

Elder Street Pedagogical Post

December 2022



So much learning and curiosity in the Possum Room

“ME TOO”: *Espressione Creativa* through the eyes of our children

Observation, documentation, and collaborative interpretation of the children's interactions and learning provide educators with constant possibilities of developing a new project avenue, theory and constructs based on pedagogy and practice. In Reggio Emilia, *espressione creativa*, a derived translation of 'creative expression' in Italian portrays a powerful way that children express themselves while they are engaging in learning. While Wright explains the term creativity as involving the act of using information or common ideas in original or unique ways (as cited in Nissenberg, 2000), widely regarded aspects of creativity include imagination, curiosity, risk-taking, wonderment, imagination, flexibility, experimentation, breaking of boundaries, and opened to new perspectives (Prentice, 2000). The project 'Me Too – *espressione creativa* through the eyes of our children' began with observation and active listening, not just to their words, but also to their actions, ideas, and expressions. This project prompted the children to be the protagonists and authors of their own learning, while educators embark alongside the children through active and reciprocal learning experiences.

After a long and dreary winter, we began feeling inspired by the warming change in seasons and hints of colour that began popping up in our learning environments. The children enjoyed smelling the sweet scent of flowers as they opened their petals, while dazzling us with their vibrant colours. The notion of the environment being the third teacher (Malaguzzi, 1998) inspired educators to construct a space where the children could creatively interact through their own unique forms of language and connection (Malaguzzi, 1996). This space was created to promote intellectually rich and meaningful art pedagogy and learning. It encouraged the children to express themselves through touch, connection, social interactions, and mark making.

The most wonderful moment in the Possum Room is when each of the children put on a tutu and instantly transform into theatrical and graceful ballerinas. The essence of this creative expression is movement. Once the tutu is placed on, the children begin to experiment with different ways in which they can move their bodies; twirling, jumping, bending, leaping, skipping, and running. When engaging in a project with young children, there is always the desire to learn, to get something out of the play context, to merge and transform ideas and to dive into a new dimension of new wonders and new understandings. Educators continued to intentionally incorporate and embed the arts pedagogy alongside the hundred languages of children into our educational program, to support the children to seek their own understanding of being involved in *espressione creativa*.





Love Bree, Keely, Carley, Roxi, Hannah
and Chloe xxx

In the Community

After many years of being restricted with our excursions into the community, educators have been more intentional with planning learning experiences in our Lambton community, particularly on Elder Street. The popular proverb, *it takes a village to raise a child*, produces a clear message of the importance that the whole community has in the growth and development of the younger generation. Our children are curious and want to learn more about their world and their experiences. While exploring our Elder Street community the children have established strong relationships with our local store holders and are beginning to broaden their knowledge while becoming worldly citizens. Community involvement sends a powerful message to children. It's one that says you are important. You are loved. You belong. And it's a message that, with it, holds the strength to empower every single child in the world.



Creating Rituals - The difference between routines and rituals has both similar and dissimilar qualities. Both are predictable, familiar, and provide a sense of comfort for the children. Rituals are a powerful way of using gestures, actions, and our behaviour to bring positive energy and intention to our daily practices. Throughout our year in the Possum Room, the children and educators have been working in partnership to create meaningful daily rituals together. Our rituals throughout the day begin with a gesture of love, by greeting the children with a cuddle and asking them how their morning has been. The children are then guided by their knowledge of our rituals where they begin ensuring our dolls are tucked back into the cots for the next child to play with and that each toy is returned back into the basket that it belongs. The notion of our ritual continues into morning teatime, where the children begin to intentionally place enough chairs around the table for each child to sit at for morning tea. There is always one or two children that also take on the role of transferring drink bottles and milk bottles to each child who is sitting at the table, while educators are turning on our special lights and candles before beginning this mealtime. As our day continues, the children are comforted through tender moments of love and care. They are tucked into their beds with their comforter or a blanket and are greeted with warming cuddles and smiles when they wake up. After some time, they enjoy having their hair done with some water and sometimes a special 'Emma' bow or a beautiful braid before joining their older peers and siblings in the back playground for an evening full of play.



