

Elder St. Herald

AUGUST
SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
2019

Starting School—transitions that support our children to become ready for school...



When a child begins school it is a significant time in their life and also in their family's life. Things change. The routine of coming to 'kindy' or 'day-care' may alter and for some families it may involve a few drop offs instead of just one.

So timing of getting ready might need to adjust, morning routines may now include making lunches and packing bags. It is different and will involve changes. As humans we tend to not like change a great deal and respond much better to it when it is introduced slowly and with our involvement in making decisions.

Our understanding of supporting children in being school ready is a long term transition process that involves continuity and consistency towards change. We do not believe that children are suddenly 'school ready' at one moment in time. The transition to school will continue on after school has started next year. It will take time for families and children, especially for

first children starting school, to feel a sense of ease and belonging to their new space and community.

How can we support children and families in the transition to school?

From our experience the best way to enhance the experience of all involved during this time is through supportive relationships and communication.

Each family is different and we have children heading off to different types of school settings. As the focus and philosophy of early childhood education and care is seeing families and children as unique, this is the approach we take when transitioning to any new experience.

Transition to school begins well before the year before school. We have mentioned this many times on subjects such as literacy, numeracy and social and emotional development as well. Each day of positive learning and exploration builds to a fluid and broad learning experience for life. However, leading up to

the time that children are going to actually move from one setting to another does require some careful planning.

At Elder St we choose to engage in a 10 week program that has been designed by educators in consultation with the children and families that focuses on becoming familiar with some common concepts, experiences and changes that happen when children begin primary school.

These experiences include:

- *developing autonomy and a sense of belonging at school

- *feeling proud of culture and identity

- *Extending existing knowledge, skills & understanding

We implement this within long term and short term planning by:

- *Including children's feelings about starting school and having many reflective discussions about what they are looking forward to or concerned with about going to school

- *Asking family's what they would like to be

included in the program to help support their child in the transition to school;

- *Making the 10 week program fun, empowering, agentic and diverse.

- *Making the transition to school a whole of community experience where we involve local schools for visits to spaces and classrooms, engaging in conversation and information sharing on children's interests and abilities and ensuring that every individual involved in the transition is heard and considered.

Kathryn Hopps (2019) suggests that to consider a transition to school successful we need to look for children displaying a sense of identity and feeling culturally safe (remembering culture encompasses the uniqueness of each child) and to demonstrate a sense of belonging and see connections between the school, home and community.

(ECA, RIPS)



Creative Collaboration: Thinking, promoting and making creative thinking visible in Early Childhood Education and Care across two countries.

We have been invited by the University of Newcastle and the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Italy) to participate in a research project that has been designed to provide a link between early childhood educators from Correggio, Italy and the Hunter region of Australia. The aim is to share and explore our understandings of children's creative thinking within learning environments.

Elder St ECHC has been partnered with a centre called 'Ghidoni Mandriolo' in Correggio, Italy. The core participation of the project is focused on monthly skype conversations between the Team Leader of our Preschool room (Paula) and the Team Leader of one of the Preschool rooms in the Italian centre. At these meetings the team leaders (supported by the Educational Leader and University researchers) will share and discuss examples of the children's creative thinking that they have seen occurring within their learning spaces. The core participants will then share what experiences, teaching, projects etc are happening at the other centre with the rest of the team on the topic of children's creative thinking.

What is creative thinking in children? This is an area that we want to know more about but feel we see happening quite a lot in our centre. There is a common misconception that children's creativity is about artistic expression. This is a limited view of a complex concept that we understand as being more about divergent and lateral thinking, problem solving and theory creation in play.

We hope to gain further insight into the projects and learning



experiences that take place in the Italian centres in Correggio and, as we have been advised by the researchers from Newcastle and Italy, the Italian centres will benefit from learning a great deal about our teaching practices also.



New goals for our Quality Improvement Plan

It has been almost a year since we were visited by the Department of Education for our Assessment and Rating visit. The final rating took a little longer (!) but the focus of ongoing quality improvement remains consistent and a focus for reflection. We wanted to share with our community the new goals we have set from feedback from families and the process of assessment.

***Neophyte program**—a continuity of professional learning program for any team member new to a position ie, newly qualified as a Diploma or Cert III.

***Working on examining quality areas 2, 3 and 7** much more comprehensively as these were our lower rating areas.

***Educational program**—some changes already taking place

That meets the needs of the families more regarding emailing learning reports with pictures included to families each learning round

***Educational program**—reflecting on language—changing the word 'learning goal' to 'learning focus' to communicate more clearly the philosophy of our teaching

***Strategic Inclusion**—working on establish-

ment of our Reconciliation Action Plan with the Narragunnaawalli site and expanding our RAP working party

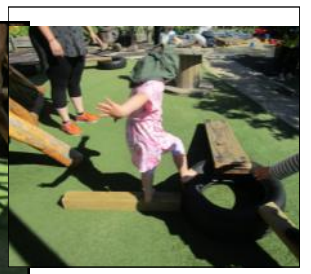
***Strategic inclusion**—each group closely reflecting on barriers to inclusive practices for all children and families.

