



Being, Belonging, Becoming together

Dear Weelam Group 2021,

During the last few weeks, we have gradually come together as Weelam group 2021. We would like to extend a big Thank you to all parents for your patience and support as we completed all enrolments, slowly settled into the routines of being at preschool and began becoming friends. This has been an important time for the teaching team. We believe each child is unique and that it is vital we have these times to provide each child with the individual support they require to develop their sense of belonging as a friend and member of our Weelam group team. The smaller groups have supported us to get to know each child, share in conversations with them and others, learn about their interests, hear their stories, and begin to understand their learning styles, strengths and challenges. The children are now actively exploring all learning environments, we have been excited to observe how quickly they are developing their friendship groups, are wanting to share experiences and work collaboratively together. We are encouraging the children to learn each other's names and to welcome others into their games. Planning for many small group experiences and gatherings throughout each session has offered the children opportunities to connect and build positive relationships with others including the teaching team and their learning with Boon Wurrung Country. The values of care, reciprocity and respect are taught throughout the program. All children are being supported to help others and show respect within all relationships as taught to us by the Boon Wurrung Elders and First Peoples. We are all learning through the Laws of Bundjil that our responsibilities to care for each other also includes the creatures and the Lands we share this world with. Each month in this newsletter the teaching team will reflect on our learning times and the experiences that are supporting learning we have engaged together as Weelam group. Please let us know if you have any questions or further thoughts. We would love to hear if you have knowledge or skills you can share with us to build upon our learning experiences. We look forward to you joining us in the program.

Creating the Letterhead above: *Thank you to the Parents who joined us for our Parent Information Night. This opportunity to gather allowed us to talk with you about the program at a deeper level and for parents to ask questions, as well as an opportunity to meet each other. On this night we created a story with the found treasures from our garden. A photo of our story (with a little artist licence) has now become the letterhead and symbol for Weelam group this year.*

Developing our Sense of Belonging: At both the preschool and at Bush camp we have been supporting the children to connect with these spaces and to strengthen their sense of Belonging both as a group and within all learning environments. Through their explorations, by making discoveries and sharing these with each other we are all developing deeper knowledge and connections with our communities. As each child develops their sense of wonder and curiosity, they are encouraged to take time to look closely, wait, listen, watch, and ask great questions as well as share their discoveries and learning experiences with others.



****** We have been creating 'Maps' of our learning environments to support the children to connect with their learning spaces.

Murnong: Last year we created a special garden and planted Murnong plants (grown in 2020) into this garden bed. We have been watching the plants continue to grow and change. The plants are now flowering and making seeds. We have begun collecting and harvesting the seeds so we can plant them later in the year. We can see new flowers as they form and change, then go to seed. We are wondering about what is happening under the ground? and What a yam might look like? We will be doing more investigating soon. Please take a look at the Murnong's when you join us at preschool.



Did you know? Murnong (Yam Daisy) is a native yam which has a distinct nutty-taste when roasted. Very easy to grow, producing beautiful, yellow flowers. A staple food source for many First Peoples communities across southern Australia, it was almost made extinct through the introduction of grazing.

Reference: <https://melbournebushfood.com.au/products/murnong-yam-daisy>

Bush camp and Beach experiences: The children's confidence in these spaces has grown each week. We have been intentionally teaching the children to begin to 'map' these environments and to begin to learn the landmarks, the paths, the spaces and about the birds and creatures that they share Bush camp and the beach with. As well as many opportunities for active play, climb and explore we have also been encouraging the children to stop, to listen and begin to know the sounds around them. They are beginning to be curious about and know the bird calls, to listen to the sounds of the wind in the trees, the waves and to look for the homes of the creatures who we share these spaces with. To support us all be safe as we play and learn in these environments the children have been learning the rules to be safe. As a group we have been talking about them as well as playing games so we can practice listening for the whistle and seeing the red hats of the teachers. The 'wave game' is a great challenge and fun way to remember we do not go into the water to play when we are at the beach.



Being curious, making discoveries and connecting with the knowledge of both Bush camp and the beach environments supports everyone's learning and sense of Belonging.



Learning to care for each other: Caring for our chickens.



The chickens are an important part of our program and as the children began this preschool year we have been teaching the importance of caring for them. We have talked about how to talk to them, make friends with them, to feed them and watch them quietly so the chickens come to know the children will care for them, not chase or hurt them. We are talking about once the chickens learn to trust them that is when they will allow the children to pick them up. Collecting the eggs is always a highlight of the session.

