

Elder Street Pedagogical Post

December 2021



The last few months in the Possum room

CONNECTING TO COUNTRY- Pathway to deepening cultural understanding

From the beginning of the year the children have built a strong foundation as a cohort of active learners. The central feeling of 'together-ness' has aided the flow of our project and the capacity and depth of the children's engagement with it. At the completion of our earlier project, 'All the Possums', the children engaged in an new endeavour of exploring a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture. Examining what was important to the children, to us as a community and the nation's first people, our project 'Connecting to Country' was created. Educators have once again engaged in a slow pedagogy of listening. What this looked like was thoughtfully engaging with the children in their experiences, listening to their voices, following their ideas, developing theories and researching alongside the children. No part of the project was rushed and everything happened when the children were ready.

Throughout the project we took time to explore different aspects of our country, unpack what it means to the children and the significant role they can play alongside Indigenous culture. The children spent time engaging in these aspects of country through a variety of mediums, inclusive but not limited to art experiences, virtual tours, dreaming stories and music. The children were invested, engaged and intrigued by each of the aspects within the project and enjoyed spending time sharing about their learning journey we have taken together.

When reflecting on our project of 'Connecting to Country' that has taken place over the year, educators have observed a deep level of learning, discoveries and evolution of theories. In order to end this section of the project, we began to reflect on the children's creative interests and strengths in order to create something truly special. Educators were drawn to the children's ongoing interest in singing songs, whether it was together as a group or individually, there was always a song for the occasion. This occurred often and has been a large part of our program this year. Utilising this shared artistic interest, we decided to draw from all the aspects of the project to create our very own song.





CONNECTING TO COUNTRY- Pathway to deepening cultural understanding CONT...

The songs lyrics were inspired by the educators and children unpacked their understanding of animals we have learnt about, the land and oceans we have explored and indigenous dancing and music. This provided the data needed to create our own, amazing and unique song to accompany our project. Educators and children together engaged in a reflective process of reading through documentation, Awabakal language and the children's voices throughout the project to write the song collectively. This song is included on the following page.

As this project draws to a conclusion for the year, educators feel strongly that it is not the end of the children's learning journey of connecting to country. The journey of reconciliation is never over, rather we see the project as a chance to position how we welcome new children, new theories, and new perspectives within an ongoing learning journey and relationship with the Awabakal people and land. This means that the children that will still remain in the Possum room will have a foundation of learning to begin with and act as leaders within the learning with our new younger children. We are committed to ongoing education on reconciliation at Elder Street and hold deep respect for the people and land on which the children learn and play.

This learning journey began on Awabakal country. The country of our homes, our families, our community and our place of learning. It required the children to come 'together', a term the children embraced by their whole beings from the beginning of the year. This learning journey supported the children in creating a meaningful connection to the First Nations people through the dreaming, caring for the land, songs, dancing which embraced and embedded holistic connection and reconciliation.



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

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!



CHRISTMAS BAUBLES– Possum room style!

The Christmas spirit has filled the air in the Possum room throughout the beginning of December with the children eagerly assisting educators with putting on the Christmas lights in the room. The children spent time creating their own unique Christmas baubles filled with memories of the natural materials hanging in the Possum Room this year and the strawflowers that were grown from seed by the children in the playground. The children selected their own materials for their baubles that will be on display within the room until the last week in care before they are taken home to share on your wonderful trees.

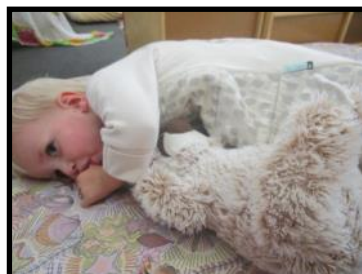


TRANSITIONING TO THE JOEY ROOM

Educators have been engaging in discussions with our families that have children moving down to the Joey room next year. Transitioning down to the Joey Room is an exciting time. Educators understand however that a big change can sometimes be daunting. In collaboration with our families, educators have been slowly transitioning the children's beds into the Possum room during rest time, as the Joeys sleep within the room. This is something that has happened gradually to ensure that each child feels safe and secure with the change. As each of the children embarked on this process they shared excitement. "That my bed" was often called from the lunch time table as children identified where they would be sleeping that day.

