

GEKA NEWS

**GEKA Vision: To be the leading provider of innovative, professional, inclusive
Early Years Education that fosters a lifelong love of learning.**



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When my child was four years old, she had a fascination with the book, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt.' I think I read it to her at least a hundred times, and I became an expert at making the sounds of the squelching mud, the swishy swashy grass, the hooo wooo of the snow storm. Every time we reached the point of seeing the bear, she would still show surprise. Whilst I felt like a fish in a fish bowl at times as we read the book together, I can look back now and see how important that time was for her early literacy and encouraging its development. We would talk about the pictures, make the sounds together, talk about how the characters in the book might be feeling, act out the story in our lounge room. It's a time that I now look back on fondly.

Literacy is about so much more than reading and writing. It's also about expression, understanding, empathy, imagination and confidence. The development of these skills comes from such a wide variety of resources other than books. I am saddened when I go out for dinner and see children at the table beside me watching an iPad whilst the adults are on their phone. Children learn literacy skills through observing and taking part in conversation. By expressing how they feel and what they see around them. I am further saddened when I see children in prams watching a movie whilst their parent or care giver does the shopping. The amount of stimuli at the local supermarket can make for great conversation, and encouraging early literacy skills. However, our reliance on electronic devices can be a source of sanity for us all at times! But it can also be an opportunity for us to encourage early literacy. We can pose questions, we can ask our children to describe what they are watching, how they are feeling, identify shapes and sounds, imagine themselves as a character in a movie. There are always opportunities for growth at this impressionable age.

At GEKA, we work with the children through their many and varied activities to develop their early literacy skills. Whilst this may take place in the book corner, or when an educator reads to the children during mat time, it also occurs when they catch a train to the Botanical Gardens, or when they expressively tell a story about their weekend. I was always sceptical when I was told by educators that children learn through play. My time at GEKA has expanded the way I think about how our children learn. I would take this notion one step further though.....they learn through experience. Play is one of the many experiences that our children are fortunate enough to participate in. However as I reflect, they also learn through winning, through losing, through successes, through challenges, through structured learning, through play based experiences – the list is endless. So if you ever have a fish bowl moment like I had many, many times, remember that the impact you are having on your child's early literacy is far greater than you can ever imagine. That's the amazing thing about these little people, they always take something new from the opportunities we are able to give them.

All GEKA Kindergartens use the communication app FlexiBuzz to share information with families.

Download the FlexiBuzz app
now to receive up to date information on current events across all of our services.



Term Three Key Dates

Term three starts:
Monday 16 July

Term three ends:
Friday 21 September

Being welcomed into the GEKA Family

By Nicole Rose, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Centre Road Kindergarten

We are through one term into our GEKA transition. It has been a great opportunity for our creative team to work together to explore the best use of every space in the kindergarten to question and reflect on why things are done this way. It has challenged us to think of the best use of space, while meeting the needs of our kindergarten community.

Changes to the entry and physical layout of the room has allowed our families to have open access and be welcomed into the service, to be part of the active program every day. Our children and families have positively embraced the change and are enjoying the areas of discovery ready to be explored each day with a new boundless excitement.

We have enjoyed attending the ongoing Professional Development on literacy development in children. The “Lets Chat” series with GEKA, has given us an opportunity to take on the knowledge to look at different ways we engage in literacy in everyday practice with children. We are really focusing on identifying words in a story when we are reading to children and taking the time to discuss their meaning in the context of the story.



Literacy Skills in a Emergent Play Based Curriculum

By Claire McIver, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Caulfield South Kindergarten

In almost every experience at kindergarten, there is an opportunity for literacy learning, although in some cases the learning may not appear obvious or visible. Children vary in the amount of practice and repetition they need to master particular skills; and there is a wide scope for what is considered ‘normal development’. Therefore, assessment and understanding of where each child’s knowledge and skills are is a key initial step when developing a program that supports literacy learning.



Pre-writing skills refer to the development of the small muscles in the hands and forearm and is an important prerequisite for being able to have a correct pencil grip and write. Sensory experiences such as play dough and clay support the development of these important skills, as well as activities that require children to manipulate small objects, for example small collage objects e.g. coloured toothpicks, stickers, and threading.

