

Ballymore Bulletin



+think + play + learn + grow =



Ballymore Kindy



Issue 3 May 2016

Desley's Dialogue



Hello everyone

And welcome to our Term 2 edition of the Ballymore Bulletin. We hope the information herein will be of interest and value to your family.

It's hard to believe we are almost halfway through your child's kindy year and in the next 2 months will begin the enrolment process for 2017!!

I know at this stage of the year, many schools are already beginning the enrolment process for Prep. Please feel free to come and see me if you have queries regarding your child's transition onto Prep. The government has guaranteed funding for any child having a second year at kindy and this can be very beneficial for some children, allowing them additional time to develop in a less formalised educational environment. When we commence enrolments for 2017, Chris and I will send an email asking parents to let us know if they are considering giving their child extra time before Prep. We will want to reserve a space in your preferred group.

I have included two articles in this newsletter:

- **Making Thinking Explicit** shares information on some of the perhaps less obvious (but just as significant) teaching strategies that we employ in supporting children's identification of themselves as "thinkers" and the impact on development across a range of areas.
- At the end of 2015, I was asked to write an article for a national early

childhood magazine called *Every Child*. The article describes our "Open Door Policy", a practice which is not common amongst kindergartens. We believe that inviting families to come into kindy rather than waiting outside till the program commences at 8.30 offers many benefits to our children and families. The article titled **Welcome to (Y)our Place: An open door in action** was published in Vol 22, No 1, 2016 of the magazine. We have reprinted it in this newsletter to share our thinking with parents.

Happy reading everyone and please check the dates coming up for important kindy events in the next couple of months!

Desley

Inside This Issue...

President's Report	... p.2
Book Fair	... p.2
Cool Weather Considerations	... p.3
Playdough Recipe	... p.3
Making Thinking Explicit	... p.4
Welcome to (Y)OUR Place: An open door in action	... p.7
Important Dates	... p.9

Dates to Note...



*Please see p.9 for details

memo
23 May (Mon) Group 1
27 May (Fri) Group 2
Evergreen Children's
Theatre

6 - 10 June
Book Fair

memo
8 June (Wed)
Parent Discussion
Evening
*Date to be confirmed

memo
19 June (Sun)
Family Bushwalk

memo
12 July (Tue) Group 1
15 July (Fri) Group 2
2016 Class Photo Day



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2 Ballymore Bulletin

President's Report

Welcome to the second term at Ballymore Kindy. It's been great to see so many parents share their skills and time at Kindy, whether it is coming in to spend some time with the children, or helping out at the Election Stall.

Over the last few weeks, we've seen a focus on promoting our centre to make sure enrolments are strong for the coming years, the same as parents before us had done.

Our Open Day on Saturday 7th May was very busy, with 31 families attending to see our Kindy in the flesh. It was great to hear of so many word of mouth recommendations as well as a few who had received the flyer in their mailbox - thank you to everyone who delivered them. There were plenty of new faces, keeping enrolments coming in right up to 2019!

The recent announcement of the upcoming federal election means our Kindy will most likely be used as a polling station again on **2nd July**. You may remember our Kindy held a small stall on 19th March when our centre was used for the local elections. With a bit of notice, it gives us an opportunity to have a little stall again or even a sausage sizzle. Although, the elections are right in the middle of the school holidays. If you're interested in helping out, let anyone on the Committee or staff know.

See you at kindy.

Deanna



Ballymore Kindy

BOOK FAIR

6 – 10 June



Our centre will be hosting a display of quality children's books from Riverbend Books at Bulimba from **6 to 10 June**. Commission made from the sale of books will be used to purchase more books for our centre library.

You may also like to choose a book to **"donate"** to our children's take home library – the staff shall leave a list of suggestions!

Your support will be greatly appreciated. *Thanks, Desley, Karen and Yvonne.*

Cool Weather Considerations

This time of year invariably brings with it a number of ills and chills particularly when young children are sharing a space together. Here are some health notes put together by one of our medical parents in an earlier Bulletin:

HOW CAN WE REDUCE THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS IN OUR CENTRE AND TO THE REST OF THE FAMILY



- KEEP CHILDREN HOME IF THEY HAVE **THICK OR GREEN RUNNY NOSES**
- KEEP CHILDREN HOME IF THEY HAVE A **TEMPERATURE, SORE THROAT, MOIST OR PERSISTENT COUGH, OR SORE EARS**
- KEEP CHILDREN AT HOME FOR **AT LEAST 24 HOURS** AFTER THE LAST **VOMIT OR DIARRHOEA**
- TEACH CHILDREN TO:
 1. **SNEEZE, COUGH OR BLOW NOSES INTO TISSUES AND THEN DISPOSE OF IN NEAREST BIN.**
 2. **SNEEZE OR COUGH INTO THEIR UPPER SLEEVE OR ELBOW**
 3. **WASH HANDS WITH SOAP AND WATER AFTER SNEEZING OR COUGHING, AFTER TOUCHING THEIR NOSE OR MOUTH WHEN THEY ARE SICK, BEFORE AND AFTER EATING, AFTER GOING TO THE TOILET AND BEFORE AND AFTER PRESCHOOL**

Kindy Playdough Recipe

Ingredients

3 cups plain flour
1 ½ cups salt
6 tablespoons cream of tartar
3 tablespoons oil
3 cups water
Colouring/food dye

Method

1. Put all ingredients into large saucepan.
2. Mix thoroughly and consistently, until it all comes together.
3. Take off heat and cool.
4. Knead, Store in an airtight container once cooled.