A learning enriched few months with the Joeys



PROJECT LEARNING: Bush Creatures; Self expression through open ended materials and creative thinking.

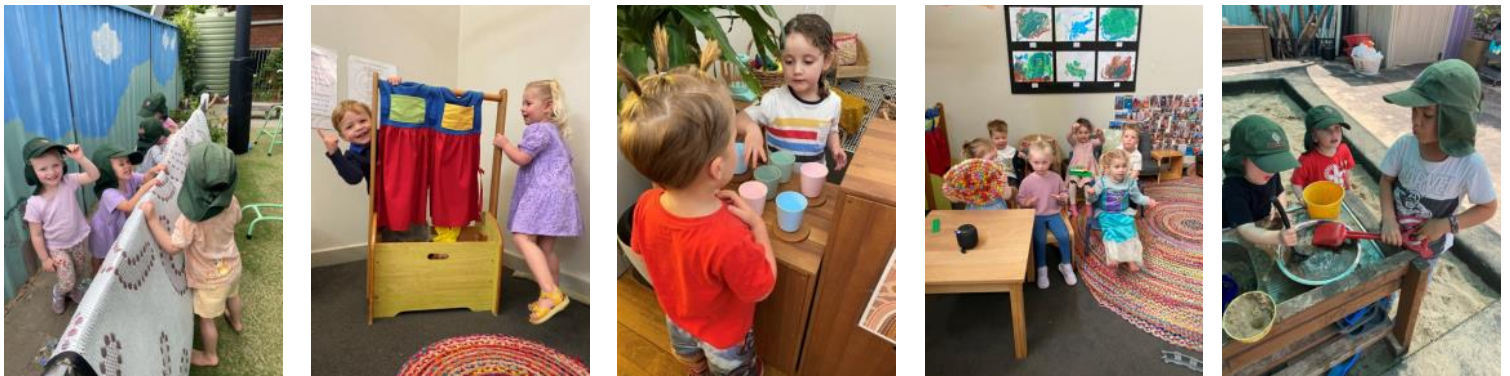
Where did the project begin? Over time, the children began to form connections with various natural materials within our environment; with the desire to create, explore and include these materials within their play. The Joeys spent time in a yarnning circle with Cherie, the owner and founder of 'Speaking in Colour' where she shared an entailing story created in collaboration with her daughter at their recent holiday at Jimmy's beach. The story titled 'Guuluu Gimbaijar' links unique characters that combine with natural elements sourced from country. Educators spent time collaborating with Cherie to assist in embedding these experiences into our educational program with the vision of connecting with the importance of imagination, creative thinking and connection to the land.

What we wanted the children to learn? After collaboration as a team, we agreed that our aim was for the children to be able to express their ideas through open ended materials, to explore storytelling through their individual bush creatures, to actively share ideas and engage in role play interactions and to gain connection and understanding of the natural world in which we live. Our end goal was for them to feel a sense of connection to their bush creatures.

Our bush creatures and 'Bushtins' that were created to house succulents and other plants became very important parts of the Joey environment. The children revisited these experiences each week, eager to see the progress there plant was making or engage with their bush creature in a new and exciting way. The culmination of our project was our exciting and very anticipated adventures to Lambton Park to collect natural resources to add to the bush creatures family. Reflecting on the children's learning, we as Educators feel that this project has been a great way for the children to express themselves creatively in a range of contexts as well as further build a connection with the land and the local community of Lambton.



FINE MOTOR EXPERIENCES - Over the past few months, we have noticed the development in the children's curiosity and eagerness to explore and engage with fine motor development experiences. The Early Years Learning Framework identifies the importance of fine motor development as a foundation for children's independence. These movements can involve cutting, scrunching, rolling, gripping and manipulating through use of the small muscles in the hands and fingers. We have found that the Joeys are wanting to test out their developing autonomy by completing lots of fine motor skills on their own and sharing their achievements with their peers and educators. This type of play provides the platform for children to extend on their manual dexterity, concentration, hand/ eye co-ordination and creativity through a vast range of experiences.



