

The Community Place Newsletter

May 2016

Mother's Day

I hope all our mums enjoyed Mother's Day. We had a great time when some of our mums and special people were able to join us for lunch. I hope you liked the little gift your child made for you.

New Resources

With the Term 2 Fund-Raising Levy, I have purchased a Light Panel and accessories to go with this (coloured translucent shapes and counters, 3D shapes and colour 'paddles'). I also purchased magnetic Polydron® – magnetic rectangles, triangles and pentagons that join to make 3D shapes (even dodecahedrons!).

These have all been enthusiastically used by the children to explore colour, shape, patterns and magnetism. Further engagement with these resources can facilitate children's learning about light, design, geometry, physics and encourage investigation and exploration.



Administration Support

The centre has recently purchased software to support a more integrated and professional approach to data collection. Kidsoft® is used by many centres to ensure their administration satisfies the demands of all users and government requirements.

Recently, to ensure the kindergarten's administration is kept up-to-date and to required standards, Ms Michele Yamada has been employed for two hours each Wednesday as our administration assistant.

Welcome, Michele!

Open Day

On **Saturday 11 June**, the kindergarten will be having an Open Morning from 10:00am – 12:00noon to showcase our centre to prospective families.

2017 will be a very exciting year for the kindergarten. We will see it moving into its new building and at last being able to settle into a permanent home.

Postcards

We have had postcards with the kindergarten's details on it. To inform local families about the kindergarten and our Open Day, we are asking if each family could take a bundle of postcards and put them in letterboxes around them.

Morning Tea/Lunch

With the beautiful weather now, we are having picnic morning teas outside. Please ensure that your child's **morning tea is in a named separate container and placed in the Morning Tea Box at the bottom of the fridge.**

Please also remember that food must be removed from **INSULATED** bags before being placed in the fridge to ensure that the food stays at a safe temperature.

Attached is C&K's Food and Beverage Policy.

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Encouraging Independence

A major goal here is to develop the skills and attitudes children will need for a successful start at school (and in life). One of these is independence. To support children to become responsible for their own belongings and tasks, please encourage your child to do all his/her own morning tasks.

This can start with packing the bag at home. The child then starts to assume responsibility for the lunch box, water bottle, etc. from the beginning of the day. Next year, children will have many more items to care for: iPad, pencil case (and contents), reading book, library book, writing book, hat, communication folder, morning tea, lunch, water bottle, swimming gear, track top and so on. By supporting children to take responsibility for their own items and jobs now, this can help your child next year not to be always losing items and 'getting into trouble' for not doing/ remembering/ having things.

Also, set your child up for success. Ensure the containers you provide and the contents are ones he/she can easily open. At school, children often have only about 10 minutes to eat. Think about the food you provide and how long it will take to open, eat and how much mess is made. Try making a 'usual' morning tea and lunch at home and observe how your child manages it – without your help.

Questions to consider:

1. Can my child easily open/close the container? (*Some children don't eat at school because 'I couldn't open my lunch box.' Also, lots of containers = lots of tops and bottoms or an understanding of geometry to fit everything back into the big container*)
2. Can my child easily open the packaging/ contents inside? (*Packaged food, whole oranges or mandarins and food tightly wrapped in plastic or in sealed bags can be difficult for small fingers to open. Consider putting a cut in the top of a banana for easy peeling.*)
3. How long does it take to eat? (*A whole carrot will take much longer than apple slices.*)
4. How much mess is made? (*If juicy or sticky food is given, supply napkins for wiping sticky faces/fingers.*)
5. Is cutlery needed? (*Provide this if required, but make it easily accessible.*)
6. Can my child open/close the water bottle? (*Ensure this is clearly identifiable – a name on/near the bottom will not stop another child with the same water bottle using your child's.*)



The Rubbish-free Lunch Box

To encourage children to be aware of reducing waste, consider packing a 'rubbish-free' lunch box.

Children benefit in that

- they learn they can have a positive or negative impact on their world today and in the future
- packaged and processed foods use energy to make and dispose of
- many children have difficulty opening packaged foods
- research shows that freshly prepared food is generally more nutritious and healthier in the short- and long-term than processed foods.

