives but also their teachers' lives. It allowed for the children to feel connected and a sense of community remained even when we weren't physically together.

"A window is a resource that offers you a view into someone else's experience. ... It is critical to understand that students cannot truly learn about themselves unless they learn about others as well." (Kimberley Moran)²

It is our hope that the metaphor of the 'window' continues to remind us of this monumental time in our lives and the unifying experience that this pandemic has placed on the world at large. We hope that it triggers a memory of a certain view or a certain experience and that in turn, it reminds us all to consider the different views from each of our 'windows' and how these views shape our world.

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I first had to start with trying



“

This year the Early Learning Centre embraced the umbrella idea of Crossing Boundaries. At the beginning of this journey, we could not anticipate the boundaries that would be crossed by individuals, communities, cities, and nations worldwide. ”

In the early days of Prep, many students spoke about the differences they noticed between the Kinder and Prep environments. So, we used this as a platform to begin our investigation of 'crossing boundaries'. Using a Venn Diagram, our class brainstormed the differences and similarities between the two environments.

In Prep we wear a uniform

We can still play outside

I listen to the teacher on the mat

In order to unpack the children's thinking about the crossing of this boundary, we asked them to consider **What comes to mind when we say the word 'boundary'?** At first this word presented thoughts surrounding restrictions and limitations. The word 'boundary' seemed to have a negative connotation in the mind of our Prep students.

A boundary is a place you are not allowed to go

If you go the police will come

It's somewhere you can't go but when you do go, you can go

Whilst we were continuing to develop as a community, we were mindful of providing the children with shared experiences. One such experience was a cloud watching experience. (Figs. 1 & 2)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

With a black fineliner pen, paper and a clipboard, the students observed the movement of clouds. They watched closely and recorded any images they saw. The students had time to share their findings. As the class discussion unravelled, we quickly noticed that we all saw different shapes/objects.

If we are all looking at the same clouds, how is it we saw different things?

Because some look in different ways

We were all looking at different parts of the sky

Because we are all different, we all have different colour skin, different colour hair, different mums and dads and we are just all different to each other

This initial dialogue demonstrated the different points of view within our community and commenced a collective inquiry into 'perception'.

We all see the world through our own lenses, but what might we understand about the world through someone else's lenses? Would this help us in any way?

The class took part in a game of 'would you?' (Fig. 3) As the students were shown different images, they had to determine if they *would* or *wouldn't* feel comfortable in that presented situation. Some examples of the images shown included jumping out of a plane, swimming in the sea, walking a dog and riding a bike. The discussion that followed entailed many interesting observations.

Everyone was always moving sides and was different

Some people liked to go to the easy side, and some went to not sure and the worried side

I noticed some people felt too nervous and some people didn't

When the person was climbing the tree, she looked a bit brave

Based on what was noticed during the game, there was a shift in the discussion and the students began focusing on times in their lives where they have felt scared. They shared these experiences and explored how they learned to overcome those fears.

I never trained and one day I trained with my dad and I got good at bike riding. Then I rode every day at the park.

When I first came to this school, I was very scared and then I did it and got lots of new friends.

I couldn't walk. When I was a toddler I kept trying and falling over. I started walking by myself.

We are risk takers doing stuff that we don't know yet but now we know how to do it

That you be brave

The term 'risk taking' became a visible part of our classroom. In Carol Dweck's research into the idea of Growth Mindset, she believes "effort is key for students' achievement, but it's not the only thing." (Carol Dweck)¹



Fig. 3

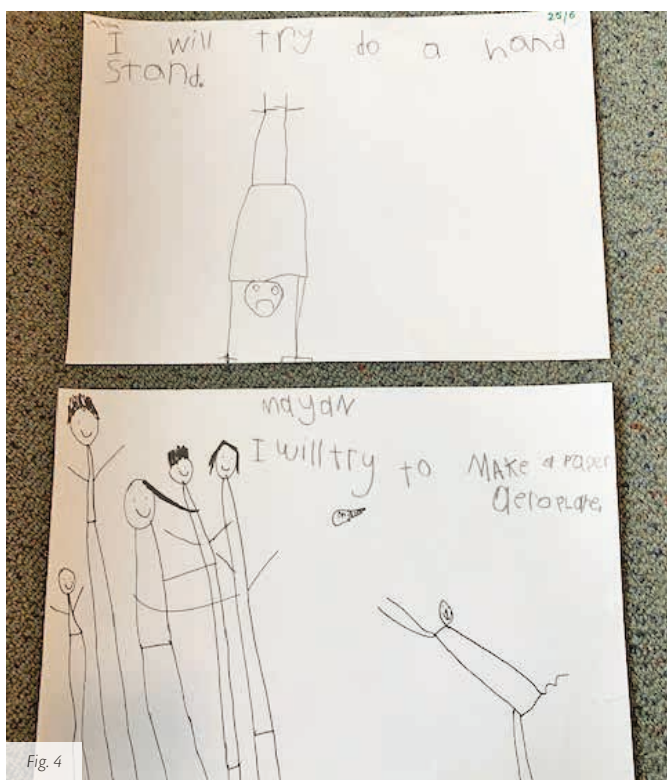


Fig. 4

Students require a range of tools to learn and develop new skills. Once they have attempted something new, it is important to reflect and ask, 'what can I try now?' The journey for learning doesn't cease after one trial. This message resonated with our class community as the students themselves are learning new things each day.

Do we all face the same challenges/boundaries?

The class was presented with the task to choose something that they would like to learn to do over the holiday and document their journey via pictures or videos. (Figs. 4 & 5) The students were then given the opportunity to share their experiences. Research shows that **“when time is not available to consolidate the learning through reflection and personal summary, it can easily be lost.”** (Ron Ritchhart)²

The climbing was scary, but I kept going.

I'll keep trying every-day and not give up (handstands).

I first had to start with trying. On the last try I could do 11 laps. It was scary because I didn't have training wheels. I had to keep the front wheels straight. It feels good now. I'm still not getting the hang of brakes.

My goal was learning to ski. Now I know how to, and it is easy. I have a new goal now to ski with new friends and a new instructor (Fig. 6).

This focus led to rich learning experiences whereby the students became critical thinkers in their own learning and reflected on how they could support one another on their learning journey. This was particularly evident online as we faced many challenges and adjusted to a different way of learning. As a class community we will continue to adopt a growth mindset and ask ourselves, *what can be done better and where to next.*

As we prepare to return to school and cross yet another boundary, we wonder how this mindset will assist the children as they adjust to yet another normality. It is easy to look at challenges or change as difficult, and sometimes even impossible, but imagine if you could see them as opportunities for something else. Where could that mindset take us?

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Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Crossing Boundaries



“

“... the eye, when it looks beyond the wall of habit, of custom, of the normal, of the non-surprise, of assumed security, will find the possible.” (Malaguzzi)¹

A group of 5-year-olds began their formal learning journey at school in January 2020. They started the year with many emotions, getting accustomed to routines of learning and exploring. Many discussions were had and thinking routines used as we tried to identify physical and emotional changes of transitioning from Kindergarten to Prep. However, within six weeks of adjusting to a new routine, the children were forced to step into a new reality that the Covid-19 pandemic brought with it.

The umbrella idea for the Early Learning Centre (ELC) for 2020, Crossing Boundaries, was decided in late 2019. Little did we realise that we had unwittingly pre-meditated an instrument to document what would probably be the most extraordinary year in our lives – personally, professionally, and emotionally – all on a global scale.

2020 provided us with opportunities to cross many boundaries and provided ample fodder for growth, reflection, change and honest self-appraisal. As the pandemic spread, governments across the globe raced to control it. The world suddenly became egalitarian – the virus impacted us all in complex ways, showing little thought or respect for class, country, race, or creed. Children were hurled into learning new skills that neither they, their parents or us as their educators were prepared for. Teachers were forced to rethink ‘standard practices’.

Many teachers have unfavourable views of young children spending extended time on screens and do not generally consider explicit online teaching as an option. This was until we were given little choice. Commenting on change, Diane Kashin (2018) stated, **“When the wall of old habits and customs is broken, the quest for the possible can begin”**². We too were forced to break down our barriers of habits. We trialed, modified, clarified and corrected our approach in our own quest for the possible.

We reinvented ourselves and our teaching styles overnight, coming up with innovative approaches. We dressed up as magicians to inject ‘magic’ in our learning, and on many occasions, attempt educated guesswork of what was happening when students suddenly disappeared from the screen. (Fig. 1) At all times, we juggled student engagement and curriculum guidelines whilst simultaneously trying our best to stay true to our pedagogy.

Believing problems to be our friends, Fullan (1992) considers change to be **“loaded with uncertainty”** and **“all change involves learning ... (becoming) good at something new.”**³ Online teaching provided us with opportunities to appreciate



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

and consolidate our partnerships with families. The Reggio Emilia philosophy considers parents to be the child's first teachers and partners in their education. Never had the role of parents in their children's education been more vital. Our school established virtual classrooms as opposed to uploading pre-recorded lessons. This enabled us to use technology to support an education based on relationships, despite the distancing. It also provided an opportunity for many opponents of online teaching, to cross boundaries of fixed mindsets and instead, use it to support critical thinking and promote creativity in active learning.