Pre-reading skills can be supported through exploring story structure through role play, listening to stories and engaging in conversations about the story to support comprehension, discussing book conventions, authorship of stories, retelling stories and sequencing. We also ensure that we are providing a print rich environment, to support children in developing skills in recognising letters and numbers and an understanding that print conveys meaning.

The most important point is for all these activities in the program is that they need to be fun, and children need to feel unhurried in developing these important skills. Please share with your teachers any suggestions and ideas for the program you may have, and don’t hesitate to speak with the teachers if you have any concerns about your child and their learning at the kindergarten.

LETS CHAT!

By Jo Elmer, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten

During our team meeting in term three, the educational team reflected on the first of four PD's entitled 'Lets Chat'. Each member took part in creating an action plan for reading a book with children in small groups. As a team we worked through the process of commenting on a page, waiting and then asking an open ended question that had relevance to the comment and story. Exploring this as a team gave us all an opportunity to provide feedback to each other and expand our knowledge of assisting children within our groups who struggle with expressing themselves in a large group story time format. This could not have come at a better time for us educators in Blue Group because we had recently registered our kindergarten for the Premiers reading challenge. Sarah downloaded the list and selected forty books from our kindergarten library. During the next four weeks we all focused on setting aside some time in the session to gather a small group of children together to enjoy participating in a story. Following the Lets Chat book reading plan made it easy for the children to share their ideas and gave them confidence to go beyond the text and delve into their own imaginations and reveal their thoughts. This also improved the children's self-esteem and when involved in a larger group format we noticed they were able to contribute along with the others. These small group activities have had many benefits for our children. During the term educators have observed improvements in growth development because the children have had a greater opportunity to further develop their social skills using language to express their thoughts and needs.



Literacy as a 'safe space' to settle.

By Marion Saavedra, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Orrong Rd Kindergarten

At GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten, each room has a homely, warm and inviting reading area, with a sofa, cushions, books on a shelf, as well as in a basket, for more portable reading as well as puppets. Reading with an individual child or a small group is a lovely, familiar way to begin the Kinder day, and often helps children with the transition of saying goodbye to their loved ones, feeling safe, comfortable and confident to tackle the rest of the day.

All groups are putting into practice the strategies learnt at the Let's Chat sessions, by :

- reading in small groups,
- always keeping familiar and favourite books accessible, while introducing some new ones for variety and interest
- using comments and questions as they read
- asking the children to finish the last rhyming word of each page
- being patient and giving children time to respond
- using a new word from the story at regular intervals throughout the day.

Literacy is used in so many various ways throughout our everyday happenings at GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten and the implementation of the strategies obtained from the Let's chat sessions has helped strengthen the love of literacy within our service.

Extending Literacy in a Play Based Environment

By Lisa Northover, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten

Over the past few weeks we have noticed a strong interest in print, writing, story-telling and word and letter recognition from a number of the children. This week we set up an open ended literacy station to inspire children to further extend on this however noticed that these experiences were developing in a number of spaces in the kindergarten setting.

As well as copying the print that is already available to the children in the room, children are also using information that is meaningful to them and expressing this through print, drawing, and language. Educators have been scribing stories for children, writing words/names for them in the correct format i.e.; Capital letters at the beginning and lowercase for the other letters, and offering them visual cues so children are able to seek help with their writing independently.

Through these experiences children are;

- Developing literacy skills in a meaningful way using drawing and words to convey a message
- Achieving a project from start to finish and feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment when complete and displayed
- Exploring open ended experiences allowing them to engage in a literacy based activity that is meaningful
- Expressing prior knowledge or imagination and turning it into a story of interest that Teachers can then scribed for the children.
- Developing confidence in attempting to write new words (scribed by teacher for them to copy.)
- Developing their sense of identity, belonging and confidence by sharing information about the people that are important in their lives i.e.; friends and family members

Extending the learning;

- Encourage children to share their stories at half group/small groups times
- Remind children to take charge of their own learning when developing, writing words, sentences and stories by utilising the print available to them within the room
- Use dramatic arts during small group times for children to role play familiar stories. Further extend by encouraging children to create their own performances
- Extend on discussions during small group reading experiences
- Encourage art projects, story pictures, story books, list writing etc. to develop over the course of the term i.e.; children can revisit each session.



