



OUR PROGRAM

50 Reasons to Smile

Above all else, the most important thing we do as educators is to model and encourage positive interactions and respect and care for our fellow human beings. If we want to live in a peaceful, productive society, we need people in it who are respectful, considerate and confident at building strong relationships with others.

As part of promoting positive social skills and developing an attitude of kindness and empathy, the educators instigated the "50 Reasons to Smile" chart. Each time an educator or another child noticed someone displaying care and kindness, a card was placed on the chart with the aim of reaching 50. When the children achieved this goal- they received a surprise... a yummy treat and a face-painting experience from Bec. Well done do our beautiful pre-schoolers- magnificent citizens of the future!



Indigenous Education

Naidoc Week provided another opportunity to discuss the contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made to our society. We looked at the work of some Aboriginal artists, shared some traditional Aboriginal legends and enjoyed some music and dance related to this interest area. The children particularly enjoyed engaging with stick painting, creating their own Rainbow Snakes.





Liv recently brought in a wonderful book to share with the children called "From Little Things, Big Things Grow". It is based on the remarkable song written by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody and is illustrated by children from Gurindgi country. It tells the story of the Gurindgi strike and the Indigenous Australian struggle for land rights and reconciliation.



National Tree Day

We are blessed at Balamara to have a playground full of beautiful trees. In the lead up to and following National Tree Day we provided many experiences to deepen the children's appreciation of the beauty and importance of trees to our natural environment. We told and read stories about trees as habitat for birds, insects and animals and discussed the impact of our actions on the environment. We closely observed the trees in our playground, drawing them, measuring them with chain links and of course giving them a big hug!



Creative Pursuits...

3D Collage

We have been promoting the use of recyclable materials for the children's art projects. Providing these materials allows the children to create freely with no right or wrong outcome. Working with 3D objects requires children to plan and persist with their work and requires problem-solving skills as they overcome design issues! It has been satisfying to see them use tape, glue and paint to attach different materials and make their ideas come to life.



Clay

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Literacy and Numeracy In The Environment

Who needs commercial materials when we have our own clever pre-schoolers? The children have been thoroughly enjoying making their own alphabet posters by adding meaningful examples of their own to each letter card including the names of friends and family members as well as familiar items starting with that letter.



Our mathematical explorations continue as the children find numerals they recognise, then match the correct number of small squares. As the children master this they will learn to count with accuracy and ease and their confidence will grow as they are exposed to increasingly complicated mathematical concepts.



Integrated Learning In The Balamara Shop

Setting up social play environments like our Balamara Shop provides the children with an opportunity to engage in natural play which consolidates their learning in multiple areas. There are endless opportunities for them to develop higher level thinking skills as they engage in meaningful literacy and numeracy experiences, making signs, discussing prices and engaging in social scripts as the role-play everyday scenarios.



Music, Movement and Dance

We use a lot of music and dance in our educational program as it allows children, particularly those children for whom English is a new language, to participate in group activities in a fun and non-threatening way. Children learn so much from music and dance. As well as experiencing the cultural richness of differing music styles, they need to follow instructions, use visual and auditory cues and work as part of a group. When they “keep the beat” and maintain the “rhythm”, they are learning, in a kinaesthetic way, the mathematical notions of time, order, pattern and predictability. Recent dances and songs the children have learned include “The Snake”, “Wombat Wobble” and “The Train”. We have recently included some wonderful dramatic movement stories by Tanya Batt. These are a wonderful resource and the children are always enthusiastic to take part. “The Magic Playdough”, “The Sky” and “The Gingerbread Man” are some of the children’s favourite pieces.



Scientific Inquiry Light and Shadow

Sometimes it is the spontaneous moments which provoke high level learning. When we placed the coloured window blocks outdoors one morning, we hadn’t considered the effect of the sun...Wow! The children discovered the colourful shadows and with some encouragement from the educator, began to copy them onto paper. Rebecca helped the children to understand what was happening and the children were delighted as their constructions projected their colour onto the paper.



Our new light table has been received with a great deal of interest and excitement. The children have used various materials to create patterns, lines and shapes and to explore the effect that light has on different objects. Light tables are a wonderful tool for open play, academic learning, scientific discovery and sensory integration. Some of the questions we ask are; How do objects change when placed on the light box? Can you change the colour of an object by placing another one on top? Are there different shades of colour- why? So many possibilities for learning!

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Scientific Inquiry Windy Weather

*Like a leaf or feather
In the windy, windy weather
We will whirl about, and twirl about
And all fall down together!*

During a recent windy day, we went outside to see the effect of the wind in action. We blew bubbles and watched as the wind whisked them away- flying upwards instead of towards the ground. The children tried to catch them, but the wind was too strong and even jumping to grab them was tricky.

We continued experimenting with lightweight fabrics. The children had races with the fabrics streaming out behind them as they ran. They tried to run as fast as they could to make the fabrics move faster.



CONNECTING WITH OUR FAMILIES

Family Picnic and Reptile Show

We had a great turn out for our Family Picnic. The wild, windy weather meant we had to stay inside, however it was easier to battle the indoor acoustics rather than endure the cold, windy weather! Thank you to all the families who brought along some delicious treats to share.

It was terrific to witness some of our preschoolers overcome their nervousness to interact with the reptiles. It was also great to learn some interesting new things including that blue-tongued lizards can make their tail drop off if they are attacked and then grow back a new one, and the fact that turtles breathe through their bottoms!



CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Tree Day

As part of the National Tree Day initiative, Hornsby Council's community nursery donated some indigenous plants to our preschool. Recent research from Planet Ark has found that time spent in nature helps make people happier, healthier and calmer. With people spending more and more time tethered to screens and devices, there's never been a greater need to add nature to our lives.

The report titled *Adding Trees - A Prescription for Health, Happiness and Fulfilment*, found:

- Just 10 minutes' relaxing outside is enough to significantly reduce blood pressure.
- Time in nature reduces a person's chance of developing a range of diseases, including diabetes by 43%, cardiovascular disease and stroke by 37% and depression by 25%.
- Nature induces positive feelings through a number of physiological mechanisms, including activating the brain's dopamine reward system.
- Students who take part in outdoor learning programs perform better in reading, writing, maths and science, with 77% of teachers reporting student improvement in standardised tests.
- A strong connection to nature makes people more likely to feel passionate about relationships with their friends and family.

Please see: <http://treeday.planetark.org/research>

Out and About in Waitara



The pre-schoolers have been completely engaged in the Balamara Shop experience so we decided to take this learning a little further.

The children had a fantastic time when they went on an excursion to explore our local shopping centre. Their mission was to purchase the items from their shopping list so they can bake chocolate brownies for someone special in their family. On the way to the supermarket, they visited the florist, the green grocer, checked out the take away restaurant, the hair salon and the Lifeline Op Shop. All of the shop-keepers were very welcoming and friendly with the children and it was a wonderful opportunity to build connections with our local community. Huge thanks to Eric's mummy, Lin and Seona's mummy, Yuki who accompanied us on the excursions.

Hannah and Charli

Hannah brought her baby girl Charli to meet the preschool children! The children were so happy to see her and were very careful with her cute little baby. Hannah told them all about the new member of her family including clothes she needs to wear, the nappy she has and the food she likes- milk! Hannah told the children that Charli eats 6 times during the day and twice during the night!

We noticed how small Charli was and we compared her tiny foot to Hannah's larger one. We used little blocks to trace around her outline and we measured Charli using little blocks. We found out that she was 9 blocks long! We asked Hannah to bring Charli back in a few months, so we can measure Charli again and see how many blocks she grown.



More Alphabet Posters...