Throughout December the transitioning children in particular have been spending time engaging in the learning environment of the Joey room. This supports them to become familiar with the space, to understand where different things are within the room and become comfortable within the space before next year. During this time they have been developing relationships with both Lauren and Olivia who will be the main educators in the Joey room for 2022. Our Possums are lucky as many of the children have spent time in our room with Olivia as their teacher throughout the year and it is wonderful she can transition downstairs with the children.

Love
Paula, Bree,
Keely,
Jess & Casey
x



A learning enriched few months with the Joey's



EMERGING MELIPONISTS– Unpacking children's lines of inquiry

Towards the end of our gardening project; 'the process of looking deeper', the children displayed ongoing connection to learning about bees through shared group learning and individualized experiences.

Following the children's lines of inquiry, educators unpacked the common learning questions posed by the children; where bees come from; their purpose in the natural environment, and the interconnectedness between bees and humans. The Joey educators supported the children in developing their understanding of learning through and from nature rather than taking from it.

The O'Neil family shared some special images of their native hive they have in their backyard, drawing connections to Eliana's home within our project learning. The children were immediately captivated by the videos and images, encouraging their peers to join their observation. Educators and children worked collaboratively with Sarah and Owen to establish a beehive in the community garden to continue the children's learning, lines of inquiry and understanding about bees, their hives and the important role they play within the environment.

The process of sharing in-depth learning about Australian native stingless bees provided the children and educators with a conceptual understanding about the bees, and established learning about caring for and sustaining a hive of our own. Collaboration and engagement with our Elder Street community was a very important element of our research, accentuating the significance of learning alongside one another. Educators shared many interactions with Sarah and Owen to gain an insight into their native bee wisdom; sharing stories, Images and videos with the children.

To support our learning, educators added subject matter books to our library that focused specifically on Australian native stingless bees. This added resource provided a factual understanding about native bees and the opportunity for in-depth exploration into their history and the environmental impacts bees have on our natural world. The children demonstrated their understanding of the next phase of the project by linking natural world learning with the native bee project.



GARDEN UPDATE

After many weeks and a lot of work we are excited to finally begin to see the garden progressing. The garden has loved all the rain, really growing healthily. The children love seeing the changes that the plants are displaying. We have been taking specific note of the learning the children have obtained from the projects to guide us in knowing what processes or growth cycles the plants are in.

We have finally been able to harvest the fruits and vegetables from the garden. We have happily taste tested our produce and are loving having the results of a self-sufficient community garden. Our lettuce was enjoyed by the children in a salad that had been prepared for lunch after harvesting.

The 2022 Wallaby and Joey educators are looking forward to working together next year to care for and engage in further learning about the garden. Sharing their knowledge and produce with the other children.



SHARING OUR SMILES

With another unusual year of the children having to stay home during COVID we are very excited to have everyone's smiling faces back in the Joey room. After this time apart both the educators and children have enjoyed seeing their peers again. We have seen friendships rekindle and connections continue to flourish between the children.



TRANSITIONING TO THE WALLABY ROOM

Towards the end of the year educators value time spent preparing for the Joey's transition into the Wallaby room. The Joeys are lucky enough to have Ellie transitioning full time and Casey a few days a week into the room with them, providing familiar faces in this new environment. Over the last few months in particular educators have noticed the Joey children beginning to make connections with the returning Wallabies for 2022. This is something we continue to support as establishing these connections early will make for a successful transition next year. The Joey's have loved taking on new roles of independence over the last couple of weeks to prepare us for this transition. The Joeys demonstrate pride within them self as they share with educators "I'm going to be a 'Wobbily' next year."

Love,
Lauren, Ellie,
Olivia, Keely,
Casey and
Jess x



Learning and exploration in the Wallaby room from September - December



SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAM - AN AMAZING GROUP OF LITTLE LEARNERS

Over a 9 week period the older Wallaby children have taken part in a Transition to School program. Educators collaborated, discussed and implemented learning opportunities for the children to engage with that supported and encouraged a range of skills and built knowledge of concepts they may deal with when beginning school next year. Each week we delved deeper into a topic and explored this closely through small group learning. These topics included; Early literacy and numeracy, playground politics and bullying, building a strong sense of identity, speaking confidently, listening and responding, social and emotional resilience, problem solving, team work and critical thinking and social justice.