What really is literacy?

By Michelle Ball, Early Childhood Teacher, GEAK Murrumbreena Kindergarten

Although literacy is often thought of as reading and writing, its definition is in actual fact far broader than this. The Early Years Learning Framework explains that literacy develops from birth as humans strive to express feelings, exchange thoughts and connect with others through gestures, sounds and language ('Becoming literate', EYLFPLP e-Newsletter No.18 2011)). Literacy not only refers to story-telling and reading books, but includes non-verbal aspects such as music, movement, drama and visual arts.

"Literacy learning does not 'begin at school'; it begins at birth. Caring families foster and applaud children's early achievements and early childhood educators complement and enhance this important learning which underpins school and life success" ('Becoming literate', EYLFPLP e-Newsletter No.18 2011).

At kindergarten, children are exposed to a wide variety of literacy experiences with development being both obvious and subtle. The commencement of a weekly library experience in the four year old groups encourages children to develop a love of reading and introduces them to the idea of borrowing books.

Show and Tell is another example of how literacy is experienced at kindergarten, with children having an opportunity to retell a story with props (e.g. a photo from a holiday, something they have made at home) and use their language skills to convey the story effectively. Children in the audience then practise their listening and comprehension, both of which are also characteristic of literacy development in children.

Recently we have been exploring feelings and emotions by reading books specifically focused on these topics (for example, worried, scared and excited). We've also brainstormed other names to refer to these emotions (e.g. afraid for scared, troubled for worried, enthusiastic for excited). The children and teachers have then begun to incorporate these words in conversations throughout the day to expand the children's vocabulary.

How can you also do this at home? Can you have a new 'word of the week' to introduce your child to?

Did you know?

Telephone and Online Support Helps More Victorian Families

More funding is helping parents and carers access vital free parenting support when they're unable to attend support services in person. Minister for Early Childhood Education Jenny Mikakos has announced funding of \$223,000 to extend **Gateway Health to deliver its services for another 12 months**, meaning it will continue until July 2019. **Parents and carers complete a six to 10-week program provided either over the phone or online supported by an accredited parenting support worker. The program helps build skills and confidence to respond positively to parenting challenges and raise happy, confident children.** This 24-hour service is targeted specifically towards people who find it difficult to access other parenting programs, like playgroups and other services such as fathers, grandparents caring for children, and families in rural areas.

Maternal and Child Health line (24 hours a day 7 days a week): 13 22 29

Gateway Health Positive Parenting: 1800 880 660

Smaller Group Times Supporting Individual Needs

By El Marson-Thomas, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Glover St Kindergarten

As we move into the second half of the year we have been focussing on our oral literacy program more than ever at GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten. Inspired by the first of the 'Let's Chat' literacy PD, as a team we have discussed and reflected on the ways in which we have been meeting the needs of our children and how we can ensure our teaching practice is more inclusive when it comes to teaching oral literacy.

While we enjoy our whole group reading sessions, at GEKA GSK, our intentional teaching practice is to have more spontaneous small group story time sessions throughout the day. Small group sessions can be more inclusive for children who are too shy or not confident enough to share their ideas during group times. With a group of 30 children (and depending on the time of day), we find that reading a story and following with a mutual discussion time can be enjoyable for many, yet stressful for others who struggle with sitting still and maintaining concentration for long. To cater for all in an inclusive manner, small group discussions can be far more effective and inclusive.

