

Balnarring Preschool & Infant Welfare Association

Learning and Living with nature



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Manameet Reflection on Learning –June 2019

Over the last month we have enjoyed spending time both out in nature and at kinder with the children. We are grateful, especially with the cold weather and the early start to the cold and flu season, that our families are being mindful of others safety and health and respecting the fact that unwell children (with runny noses, temperatures, coughs and signs of cold and flus) are to be kept at home where they can get better.

We had a wonderful adventure at Coolart a few weeks ago and the children had a lot of fun exploring. Lisa, Kim and I supported children to look closely at the environment; we noticed and posed questions about nature and encouraged children to use their senses like smell, touch and sight to explore and learn. We explored the edible garden smelling and looking and even tasting some of the items, we asked questions and shared our thoughts on the different old farm machinery, we explored bush camp by jumping and balancing on trees, playing and crawling in spaces, creating imaginative games, drawing in the dirt and wondering about the holes we found in the ground and why they were there. As we walked and talked and explored we were also helping children to take risks and challenge themselves, to build their language and communication skills, to develop physical strength and gross motor skills such as balance, jumping and core strength as well as engaging children's vestibular system which helps them to develop an understanding and awareness of where their bodies are in relation to others and objects in the environment and hence how to move their bodies in environments safely. Children were developing their sense of belonging in place and also a sense of wonder and curiosity which is important to their wellbeing and future success and engagement in learning.

We developed our connection with Country and place on our visit to Coolart and were learning to respect and appreciate country as we sang Yaama (hello) to Gunimaa (mother earth), Bundjil, Waang, trees and other things in nature. We are learning that we are all important and equal in nature.



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Wondering about the environment.... posing questions, thinking and sharing our ideas are higher order thinking skills. What are the machines used for, what are mushrooms and fungus, is that Bundjil or Waang, what animals might live in the holes, does it smell nice?



We wondered what animals might have lived in the stables in the olden days



As we crunched, kicked, ran and threw leaves we were developing body awareness, balance, gross motor skills and having a lot of FUN!



Imaginative play... dinosaurs were exploring base camp today and role plays took place in the caves. We also used sticks to draw in the dirt



We were building our gross motor skills, balancing, jumping, running, walking on uneven terrain, climbing and much more. This helps to develop body awareness (so we move safely), core strength (so we can sit on the mat) and positively impacts our wellbeing and mental health.



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We have been extending children's interest and investigations of leaves at Coolart back at kinder over the last few weeks. We have loved listening to the story 'Leaf Man' and we were inspired to create our own leaf creations. We have investigated the differences and similarities of leaves such as size, colour and shapes as we created leaf people and pictures with the leaves and other interesting seeds and items we have collected in nature. The sorting developed our maths skills, the creations we came up with helped us to be creative and imaginative and our discussions and descriptions as we worked, helped to develop and extend children's vocabulary, observation skills and scientific thinking. Children also had to learn to assess how hard or soft they needed to be when touching different leaves and moving them about without breaking them.



We appreciate the mountains of leaves that our families collected and the reusable bags and inventive ways the leaves were brought into kinder. This has been a great sensory experience for all children to explore. We created a huge pile of leaves on the grass at kinder and the children have had a wonderful time, playing in them... throwing them, kicking them, running through them, sitting in them, making leaf angels and raking them into a big pile before doing it all again! Not only was it fun and exciting but it was important in activating children's vestibular system, so they are learning to balance and understand spatial orientation better in relation to close proximity of others. It was a great way to stimulate other sensory systems such as touch, sight, sound, smell as well. When raking, pushing and gathering leaves, children were also receiving information / sensations from their joints and muscles which helps to develop body awareness. Our interest and investigations in leaves at Coolart and at kinder have led us to talk about and learn about the changing seasons.



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Sensory activities are important for children's development and research has proven that activities which stimulate children's multiple senses such as sensory activities, improve children's cognitive learning. Our new sensory tub has been put to the test recently as children have explored and experimented with the soapy slime. We built vocabulary as we described what we were feeling such as slippery, slimy, squishy and what it smells like and looks like. We also encouraged social interaction and language development as we talked and encouraged peer interactions. As children experimented, they moved it in different ways; they whisked it, stirred it, dropped it from heights and squished it. Childrens soapy slime experimentation helped them to begin to develop an understanding of concepts such as runny, smooth, soft, lumpy etc. It is also fun and interesting, fostering children's imagination and curiosity and providing opportunities for them to develop physical fine motor skills and strengthen their dexterity which is needed for children to hold and use pencils and scissors and thus impacts their handwriting in future.



Children have also had the opportunity to explore other sensory activities such as playdough, sand and water play, finger painting, music and light play etc. One of the major benefits for young children's learning is that these activities do not focus on an end product and they aren't process driven. This means that everyone can succeed and we can help children learn and develop at their individual level.

Last week we had a successful sensory session jumping in muddy puddles. Childrens interest and curiosity in the water in the mud pit at kinder when it had rained one week, led us to bring our walk forward so we could jump in muddy puddles after a big week of rain. We had a lot of fun and children were encouraged to participate at a level they felt comfortable with. Whilst some children sat and splashed in the puddles others chose to walk or stick to shallower ones. Most importantly, all children were able to participate and took risks. They all engaged in movement and play that helped to make new connections among brain cells. It benefited their wellbeing, balance skills and gross motor skills. Children were also learning about the concept of depth and had to show a level



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of resilience and manage emotions when either dealing with being wet and playing with multiple other people in the puddles and walking back to kinder once finished.

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Additionally, some other strong interests we have had this month include, pasting onto a 3D surface, exploring the fairy garden and doing building work and playing with cars and the train set. Telling and retelling stories, both newly imagined ones and other familiar ones. Learning about the similarities we have with peers when discussing our 'All About Me Pages' and playing the clapsticks. Whilst playing the clapsticks we have been looking at playing at different tempos - fast and slow, different pitch - loud and soft and keeping the beat to familiar songs and indigenous songs. We have also been working with children individually and at activities to support their understanding of and development of friendship skills. We have done this by encouraging peer interactions and helping children to join in play by providing them with words and modelling as well as discussing specific friendship skills like sharing and turn taking which are different skills and standing up for ourselves. As we are at the end of the term nearly we have decided to focus on small group teacher led instruction on safe and fair play in term 3 and will continue to provide and model skills of safe and fair play in activities with children over the next few weeks.



STAY and PLAY

Thank you to those of you who have been able to join us at kinder and to those who have joined us out learning with Country. We love having you join in and play. Please remember that if you don't make it to kinder within the last 15 minutes, please leave remain in the foyer till the door is opened.



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 9:30am-11am

Thanks, Jill



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