Literacy & numeracy learning - As always, the children were all very eager to engage in experiences that were centred around literacy and numeracy learning. Over the week we encouraged the children to copy, trace and identify letters and numbers, recognise print in all of it's forms throughout their environments and challenge their thinking and skills when it came to letters and numbers. "Children begin to understand key literacy and numeracy concepts and processes, such as the sounds of language, letter-sound relationships, concepts of print and the ways that texts are structured (DEEWR, 2009). The children applied themselves to these challenges and were eager to explore new ideas, learn new skills and share their knowledge with the group.

Social and emotional resilience — This week in our school transition programming was all about support the children's understanding of new experiences of the schools built and social environment and in turn build resilience. We wanted them to be aware of what will happen in school, to help them understand what they can do to help themselves and others when faced with challenges and experiences. We also wanted to build on the children's understanding of wellbeing by engaging in whole body connections through conversations about mind, body and spirit. The children responded amazingly to this learning throughout the week. They demonstrated a clear understanding of the meaning of resilience and were aware and confident of what they could do to help themselves and others. We shared quiet moments together concentrating on our breathing and regulating our bodies and were able to shut our minds off just for a few minutes a day to concentrate on our thinking.



Developing a strong sense of identity - The aim of this week was for the children to build an understanding of what a strong sense and identity is and how this can help them as learners. Educators wanted each child to create a vision of who they are and to identify their own strengths, qualities or features they love about themselves. The children were invited to spend unhurried time creating a self portrait. We encouraged the children to look at their reflection, add their features and share discussions about what they liked about themselves. Below are direct quotes from the children answering the question 'What do I like about me?'

"I like my eyes because I like their colours and they let me see" - Addison

"I love that my eye colour changes every day. They change to green and blue" - Chloe

"I like my eyebrows. I like my hair, it's blonde and some is starting to turn brown" - Cedar

"I like my nose because it can smell" - Axl

"I like my hair because it's in piggy tails" - Ruby

"I like my eyes so I can see. I like my hair. I like that it's gold" - Sid

"I like my skin because it feels soft and my eyes are good so I can see" - Maddison

"My favourite thing about my face is my smile because I always smile" - Lucy

"I love looking at my eyes. I can close them and dance. I also like that they are green" - Hamish

"I like my ears because they listen" - Kenzie

"My eyes are blue and they change to green, but only on the weekends" - Harriet

"I like my eyes because they are green" - Max. S

"That I like to play on my own sometimes. I like my hair because I can do pretty things with it" - Harper

"I like my ears. They are flexible that's why" - Max. C

"I like my heart because that's how I love people" - Ivy

"I like that I'm funny and I like that I'm good at dancing" - Lucinda

"I like my cheeks because they are nice and rosy and my lips because the sound just wouldn't come out if I didn't have lips" - Alba

"I like my eyes because I can see and I like that I'm fun" - Penelope



Social Justice - Our objective for this transition to school week is for the children to feel safe, secure, and supported when discussing social justice issues of difference and the concept of equality. Throughout the week we shared ideas that gently address difference, ability, race, and family structure. To support this learning we shared books with the children including "When Charley met Emma" a beautiful book about a girl in a wheelchair who shares her thoughts and feelings about being different. We also watched some videos about inspirational people such as Kurt Fernley, Turia Pitt and Nick Vujicic, showing the children that anything is possible with hard work and determination. The children responded so positively to these stories and were confident in sharing their thoughts and understandings within the group.



"The EYLF recognises that children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities. Identity is not fixed. It is shaped by experiences" (DEEWR, 2009)

Problem solving, team work and creative and critical thinking — This week is designed to test and foster the children's creative thinking solutions, persistence and perseverance in problem solving. We encouraged the children to view themselves as successful learners and to persist in problem solving thinking when faces with challenges. This was done through fun shared group learning experiences including three legged races, the knotted rope experience, small world setups and discussions that posed ethical dilemmas for the children to solve. It is amazing what there little brains are capable of when they slow down, think critically and communicate with those around them.



