

Balnarring Preschool & Infant Welfare Association

Learning and Living with nature



Gareeal Reflection on Learning –May 2019

After the three week break (including the staff profession day of learning on the first day back of term), the children settled very well back into kinder and shared their stories with us. We assisted children to settle in by reconnecting with them individually and reminding them about the kinder routine through the use of the boardmaker schedule. The schedule also helped children to successfully process and understand the changes to the routine we have had over the last 3 weeks including indoor and outdoor play, preparing for and celebrating Mother's Day and walking and learning with Country. These small changes to the usual kinder routine allow children to continue to develop their emotional regulation skills and become more adaptable and flexible.

The first week back we were busy making something special to give as a gift to our mums for Mother's Day. We decided to use our fingers and do fingerprints / painting on the cards as well as for the fridge magnet as it followed children's interests and exploration of fingerprinting and hand printing last term. We yarned and talked about the special women in our lives while we worked at the activities and at mat time. Some of the things we talked about were why our mums are special and important and what they do for us and with us. This is an important social skill and helps children to begin to develop empathy and understanding for others and is essential to their building and maintaining successful relationships. It is a complex and tricky skill that we need to teach children by modelling and role playing and one which at this stage in children's development they are only just beginning to understand. Celebrating Mother's Day and doing these activities with children also helped children to feel a greater sense of belonging and had positive impacts on their wellbeing and identity as children engaged in and celebrated this familiar cultural celebration.

We certainly hope that our VIP women that came along to our session appreciated and enjoyed their time with the children, in particular the massage the children had practiced. There were lots of activities set up for VIPs and their child to do. We drew and painted together, ate a yummy scone together which the children had made at the start of the session, gave our VIPs a hand massage, played with the dinosaurs and playdough, created bracelets and threading's, built with blocks and lego, solved puzzles and shared stories. We also loved watching our families enjoy a special cuddle and hug as they listened to our story at the end of the session together.



Acknowledgement: Balnarring Preschool acknowledges that our children and families play and learn on Boon Wurrung Country. We acknowledge the Boon Wurrung of the Kulin Nation as the First Peoples of this land. We thank them for caring for the land and the waterways and value the sharing of their knowledge and stories. We pay our respects to their Elders: past and present.



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HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY TO ALL OUR WONDERFUL VIPs



Volcanoes and dinosaurs in the sandpit were also a big hit in Gareeal during the first week. Childrens play and wonderings about the red sand, led us to discuss the volcano experiment Manameet had done and you can guess Gareeal wanted to have a go too! All the group wanted to join in and have a turn. We watched, listened and predicated just like real scientists. We engaged in deep conversations together about what happened to dinosaurs and what volcanoes are. We talked about sleeping volcanoes and active ones which burst out lava. We talked about what was happening as we poured in the vinegar and what the vinegar smelt like. With support, the children took turns, shared equipment and listened to the instructions. We had a lot of fun being scientists!



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Whilst some children made scones for Mother's Day others were curious and engaged and enjoyed planting vegetables in the newly renovated vegetable patch. They were popular activities with children, who were engaged with the real-world tools (hand trowels, pastry cutters) and being with peers in the group. In the three-year-old program with careful selection we will begin to introduce more real world activities and tools into childrens play, such as cooking (with sharp or hot equipment), digging (with metal rather than plastic shovels), craft (hole punches, staplers etc) and when out with Country (balancing, climbing and exploring). The list of real-world opportunities provided to children over the kindergarten experience goes on, depending on the interests and materials we have. Teachers and educators are acutely aware of the risks involved in these activities and we only provide a real-world experience for the group that is manageable and carefully considered beforehand. Tools, experiences and materials are always introduced; children are guided through their use and then observed to ensure they are safe and supported. In all experience's risks are thought through and weighed against the learning that occurs.



In May, the children have also been on their first full session learning with Country. Again we met to remind ourselves how to be safe with Country before heading off to the pine trees. We all carried our own backpacks which is a self-help skill that teaches us responsibility and builds strength and stamina. It also builds our resilience as we navigate terrain and distance carrying it and have to deal with and self-regulate when we feel negative emotions about carrying it. We started looking and investigating straight away and noticed that our bodies and the trees were making shadows. We learnt about and explored how when the sunlight hits the trees and our bodies it makes shadows, shadows that can move and dance. We also enjoyed playing on the running hills, but reminded ourselves of the rules about watching for others so we didn't bump into others and being mindful of how fast we would go first. We also enjoyed making the making the hills into pine cone racing track and explored mathematical knowledge looking at how far different pine cones went and which ones rolled the best.



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As we walked we investigated and noticed some interesting things with BoonWurrung Country that had changed since we were last here. We saw and discussed the orange berries that we could now easily see on some bushes and discussed how this is the food of the birds and not for us to eat. We were learning and developing gross and fine motor skills as we were supported to take our time and balance along the fallen tree trunk with our arms out like Bundjil or Mouyi (the cockatoo) and to climb and jump from the climbing trees. Tricky tasks as the balancing tree trunk was narrow and many children also wanted to climb so we had to wait our turn and were supported to think of others which helps develop empathy.



We introduced more boundaries with Gareeal so they could explore within these boundaries more freely. This allowed the children to investigate more independently but to stay within a safe distance of adults where they can be seen. It also allowed some of the children to play a quick game of hide and seek. Children learnt about other special boundaries we use whilst walking to the wetlands like the resting logs at the end of the pine tree path where we wait for everyone and the concrete platform where we gather before crossing along the road. We enjoyed snack together at the climbing trees and discussed safety when we passed by some dogs in their house back garden. As we explored further, I introduced children to the witchy finger tree. Here the children explored and looked at the seeds which they could wear on their fingers. Some children thought they looked like dinosaur claws too. It was great seeing the children use their imaginations and although a busy afternoon learning with Country we certainly had a lot of fun!



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Soft Plastic Recycling

We need your help to collect as much soft plastic recycling as you can and bring it into kinder. The 3 and 4-year-old kinder groups are doing projects to increase awareness and sustainability practices for children. We would love you to get on board. Go to redcycle.net.au and look for what can be scrunched and recycled and then start collecting and bring in your plastics to the kinder at any time.

STAY and PLAY

The stay and play rosters are up at the sign in desk. Thank you once again to the families who have joined us this term during sessions and those who have been able to join us for the last 30 mins as well. We appreciate your help and support. **There are a few sessions in Manameet group this term which if you are able to help still don't have a helper for the session.** If you or someone you know can come along it makes a huge difference in your child's learning and in relation to the quality of activities (and the inclusion of real-world activities) that we can offer in the program when we have family support.



Wk 5 - Friday 24th May

Excursion – Coolart walk on and learning with Country

Wk 9 - Friday 21st June

Walk on and learning with Country

Wk 10 - Friday 28th June

End of term celebration – International Mud Day Celebrations at kinder families are asked to join us between 1:00pm-2:30pm

Thanks, Jill



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