The new 'normal' of online teaching set in and the novelty soon started wearing off. Excitement was replaced with frustration, screen fatigue and ingenious solutions to zone off learning. We regularly reminded ourselves that as children, our students were bound to feel, but find it hard to express their frustrations and insecurity about this uncertainty. Regular school provided security and connection to children and families. However, a virtual classroom was a different setting. It was becoming evident that we, as educators, had to address curriculum and personal growth differently.

While children were learning ways of the digital world, adjusting to new routines and communication etiquette, we identified gaps that are common stumbling blocks in learning – lack of resilience and ability to persevere. A staff webinar focusing on the 'Batman Effect'⁴ motivated us to trial this concept in our virtual classroom.

Children dressed up as superheroes and discussed the qualities they admired of their superhero. We used Project Zero 'thinking routines'⁵ *What Makes You Say That* and *Claim, Support, Question* to identify heroic qualities. Children believed superheroes wore capes and flew around the world saving and helping people (Fig. 2).

Using these routines helped the children keep in mind 'What would Batman do?' when they found it challenging to stay focused, motivated or understand instructions given remotely through a screen. This tact of encouraging children to use their superhero's image when tasks became challenging enabled them to persist because, as a student remarked, *"Batman never gives up!"*

However, these were extraordinary times. Extraordinary times ask for extraordinary superheroes.



Fig. 3

A See-Think-Wonder Thinking Routine was used to study *Game Changer*⁶, an artwork by Banksy. (Fig. 3) It led us to question the stereotypical attributes of superheroes. Students wondered if wearing a cape made one a superhero. While one said, *"Batman is a superhero, because he wears a cape and has gadgets"*, another said, *"the nurse is a superhero because she is making herself useful while Batman and Superman are just chilling out!"*

"All young children have active and lively minds from the start. The basic dispositions to make sense of experience, investigate it, care about others, relate to them, and adapt to their physical and cultural environment ... can deepen and strengthen under the right conditions."⁷ The children realised that while they could 'not give up' like Batman, they were also capable of seeing the *bigger* superheroes around them.

Children identified concrete growth points within themselves. While many found navigating the online world frustrating, with occasional internet interruptions and 'accidental' removal from meetings, they noticed their own growing independence. A student remarked, *"I accidentally went into the wrong channel, but knew how to exit it and go to the correct one!"* or *"My mum used to get everything ready for me for school, now I do it myself!"* Another child commented, *"I get upset when I get mixed up with instructions and make mistakes, but I am learning that it is ok; I can cross it off."* These are important life lessons that online learning was teaching them. Despite the limitations and restrictions, children were becoming confident, competent, and certainly powerful.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

We surveyed parents to understand their perspective and get a broader picture of the effects of online learning. Parents recognised the success of adaptive teaching in a supportive school with motivated teachers. They were seeing their children as learners, putting on a ‘teacher-hat’ was an eye-opener for many; and most were amazed with what they saw. A parent quoted, **“I was surprised with her ability to adapt to the new learning environment and engage with her peers and teachers”**. Another parent saw in their child **“a resilient, strong-willed, independent girl who found creative ways to approach learning”**. (Fig. 4)

But what about tangible achievements? Some parents rightfully voiced concerns questioning academic setback during online learning. Could these children add numbers, spell words, or write legible sentences? These were tough questions to answer. Not only because it is impossible to generalise such responses but also because virtual teaching and assessment is an art that we teachers are still trying to hone.

We had many successes and as many challenges. Children used fruits to collect, sort and interpret data. They wrote stories based on predictive texts read. Virtual classroom and teaching enabled some children to thrive, but many struggled to keep up. The blurred lines between home and school resulted in rich family experiences, but also increased distractions during learning time. (Fig. 5)

Moving into next year, we have many questions to answer. Will we need to give special attention to letter formations along with formal teaching of Number? Yes, we will need to reprioritise curriculum outcomes. Will we need to spend extended hours introducing flexible mindsets, appreciation of family and the value of mistakes? No, because the child with a hundred languages has shown she/he has already identified many of these skills; including some we had not considered before.

“The problem is not to close the box at this particular moment, thinking that all voices are exhausted; rather, ... to “squeeze” the box and see how many things can still come out...”⁸

The Reggio Emilia philosophy stemmed from a need to provide healing, hope and opportunities after the horrors of World War II. Can we adapt this same philosophy to rise from this pandemic, create a new ‘normal’ and reconstruct education to provide hope and healing once again? It seems we can.

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Figures

- Fig. 1 Children and teachers dress up as Saucepan Men.
 Fig. 2 Children begin exploring the Batman Effect by dressing up as superheroes.
 Fig. 3 Game Changer by Banksy used to conduct See-Think-Wonder Thinking Routine.
 Fig. 4 Parent joining the class as a guest reader.
 Fig. 5 Children enjoying family time.

Crossing Boundaries in what we see and think



“

Visual texture recognition ignites in us the known more than the unknown.”

Over the course of the year, within our Crossing Boundaries focus and during our cross-class enrichment sessions, we would seek to explore, compare and contrast the concept of textures relating to environments and the inhabitants of these environments. In addition to discovering the creating of textures that we might use to represent our thinking, these ideas presented new discoveries that would be shared between the cohort.

Within our sensory systems, each sense stimulates a part of our brain, which in turn affects or triggers our memories. Our eyes are incredible perceivers and what we learn, whether from our environment or from our early years' experiences, and are the basis by which we can enter new situations; which may or may not challenge our visual recognition and memories. And with the hope of crossing boundaries between what I used to think and what I think now.

Our year began with developing shared understandings and the building of a vocabulary of textural words and associations. Whether viewed in one of our provocations of a particular environment or through the creating of textures with materials to extend knowledge and in turn application.

“When you look at textures, what does it make you think about? How does it make you feel?”

The students walked around the school photographing their observations of what they knew about the textures they observed, both inside and outside. Their photos focused more on patterns in these textures and zooming in rather than capturing the entirety of an object. Most interesting. However, it was the contrast of what appeared next to or around these images which invited more information or wondering as to where these photos were taken. So, the intended focus of crossing boundaries steered towards the concept of everything in relation to the other. Our eyes look at one surface, colour, texture in relation to what is next to this. When we look at something, we are also looking at what is next to it. This helps us to understand what we are looking at. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

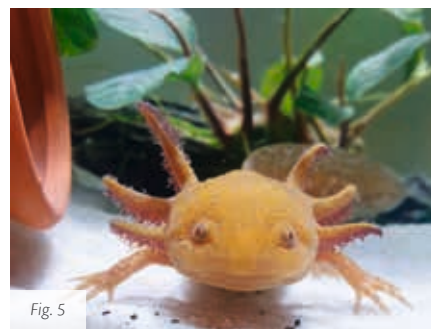


Fig. 5



Fig. 4



Fig. 6

Visual representations are strong indicators of what we learn...

We explored discovering and representing textures, 'Texture detectives' and 'Texture inventors.'

When Digital Bialik began in Term 2, the students explored everyday textured materials used in their homes. How could these materials change and reinvent themselves? And for all of us it was indeed the rethinking of ourselves in this new learning environment. Surely the way forward was to seek new paths for thinking. As we are reminded by the tenets in the Reggio Emilia approach, 'looking at the extraordinary in the ordinary'. And crossing boundaries between the known and the unknown. Changing textures, changing viewpoints. (Fig. 2)

What names do we associate with textures and who do the textures belong to, living and inanimate?

From a graphics viewpoint, the use of line can engender emotions and reactions. What's in a name? (Fig. 3)

Playful interactions were added to, with students observing zoomed in photos of the textured surfaces, including those of flora and fauna. For the students these were easily recognisable and offered opportunities for them to share their knowledge about the features of plants, animals, birds and more, and to connect this to their own environments.

Over the course of several months of online teaching and learning, we sought to engage the students with making connections to their current learning environment, mostly in their homes.

The students were eager to share their pets and habitats. The shrilled back lizard featured in one student's discussions who, together with her family, had an interest in these and other creatures such as the axolotl. (Figs. 4 & 5)

Personal experiences brought to the fore authentic knowledge, which added to the richness of this ongoing focus. The interest in observing the relationships between different textures saw photographs and commentaries sent in by the students and their families.

"We went to Organ Pipes National Park on Thursday. This is where there are really interesting rock formations from volcanic lava that cooled and cracked millions of years ago". (parent)

Animal features were explored and responded to in discussions as to how features, in particular the textures of the skin, fur, feathers, and spikes assisted the creatures living within their habitats. (Fig. 6)

Given that the students were no longer able to participate in excursions, a webinar was organised with educators at the Royal Melbourne Zoo.¹ This offered several provocations for the students that included the opportunity to think about how the zoo was creating environments for animals who may be endangered; providing these animals with not only food and shelter but also initiatives where the animals could be curious and interact with their zoo environment. The students explored ideas of creating a model for enrichment for one of birds, the Little Penguin. The students designed and constructed ideas in clay for an enrichment concept for the Little Penguin. This bird was of great interest to them. Many had seen penguins at Phillip Island during the twilight 'Penguin Parade'. However, what furthered the student's interest was the watching and re-watching of the Little Penguin's daily interactions with each other and their environment via a webcam at the zoo. We were able to pause and discuss what they had observed, and this assisted them; from drawing their initial understandings of this animal to adding to what they now observed 'close up' and then drawing for meaning. Looking closely at features including their web feet, mobility, and how

this bird used their existing environment, assisted the students in creating their models and designing an enrichment initiative. Some noticed the traction or texture along the paths that the penguins navigated. Would this also mean that what they would design should also have a similar texture?