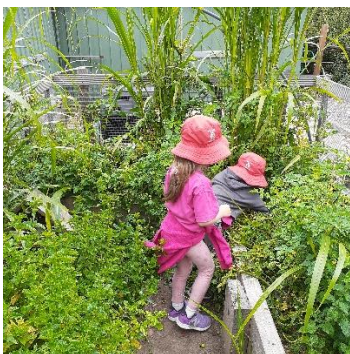


Learning with Challenges:



We are creating many opportunities for the children to challenge themselves, try new experiences, build on their current skills and to understand problems, those “can’t do times” as learning opportunities and to come to know there are many ways problems maybe solved. The children have been very motivated to build their own climbing challenges with the soft foam equipment. These challenges support them to be excited about unfamiliar experiences, to try out new skills, to have another go if first it doesn’t work, to ask for help, to watch how other manage the challenge and to be a teacher themselves and help a friend who has a problem. Challenges become a time of wonderful learning when they are shared with friends. We look forward to growing these experiences and building on the children ideas throughout the program.

Out in our garden:



Did you know we are very good at growing tiny tomatoes and zucchinis? The children have been exploring our veggie garden to find these treasures for us to eat. They have also begun to find the bugs and creatures who live in the garden too. Knowing where their food comes from and then cooking with it is encouraging the children to try new experiences. We deliberately leave our veggie garden a bit messy so the children have to look hard to find the veggies and bugs, another challenge!!



Restaurant Day:

Thursday session is becoming known as ‘Restaurant Day’ and this is the day, we ‘cook’. At present we are exploring many ways to cook with the tomatoes and Zucchini’s that the children collect from the garden. The children have begun talking about future ideas for our menu- we welcome families thoughts, favourite recipes and skills too.

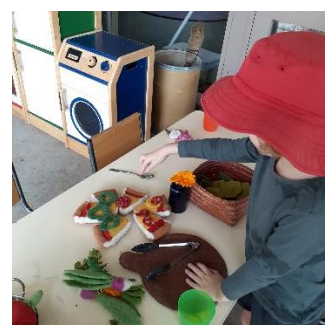


Cooking together to make veggie muffins required lots of cutting, grating, mixing, measuring and lots of stirring skills.



Cooking as a play experience:

We have been extending the cooking experiences into play opportunities within all the preschool environments. These experiences offer many opportunities to sit and have a chat, a mud 'coffee' and 'cake' and for friendships to develop as children work alongside and with each other. We are encouraging the children to invite others into these games.



Moments shared with friends: *Many new friendships are emerging within the group. Small group experiences allow children to play together share their ideas, discover they have similar interests and to inspire each other. We are encouraging the children to develop many friendships within the group and will continue to support their friendship development and understanding this year.*



Our Learning Diary: Everyday as a teaching team we reflect on the learning we observe of the children and experiences along with sharing suggestions for possible learning times with each other and with the families of children who attended the session. Have you seen our learning diary? It is a large black book that holds our reflections, photos and children's contributions as a record of our times together as Weelam group. The children are helping to create the pages in the book, cutting out the photos, adding drawings and their words (written by us) as they reflect on the photos of the experiences from the previous session.



Our White Individual Folders: *Each child has their own White Folder and we have begun adding to each folder individual learning stories of your child's learning and development within the program. We have also begun sharing each child's story of their family with each other (this time is known as their turn to be a Story Star). You are welcome to look at your child's folder when ever you are at preschool. We just ask you only just look at your child's book. These these folders will be sent home in a couple of weeks so your child can share their stories with their families. (Please return your White Folder asap if you haven't done so far).*

Family Lunch: *Unfortunately our planned family lunch this week had to be postponed due to COVID restriction. As soon as it is possible we will be rescheduling this opportunity to be together at the preschool.*

Future Gatherings: We are also planning other opportunities for families to join us within the program and we will communicate these with you when we know they will be possible.

Thank you: *On behalf of the Weelam group teaching team Thank you to all families for greeting us with your smiles (even under masks) and for your kind words and reflections on the program so far. We look forward to you joining us for a session when you are able and being able to share in our learning experiences with your children. Please let us know if you have any questions and thoughts to share. Kind regards Ann and Sarah, Beth and Kim.*