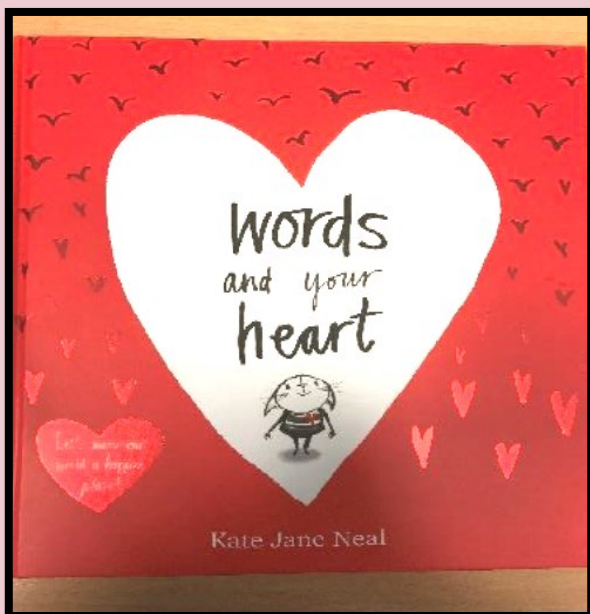
During mat time group sessions, music, rhyme, Auslan signs, YouTube videos and standard storybooks are all ways in which we embed literacy within our programme. Using a variety of multimodal forms of literacy support all children to feel part of the programme as we all learn in different ways.



Words have Power

By Rachel Green, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Bentleigh Kindergarten

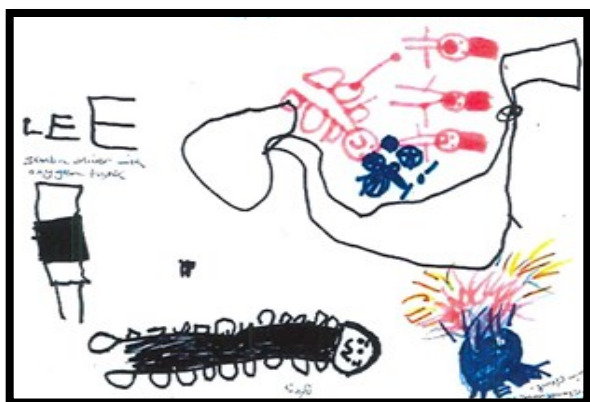
"All children, with support, can develop a strong sense of self and learn how to interact with others with care, empathy and respect" (VEYLDF p18)



As part of our focus on teaching kindness, we wanted to encourage the children to think about how their words can affect others. At circle time today we read "Words and your Heart" by Kate Jane Neal. This book describes your heart as "The little bit inside of you that makes you, you" and asks children to consider how "your words can actually change the way someone's heart feels".

The book tells us that our words have the power to make other's hearts feel happy or sad. As we read the book together, we asked the children to think how their words can cheer someone up, make them feel stronger, encourage them not to give up or simply smile and laugh. We recorded their ideas in the reflection book, a photo of which is shown below.

We have taken inspiration from the book for the next challenge on our challenge board which asks the children "Can you use your words to look after each other's hearts?" Our intention is to support the children to develop empathy, think about the impact of their words on others and nurture a sense of kindness within the group.



Making Sense of the News

By Stella Eizenberg, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Brady Road Kindergarten

One of our children shared a news clipping they had brought into the kindergarten, about the International rescue of the boys stuck in the cave in Thailand.

Supporting children to engage with the newspaper, as one form of communication, they are able to learn about the wider world through development of a life skill: to understand and interpret the media. By using a newspaper we are supporting children to use contemporary texts, including electronic and prints based media. (EYLF, 2009, Outcome 5).

Through our group discussion on current news events seen in various sources of media children are learning to broaden their understanding of the world in which they live and learning how "good team work" can be adapted into our kindergarten environment. (outcome 2). Following our discussion on the newspaper clipping here are some of our two way conversations:

Stella – what is this story about in the news?

Evie – The divers came from all over the world. They are heroes, they saved everyone and all helped together.

Everly – "some boys went into a cave and got stuck in Thailand".

Josie – "They did not know the way out because they didn't have a map."

Bella – "Exploring means to look around."

Stella – "What does rescue means?"

Lee – "The divers saved them?"

Stella – "was the beginning sad?"

Mathew – "Yes, because they did not know if the kids were alive."

Melody – "It is a happy story because all the divers helped each other."

