



The process of looking deeper

- Unpacking an interconnectedness between children and their natural environment.

March – September 2021

Background

Throughout the month of March, the children displayed curiosity in the evolution of flowers and plants within our community garden. Educators noticed children investigating garden beds, examining seeds and excited to water and tend to our community garden. This stemmed an interest in learning more about the plant cycle and diversity of flora we have within our Elder Street natural environment.

The children continued to demonstrate interests and curiosity in furthering their knowledge of outdoor gardening and the natural world.



"It's so beautiful" –Eve

Learning Objective

- To support the children's communication during small group learning through inquiry- based learning
- To incorporate the children's connections to their home environments
 - To support the children's engagement with working as a team
 - To support the children's understanding of plant diversity
- To explore mathematical concepts in learning (measuring, pouring, leveling, etc)
- To support a deeper understanding, model respect, care, and appreciation for the natural environment



Where it all began

Our homegrown garden began with a delivery of 'Woolworths plant and grow seedlings'. These were the foundation of the children's investigations and began our exploration of the gardening and planting process'. Throughout the planting experiences the children demonstrated their understanding and knowledge of caring for the natural environment, creating sustainable environments, and handling living objects with care. This observation period provided evidence of how the children had already begun to form connections with each plant and their produce.

"These are carrots"

- Maddox

"The water makes the soil go big"

- Florence

"I garden with my dad at home"

- Claire



Processes of block to soil

As we planted the seedlings, educators noticed how the children took an interest in the process of the soil turning from hard pellet form to moist soil by simply adding water. The children redirected our focus to understanding how this process came to be. After collaboration on the project concept, educators made the curriculum decision to focus on researching with the children how the process occur. As we continued to spend time creating our soil and planting our seedlings, it was evident that the children were amazed to see this process occur. When approaching the growing table, the children would alter their body positioning closer to the table to gain the best possible view.

Their developing curiosity displayed the ways they wanted to engage and collaborate in learning that extends their lines of inquiry also utilizing their senses of sight, touch and smell to gain their own understandings.

The children demonstrated through the language of body proximity, use of language and focused attention, that they were amazed and engaged.



"What's happening, its changing"
—Parker



From seedling to sprout

As the seedlings began to sprout, educators saw the children forming a sense of pride in their gardening achievements.

This was demonstrated by their ongoing desire to spend time together and observe the continual changes and developments the plants were making. This became a more frequent part of their daily routine as the seedlings displayed more visible plant and root growth. At this point in the exploration, educators noticed how the children were gaining an understanding of following specific steps to ensure the success of the plants. They displayed how this understanding was developing through confidently communicating these steps to their peers.

"I think they need the sun"

"And water"- Winifred

"They need us to look after them"

-Elijah



Learning about what plants need to grow

Educators began to notice how the children were grasping an understanding of what is needed to ensure a happy, healthy garden. This was evident in their knowledge of how to care for the plants, understanding how different natural elements; inclusive of sun, water and air have an impact their growth and development.



"Can we go water the plants" –Claire

"Its sunny, the plants like the sun" –Elijah

"The plants like the sun" –Winifred

Finalizing our planting

Each of the children had the opportunity to explore the processes of planting the seedlings into their compostable containers. The children have extended their existing knowledge on plants during this project. Another outcome that has been noticed by educators is that from slowing down and taking their time during the project, the children have benefited from a slow pedagogy that provided them uninterrupted learning time for observation, communication, connection and the opportunity to observe changes in the plants over time. The children have displayed how connected they are to the experience by taking time to regularly observe any changes made to them.

"Oh wow look, they are growing" –Elijah

"Wow look at that Ellie. Its grown, they have grown" –Eve



Families' connection and contribution to the learning

During the gardening journey, educators and children have incorporated the family's knowledge into our learning. Harriet and mum Ashley spent time observing the progress of the seedlings. Ashley shared how they also had some seedlings at their home and were encouraged by our love of gardening to plant them in their garden. Educators have loved ensuring that we are creating connections from the experiences we are engaging in to their loved ones at home.