SELF EXPRESSION

Educators have been noticing the ways that the children are able to express themselves both individually and as part of the wider community at Elder Street. Self-expression is crucial for the development of a child's identity, self-confidence, and sense of belonging to the world. It opens children's minds and allows them to form thoughts and ideas that often surprise us. Self-expression helps children communicate their feelings in a positive way and encourages the development executive functions skills such as impulse control and self-regulation. Supporting children as individuals is crucial in the early years and throughout life. As educators, we document and extend on the children's ideas, dynamics, knowledge, interests, personalities and how all of these concepts combined influence the way they see and share a true expression of themselves. *Children learn about their worlds and communicate with others using many different languages (Malaguzzi, 1998).* We can see this coming to light in many areas of the children's play. *"Creativity is the ability to challenge, question and explore. It involves taking risks, playing with ideas, keeping an open mind and making connections" (Hans on Scotland. n.d pg. 169).* We have seen the children's confidence and authenticity as active social beings grow exponentially in such a huge range of ways. These have included; dance, dress ups and role play, physical movement, mark making and construction. We have witnessed amazing ideas, thought processes and shared learning through the children feeling comfortable and confident in expressing themselves within the Elder Street community.



Love Kate,
Donna, Olivia,
Luan, Casey and
Jess xxx

A huge Merry Christmas to all of
our wonderful families here at Elder
Street. We hope you have a lovely
Christmas filled with love,
laughter, presents and joy xxx

What is our planned approach when we write a child's learning profile?

A guide for parents about how educators plan for and write children's individual records.

As we are approaching that time in the year where we send out the final instalments of the children's individual learning records, we thought it would be helpful to explain the process of how these are informed and written by our educators.

As you can imagine from the detail provided in the profiles, it is quite a lengthy and collaborative process between all stakeholders; parents, educators and children alike, to support the practice of selecting learning focuses and then formulating learning objectives and teaching strategies to document the children's achievements.

Why do we seek a learning focus for each child?

At Elder Street our educational program remains an ongoing process of professional learning, methodology and discovery as we design and re-design a contextual and unique style of documenting the children's learning. We are regulated under the National Law to provide an educational program and clearly document the children's learning overtime. We are also highly committed educators who thoroughly understand and advocate the importance of high quality learning opportunities for children in their first five years.

Over the years our educational program has evolved and changed as we have grown as educators and an education and care facility and community of learners. Originally when this format of individual learning records was introduced the learning focuses were referred to as goals. Upon professional reflection and feedback from families we came to understand that a goal could be viewed as a narrow and end product focused approach that can imply we are aiming to fix deficit in a child by testing them to achieve a goal within a certain timeframe. After this reflection we changed the language of the records to communicate a 'learning focus' which is a more interest based approach that aligns with our theoretical and philosophical beliefs about how children learn best.

How are children's learning focus chosen?

This is a collaborative effort involving educators and families. We send an email asking families what learning they would like us to focus on with their children. Educators discuss with the children or observe the children's interests and closely follow lines of inquiry to formulate ideas about what they are interested to explore and know more about. Educators within each of the child's room also discuss the learning focus for each of the children to explore over the coming months.

Where do the observations come from?

Observations are not from one source or person. Educators work collaboratively with the whole team to observe, analyse and plan experiences which support, facilitate and challenge the children's focus of learning. The experiences that are written about within the learning profiles are a collection of spontaneous interactions, planned experiences, onlooker observations and conversation with the children.

How do the daybooks support the learning profiles?

Often the experiences documented within a children's learning record can be found within the daybook. Educators use the daybook slides like a sticky note which combines photos and written documentation taken on the day within the record. Later during scheduled programming time educators extend and analyse these documented observations and incorporate them into the individual learning records.

When are the individual learning profiles written?

Each of the focus children educators and teachers are allocated between 1-4 hours a week of release from face to face teaching to complete these profiles. During this time educators undertake further research into learning topics, plan experiences and document and analyse the children's learning. During the final few weeks of the learning round educators spend extra time completing and editing these records. At Elder Street our staffing arrangements are designed to accommodate this time off the floor and ensure the children's continuity of care is uninterrupted by providing them with educators to replace programming teachers, that they are familiar with and knows them and their routines well.

We hope this support our families in understanding further how our individual records are written. With a little more insight, hopefully you will have an easier time contributing to the individual records as this can sometimes be hard when prompted to do so. We hope you enjoy spending time reading these when they come out in the next few days. Have a happy and safe Christmas from all of us here at Elder Street. See you Next Year! xx