We have been discussing all the "good team work" happening in our kindergarten environment co-operating, listening to each other, exchanging ideas and being kind and respectful to each other. We were amazed by the some of the children's prior knowledge of the International rescue mission and their contribution to our group discussion.

NEW Resource Available for Families:

Victorian State Government Parenting Website

Practical information is available for Victorian parents and carers in a variety of areas from child development, behaviour guidance, family health and safety (to name a few). Visit www.education.vic.gov.au/parents to learn more.

Occupational Therapy for children

By Leanne Clements, Vernessa Johnstone and Josephine Dingiria, GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten

Following on from a professional development training session facilitated by 'Little Bridges Occupational Therapy', titled, 'Fit Fingers' educators at GEKA Bentleigh East kindergarten have shared their learnings with families and put many new strategies into practice.

As a team, we have introduced small plasticine balls to the children in the three year old group, to build small muscle strength in the hands. First, children rolled the plasticine out in their hands, then tried to squash the ball in one hand. Children were set the challenge of trying to move the plasticine with just the fingers in one hand. This was tricky, however the children enjoyed the challenge. The children then poked, squeezed, pinched the plasticine. Some simply enjoyed the sensory, tactile experience of stretching the plasticine and trying to make it softer with their hands. The experience had a calming effect for some children. We also explored the colours of the plasticine and the mathematical concept of how many balls children had in each colour. The importance and focus of the experience was to help strength and develop their hand muscles so they could improve their fine motor abilities.

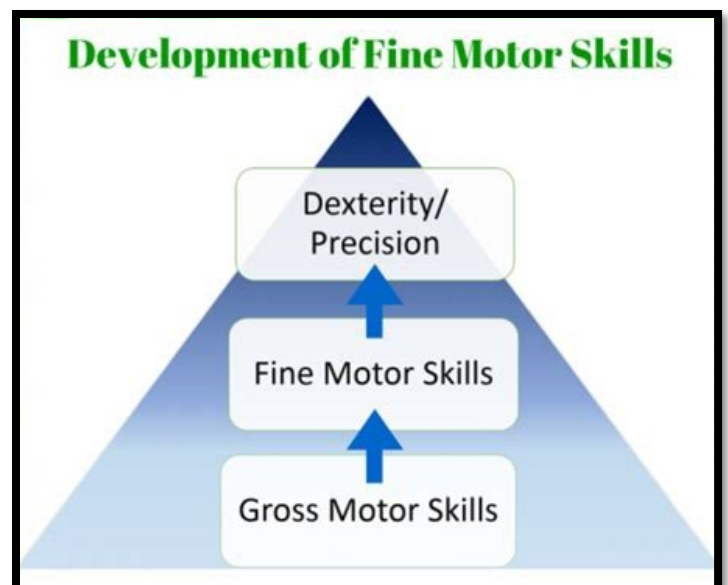
What are fine motor skills? Fine motor refers to the use of the small muscles or intrinsic muscles of the hands. Fine motor skills involve the use of the small muscles in the fingers, hand and arm to manipulate control and use tools and materials in a precise and refined manner.

As educators, we intentionally provide experiences to help develop fine motor skills, which inadvertently support academic skills, such as developing pencil skills and scissor skills, play skills such as construction skills, doll dressing, manipulation and self-care skills such as dressing, eating and hygiene. This helps develop the building blocks for trunk stability, shoulder stability and strength, wrist strength and stabilisation, hand and finger strength, in hand manipulation, finger isolation, development of palmar arches of the hand, skill side and stable side of the hand. Open web space, pincher grip, and bilateral co-ordination of the hands, control of the arm space, ability to cross the midline, hand dominance, hand-eye coordination, proprioception/body awareness, and tactile sensory feedback, are all supported by regular engagement in fine motor skills.

Our objective throughout the remainder of the year, is to provide time for the children to develop these milestones in using both hands cooperatively.

