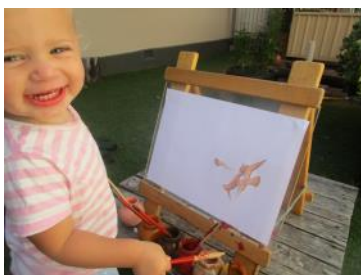


Elder Street Pedagogical Post

April 2022



Our first few months in the Possum Room, 2022!

Welcome to our Elder Street Community

Educators from the Possum Room would love to welcome our new and returning families into the Possum Room and Elder Street community for 2022. We have loved every single moment of sharing cuddles, friendly waves, getting to know your child's interests, who they are as an individual and nurturing where they belong in our Elder Street community. Each morning and afternoon is often a special time where we enjoy engaging with our families through listening and sharing stories of the children's learning from their day. We also enjoy hearing about your children's adventures from home and finding creative ways to incorporate this learning into the educational program in the Possum Room.

It is our aim to create a warm and welcoming space that is reflective of the children's interests and learning. Much of our room will undertake transformations throughout the year with our walls being filled documentation and artwork that is representative of what the children have been learning and engaging with throughout the year. We encourage our families to spend time with the children, asking questions about the space, searching for their child's artwork, looking at photographs and reading about their learning. As the year progresses it is truly warming to see how the room transforms and becomes 'who we are' in the Possum Room this year. "Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark on a journey down the water. Through an active, and reciprocal exchange..." (Malaguzzi, 1998).

We can't wait to embark on this learning journey together, welcome!





Project Work in the Possum Room

Project work is an educational practice we follow here at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre. Inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, project work is when the children and educators embark on a learning journey. This learning journey is unique to each learning group of children and nurtures the children's emerging theories, concepts, and ideas.

In an educational collaboration at the end of last year, educators discussed the idea of the project 'Connecting to Country' not ending in 2021. This idea opened a world full of possibilities for each of the children to continue to engage in becoming active researchers with a concept they were already familiar with, and build new theories alongside the children that joined the Possum Room in 2022.

When educators reflect on the children's learning we envision a waterway. A waterway that absorbs all the creeks that feed into it, making space for new waters to cross and create a river (Gilimba, 2021). Each theory created and investigated by the children contributes to our unique waterway that is rich with the children's voices and ideas.



Connection to Country

The children's investigations of connecting to the Pamara (the river)

From the beginning of the year educators began observing the children gathering around the water trough in the playground. Much like the symbolic importance of a river, the water trough became an important meeting place for the children. This space fascinated many of the children to develop a curiosity of how their interactions with water provoked different movements and effects. While the children were investigating water in different forms; educators documented their understanding of the theories the children were forming.

When I place my hand in the water what is going to happen?

If I drop a rock in the water what is going to happen?

If I sit my body in the water what is going to happen?





Vygotsky (1934) believed that children actively seek an understanding of the world around them. When children develop these theories, it is to generate their own explanation as to why things occur in the world around them. Over the space of two months educators intentionally supported the children to investigate their ideas in un-hurried time. The result of this was that the children could construct and build upon their own ideas over several days and weeks.



Celebrating Harmony Day



In March the Possum and Joey children joined together in the playground to celebrate Harmony Day. Each year, Harmony Day is an important celebration of inclusiveness, respect, cultural diversity, and a sense of belonging for everyone. Our time spent in the playground together nurtured strong connections between the two groups of children. This year educators discussed how the children could create a symbolic artefact that represents this year's theme of 'Everyone Belonging'. A range of intentional colours were designed for an art experience to signify and celebrate culturally diverse community and country the children live in. Although objectively beautiful, this artefact is not about the children's individual artwork. More so, how the children's artwork can join in order to create a symbolic representation of everyone belonging.



A Glossary Guide

Our educational project and program is inspired by a connection to the traditional custodians of this land, the Awabakal people and their land on which we play and learn upon each day. Educators are beginning to intentionally embed the use of Awabakal words within our day-to-day conversations with the children and thought it would be useful for our families to have a guide to what these words mean alongside the wonderful 'Welcome to Awabakal Country' song the children from the Possum Room created at the end of last year.

Glossary

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Mulubinbah – Newcastle | Muring - Sea |
| Taruralong – Gum Tree | Watiyelong – Trees |
| Yuring – Leaves | Werekata – Kookaburra |
| Mowane - Kangaroo | Pamara—River |



Lots of love,
Bree, Paula,
Keely, Carley,
Hannah and
Chloe xxx

Welcome to Awabakal Country

Welcome to our home, Mulubinbah.
Near the muring.
The land that meets the big, big, sea.
We take care of the land.
The land takes care of we.
This is Awabakal country.

We live by the muring.
Home of the flying turtles.
Be careful! Big whales jumping...
They swim and swim and swim and swim,
to warmer waters up north.
And return back down to the swishies.