SHARED PLAY - As the year has progressed, educators have noticed a difference in the types of play the children are engaging in. When the year began, they often explored parallel play; the same interest side by side. Recently, we have been observing the children engaged in play experiences that explore friendships, connection, communication and sustained shared thinking. The children have shared interests, ideas and ways of thinking as they engage in construction, role play, creative art and movement, and small group times. Shared play helps children to collaborate and compromise with others, recognise and respond to others feelings, share, show affection, resolve conflicts and follow rules and instructions. The Joey children have demonstrated their ability to extend on these developing skills as they enjoy special moments spent together.



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



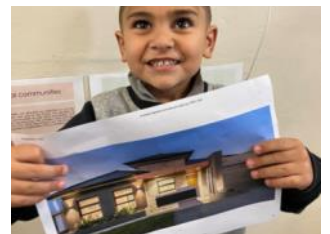
Learning and exploration in the Wallaby room from September—December

PROJECT LEARNING: Future me, Future us

The Wallaby Visible String Wall - The children have continued to connect throughout our project journey as individuals within our community. Marli extended our understanding of connecting to loved ones by introducing us to the book "The Invisible String". We followed along the process of connecting to the love provided by special people in our lives. The children unpacked their knowledge and validated their feelings by engaging with the 100 languages of children, exploring written and spoken language, the arts, and connecting with their heart and holistic being.

Processing and Connecting, Interconnectedness - We undertook a wider view of the different interconnected elements within different communities, unpacking how they connect and rely on the effectiveness of one another to create a seamless, functioning environment. Olivia unpacked the food supply chain and how each element in the process is pivotal and interconnected with one another, from producing fresh food, all the way until the food is in your home ready for consumption. The children were able to grasp the understanding of interconnection and co-dependence as a concept between working communities.

Connecting Through Words; the Wallaby Letterbox - Educators made the curriculum decision to extend the children's active connection with community by communicating through letters. Collectively, we unpacked the significance of the letterbox and who we can connect to here at Elder Street. We extended this experience to parents and visitors and were amazed at the response at bringing the home and care environments together as one.



Members of our community: Their role and how they help people - We were extremely lucky throughout our project learning to have families of the preschool room share their job roles, experiences in the community and the different ways they help and support people. Each role plays such an integral role in the wider community and the children really responded to learning more about this aspect of their community. Trent (Sam's Dad) and Luke (Finn's Dad) spoke with the children about the importance of being a firefighter. Michelle (Jonny's Mum) shared her knowledge about being a scientist, explaining all of the very important jobs and experiences she gets to witness everyday. Katie (Hugo's Mum) shared knowledge about her important role as a doctor and her involvement with the community. She highlighted the importance of looking after your body by eating healthy foods and keeping updated with vaccinations and check ups with a GP. Mark (Winifred's Dad) was so excited to share his role in the community. He became a priest and his job was to give people food if they were hungry, give them a blanket if they were cold and talk to people when they were feeling sad. Mark decided that he wanted to help people even more and is currently studying to become a doctor.





POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS - One thing that has been embedded into the daily practices of the preschool room is positive affirmations. This curriculum decision was made to support and encourage the children to check in on each other, understand gratefulness and provide opportunities to unpack what makes them happy. Each morning, the children take it in turns to choose an affirmation card with positive words or words of encouragement for the day ahead. These intentional, quiet moments in our day guide the children in developing their holistic wellbeing, mental connectedness and feelings of positivity and contentment.

SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAM - Over the past 10 weeks, educators have spent time with the graduating children unpacking and delving deeper into skills, concepts and strategies that may be helpful to them as they begin their journey to kindergarten in 2023. These concepts included building a strong sense of identity, speaking confidently, listening and responding, social and emotional resilience, problem solving, team work and critical and creative thinking, social justice and playground politics, bullying and herohood. As Early Childhood Professionals, we wanted to provide a program that provided the children with the stepping stones that would support and encourage them to speak up, support others and be their unique selves. We believe that the group of little people heading off to school next year are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to begin their next positive learning journey. We are so proud of each and everyone of you!!!



Love Kate, Ellie, Olivia, Casey & Hannah xxx