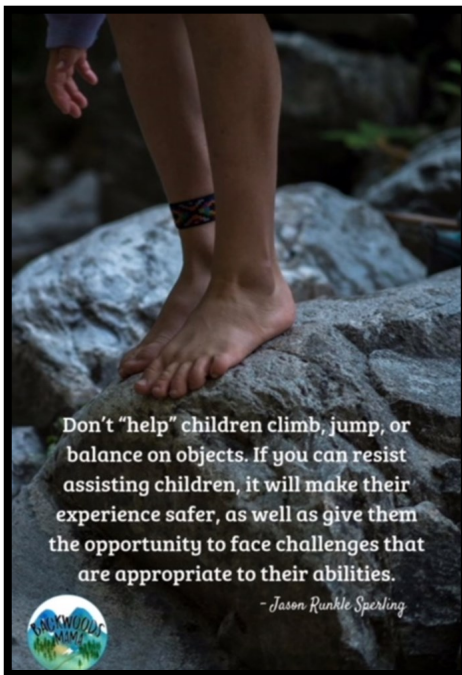
Knowledge is only a rumour until it lives in the muscles.

For further information, you can contact 0404 517 955 or email littlebridgesot2@gmail.com



Risky Play: Introducing risk and challenge in a children's program

By Archana Millik, Early Childhood Educator, *Professional Development Reflection*



'Risky play' can be defined as a thrilling and exciting activity that involves a risk of physical injury, and play that provides opportunities for challenges, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury (Sandseter (2007; Little & Wyver, 2008).

Everyday life is full of risks and challenges and children need opportunities to develop the skills associated with managing risk and making informed judgements about risks from a very young age. Risk-taking is an essential part of children's play. Managing that risk is the key to providing opportunities that support growth and development and keep children safe from unreasonable

risk and injury. Outdoor play provides an important context for children to explore, to experiment, be themselves and make the most of the opportunities afforded by the environment in a less restricted manner providing the foundation that teaches how to be resourceful, persistent, innovative and resilient.

The PD I attended recently on "Risky Play" has encouraged me to reflect on my perception and definition of "risk" and "safe" play. This gave me an opportunity to look back, think of my favourite childhood activity and reflect upon them. My favourite childhood memories are of doing things like climbing trees much higher than I can imagine, making utensils of mud, and cooking food on manually made hearth out of bricks. While as an adult, I am sure we all have almost same childhood activities the critical reflection lies in do our children experience the same? As early childhood professionals, while planning outdoor play, whether the goal of unintentional physical injury prevention should be, to keep children as safe as possible or as safe as necessary? However, the perceptions are very much subject to cultural interpretation, parents understanding of outdoor play, factors associated with the quality of the outdoor environment, regulatory requirements, and a litigious environment. The PD provided 2 tools currently used to change and reflect on perceptions around risk and play. They are:

Risk-reframing (care-giver focused / Reflection)

Risk benefit assessment (children and action focused)

Some of the advantages of risky play are;

- Building resilience and persistence
- Balance and coordination
- Awareness of the capabilities and limits of the body
- The ability to assess and make judgement about risk
- Develop skills in negotiating the environment (including risks)
- Learn how to use equipment safely and for its designed purpose
- Develop coordination and orientation skills
- Learn about the consequences (positive/negative) of risk taking
- Understanding consequence to action

My philosophy to promote "risky play" is to let children experience a considerable amount of risk (unsafe situation to them) to know what is safe for themselves.

We have a tree at GEKA Glover Street which I described as a "not easy to climb" tree! Children in our group see this as a challenge! Seeing children's interest, we made it safe to climb by placing cushion mats on rocks underneath the trees. I took this as an opportunity to talk to the children that climbed, about how they feel being up in the tree. This supports a "sense of being."