They would slip when its wet if there was no texture on the path.
(Figs. 7 & 8)

In thinking about their initial ideas, the student's focus was on 'what do I know and what do I need to know more about'. The 'Crossing Boundaries' of our thinking; with information that we know or that what we still need to discover.

It was at this time that I introduced the artist, Angela Haseltine Pozzi who devised the 'Washed Ashore' project.² This encompassed her interest in "...textures, patterns, and colors in the world around me...", and at the same time making a statement through her sculptures about the amount of plastic products discarded and washed up on beaches which continued to create a devastating impact on marine life and our eco system. Her large sculpture of sea creatures created out of refuse washed up on the beach made both a statement about the effects of pollution and a reminder of the marine world that is becoming endangered. Angela stated, **"I see the designs of sea creatures in familiar human made objects and create additional elements out of anything that works."** The students were well aware of the concepts of pollution caused within our environment but were also intrigued with the monolith like sea creatures which appeared both real and unreal; given the recycled plastic materials that that were collected from the beaches and used to make these works.

Many provocations were explored as this investigation progressed. This included viewing animal species and exhibits online at

Melbourne Museum, exploring the symbolism of animals in stories, hearing narratives of Indigenous Australian literacy and viewing animals featured in visual representations by artist from different times, places and cultures.

We returned to online learning in Term 3. Clay was sent home with the intention of offering the students further opportunities to research and respond to our focus and their interest in animal behaviour and habitats. At the same time, continuing to embed a skill set and strategies for problem solving challenges.

To further explore the students thinking in this design process, and in consultation with our school Maker Space staff, we discussed a project specific brief for Preps within Bialik's Design Cycle. This gave the students guidelines for designing an enrichment opportunity for their chosen animal. How would their animal be represented using the student's ideas and based on their understandings of the animal's unique features? This would include, the Brief (Identify), Need to know (Research), Ideas (Imagine), Plan (Draw designs), Create (Build a model), Test (Try it out) and Refine (What needs changing). Students drew from their existing knowledge, further researched, and then discussed their ideas with their peers for feedback. Revisiting the 'need to know' when thinking about the creating of an idea for a design included a focus on the senses. These senses could attract the animal to use the enrichment model or to enable the animal to use it and move or behave with it in natural ways. Students were encouraged to 'step inside' the creature to think about the animal in comparison or in contrast to themselves. Did their animal have legs or flippers? Could it hold or grasp an object? Which of the animal's senses were more important than another? (Fig. 9)





Fig. 10



Fig. 11

Inspired by some of the provocations, the students created a series of diagrams about the animal that they had chosen, to design and create something that would enhance the animal's play and wellbeing.

Within the breadth of this investigation's focus was the realisation that the basis of our understanding of the acquisition of knowledge, experiences, memories also lay within the recollection of stories. For us, it was the sharing of Indigenous Australian paintings and reading stories by Indigenous Australian authors, with the focus on the land and the symbolism of the animal world. This tapped into student's schema and, for some, remembering their experience of a Tanderrum (smoking ceremony) and a Welcome to Country by Indigenous Elder Murrindindi at our school, as part of our Jewish New Year activities.

The students' recollections brought to the fore a conversation about elders, and the symbolism of the leaves used in a smoking ceremony and the telling of stories to family members by an elder.

An elder is to be the biggest in your family.

To be the oldest of tomorrow.

Crossing backwards and forwards, interconnecting symbols, stories, and relationships of what was then and what is now. The students wrote, drew and some recorded stories that revealed questions, opportunities and problem solving.

They drew it so they could remember how to hunt their food, remember their stories and to share them with their friends.

What is the problem in your story...? How was the problem solved?

How will you share this?

The problem with the Polar bear is that he thinks he doesn't need any friends. In the afternoon he saw people playing together and he realised that he needs friends. He asked the wizard in the mountains and he said by doing something good he will have friends forever.

The monkey was being a bad neighbour. He chased all the food out.

I have a suggestion for being a good neighbour. If the neighbour is kind and calm that would make a good neighbour.

I wonder what my Tasmanian devil is up to. My story may be a little different.

What if my story is too scary? I'll have to make it have a happy ending.
(Figs. 10 & 11)

Understanding more about the needs of animals, caring for their and our habitats, recycling, reimagining and retelling has deepened an appreciation of the need to continue to view what is seen, through new lenses, and viewpoints. Let us all cross boundaries towards a sustainable future.

We need to take care of each animal; they need to look after us and we need to look after them. Some animals make food for us. We can also be in danger like animals and they can protect us. If animals can't take care of us, we can't take care of them

Of course, the intent of this investigation was to be ongoing and not in isolation of everyday life. It is about being reminded of cause and effect, active participation, or inactivity. Crossing Boundaries is a lifelong endeavour.

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Year 1

Our life is our life
and our choices
are our choices



“

Two Women.

Two stories.

Millenia apart.

Both innocent.

Both naïve.

Both transcending the limits.

How different they were, and how
different their outcomes!”

We have chosen two women from Biblical stories that we have studied who, in our opinion ‘crossed boundaries’. The one, selfless and for the good of her nation and the other, not leading to an entirely positive outcome. Nevertheless for both of these women there were significant repercussions and consequences which had an effect on mankind. Interestingly enough, when we chose these two women, none of us realised the Biblical connection that actually exists between them.

Story No. 1.

EVE (– Hebrew: **CHAVAH**... meaning ‘Mother of life’)

The first boundaries ever, were established during the story of The Creation, and given to Adam and Eve. God created man to be in charge of the Garden of Eden with only one restriction: *‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of Knowledge, of good and evil you shall not eat, for the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.’* As long as Adam and Eve respected and lived within God’s boundaries, they had an abundant life and enjoyed God’s intimate presence in their lives. But as soon as they violated that first boundary, the world that they knew was changed for themselves and for mankind forever. On presenting this information to the children in the form of video clips and storytelling, the children pondered... (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

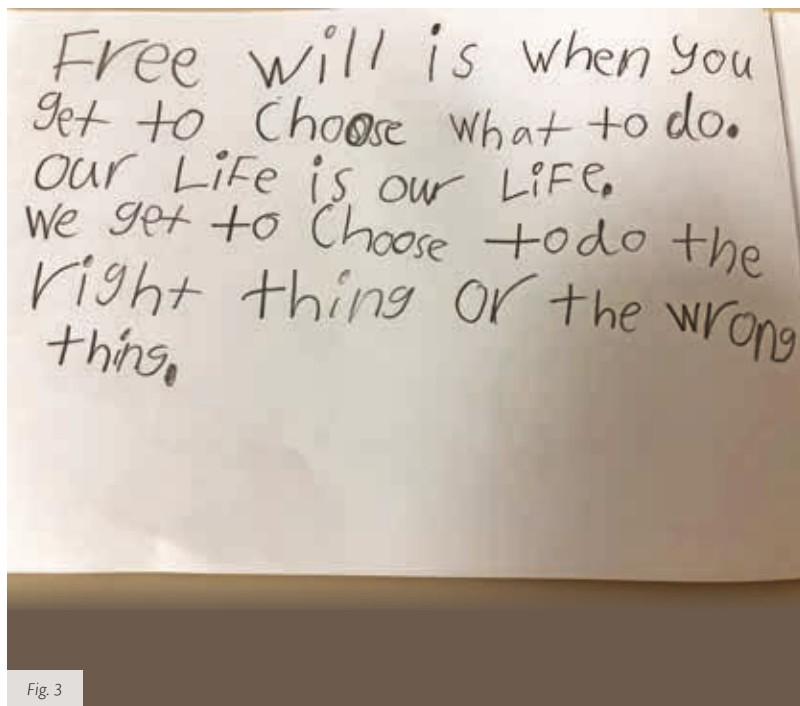


Fig. 3

Were Adam and Eve born as adults? Were they never babies?

I feel sorry for Eve, she was so new to the earth, maybe she didn't fully understand.

I don't think that she thought about it too much, she even invited Adam to take part in what she did.

I'm wondering if Eve actually knew what it meant 'to die'... she had never seen anyone die before.

You know how parents need to tell you things lots of times before you know what is right or wrong, well God only told Adam once, who told Eve once so maybe she forgot.

Seemingly Eve was aware that she was required to obey God, but did she actually realise the full implications of the consequence of not obeying God's command?

The children had so many opinions and theories and so they were divided into three discussion groups and discussed this further.

Group No. 1 took a firm approach:

You have to take responsibility for things that you do, even if you make a mistake.

The second group was stuck on discussing 'Why did God even create this tree, if Adam and Eve were told not to eat the fruit from it?' (Fig. 2)

Maybe God was testing them.

This group felt that God was setting Adam and Eve up for failure.