Professional writing—for our team to continue focusing on professional writing in documentation.

POSSUMS.... Hello families! We have continued on with our sensory touch learning project all year and are almost ready to share our learning documentation of this experience. What we have collectively taken away from this project is the co-learning that has been happening. We have learnt a lot about how important our haptic sense is to us from a very early age and the connection to brain development that it provides. Most recently we have begun encouraging lots of independent skill building for the children that are transitioning to the 2-3 yrs room next year. This involves communication, verbal and signing, self help skills and also becoming comfortable in the Joey room space, which the children have been enjoying immensely. Music is a huge part of our day in the Possum room and engaging in music play benefits self regulation, language development and movement. We have been incorporating natural materials to explore a wider variety of musical sounds. We have had family members attending who played instruments for us which provides such a rich holistic experience for all the children. During times throughout the day when the children are asked to move from one place to another (ie, transitions of washing hands, getting ready for nappy change etc) we have been playing instrumental music as an indicator of time to transition and have been closely observing the children's responses. We have added new plants to our indoor learning space and also created with the children a new tyre herb garden which we plan to use in our cooking; Lauren, Carley, Bec and team

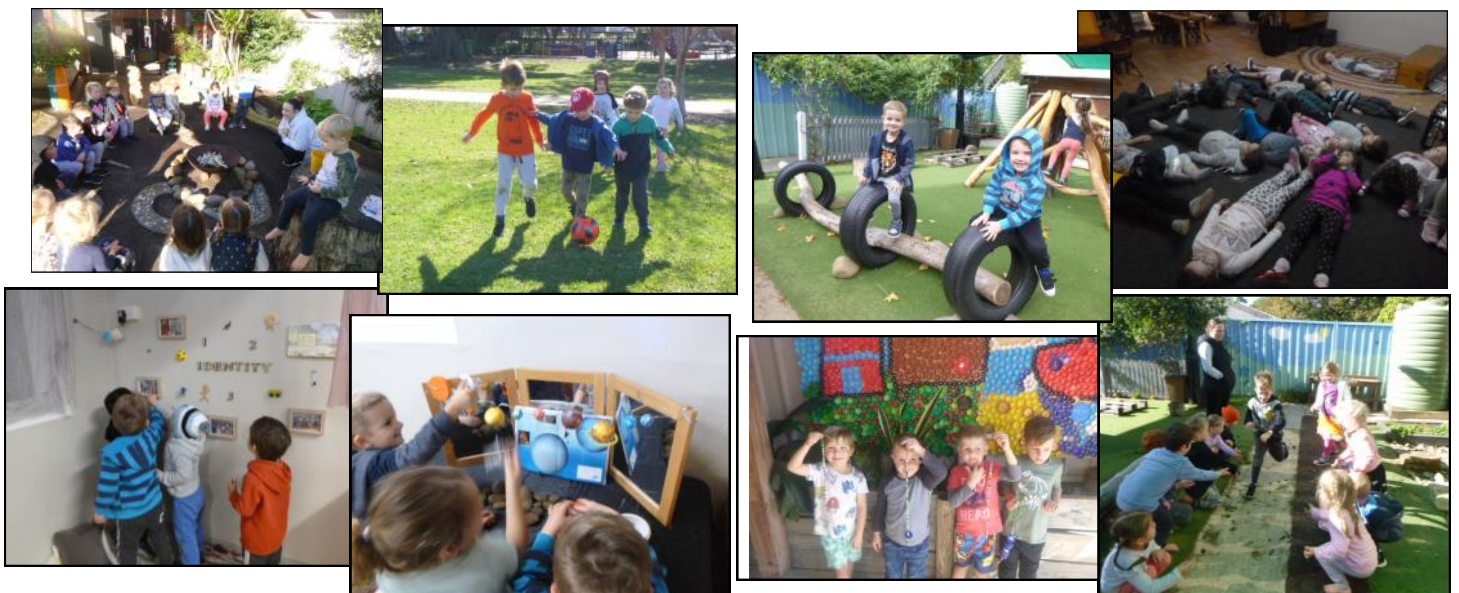


JOEYS.... Hi everyone— Since July we have been working on learning about concepts related to food and cooking. We can sometimes be fussy eaters at this age, so engaging in hands on experiences around food can make us feel more sure and confident in trying new foods. We have been involved in simple cooking experiences to slowly introduce the basic understandings of food chemistry and preparation. We have talked about ingredients used in recipes, the utensils that are best for different steps of the cooking and also assessing the risk of utensils for cutting and how to be safe in the process. We have scaffolded this small group learning by having our socio-dramatic kitchen area set up as an ongoing play lab with lots of real cooking utensils available for further practice and revising new skills learnt. Transitions are a key topic of this newsletter and the Joeys are also preparing for the transition to the Wallaby room in the new year. We have been adapting our daily routines to build our way up to a faster pace with more children. This has included making and packing away our rest time beds, scraping our bowls and putting them into the dirty dish tray, being responsible for our own belongings; drink bottles, jumpers, shoes and socks and artwork and dressing ourselves independently. We all deserve a big standing ovation for what we have achieved—we encourage you to continue with this skill building at home—we may need a little more time than usual, but we gain so much from doing things ourselves! Finally, we have been really moving our bodies in the last couple of months. Lots of fundamental movement experiences that help us to stop and think before doing (self regulation) and also to connect what we are saying or singing to what our brain needs our body to do in response—we do this through action songs and instructional movement games. We are so good at it and it really wakes our brains up and connects us with the world around us—helps us to find our body in the space and not fall over and bump into things so much! Thanks for reading—Kate, Roxi, Bec and the team.