International Association Nature Pedagogy Conference (IANP) May 2017

By Natalie Cross, Early Childhood Teacher, *Professional Development Reflection*

I have a passion for nature, community and quality early childhood experiences, so when I saw the IANP was coming to Australia- it seemed like too good an opportunity to meet and learn with some similarly passionate educators. The only catch was the conference was in Adelaide. I knew some unique circumstances would be required to get me there. We heard from international nature pedagogy superstars such as Claire Warden and Doug Warden who not only offered further professional knowledge but offered practical experiences that could be brought straight back into kinder. We learnt how to build small fires in just a few minutes, introduce children to wood whittling and weaved using natural materials. While these are all “risky” experiences, there are plenty of safety measures to take to minimise risk and achieve positive outcomes. Economically, teaching these experiences, with nature has minimised our purchase of resources at Carnegie and we often collect and learn from our surrounding environment now. This saves us money and it means we have more to spend on bigger ticket items to offer an increasingly diverse range of programs at kinder such as a musician in residence, a karate instructor and a pottery teacher. It also means when we go outside the kinder gates, children and educators are practised with risk taking and become aware of our connection and responsibility to the immediate environment, including the risks it poses. However, the biggest outcome from the IANP conference for GEKA Carnegie Kinder was a session and consultation with Adam Bienenstock. He is a natural playground designer from Canada and was the “naughty child” at kinder. He seeks to create natural play spaces that are “Disruptive, transformative and relentless”. His laments the uninspired, knocked together, brightly coloured fixed structures that dominate play spaces and plans natural play spaces that will meet every child’s need. This includes the wild child like himself, the quiet children (that need sanctuary from the wild child) and the creative and expressive child. Following Adam’s instruction, I built a model of my first natural playground and this sowed the seeds of a plan to offer this type of space in the increasingly concrete jungle that is Carnegie and Glen Eira. Fast forward a year and works are due to start this August of a forest/ bush play space that will benefit GEKA Carnegie children past and present on the land where the kinder and primary school are co- located. It is a community effort with CPS, GCK, the educators, families and children all involved, utilises and nurtures nature and offers a quality early childhood experience for hundreds of children hopefully years to come.



Clay – Reggio exhibition “A Marketplace of Possibilities”

By Vibha Jain, Early Childhood Teacher, *Professional Development Reflection*

Clay comes from the earth: ancient, organic, substantial. It smells cool and earthy. There are different types of clay (raku, terracotta and cream white) and can be used for different purposes. Some clays are better with younger children because they stick together more easily like *Raku* (coarse or grainy), terracotta and earthenware to give experience of different forms of clays to the children. They do not need to be fired all the time. They can be air dried and can be reused after sometime by adding water to them.

What are the benefits of clay?

It helps build relationship with the environment and has limitless possibilities.

- Learn about the temperature, malleability, sound and colour.
- Share strategies to work with the material. Materials are truly important in the moment as they become a language.
- It gives visibility to children's thinking.
- It supports creative thinking and intellectual ability.
- Develops large and small muscles.
- Earns satisfaction at gaining success over medium.

Nurture in Nature CAMPference.

By Sarah Johnson, Early Childhood Educator, *Professional Development Reflection*

Over the weekend of Friday 17th August to Sunday 19th August, I was lucky enough to attend a CAMPference *nature retreat* and conference facilitated by Tania Maloney from Nurture in Nature. She brings a wealth of knowledge, and skills to share with educators and families to inspire them to get active in nature.

We learnt many things over the course of the weekend from many skilled professionals. Molly, who works at *Wild Arts Forest School*, taught us how to do basket weaving using raffia and a blanket stitch. Basket weaving is not as easy as it looks, unless you are actually good at sewing - think I need to practice my sewing skills before I share this with others!

We learnt from Pascale - she taught us to make terrariums, using pebbles, charcoal, potting soil, and plants that were suited for either a rainforest or dessert. This is an excellent skill I plan to share with the children.

We learnt how to whittle wood, which is harder than it looks; the knives are extremely sharp and you have to be very precise. You can design just about anything from a piece of wood and a whittling knife.

Pascale also gave a quick lesson about 'Learning on the fly'. *What is learning on the fly?*

It is following the children's lead, teaching without a plan, and using the outside environment as a learning tool, for the children, introduce plants, ask questions about what is happening outside, what sounds can you hear, what can you see etc. Then moving forward with their answers, to extend knowledge.

We headed to the 'Great Otway National Park' so we could see where Gellibrand River meets the sea.

What an amazing sight it was, seeing the river, then the ocean all in one. In addition, the foam from the ocean was amazing. So thick, oozy and sticky. It was great to be walking along the beach and learning in this 'hands on' way, with other likeminded educators, and talk about all the different learning opportunities the beach as to offer for children. Did you know that the actual sea foam is called 'Flocculent'? In addition, that Flocculation is technically the process of sea foam forming. I will pass this new knowledge onto the children too!