I think that we are being tested all the time.

How come?

Well we can choose to do something bad or good. Our life is our life and our choices are our choices! (Fig. 3)

Group three had a slightly less harsh, perhaps more scientific approach and tried to understand why Eve had disobeyed God.

I think that there are so many wires inside our brains, like we've been programmed, maybe one of Eve's wires got stuck and she made a bad choice.

How can one person's choice affect the whole world?

Well, some people during Covid didn't listen and made bad choices and now we're all in lockdown, so other people's choices do affect us all.

My Mum and Dad say that we need to do the right thing or we will lose our rights.

The children were then required to tabulate their own responsibilities for the home, for school and for the world. This would lead to many discussions about responsibilities and consequences.

If I don't feed my dog, then he will be hungry.

I have to unpack the dishwasher sometimes. Mum gets angry if she asks me to and I don't want to.

If I don't tidy my room I'm not allowed to watch my favourite show.

Some children took a global approach.

We all need to look after the environment, or when we grow up, things will be really bad.

They already are bad – look at the fires that we had – that's because of Climate Change.

The fish in the oceans are dying because of plastic. It's not 'biobegradable' and people still use plastic all the time.

There was so much discussion and questions, but we had another Biblical figure that we wanted to focus on so we told the children that we would return to these issues at another time.

Story No. 2.

ESTHER, QUEEN OF SHUSHAN

This story opens with Esther, as a beautiful and obedient, but relatively passive figure. During the course of the Purim story, (The story of a heroine in Jewish History which has led to the Jewish festival of Purim) she evolves into someone who takes a decisive role in her own future and that of her people. Reserved, modest, quiet, self-controlled, hidden. (Fig. 4) These adjectives probably do not conjure up images of a heroine. They do not seem to describe the type of person who would put her own life on the line for others. But they are! These are the very words that describe Queen Esther, a woman whose body, mind, soul and actions affected and changed the world for the Jewish people.

While Esther had the constant support of her uncle Mordechai in fighting the decree that was aimed at destroying the Jewish people, it was Esther who was able to implement the plan and who had the foresight to know how it had to be carried out.

Esther was taken to be queen against her will. From the beginning she had a secret – she was Jewish and was told by Mordechai not to reveal this information to King Achashverosh. When the wicked Haman devised a plan to kill all the Jews in Shushan, it was Esther, with Mordechai's support who saved the Jews. She made an

appointment to meet with the king, knowing that this could lead to imminent death. Her tactic was not merely to blurt out to King Achashverosh that Haman wanted to kill all the Jewish people and that she, herself was a Jewess. She devised a plan and it was during this time, that she was able to weigh up her odds. (Fig. 5) How much more sophisticated she was than her counterpart, Eve!

Queen Esther realized that she was given a mission and was chosen as a vessel. Not only did she confer throughout with Mordechai for advice and direction but before she approached the king, she asked the entire Jewish people to fast and pray for 3 days in support of this mammoth task. Of course after hearing the story of Esther, perhaps for the first time from a different angle, the children were bursting with ideas, and theories.

I think that Esther didn't do anything in the beginning because she was just trying to take it all in.

She always waited from Mordechai to tell her what to do.

Queen Esther needed to think about this and she managed to make a plan.

We can all relate to this as often when one is forced with adversity, it can seem overwhelming and too difficult to even contemplate.

So... what was her plan?

She decided to invite Haman and the King to a party, which was scary because she wasn't allowed to approach the King, but she did.

Sometimes you have to be scared to be brave!

The King and Haman were invited to a party that Queen Esther had planned which would lead her to reveal all to the king. On hearing the accusation, King Achashverosh was horrified that someone, let alone, his first officer was planning the elimination of his beautiful queen and her whole nation. She managed to persuade the king to overthrow the cruel decree. Haman was punished and hanged at the very gallows that he had prepared for the Jewish people and the Jewish nation was saved.

So... how did Queen Esther transcend the boundaries and overcome the constraints of that time in History? The children commented on her actions.

She wasn't allowed to talk to the king without being called upon, but she did.

She could have been killed for this but she took a risk.

You get good risks and bad risks. I think this was a good risk.

She probably crossed her first boundary when she kept being Jewish a secret.

Why was that such a big secret?

Maybe the king wouldn't have married her if he knew that she was Jewish.

It's not good to lie, but for her it was probably worth it.

So how can we explain Queen Esther's change in behaviour from deep despair to determined action and from passiveness to leadership? Hearing the horror of the planned genocide, she



Fig. 4

understood that she had a mission to save her people. We also need to put the Book of Esther into an historical context to better understand Esther's choice. The story of Esther happened after Cyrus, the first Persian King, called for all deported Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. (538 B.C.E.) Most of the Jews preferred the comfortable life of the Persian Empire to returning to rebuild their homeland. The Talmud (commentary on the Bible) sees Haman's decree as a punishment from God for these Jews for whom perhaps a spiritual side was missing. As a queen, Esther understood the true meaning that the only way to rule is not when you control others, but when you represent them.

Just like in the story of Purim, events were turned around; Adam and Eve's lives were changed forever after eating from the forbidden tree. Eve gave Adam the forbidden fruit to eat which had a disastrous outcome, and Esther gave King Achashverosh forbidden knowledge (that she was Jewish) to avert disaster. It is almost as if Queen Esther redeems the story of the Tree of Knowledge. The story of Adam and Eve led to failure and this time, Mordechai and Esther are used to 'fix' the story that once led to failure.

Like any good book, the conflict that is set up in the early scenes will come to a resolution in the grand finale. Queen Esther saves the Jewish people and can rise above the wicked Haman. And Eve, although the ending of her story isn't as positive, we can learn a

certain resilience from her story. Her name means 'Mother of life' and her life carried on, albeit differently from her life in Paradise. She accepted her punishment without choice, but she continued living and raised her sons and faced many challenges along the way, but humankind continued and a lesson was learnt... hopefully.

In life, we take many risks, sometimes we are unaware of the consequences. Nevertheless our actions have repercussions for the people around us and for future generations.

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Figures

- Fig. 1 Adam standing at the Forbidden Tree (Tree of Knowledge) in the Garden of Eden.
- Fig. 2 Children fascinated by the picture of Adam and Eve at The Tree of Knowledge.
- Fig. 3 One child's writing about choices.
- Fig. 4 A child dressed up as Queen Esther on the festival of Purim.
- Fig. 5 Children perusing Megillat Esther – The Scroll of Esther. (The story of Purim)



Fig. 5

Through the adaptive processes of assimilation and accommodation, people are better prepared to deal with the world around them

“

Working in a school that incorporates the values and beliefs of the Reggio Emilia approach often makes one think outside the box. With the outbreak of Covid-19 and in turn the change to the way we needed to teach, going from teaching in the classroom to teaching online, we found ourselves in a new and unknown realm.”

Interestingly, our Early Learning Centre (ELC) focus for 2020 was 'Crossing Boundaries'. The fact that we were crossing from teaching on campus to teaching online fitted so well with this focal point.

Immediately, a myriad of thoughts came to mind. How would this work? Our children were only six and seven years old. What did we need? How could we facilitate the children's learning? What changes would we need to make? What digital platform would we use? The list went on and on. I wondered what Malaguzzi would have thought. Would he ever have imagined when he wrote **The child has a hundred languages (and a hundred, hundred, hundred more)**¹, that one of those languages would be the language of online learning?

On Wednesday 25th March 2020, Digital Bialik, our new way of teaching began. It was strange, uncertain, and very interesting. In the beginning we could only see four children on the screen and the children all kept calling the teacher's name. Making sure that each child was engaged, and their educational needs were being met proved to be challenging. At the end of each day the educators would meet as a team to look at what had worked well and ways we could overcome any difficulties that were occurring.

During a year level meeting, where we were discussing how our online sessions were going, our head of the ELC spoke about adaptation. This sparked a real interest in me and I began looking more closely at how we, as the teaching team, the children and the parents were all adapting to the changes that were continually happening and what impact this was having on the children's learning, emotional well-being, and social interactions.

Adaptation is a term referring to the ability to adjust to new information and experiences. Learning is essentially adapting to our constantly changing environment. Through adaptation, we are able to adopt new behaviours that allow us to cope with change.

According to Jean Piaget's theory, adaptation is one of the important processes guiding cognitive development. The adaptation process itself can occur in two ways, through assimilation and accommodation. In assimilation, people take in information from the outside world and convert it to fit in with their existing ideas and concepts. People possess mental



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

they had readily available at home, be active, and spend time outside whenever possible. Themes such as 'Winter, Bears and Hibernation' included the story of a hibernating bear, and the children drawing, making a model and finally building their own 'Bear Cave', where they ate their morning snack while listening to 'The Teddy Bear's Picnic' song. These activities integrated Steam, Literacy, Well-being, Library and Music. We added cooking sessions to allow, where possible, for families to learn together. Our Feel Fantastic Friday sessions included all the children in Year One where they could create something together in small, cross class groups. There were also sessions that gave the children opportunities to have time to just chat; share and interact with their friends in the class, in very small groups and without adult facilitation. (Figs. 3 & 4)

We also noticed ways in which parents were adapting to the changes brought on by Covid-19 in both their own lives and that of their children. Parents expectations of what the school and teachers needed to do for their children changed. They crossed the boundary from focussing on the academic to the emotional needs and well-being of their children and the importance of how we as teachers met these needs for their children. They went from not being aware of how their children learned to facilitating and scaffolding the learning, building a stronger connection with the teachers, school, and the class community. As a cohort, the parents created birthday videos for each child who celebrated a birthday in isolation and sent cards and gifts via post. During our online parent/teacher interviews, many parents spoke of the importance and success of the Tuesday afternoon small group chat sessions and how important it was for their child to have the chance to interact, socialise and run the small groups independently. They spoke of how, for them, their child's emotional well-being was paramount. At the end of Term 3, the parents sent a group email discussing how they felt more connected and had gained a far greater understanding of how their children are taught and learn, a small window into their children's learning, as well as more of an understanding of the relationships the teachers have with each child.