PRESCHOOL WALLABIES.... Hi everyone...on reading the Wallaby notes for the newsletter I would have to use the words, deep, rich and meaningful to describe the learning that has been taking place from August to now. Musical concepts has been a large part of the play and learning over the last few months. This learning started with creating a song book of favourites, to having a musician (Abbey's neighbour Arthur) attend to play us some music on his flute and to then practicing playing some music and reading music notes ourselves. We have some brand new instruments in the classroom now and the children have absolutely loved engaging in this learning. We have explored beat, tempo, pitch and basic notation and included other ways of communicating song and music through sign language and braille. Other creative art experiences have included re-engaging with the purpose of our atelier area. An atelier is a creative workshop space to express ideas and creatively think and engage with the materials available. Earlier this year we worked on depicting landscapes with different types of paint mediums, since then we have re-set the atelier space with paint colours to begin the intentionally slow process of creative engagement again. Construction and block building has been very popular these last months with the children showing interest and skill in integrating designs. They are proud of their work and like to record their efforts by taking photos of their products. Book week and science week provided inspiration for our teaching as we noticed the power that literacy holds for children in their pre-early reading stages of becoming literate; and we also became closer to the children's knowledge and interest in the broader universe whilst learning about the Moon, Space and the job of Astronauts through many science experiments.

Socio-dramatic play has been a big focus and touchstone for many learning areas this year. This type of play connects so well to practicing becoming social, regulated, connected and a confident communicator. Becoming another character provides a type of safe space to explore and step out of our comfort zone into a story or imaginative scenario. Pretending is powerful! Whether we intentionally provide for this learning or not, it happens in both the indoor and outdoor learning spaces quite spontaneously. We have also promoted this learning during group times through acting out stories such as The Gruffalo, Handa's surprise and Mr McGee and the Big Bag of Bread. Finally, learning to write and make meaning with letters continues to be a burgeoning interest for almost the entire Wallaby group. Some of our children are so determined to learn and practice writing their name over and over again. Whilst we support this interest we understand that the best disposition for becoming literate is to follow and sustain inquiry, so that is what we do. It is a joyful experience when it comes from a little person's desire to learn more. We are so lucky to work with these children—they are inspiring! Thanks Paula, Donna, Bree, Bec and Jena.



Happy Birthdays to....

August

Theo turned 1, Willow turned 2, Lucinda, Harriet & Addison turned 3 and Ethan, Ellie and Evelyn R turned 5!

September

Patrick turned 1, Oscar, Harry and Chloe turned 3 and Sebastian and Sam M turned 4

October

Winifred turns 1, Louis and Grace turn 4 and William and Austin turn 5.

Happy birthday everyone!!!

Dates for your calendar...

Fri 25 Oct — Grandparents day 9.30am to 11.00am

Tues 19 Nov — What I did on my holidays show 9.30am

Wed 20 Nov — Photo Day—starting at 8am

Mon 25 Nov — Road Safety Show 10.00am

Fri 29 Nov — Family Xmas Celebration 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Thurs 12 Dec —Preschool Graduation Ceremony 4pm

Fri 20 Dec — Last day of operation for 2019

Tues 7 Jan — First day of operation for 2020

Grandparent's Day....

NSW Grandparents Day celebrates the contributions grandparents make to their families and communities. The campaign recognises the diversity of grandparent relationships across age groups, cultural backgrounds, and geographical locations.

Grandparents, grand-friends, kin, and those who take on the role of a grandparent in their family or community are celebrated for their contributions.

It aims to foster intergenerational learning and offers older people ongoing opportunities to participate in their local communities.

It's a day to spend time with an older loved one and connect across the generations.

We are hosting a morning of activities and morning tea for any Grandparents or special people in the children's lives on **Friday 25th October from 9.30am to 11.00am**. We have organised games and creative activities for all to enjoy.

Let us know if your family member can come along—we would love to have them visit with us.



REMINDERS from the Teachers...

- *Please remember to pack spare clothes for warm weather in your children's bags, especially spare undies and shorts/pants to cover any accidents that may occur.*
- *Please remember to bring a drink bottle with WATER only in it each day. Also take home and wash each day.*
- *Children need shoes that have a back on them for safe play—no thongs please.*
- *Don't forget to put sunscreen on each morning before you arrive or use our sunscreen on arrival.*
- *We have children with serious allergies, so please ensure no food is brought into the centre or kept in children's bags. Also please don't store medications or other potentially dangerous products in children's bags as they may be accessed by other children.*

PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING :)

Thanks for your support!