Welcome to Awabakal Country,
With many taruralongs.
The kooka fly to the big watiyelong,
they warn us of the rain
and dance behind the yurings.
Then we hear then werekata call
Ko-ka-ka-ka-ka, big rain coming!

Out in the bushland lives the kadaloo's,
they're called Mowane.
little kadaloo goes jumping,
looking for its mummy.
Big journey through the grassy tree's,
making friends along the way.
The kadaloo had a very big day.
Goodnight kadaloo!

Glossary

Mulubinbah – Newcastle

Muring - Sea

Taruralong – Gum Tree

Watiyelong – Trees

Yuring – Leaves

Werekata – Kookaburra

Mowane - Kangaroo

Pamara—River

Welcome to our home, Mulubinbah.
Near the muring.
The land that meets the big, big, sea.
We take care of the land.
The land takes care of we.
This is Awabakal country!

A learning enriched few months with the Joey's



PROJECT WORK - EMERGENCY VEHICLES: Further investigating the children's connections with vehicles in the community.

Over the first few months of the year, educators formed connections with the children, getting to know their ideas, interests and their families. As the children began to settle into their new routine, they shared common ideas about motor vehicles seen within the community. The main focus was trucks and emergency vehicles including their colours and sirens. These elements were points of conversation by the children. They then started to share more in-depth understandings about the roles that individual vehicles play in the community.

According to Dewey *"learning should originate from the interests of children, which is foundational to the projects approach. The educator is there to promote their interests for discovery and inquiry."* Educators have observed common interest and curiosity towards the topic of emergency vehicles and intend to support and foster these ideas. When the children were asked what they would like the end goal for this project to be, their response was "to drive one".

So far in the journey, the children have explored their ideas and learning in two specific ways; through literacy and through art. Introducing these concepts to the children stimulated their thinking and encouraged them to ask questions and share knowledge on a deeper level. Our literacy learning prompted the children to unpack 'what is a rescue helicopter?' through books, images, videos and news articles. The children questioned "who drives it?" - Harry, "Who's inside?" - Angus and "what do they do?" - Willow. Collaboratively we learnt that "they rescue people" - Angus, "the driver is a pilot, he wears a helmet" - Harry, "Doctors help you when your hurt" - Willow, "Doctors are on there too" - Angus.

Educators then intentionally set up a space in the atelier where the children could express their ideas through art. This space included photos of emergency vehicles and the children were encouraged to share their knowledge and transfer it through drawing and other forms of art. "The fire truck has a big hose that sprays" - James, "the helicopter has red, white and yellow and a little black" - Sunny, "rescue" - Isla, "that says police" - Frankie, "the lights are red and blue" Harry, "fire truck lights" - River.

Our project is continuing with the children making the collaborative decision to design their own firetruck through recycled materials. Keep your eyes out for this fantastic addition.



OUR COMMUNITY GARDEN

As a group we have been spending lots of time in the Community Garden. This has been a calming space as we have built connections and settled into new environments and routines. Throughout our time in the garden, we have learnt all about our native bees and how to take care of them. Growing, caring for and harvesting our own fruits and vegetables has also been a huge part of our learning. The children recognise when produce is ready to be picked or eaten and when it might need a little bit more care. Caring for the natural world is so important and we are so glad we have this space to share with children and families.



“Close relationships are the context for children’s play, development and learning. What young children learn, how they react to events and people around them, and what they expect from themselves and others (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) depends greatly on their close relationships”



A SENSE OF BELONGING

Since the beginning of the year we have been focusing on the children, both old and new developing a strong sense of belonging in the environment and building connections with peers and educators. For some this is a bit of a tricky process as they are put outside of their comfort zones and face the unfamiliar. With lots of love, guidance, support and encouragement from educators, the Joey group of children have done amazing job at settling in, building bonds and sharing their thoughts, ideas and understandings through their play and learning. These shared ideas have been such a big part of the reason that we went down the project path of emergency vehicles; this was an overwhelming interest in the group and a great way for them to forge even stronger bonds throughout the first few months of the year.



Love,
Lauren, Olivia,
Casey, Chloe and
Hannah xx



Learning and exploration in the Wallaby room from January - April



INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

2022 welcomed a new group of children into the Wallaby room, eager for another year of developing and acquiring knowledge. The children immediately displayed dispositions for inquiry-based learning both in individual and group contexts. Building on their already developing knowledge bank, educators noticed an inundation of questions inquiring further to finding out the what, why, and how. We encouraged the children to engage in their own learning using a hands on approach.

Inquiry is defined as prompting children to ask, investigate, create, discuss and reflect on their prior funds of knowledge, providing new opportunities for new learning. Engaging children in authentic inquiry and developing independent learners is what lies at the heart of early learning pedagogy.

Through literacy learning, group times and shared conversations and questions, the children were soon sharing their knowledge and ideas of what they wanted to know more about. One concept that stood out to us was space and the solar system. Maddox and Winifred shared their understandings about our world and the solar system and these child led group times prompted questions, intrigue and curiosity from the larger group.