On behalf of all the parents, we would like to thank you all for your patience and creativity this term. Once again you have shown us your passion for teaching and your dedication to our kids - not just in a normal world but especially at this challenging time. Our kids have thrived and your efforts are no small part of that.

The cooking, the maths, the footy tipping, the sharing, the songs, the caves, the creative writing, the Jewish stories, the drawing...the list goes on and on. It has been an absolute pleasure to watch how engaged

our kids are and how excited they are every time they join a session. We have been allowed a unique opportunity to see, and often join, the learning opportunities you bring to our kids...

Relationships are at the very heart of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. That philosophy is reflected in an environment that encircles the child with three "teachers," or protagonists. ... It is the child's relationship with parent, teacher, and environment that ignites learning.³ (Figs. 5 & 6)

We are about to return to teaching on campus for the fourth and final term of 2020. It will be interesting to see how the children adapt to this after being online for so many weeks. How will they interact in a large group, as they have been individuals for so long? How will they navigate the playground and all the social nuances? How will all these changes affect them academically, emotionally, and socially? What are the implications of these changes for their transition from the ELC to the primary school in 2021, given that, due to the restrictions of Covid-19, they have not had the opportunity to be involved in the usual cross-class and transition programmes?

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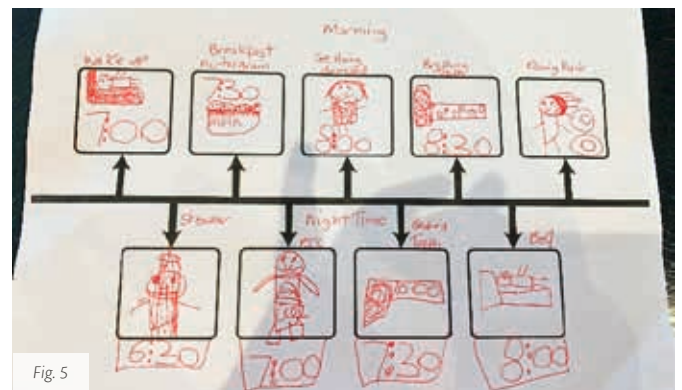


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

... investigation continues children are sharing what word 'place' means to it – big places like the city, all places like the school, even smaller places like class vegetable patch.

The children made practical considerations in regards to the building's formation.

I used to think that a place was somewhere. Place is for people or animals. It is not a place if there are no people in

Communication is so much more than talking...



“

... we are crossing boundaries in communication through sign language!”

As part of our classroom morning routine, Year One Aleph sit together in a circle of inclusivity and a sense of community. It allows us the opportunity to greet each other with a friendly and kind “hello”, with respect and with whole-body presence, as well as to discuss the activities of the day.

One morning as the children chatted, organising their lunch boxes, water bottles and books, they settled themselves into the familiarity of our morning circle routine. One of our staff, Chris, had recently started joining our class on Monday mornings to support the children’s learning and she settled herself in the circle. A student proceeded to turn to her and say “hello,” and the student was greeted with some hand gestures. The student looked perplexed and then turned to look at me. (Fig. 1)

What do you think Chris did just then, I asked? Some children responded.

What is she doing?

I know, is it sign language? My dad has a couple of people at his work who speak sign language.

Do you know sign language Chris?

Chris begin to share her life story with passion and enthusiasm, about how she started learning sign language, to a very curious and intrigued audience. The children were amazed to find out that she had started learning sign language over forty years ago! As an observer, in that moment, I reflected on a quote by Debbie Miller. **“Have you ever thought about the way you respond to new information? Have I really noticed what your inner voice says when you are learning something new and the dialogue that comes with it, that initial excitement.”**¹

You were only a little bit older than me when you started learning sign language!

Wow, that is so cool!

Can you teach us?

There was unanimous excitement and responses to this question!

Young children are encouraged to explore and express themselves through multiple paths and all their “language,”



Fig. 1

including expressive, communicative and symbolic. (Edwards, Gandini & Forman)²

Along this line of thought, our Year One morning circle time became the initial provocation for a rich, collective inquiry about 'crossing boundaries.' We were about to embark on learning a completely new language. These moments can happen when you least expect them. They frequently come in the form of a question on the part of a child. Children develop natural curiosity about a topic. The children were posed with the question, "What do you think you know about sign language?"

Some people at my dad's work are deaf so they do sign language to talk.

My mum says that even though they cannot hear they can see much better than us, because they have to.

I think my dad knows a little bit of sign language.

I have never had to sign language before.

Sometimes you see it on TV.

The initial dialogue demonstrated that there was some awareness, however we were not part of a community where sign language is a part of our everyday living. **Children learn to use language through involvement in particular social and cultural contexts. Children become competent language users through the opportunities they are given to interact with peers and adults, thus language is a major factor in shaping identity.**³

The children were so motivated to learn. Chris introduced their first words in sign language. They went home that day with a bag of their first sign language words and letters of the alphabet – (Fig. 2)

'Hello.'

'How are you?' (also, how to respond).

'What is your name?'

'Good Morning.'

'Good Night.'

'Thank you.'

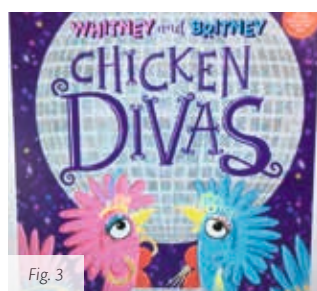
'The alphabet.'

At the end of that day, information was sent to the parents, that their child had started learning sign language and with a link to the AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language) Alphabet, should their child wish to practice at home. I was amazed with the responses I received that week.

I think it is fantastic that my child is learning sign language and I look forward to him teaching me!

My child has started teaching the whole family sign language!

What a great way for the class to learn about something that is so important and beneficial to know within our society!



To extend further, and as a provocation, Chris and I role modelled a scenario where she talked to me in sign language and I tried to respond and invited the children to respond to the following question:

"How do you think deaf people would feel when they are trying to communicate something important and when the other person does not know sign language?"

They could feel scared.

They could feel confused or upset.

They could feel embarrassed.

They may feel very alone.

We asked the children to explain how Chris looked when she was trying to talk to me.

Her face looked scared and like she was about to cry.

By looking at her face, you could see what she was feeling.

Her face helped me see that she was upset.

We paused for a moment and let the children think about what we just demonstrated. Chris started to explain the importance of how we use our facial expressions when trying to talk to someone who is deaf and to do our best to be respectful when doing so. Ron Ritchhart states, "when a person is developing a sense of what it feels like to be that sort of person and belonging in certain social spaces, they have to take up the positions with respect to what they are studying."⁴

The children really grasped this concept. Listening is one of the powerful ways we can show respect for and interest in others. **"Deep listening is miraculous for both listener and the speaker. When someone receives us with open-hearted, non-judging, intensely interested listening, our spirits expand."** (Ron Ritchhart)⁵

An opportunity presented itself in the form of the National Simultaneous Story Time. National Simultaneous Storytime (NSS) is held annually by the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)⁶. Every year a picture book, written and illustrated by an Australian author and illustrator, is read simultaneously in libraries, schools, pre-schools, childcare centres, family homes, bookshops and many other places around the country. It is available in AUSLAN. We wanted the children to deepen their thinking, awareness and discuss their observations. After the story finished, I asked the children, "What did you notice?" (Fig. 3)

"The person did not speak."

"The lady moved her hands around a lot."

"Her face did different facial expressions at some parts of the story."

"Sometimes her hands were still moving even when the speaking had stopped."

"It was fast."

"It was hard to follow her and read the words of the story at the same time."

Chris and I discussed and wondered about creating an opportunity where the children could spend time with someone who is deaf, in a respectful and considerate environment. Unfortunately, circumstances did not allow this opportunity to take place. **It is possible that if the students were in contact or exposed to children and adults who are deaf or with a hearing impairment, they would be better able to discuss their own limits and**

expectations and to consider the other person in a deeper way. Physical conditions can be subtle and difficult to recognise. (Edwards, Gandini and Forman)² However, it was evident that the children's curiosity was palpable. As educators, we could see the value of what was motivating them, attempting to do something new and beyond their capabilities.