The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children in the UK is tracking the long-term health and wellbeing of around 14,000 children. In 2011, it reported that a predominantly processed food diet at the age of three is directly associated with a lower IQ at the age of eight and a half.¹

If you have any ideas for healthy, environmentally friendly lunch box contents, please email these so they can be shared.

Facebook



Did you know that the kindergarten has a Facebook page? Check out <https://www.facebook.com/woolooowinkindy/> for our activities and excitements.

Twitter



For those wanting to keep updated with early childhood news, you may want to follow these accounts:

[Queensland DET @QLDDET](#)

[EarlyChildhood Aust @EarlyChildAust](#)
[Raising Children @RCN_AUS](#)
[ACECQA @ACECQA](#)

[Everyone Benefits @earlyedbenefits](#)

[CCCH @CCCH_AU](#)

[NAEYC @NAEYC](#)

[ASTA @ASTA_online](#)

[Teaching STEM @TeachingSTEM](#)

Survey Results

Many thanks to those parents who responded to the survey in the last newsletter.

It was encouraging to have so much supportive and positive feedback.

One parent was concerned about hand washing. This occurs regularly throughout the day for both parents and educators. Parents are asked to encourage their children to wash their hands on arrival. As a group, children wash their hands after outdoor play/before morning tea; before lunch and after packing up their bags in the afternoons. Educators wash their hands when necessary throughout the day.

Some parents were seeking more information about community resources. I am still becoming familiar with what programs and professionals are available in this community. If parents want to share any community resources, please do so. Please remember that The Community Place offer parents a range of programs.

Clothing and Jewellery Alert



We have been advised by the Department of Education and Training that a serious accident has occurred in a centre when a cord from a child's hat became caught in equipment. Centres have been reminded to be vigilant to reduce the risk of choking or strangulation from children's clothing or jewellery.

We will remove cords from children's hats and request that children leave toy jewellery at home.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

This is always on display (in the bookshelf by the sign-in book) for parents to access and comment on.

Philosophy

Please find attached the centre's Philosophy Statement. We are required to review this annually and ask for comments and suggestions.

Policy Review

C&K reviews its policies and seeks feedback from all participants regarding this process. Parents are invited to participate. A letter is attached for parents.

Lock Down

This week we have had a practice for a 'lock-down'. Children practiced going into the office with teachers in the event of a threat being outside the centre. What would constitute a 'threat'? Should a person make threats at or near the kindergarten, we would go into 'lock down'. If there were a natural disaster or other emergency, gathering the children together may also be necessary.

Hopefully, none of these situations will happen, but we are required to practice them so children are familiar with the procedure if it were implemented.

Connecting with Nature in the City



Increasingly, our children are spending more time indoors. The reasons for this are many. Society's attitudes to allowing children to roam the neighbourhood until sunset belong to an era that is long gone. Responsible parenting is now equated with observing children at all times. Competing demands on time often mean that parents can't spend hours outdoors every afternoon or bush walking on weekends.

The type of outdoor play is changing also. With greater urbanisation and carefully planned small backyards (or no backyards), children spend more time in planned playgrounds or outdoor spaces.

In kindergartens, the spectre of litigation for negligence remains a motivating force for the type of play and equipment used. Risk assessment forms are required for activities such as growing tomatoes, water play, using scissors, climbing trees and keeping guinea pigs.

There are good reasons for these: some, indeed, are law. However, there is also evidence that by removing children from the challenges and connection with their natural environment, we are creating significant health and social problems and impairing the development of key thinking and emotional skills.

In 2012, ABC Radio National *The Health Report* looked at how humans adapt to rapid economic, social and environmental changes and their impacts on our health (<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/healthreport/the-global-body---part-one3a-rural-developing-world-28sri-lan/3876290>).

More specifically, in a population based case-control study carried out in Perth, Western Australia in 2001², results confirmed the role of susceptibility factors in asthma and show that indoor environmental factors contribute as risk factors for asthma in children's early years.