Educators discussed how special and important it is when we are able to connect our intentional teaching and the children's learning here within the service with the children's home and families. Educators discussed the importance of incorporating socio-cultural perspectives from our community philosophy into their learning. This approach offers visible and lived experiences of learning that draws from each child's social and cultural backgrounds and is advocated within the classroom. We believe this project is cultivating a deep relationship with the planet through education for sustainability with children and families through this approach.



"We have those at home" –Harriet

Exploring art in the Atelier

Educators made the curriculum decision to utilise the Atelier as a space for the children to explore their retained knowledge and unpack their understandings of the project through art-based experiences. Our objective was to create an environment that encouraged, supported and inspired the children to engage in deep and connected learning both individually and as a group. Educators decided to make paint colours that represent the plants and surrounding environment in our community garden, providing deeper connections between the children and their artworks.

"There's Winifred, she is in the garden"

– Eliana

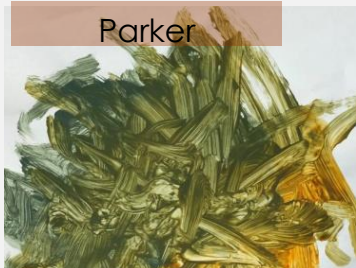
"Wow lights, look at those lights"

–Edward

"I like carrots and this one" –Winifred
stated whilst pointing an image on the
book



Parker



Florence



Elijah



Edward



Claire



Florence



Elana



Florence



Maddox



Elana



Eve



Maddox



Nicholas



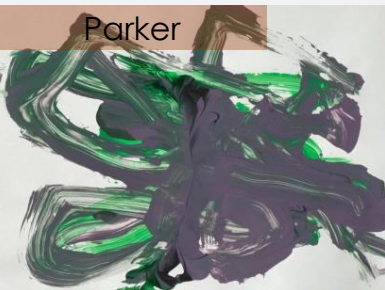
Maddox



Hunter



Parker



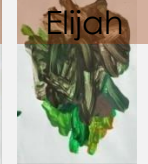
Mabel



Claire



Elijah



Finn



Nicky was excited to see big beautiful sunflowers in the room, "Sunflower" he would say pointing the flower.

Eve- "I am painting some flowers".
 Florence requested "I do a sunflower painting"
 Parker explained "green, green grass" as he utilised many shades of green on his paper.

Caring for our seedlings

The children have displayed ongoing connections with gardening by demonstrating conscious care and appreciation for the growing plants. This has been done by ensuring that they are providing them with the resources they need to thrive, i.e. fresh water. The children have made watering and observing the growth of the garden a daily practice.

“Big, bigger” –Winifred exclaimed excitedly as she pointed out the tall sprouts that had grown.

“Stink, that stink” she father explained after a closer inspection with her nose.



Hunter and Harriet searched through the community garden for rain water after recent wet weather. Gathering different available containers the girls would collect the water and gently place it onto the soil. Educators made a curriculum decision to emphasize the importance of using any available rain water to water the plants before accessing the tap. These conversations were a positive link to only taking what is needed from the natural environment. Preserving and sustaining it as best we can.



Human impact on plants and flowers

During a planned group experience, educators sat down with the children and spoke about the impact water has on plants growth. Ellie had brought in a bunch of sun flowers both established and closed for the children to see the transformation they go through and their life cycle after being picked. Lauren supported the children in providing our fresh flowers with new water. Educators instilled the message of caring for our natural environment, rather than pulling and taking from it. Caring for our natural environment will promote new growth in the future.