Our investigation took a new pathway with the announcement of a global pandemic and all schools in Victoria had to close for the immediate future. Our learning commenced online. I still wanted to continue with learning about sign language, however it was going to be a challenge. As Malaguzzi states, 'our task is to help children communicate with the world, using all their potential, strengths and languages and to overcome any obstacle created by our culture.'⁷ I was crossing my own boundaries as an educator; in being flexible to follow the children's interests in a very different way. I was also learning alongside the children during a unique time for all.

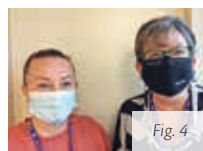
The children showed amazing resilience and perseverance in the wake of this pandemic. We turned up every day; being a community, sharing our ideas, and learning. I introduced the book, 'Is Your Mama a Lama.' I ask the children to focus on the person doing the sign language.

- The sign language person used her hands to tell the story.*
- She repeated a few things with her hands – a few parts of the "Lama's don't do that."*
- She did some sign language that we have not been taught yet.*
- Facial expressions – what the animals might do.*
- She was using her feelings and different emotions to tell the story.*
- She showed excitement – at the end when she saw her mum.*
- She showed happiness.*
- She showed thinking, she eyes went up.*
- She also looked surprised at different parts.*
- There was no verbal talking.*

It was evident the children were thinking about what they already knew from previous conversations. They were observing the facial expressions and making connections to factors that are important to consider when using sign language.

A protocol during this pandemic was that all adults had to wear masks as protection. I put a mask on my face and asked the following question – **Can people still use sign language? What makes you say that?** (Fig. 4)

- You can do it with your hands; however, the mask covers half of your face, it hard to see facial expressions.*
- Yes – you can do facial expressions but just with your eyes.*
- They cannot see your face, even if they use their eyes not always sure what they mean.*
- You still can use sign language, use your hands a lot more times than usual.*
- You can still use sign language with your eyes. Your eyes can go wider, and your eyebrows go up. They could also sad or mad. Your eyes can smile.*
- If someone is angry eyebrows can go down.*
- It might be a bit confusing for a deaf person; they look at a person's face as well as their hands.*



As we entered back into the classroom for the second time, after learning online for a total of seventeen weeks, the children still had an ignited spark to continue learning sign language (Figs. 5).

When we were learning at home, I saw sign language twice in the news. I also saw it in my Hip Hop dance class online.

When I saw the person doing sign on the news, their face did many different facial expressions.

I saw Chris on my holiday program, and we spoke in sign language.

I saw two people talking to each other in sign language in the park.

On the news there was a person doing sign language on the side.

There were some people doing sign language at a football game on TV.

The children have extended their knowledge beyond the classroom and crossed boundaries into teaching their families at home. The children have observed and wondered, changed mindsets and respected differences; we are all normal in different ways. We are bringing awareness to a minority form of communication. (Fig. 6)

It is good to know sign language; if someone becomes deaf, you can help them and talk to them.

You want to communicate with all the people, everyone, you can if you know sign language. It is respectful; you are inviting others to talk with you.

You can also learn from a person who is deaf, they can help you learn.

You can learn it now and if you need it later, when you are older, you know it!

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Figures:

1. Chris and Audrey in our morning circle time.
2. The Alphabet in AUSLAN.
3. The National Simultaneous Story time – Whitney and Britany Chicken Divas.
4. Melissa and Zia wearing a mask as part of COVID guidelines.
5. Picture of why it is good to learn sign language.
6. The children practicing sign language.

Life lessons and loving kindness from generation to generation



“

Crossing Boundaries was our overarching theme for this year. As a link to this theme we began the year posing the question – **What do you think it means when we say – “Think Outside the Box?”**”

Our initial intention was for the children to broaden and deepen their creativity and thinking, by engaging them “to think outside the box” and to invent something that would help others; making life easier and happier in the times we live in. This was initiated with the bush fires of the holiday in our minds, and the first inkling of a virus that needed to be contained.

Little did we know that we would vitally need this experience to do just that; to connect and cross boundaries, to reach out and through and beyond ‘the box’, exploring ways of deepening connection and bringing joy to others in this year of change, challenge and overcoming adversity.

The question now was – How can we make this year a meaningful year? Meaningful for our children and families of our Year One Bet class, beyond the school classroom, as everyone engaged through the means of ‘little boxes’ that had become our online digital learning experience.

Eddie Jaku, Holocaust survivor and author of *The Happiest Man on Earth*, stated **“This is the most important thing I have learnt: The greatest gift is to be loved by another person. Love saved me. My family saved me. Small acts of kindness last longer than a lifetime”**¹

Separated from friends and extended family, playgrounds closed, business closures and everyone isolated and at home as Melbourne entered stage 4 lockdown; the feelings could be heard in the children’s voices –

You can see your friends in the little boxes, and you can’t feel them. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1

I get to see them. It's like their shadow because it's not real, it makes me feel jealous because I want to see and play with them in real life.

This was the time to listen to the stories of others, gaining perspective of how we can learn from their experiences. We grew inspiration and insight through the life lessons of Dylan Alcott, the Paralympian tennis and basketball player. Sharing his motivation, he said **“Use what you have to become the best version of yourself.”**²

Both Eddie Jaku and Dylan Alcott have overcome adversity through their passion to live and reach out to others. **“I'm doing everything I can to make this world a better place for everyone, and I implore you to do your best too.”** (Eddie Jaku OAM)³

“There needs to be positive role models we can learn from. Sharing our stories to help others to live the best life we can.” (Dylan Alcott OAM)⁴

A role model is someone who people learn from or who teaches others.

The children began thinking about who their role models have been and how they have overcome adversity.

When I came to Australia, I had a hard time speaking English and it was a challenge to learn English. I practised with my parents and I succeeded.

I had hard things when I was young. It was hard speaking English and I had lots of speech therapy. I practised and I learnt much, much better. My dad had an experience from adversity, his parents could not play sport, so he learned from his uncle.

We recognised that even our role models have had role models of their own.

If you keep on practising then you might be able to help people because then if people learn from you, you can learn from them.

This led us to thinking about the importance of connecting with family, especially the family we are separated from.

Seizing the opportunity of collecting an Oral History, through interviewing a family member that we look to as a role model, the children began deepening these meaningful connections.

Their interviews were gained through zoom sessions when grandparents were far away or video interviews and face to face interviews with parents who were close by. (Fig. 2)

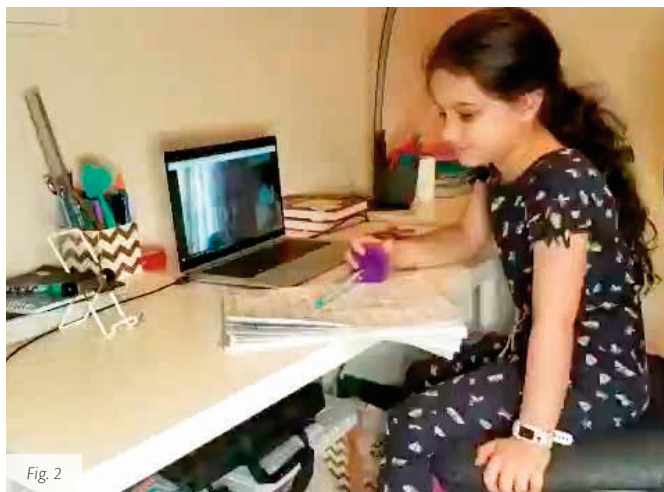


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

We were turning a time of separateness and disconnection on its head, by changing the narrative and following the heart's yearning for connection and understanding, to a precious time of listening and learning from others.

My Nanna was born in Jakarta Indonesia. She moved to Singapore with her family. She has three sisters and three brothers. (Fig. 3)

My nanna's most powerful memory was growing up in Singapore by the sea.

My dad's most powerful memory was of his Grandmother's – (Mama's) cooking. He loved her goulash, nokel and fried chicken – yummy.

By spending this quality time asking questions about powerful and favourite memories, listening to what is important and what is passed down from generation to generation, the children began weaving their own story.

My favourite memory with my mum is spending a lot of time with my mum in lockdown.

My mum has taught me to write, read and be kind to others – like my friends and family. She has taught me to treat others how you would like to be treated, and that I am a role model for my little sister.

The interviews would now become the fabric of this time, captured in the children's biographies of their role models, as they transferred these experiences into visual presentations, documenting the connections and values lovingly formed.

This book is the biography of my precious Shabtha Ricki. She is a big part of my life. She taught me so many wonderful lessons for life and made me feel special.

My Dad taught me to be kind and good.

What my Nonna has taught me- I learnt how to be kind, to be polite, to love my family and friends AND to sneak deserts when I sleepover when mum and dad have gone home.

This biography is about my Nonna and how much I love her. I miss sleepovers, I wish Covid would end so Coby and I can sleep over again.

The children now had a voice to express their longing as well as their gratitude for family and connection; by thinking outside the

box, making the most of technology to deepen relationships and overcome adversity.

The reality of grandparents and grandchildren not being able to visit each other and thinking how lucky we were to find a way of inspiring real joy in bringing family together in this way, brought a sense of purpose and meaning to life, so vitally important at this time.

We now began to think about the elders in our community who live in aged care facilities and have not had any contact with children for over six months, and what the sense of the loneliness, isolation and disconnection must be like for them.