Macquarie University's Helen Little and Shirley Wyver examined the status of outdoor play in urbanised societies. They concluded that

Decreased spaces for physical play combined with changing attitudes towards the risks involved in some physical activities has brought about changes in the quality of children's outdoor play experiences. Practitioners and researchers from diverse disciplines

are beginning to recognise the negative impact such changes are having for children's optimal growth and development. ... failure to provide children with stimulating and challenging experiences through which they can engage in positive risk-taking exposes them to different risks that compromise their health and development. ³

In Scandinavia, Nature Schools started in the 1950s with the aim of children to learn life skills through engagement with the outdoor environment. The model has spread to other countries, many of which have climates less conducive to outdoor pursuits than ours, but the results speak for themselves.

In Scotland, Forest Kindergartens have been established and a government report concluded that *Research with early years and primary children and their teachers in Forest Kindergarten/School settings, compared to traditional settings, is beginning to gather evidence of significant benefits, including:*

- **Motivation and concentration** – more imaginative and independent play, greater ability to focus on a task and concentrate for extended periods of time
- **Language and communication** – better listening skills and more sophisticated conversations stimulated by firsthand experience and active play
- **Outdoor activity supporting health and wellbeing, including physical skills** – less absences, greater stamina and fine motor skills; improved balance and co-ordination
- **Knowledge and understanding** – early understanding, appreciation and respect for their natural surroundings
- **Confidence and self-esteem** – from being able to demonstrate independence and achieve manageable tasks; able to overcome concerns being outdoors in almost all weathers, all year round
- **Social skills** – better awareness of self and others, and consequences of actions on others; able to share tools and tasks with others, and take part in co-operative play⁴

Children don't need to be drilled with numbers, letters and words to do well in school - and life. They need to look, feel, compare, assess, interpret, wonder, seek further knowledge, recall past information, listen to the wind, the rain and the birds, collaborate, challenge themselves and understand their interactions and relationship with their outdoor environment and others. How can we challenge and provide acceptable risk-taking in a world that seems increasingly hostile to outdoor exploration and engagement?

Plan to spend time outdoors. Involve them with this process about where they'd like to go or what they'd like to do. Have a big box with items for outdoor play: pieces of material, old saucepans, buckets, balls, cylinders, magnifying glass, bug catcher, string, paper and wood can all be used in limitless ways. Even the box can be used! Ideas can also be found

at http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/outdoor_play.html

At kindergarten, we facilitate children's connection and engagement with the surrounding environment by comparing leaves, seeds and bark; learning the names of trees; listening to identify whether the sound is a rainbow lorikeet, magpie, crow or cockatoo; watching the clouds; predicting the weather and studying insects.

There is also the element of challenging themselves when jumping off the platform, climbing over a trestle, crawling under the bridge, throwing balls in the hoop, running fast, rolling down the hill and balancing across a beam.

Then there are the times when social skills are required: learning strategies for sharing, joining play, sharing thoughts, waiting for a turn, listening to others' ideas, helping others and seeking help.

When the cooler weather arrives, we will have outdoor play after morning tea when the playground is drier and warmer.

I am very aware that some of our families are from cultures where outdoor play is not embraced. Some children have never walked on grass in their bare feet, been to the beach or climbed above the ground. I welcome discussion with all parents about our outdoor program and environment and invite parents to observe our outdoor play, contribute ideas and to ask questions.

Avon Longitudinal Study

The study mentioned earlier has information on a wide range of educational, behavioural, environmental and genetic influences on children's development. Recent findings have covered educational outcomes of babies born between 32 -36 weeks gestation (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac/news/2011/20.html>), eczema (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac/news/2011/21.html>), and children's vitamin D intake and depression (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/alspac/news/2012/42.html>).

Parent Roster

Don't forget that you are most welcome to come on roster. It's OK if you only have an hour or so. Just put your name down on the list beside the sign-in book, bring your hat and some food – and enjoy some time with your child.

Alison Mackenzie
Director
May 2016