"Here's some water"- Luca



Respectful interactions with nature

The seedlings are beginning to outgrow their compostable containers, ready to be planted in a larger garden. Jakody lifted up the seedling pots and noticed some white veins on the bottom and encouraged educators to join in the observation. Jakody and Lauren spoke about those being the roots of the plants which support the plants to grow. Educators spoke about being very gentle with the plants when observing and transporting them from one container to another to ensure that their leaves and roots are preserved, modeling respect and care for the natural environment.



Out in the community

Isla, Maddox, Winifred, Eliana, Florence, Lauren, Ellie, and Casey walked down Elder Street to see the local council refreshing Lambton library's community garden ready for their seasonal planting. Educators made the curriculum decision to plan an excursion to take the children out into the community, observing gardening in action.



Being the perfect addition to our project, the children carefully observed the gardeners busily shuffling the soil around. The children pointed out the different fruits and vegetables that they could see across the road. The council gardeners invited us to come down the following Wednesday to join them in planting the new seedlings ready for spring time in Lambton.



"Wow, I like carrots" Winifred expressed.

"I like carrots too, and big dogs" Maddox added.

"They are gardening over there and digging" Isla stated.

"There's a digger" Winifred also added.

Lambton Library garden excursion

The Joeys transitioned to the community library in two groups, allowing more time for educators and the gardeners to enrich the children's knowledge individually. This provided each group with the opportunity to focus on the processes and steps the gardeners were implementing in the garden.



Winifred shared "I like carrots and flowers"

Maddox and Parker identified the colours of the plants "red one" Parker said pointing to the plant with deep red leaves, "there's green one too, it smells good" said Maddox replying to Parker.



After observing the gardeners busily planning out the layout of the garden, measuring the holes and carefully digging the soil, educators and children discussed what we could see. The children confidently pointed out different colours they could see in the garden, soil density, how to form the holes and how big each plant will grow. Evident in the children's ability to be curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning.

Nicky was excited to see the plants, "*there*" he said to one of the council gardeners.

"It's a garden" Eliana shared.

Hunter displayed curiosity in the sprinkler where she politely asked "what's that for?" before being mesmerized by its purpose



Planting our new plants

The council men and women working on the library community garden generously gave us some fresh new plants to add to our own garden. After our walk down Elder Street, we spent some time in our community garden, searching for a special place for our new seedlings to be added. The children have displayed strong connections to spending time together in the space. Educators have consciously spent more time in the community garden, eating our meals and intentionally setting up play experiences.

“Make a hole” –Winifred
“I love gardening” –Eve



Connecting with our documentation

The children have displayed a strong connection to the documentation that is now on display. Since adding the documentation slides, educators have noticed how the children have expressed a strong sense of pride in our collective learning achievements. This has been demonstrated through the children encouraging one another to explore in the space, promoting group collaboration and creating opportunities to unpack their thoughts and understandings through critical reflection.

Documentation is a way for children to reflect and look back on the learning that has taken place. The children often use their recall memory to discuss deeper understanding and the memories associated behind the photos.



"I can see me, Pat"-Patrick
"There's Winifred and Eliana"-Eliana
"There's my bingo shirt" -Winifred
"Leaf" -Eliana
"This one's dirt, yeah dirt" -Patrick

Checking in on our gardens

Whilst in the community garden, the children have been able to confidently communicate the physical changes that they observe the plants making. Educators and children continue to develop their connection to the natural environment by being immersed in hands-on learning. We have been planning our morning around spending periods of uninterrupted time out in the community garden for rich and collaborative learning to take place.

"Yeah those are the carrots, I know that" -Claire

"(A hole) for the carrots to move into" -Eve

"The rains made the plants grow" -Claire

"Yeah so big" -Eve

"I like lettuce, we buy lettuce from the shops" -Hugo

"Rabbits, rabbits eat carrots" -Nicholas





"Look at the carrots, they are big now" -Eve
 "Where are the cherry tomatoes? Look Maddox, look they are growing big" -Isla
 "Water the plants" -Eliana
 "I think these are carrots" -Florence