The values passed down from generation to generation and the absolute delight in giving back spurred us to connect with Emmy Monash Aged Care. We became part of the Rosh Hashana Project and created a Shabbat Zoom, bringing together children and elderly residents to convey our wishes of spreading joy, love, healing and hope for a Happy New Year to the residents of Emmy Monash, and everyone in our community. (Fig. 4)

The children wrote their heartfelt messages, sharing their ideas to include the other Year One classes, so that together the giving back to our elderly community would continue to grow with connection and joy. (Figs. 5 & 6)

Noticing the importance of continuity and observing how the children had formed closer connections and insights from the oral histories of their role models, through their interviews and biographies, our next step was for the children to create their own Time Capsules. These were to capture their reflections and experiences of their time in Year One 2020.

We used a 'Step Inside' routine adopted from the Harvard Cultures of Thinking Routines. The children were asked to imagine themselves as their 80-year-old self, sharing their oral history and

documentations of their experiences and reflections of this time in their life, and the important lessons they wanted to share with future generations.

When I look back at this time, I want my memories to be of the joy of spending time with my family.

I have learnt that I can find new ways to have fun. I play with my little sister; we build cubby houses. I have had fun talking to my friends on face time and zoom. We have to communicate with our friends.

I have learnt that some people need extra help as they can't get out to do things, like older people in homes.

What I have learnt during this time that will help me for the rest of my life is to be kind to others.

We can see how the importance of family support, reaching out to others, and the use of technology has helped to maintain connection and may have even strengthened relationships.

My memory of not being able to see my friends made me sad because we couldn't have sleep overs.

It has been hard, but we will succeed, we will persevere during this time.

I think the things I have learnt during this time, that will help me for the rest of my life, is that sometimes it is hard and sometimes it is easy. Never give up!

I am proud of learning how to deal with new experiences.

I have learnt to be my best. I am proud of surviving Covid.

By helping children to recognise the inevitability of change and supporting them through life's challenges, through reflecting on their own ability to respond positively and in a meaningful way when coping with change, provides children with the knowledge that they have the power to effect their own coping skills, helping to build resilience and confidence.

I have learnt to not give up and trust in myself. To share my ideas and answers with my friends and teachers.

My speed running has changed. I run slowly and admire things around me and enjoy them.

Life lessons through overcoming adversity, appreciating the richness of living each day, sharing loving kindness and feeling gratitude. These are experiences imbedded in the heart and, with hope, will continue to be passed on from generation to generation.



Fig. 4

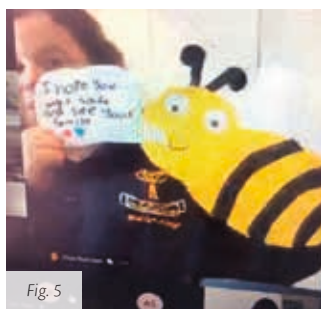


Fig. 5

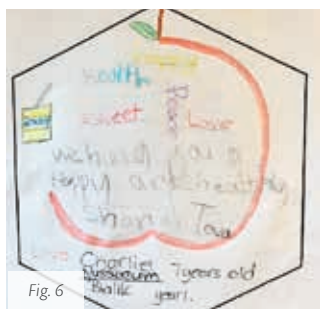


Fig. 6

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4. Alcott, D, OAM (ICMI Speakers and Entertainers– YouTube.)

Figures

- Fig. 1 Photo of online learning.
 Fig. 2 Interview via Zoom.
 Fig. 3 Drawing of family re Interview.
 Fig. 4 Shabbat Zoom with Emmy Monash Aged Care.
 Fig. 5 Rosh Hashana bee message for residents of Emmy Monash Aged Care.
 Fig. 6 Rosh Hashana Hexagon message for residents of Emmy Monash Aged Care.

As I look out, a new world looks back. Nature's growing and the whole world has changed there are different things all the time.



“

During Term 2 this year, our teaching and learning went online. What began as cross class enrichment sessions in our studio at school now took place in student's homes (except for a small group of students onsite whose parents were permitted workers).”

Our staff had several intensive professional learning sessions, prior to online teaching, where we navigated the platform Microsoft Teams and its features. Thus, began Digital Bialik. What we thought would be a temporary measure for the term, and after a short reprieve in-between, we returned to online teaching during Term 3.

For most of us teaching and learning is face to face and so we needed to ensure that our lessons included new tools and fluid interactions between students and students, students and teachers. This included group discussions, student reflections and the developing of student's theories, testing of materials and learning new skills,

What did we need to know/learn about teaching and learning online?

1. Teacher voice, student voice
2. Interactions between students and students and teachers online
3. Communicating with parents/families
4. Organising the daily online schedule
5. Parent feedback
6. Reflect and re-evaluate.

The setting in which online learning took place, in the home, family room, kitchen, study, parents office...

Parents were more hands on in their children's learning, albeit in the vicinity of their child's home classroom. Some parents sat side by side, others were involved in other areas.

For me, a positive of online learning was an audience, giving parents insights into 'classroom' dynamics, content, pedagogy and practice. However, this could have been initially perceived by teachers as daunting.

Each could be a critic of the other. How did my child respond, how did other children respond?

One parent mentioned how much they enjoyed the lessons and organised their schedule to be part of these. However, they also mentioned that their child really enjoyed it when the time came for 'hands on' after our discussions.

Something for me to consider as an educator. Who was doing most of the talking, and who was listening and responding? How did we 'ensure' rigorous learning and that the embedding of skills was taking place? The crossing boundaries of teaching and learning online continued to evolve for me, my colleagues, the students, and their families.

During Term 3, the second phase of online learning, a rhythm appeared to ensue. What was perhaps initially the novelty of a new learning platform becoming routine for our online classroom.

These young students were now more confident in their skills at using our digital platform. Additional features were added during the term that ensured students were 'heard' and enabling them to listen and add to a peer's observation or thought processes.

How had I reflected on my practice and delivery of my sessions after Term 2 and by doing so planning for online for Term 3?

In revisiting the provocations I presented in Term 2, and mindful of a well-known adage, 'A picture paints a thousand words', I continued to plan provocations, instructions and structures of my sessions and giving time for pauses, 'a toing and froing of the ball...'. My voice now wove in and out of the students. Was I mindful of whose voices? Absolutely. Did I keep a tally of who had and had not contributed to the conversations? Yes. However, I was cognisant that the reactions and responses from students varied each session and often I would debrief with the classroom teacher and assistant either prior or after the session to learn more about the current climate of the students. These enrichment sessions were not solely based on content or 'hands on' driven. A large component focused on what each student 'brought' to the session. In several online parent sessions, the families spoke about the wellbeing of their children and their academic progress. These young students were indeed resilient; their experience and mastering of technology was evident. 'Having a go', learning new skills online and as mentioned the desire that their voice and thoughts be heard and visible was another layer to consider. The connections and communication were paramount.

My area of learning at school takes place with different groups of students from each of our Year 1 classes who meet in studio sessions. These investigations are in addition to classroom investigations within the ELC specific focus of 'Crossing Boundaries'.

A major focus in these sessions was for students to explore the 100 and 100 more languages within our pedagogy, inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach. My focus was on the interrelationships within a multidisciplinary approach.

Earlier this year I organised a session on a retrospective exhibition of work by Australian artist Roger Kemp at the National Gallery of Victoria.¹ This was requested by my colleagues from our Early Learning Centre curriculum committee. This group comprised the Head of school, Director of Curriculum and Innovation, literacy and numeracy coaches and the coordinator of Hebrew and Jewish studies. They agreed to participate in the research and the plan I intended to focus on for the Year 1 students. Selected works were chosen to draw their attention to this artist's early works, middle and late career drawings, paintings and prints. The artists reference to line and music, an early career in advertising, an increasing interest in geometry all offered provocations for my colleagues to discuss these works from their areas of expertise. It was the interrelationships between learning areas that I was keen to explore, first with my colleagues and then with the students within our focus.

Crossing Boundaries; my premise was that the fluidity of thinking is dependent on the variables of the provocations. Challenging the observers' preconditioned perceptions of reality. And within this exhibition commentary on the artist. Kemp's concerns were 'to make visible the invisible'.² For me, this was a salient statement which I sought to explore as I prepared provocations to ignite students' responses to our Crossing Boundaries focus.

What gives structure to our thinking within the concept of developing one's own visual language?

This investigation began with the concept of a line as a moving boundary. You may think in your mind of what constitutes a line. However, the line in these sessions traversed both in its visual representations and in the hidden layers which would be uncovered and debated as the year progressed. This developed further with the expression 'Marking Time'. There, then and here, now. Time past as history, long ago and more recent. When did the present become the past and how did and would the past affect the future?

These sessions facilitated skills acquisition, critical reflection, developing theories and debate.

Are there really lines? Are the lines boundaries? Or are the boundaries, the edges next to each other? Of colour, light, shade and texture and of points of view? Do lines exist in reality... or does it help us construct form?

When each of us presents a point of view, is it dependent on how we receive this information and then interpret this view as to how it might change our thinking? As previously mentioned, it is the toing and froing of that ball.