The next step was to explore inquiry based learning through artistic exploration. As we transitioned our learning to the concept of space, the children were able to unpack their ideas, theories and understandings through mark making and other creative avenues.

The Wallabies were able to consolidate their learning using the 100 languages through art, language, literacy, moments of play, conversations and the sharing of ideas.

PAUSE, REFRESH, REFLECT

Educators emphasise the importance of reflecting and looking back on learning and unpacking changes in our knowledge building as we progress through the learning journey. When gathering the children together, educators re-cap the previous books and experiences that have been shared together. The children confidently share their current understandings about space and delving deeper into inquiry.

"Pluto is very small. There are 8 planets, do you remember the hottest planet? It's Mercury and Venus" - Sam. R

"Saturn has a ring and it's made up of rock and ice" - Luca. S

"Earth. It's the planet we live on" - Jules

"The moon comes out at night" - Ruby

"Mercury is my favourite" - Olive

"The milky way. I like the parts of it. The planets and the power" - Hugo

"Rover! He is looking for dirt and rocks" - Elijah

"Earth and planets! I love the sun" - Hunter

"The sun. It's hot" - Eve

"The sun comes from the milky way and the milky way comes from the sun" - Sara

EXPERIMENTATION AND HANDS ON LEARNING

Throughout our project work our aim has been to engage the children in a range of experiences that intrigue, excite and make them question the what, when, how and why of learning. Experimentation and hands on learning adds another layer into their hypothesising and knowledge building.

Throughout our exploration of space and the solar system, we introduced the children to an experiment that caused a rocket to 'blast off' into the air. This immediately caught their attention and they wanted to know more. Educators intentionally planned this experience so that we could foster the children's thinking and critical thinking skills. We shared discussions about the ingredients and hypothesised about what might happen. "It's going to explode" - Marli, "It will shoot up to the sky" - Jonny, "I want to see it shoot" - Maddox, "It's going to the clouds" - Henry, "It's going up, up, up" - Luca. Although this experiment was based around our ongoing learning of space, it also provided the opportunity to explore science concepts such as reaction, cause and effect and change.

Marli extended on her own learning and that of her friends by sharing a model rocket launcher from home. This revisited the ideas from our experiment but instead used force from the launcher's foot to release it into the air. What great collaborative learners we have in the Wallaby room.



PLANNING & HYPOTHESISING

As our project progressed and the children came to a decision about what they wanted to create, the planning process began. We delved back into our inquiry based learning asking lots of questions about how we could create a meteor, how it would connect to the solar system painting and how the rocket would move around it. The solar system and background of their design was on "a big board" and has "planets, stars and the milky way". They discussed that the rocket could be made out a paper towel roll with a "pointy bit at the top". "Straws for fire because they are red" they decided. The project group needed to collaborate their ideas, hypothesise and consider what would work and what could go wrong. They discovered after our first attempt of a meteor (a balloon that they layered in crepe and tissue paper) that sometimes ideas don't work when the balloon deflated. We are still in the planning stages of a new design for our meteor but know that the children are capable of solving the issues that arose and revisiting their ideas and ways of thinking to create something amazing.



EXPLORATION OF ART CONCEPTS

Art is a huge part of how we as educators see the children express themselves. When they are intentionally introduced to new concepts and ways of thinking, it provides them with opportunities to build new skills, develop new understandings and explore self expression through a new lens. The children were exposed to the work of Henri Matisse, an artist who uses colour and decorative pattern. The children were intrigued by his style and asked if they could "do that on our wall" (Marli). A space was intentionally set up with resources including scissors, coloured paper, glue and Henri Matisse's book to provide inspiration. This experience soon became a collaborative art piece as the children worked together to create a range of different scenes including 'under the sea' and 'Taronga Zoo'. Fine motor, creative thinking, collaboration, self expression, communication and thinking outside of the box were supported throughout the children's engagement in this learning.



"Active involvement in learning builds children's understandings of concepts and the creative thinking and inquiry processes that are necessary for lifelong learning. They can challenge and extend their own thinking, and that of others, and create new knowledge in collaborative interactions and negotiations. A supportive, active learning environment encourages children's engagement in learning and can be recognised as deep concentration and complete focus on what captures their interests" (DEEWR, 2009)

HARMONY DAY

The 21st March marked Harmony Day, a day that celebrates inclusiveness, diversity, respect and belonging for all Australians. To recognise this day, the Wallaby group spent the morning at Lambton Park, on Awabakal land to spend time together, share stories, play soccer and create a group artwork that represented the children's thoughts and feelings about where they live, friends family, Elder Street and the wider community. Watching the children engaging in small groups, enjoying each other's company, laughing, dancing and exploring a different environment highlight to us as educators their strong sense of belonging with the Elder Street community.



Love Kate, Donna, Ellie, Luan, Casey and Hannah xxx