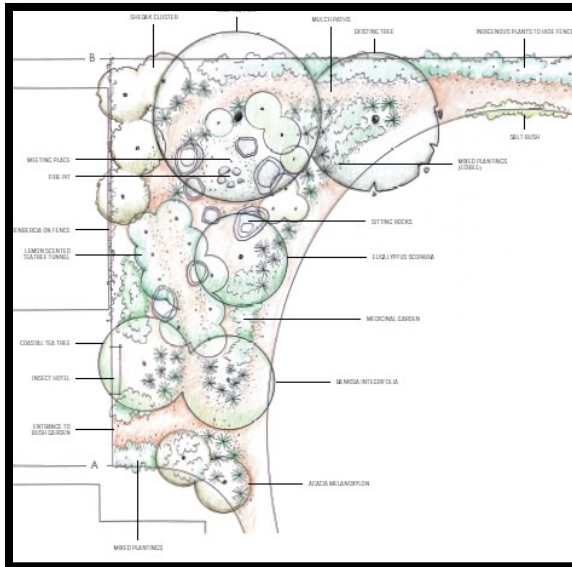
Quality Rating and Assessment Process to commence for GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten

We have received notification of a **Rating and Assessment visit for GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten from the Department of Education and training (DET)**. The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the service will be submitted to DET on 27 September with the visit scheduled for some time between **18 October and 15 November**. This service was assessed in 2013 and subsequently received a rating of MEETING the National Standard.

Under the revised rating and assessment process, all areas of the National Quality Standard must be rated as exceeding (as opposed to the previous system where only four areas needed to be rated exceeding), for a service to receive an overall exceeding rating.

GEKA will look forward to showcasing the practices at this GEKA service. Good Luck Team!

GEKA Carnegie 'Bush' Project!



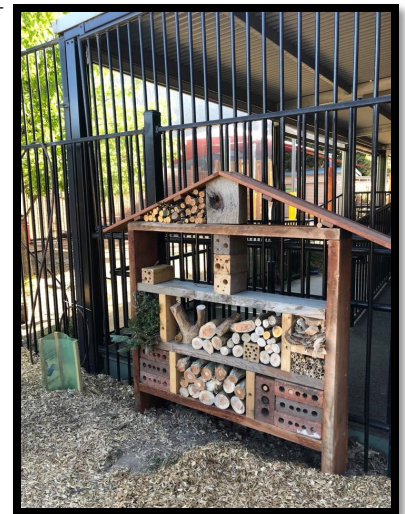
After more than 12 months of planning, the 'Bush Garden/Forest' Project has been implemented with GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten on the grounds the local Carnegie Primary School! For the past 3 years, the GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten have incorporated a 'Bush Kinder' Program into the curriculum for children in both 4-year-old groups. This has been facilitated in the local parks (Boyd or Malvern Urban Forest). Children visit the bush area, on a regular basis, either by train or bus, to engage with nature for a few hours of the day.

It is here that we see children navigating and assessing risk, engaging in rich inquiry and a developing love of the world, as well as collaborating together to explore, problem solve, discover and wonder. The GEKA Philosophy supports children to learn from 'real life experiences' as a way of forming a strong foundation for their current and future lives. Extensive Risk Assessments are completed prior to all outings into the park.

In addition to the off site Bush Kindergarten program, our aim for the past year, has



been to establish a 'bush kindergarten' environment in the adjoining school grounds (the kindergarten is located on the school grounds), along the perimeter of the school oval and along the boundary of kindergarten building.



The educational benefits to both kindergarten and school children are enormous, in particular, the strengthening of the transition to school process for children moving into a school environment.

We thank the school for their willingness to share the school land with us so we can embark on such a mammoth project. We also acknowledge Paul Sampson, from Paul Sampson Landscapes, for his vision and implementation of the space. The space is beautiful and we will watch with eagerness as it grows with generations of children in the years to come.