What traversed throughout this investigation was indeed the interplay of perception, looking through and beyond visible or boundaries of perceptions. Junctures in time and place, known then and now. What made eyes relook and rethink what we saw or heard?

Recently a student was reluctant to upload their drawings. Because of not getting it right yet. I spoke to all students about each mark that they made told a story about them and their thinking. These were not incorrect marks rather more marks, more story revealed.

The lines of ideas shaped the story. Using a range of lines and tones to render created the illusion of form...

My intention was to continue to engage curiosity. Whilst the parameters of our physical environment were constrained due to government restrictions, this would not limit one's mind, rather seek to enrich one's thinking and problem solving.

Thinking about what if, I wonder how, I wonder why, what makes you say that?

What would be the physical changes to my thinking, how would I represent this?

When one draws a shape, an object, you are sharing what you see and what is around the shape or object. The lines you draw are the edges between one shape and another. Nothing is in isolation. One affects the other.

Further insights espoused by artist Paul Klee, "**A line is a dot that went for a walk**".³

Throughout this investigation, the idea of crossing boundaries by providing the provocations of statements such as this and the artists visible interpretations engaged the students in developing their skills, observations and insight which they sought to share with each other through their own representations and discussions.

Lines became grids as we observed the works of Piet Mondrian which provided a technique which directed the eye and in turn one's perception to travel across the page, canvas or beyond. We

were able to see Mondrian's famous grids featuring in building designs, furniture and fabric.⁴

With reference to geometry, students revisited their understandings of the distinguishing features of lines and edges of shapes. (Fig. 1)

A focus on edges of a shape, not in isolation, rather as edges of forms as symbols of what we see around us. These symbols have been used throughout history; art history though has not remained static.

Roger Kemp sought to use his preferred shapes, a square and circle, in developing his work. **"I have broken the boundaries of both things and one finishes up with the breaking of the square and the other with the breaking of the circle, which allows for creativity itself to occur"**. (Roger Kemp)⁵

An example of geometric shapes and forms in the paintings of the period in art known as Cubism was a response to those artists at the time who sought to show multiple viewpoints on the one canvas. (Fig. 2)

On the one hand there is perhaps a familiarity with these shapes linked to early childhood drawings of shapes as symbols representing houses and relating to their environment and family. However, the essence of seeing everything around us based on geometric forms provided a new way of seeing. Bringing a common language to frame what we see and understand. A starting point which does not end at a common meaning or uniformity of thinking. These examples intrigued these students.

Roger Kemp stated, **"What I tried to do with the black line (was) I had to smudge in the centre, the energy sort of moving around not knowing where to go until I captured it and put it in a harness so to speak..."**⁶

In 'Architecture according to Pigeons', Speck Lee Tail Feather flies with his friends around the world describing world architecture as seen through the eyes of pigeons.⁷ A bridge so to speak between the descriptions of line, shape and form of well-known architectural landmarks from the point of view of pigeons. The students understood the humour in this story because of their familiarity of these well-known architectural landmarks.

Crossing boundaries between what we know and what could be...

Different buildings reflect where they are. Famous landmarks in countries which people can identify. To challenge the students established schema I shared further contemporary buildings designs unfamiliar to them.

The students marvelled at the whimsical shaped buildings which seemed to be impossible constructions, not unlike Roger Kemp, began with one or more traditional shapes yet pushed the boundaries beyond one's expected perceptions. And what in fact may be seen as an impossible feat of architecture is still functional. The students intrigued by photos they observed of contemporary architecture, then used their knowledge of line, edge, shape and form to imagine their own unique structures, pushing the boundaries of design and purpose. (Fig. 3)

We transferred this discussion to ask the students to relook at their homes, it's design structure, both external and internal. They emailed photos from the angles that they wished us to look at and discuss.

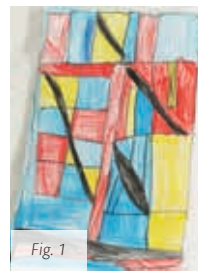


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

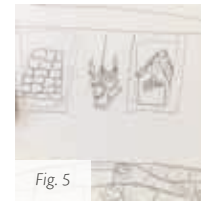


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

They drew about favourite places within their home and neighbourhood, took photographs when out walking with their family. Different viewpoints 'outside of their house, standing from the front, standing in the backyard' 'Houses next to theirs and in their street'. (Figs. 4 & 5)

Making learning meaningful required the embedding of student learning within their current environment; something we think about in our pedagogy where learning transcend beyond the physical classroom and beyond the school day.

Were the students now looking around their home environment, their neighbourhood, with new eyes with wonderings and possibilities?

Revisiting our investigation focus, students were asked about what they noticed about the materials used in these buildings, what were the features of the external and internal designs? Again, with reference to not viewing something in isolation.

The student's drawings certainly developed, becoming more purposeful over the course of discussions and because of initial provocations and the sharing of their photographs of their homes and neighbourhoods.

They were asked to 'Step Inside' a thinking routine which encourages deeper observation and thinking.⁸ To discuss from the point of view of a particular object, item.

Think about the room where you are sitting, what are the thoughts of the objects in this room?

Within the design of your room choose one object that you feel is important and write about its feelings, its history, living in your home.

I am bedside table. I live in Ethan's bedroom. I hold books and a clock and a lamp. I have two drawers. I am made out of timber and black handles. I have been living here for a year.

Crossing boundaries between the visible and invisible; what was represented and what we could further discover. One could describe this as positive and negative space, not new terms but in reference to the metaphor of uncovering of boundaries between what we could and could not see. The concept of a silhouette, the mystery of dark shapes against light, activated reactions between the students and their families. These dark shapes revealed possibilities, not necessarily all of the answers, particularly when information was not evidenced in the darkness. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 7

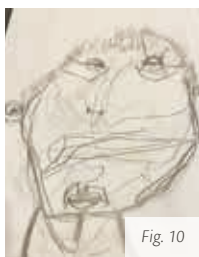


Fig. 10



Fig. 13



Fig. 8



Fig. 11



Fig. 14



Fig. 9



Fig. 12

Many artists, writers and photographers were commenting on life during a unique and challenging time. As has been the case at different times in history, we were able to look back and reflect on what was then and what is now.

The opportunities afforded through the fashioning of traditional silhouettes and ideas of silhouettes changing our perception were now seen displayed in windows of homes around the world. The artist Pejac's unique idea of transforming 'Home Windows into Imaginative Silhouette Art' had become a global movement..

Excitedly students prepared to change their viewing and thinking about the window of the rooms they were participating in during their online class sessions. They would also surprise their families by adding a new feature to another window in their house. (Fig. 7)

Further discussions focused on the marking of time which led us back to the concept of Crossing Boundaries and the application and symbolism of time. The mystery of the dark in comparison to the day, a concept of time.

Windows are like a stage really, close those curtains and then open them and you are not sure what you will see.

Had we gone full circle, or perhaps a spiral of learning where we pondered over the lines we made and considered their representation?

As we entered the final term of the year and our class remained online, I asked the students to consider drawing a reflection of themselves. We returned to the concept of line. How would a continuous line travel with their eyes around and across a view of themselves? A map of sorts, which would allow the viewer to travel with them. A continuous contour line drawing without the pen leaving the paper. A challenge. For some the pen lifted. Why? The relationship of what the eye sees and what the hand tells is an intriguing one. I am sure many have researched this. In this instance I wondered, were the students wanting to check how their drawing looked? Was this a pre-existing trait? What of those who continued moving their line backwards and forwards across the page, around their eye, across their nose, towards their mouth and chin? I should remark here that students were given a choice of a mirror to view their reflection or to use our Microsoft Teams platform of our daily

interactions and conversations, as we greeted each other with our faces and expression with multiple squares on our laptop screens. Was this more a reflection of ourselves, themselves during this past year? *What we do today, tomorrow will be history.* (Figs. 8–10)

What would the students bring to these sessions about their term break albeit restricted at the current time? Walks in the park and times to play there? Would the students now notice more about what was around them?

A new animation of a book was launched recently entitled 'Windows' by Patrick Guest and Jonathan Bentley and based on the current times of looking out at life whilst experiencing more life in the home.¹⁰ This engaged students in a discussion where they made their own connections to current times.

I often lay out on the grass in our back yard and look at the clouds and the sky. You can see shapes and stories.

When you look out you see different things in the world.

As I look out, a new world looks back. Nature's growing and the whole world has changed there are different things all the time. (Figs. 11–13)

This I am sure has featured in our own experiences, whether as a child or adult, lying on the grass or on a beach or hiking to the top of a mountain and looking towards the sky. Why do we do this, what do we feel and think?

There is indeed a new world of experiences. The expanse of the sky offers imagination, dreaming, opportunities and crossing boundaries, now and into the future. So as the students returned online, rather than feeling constrained, we continue to explore the concept of crossing boundaries now and in the future using the metaphor of a kite.

Nicole "Nic" O'Neill, president of the American Kitefliers Association stated "**When people fly a kite, they're allowing themselves to be free... experiencing that freedom changes our lives and how we see the world.**"¹¹

This investigation will continue, from the provocations offered, memories of learning experiences, and with the intention that the learning will continue, not as a topic but rather the transference of 'what I understand now and what I would like to explore further'.

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