Following many requests, here is our playdough recipe from Mrs. Matthews and Mrs. Curling:



Making Thinking Explicit

Many aspects of children's education will be very clear and obvious to an onlooker, however there are other aspects of the curriculum which are more subtle and perhaps not recognised by someone watching on.

As adults working with young children, one of the most effective and yet often unrecognised strategies of teachers is to make their thinking, and the thinking of children, explicit. In doing this, we can as the title suggests: support the development of positive relationships in the classroom and of individual children's self-regulation and cognitive abilities.

What do some of these strategies look like?

- The importance that we place on group times, and in particular on reading books together, is a considered strategy to assist children in developing the ability to regulate their attention. Before beginning stories we will often do a breathing exercise and then verbalise what we will be doing – “And now you will be able to look up at the book and think about the story as I read it” and “I will be able to think about the words that I have to read so that I say the right ones.”



Explicitly identifying what to look at or what to think about is an important first step for young children.

- As discussed in previous messages, our listening and thinking activities such as Buzz Groups and the What Is It? Bag have a focus on the processes of attending, listening, and processing. We specifically prepare ourselves for these listening activities by guiding the children to “sit beside someone who you won't feel like talking to because we have to listen to and think about the clues” and by incorporating activities such as “Close your eyes and make a picture of your kitchen in your mind. Can you see something in your kitchen with a plastic handle...?”
- Visualisation is an effective thinking skill for young children to become aware of, as is the use of private speech – children will naturally use self-talk to regulate or guide their behaviour, emotions and cognitive strategies and we can capitalise on this in education – “You could say to yourself ‘Now I need to stop and look at the book and then I can go to play outside’.”
- This self-talk can also be practiced to some degree when we have fun together sharing songs using the actions only – i.e. saying (or singing) the words in our head.
- In helping children to regulate their attention, we also assist by explicitly explaining where our attention is focused. For example, often as stories finish we will invite the group to make comments on what they have listened to (an important thinking process in itself as it encourages the use of memory and connections with personal experiences). Inevitably someone will make a comment that is far removed (or totally unrelated to) what the book was about. In these instances, we will bring their attention back by saying “I know you would like to talk about that but at the moment my brain is still thinking about how they solved the problem of the

missing cat. Did you want to say something about that?" We will also offer the option to "keep that other idea in your mind and tell me about it when group time is finished".

- Encouraging children to give opinions, thoughts and comments (What do you think about...? Why do you think...? What do you think will happen next?) lets them know that we value their thinking abilities as well as strengthening these skills. Being able to predict what might happen next in a story is a particularly useful skill for beginning readers and demonstrates how they are able to hold elements of information in their mind (working memory) as well as to respond to a range of possibilities (cognitive flexibility).
- Our efforts to wonder and ponder on things with children (a culture of enquiry) also builds on these skills as we toss around questions and possibilities together holding ideas and information, drawing conclusions where we can and asking more questions when we can't.
- Listening and responding to others is a complex activity for young children and requires them to manage their awareness (noticing that someone has said their name), self-control (stopping what they are doing) to attend to what the person is saying, processing what has been said (requiring the use of their working memory) and then maintaining self-control and attention long enough to respond. Supporting children through these interactions takes time and patience on the part of adults but will help to build their abilities and to strengthen relationships with others.
- Children's interactions with one another are so complex, and their skills are still developing, so that they regularly need our support to reframe the actions, thoughts and language of others. When we take the time to do this (eg "Bill come back for a moment, I think Jim wanted you to know that he wasn't happy that you walked over his castle. Let's work out what we can do about this."), we not only support relationships and self-regulation but we also expose children to differing perspectives thereby contributing to the development of their Theory of Mind – the ability to understand and predict another person's mental processes, including their intentions, emotions, motives, thoughts. When we reframe thoughts and behaviours we build children's cognitive flexibility – the ability to respond to differing demands, priorities and perspectives.
- Our focus on children's imaginative play is also supporting this acceptance of different perspectives as we actively demonstrate our valuing of varying ideas and abilities when we listen to and assist children to represent their ideas in play. These play experiences offer opportunities to draw attention to past experiences, encouraging children to access their prior knowledge – "Let's think back to when you went camping, where did you sleep, what did you eat, what was different from being at home?" We sometimes challenge ourselves too – "Let's see if our brains can think of a new idea or a game we haven't played yet."
- Our "games" present a range of problems to solve – how to share the blocks so that everyone has some for walls, how to make a tree for the dinosaurs to sleep under, how to attach fairy wings to the babies, what to do if someone wants to come into my game? It is empowering for children to know that they can solve problems for themselves – both practical problems and social problems. Social problems are particularly complex as



they need to take account of differing perspectives and there are usually no “right answers”. The actual process of problem solving in small or large groups, for whatever purpose, provides authentic opportunities to build cognitive and social skills as children are exposed to different perspectives and have practice in talking and listening to others. As adults it also allows us the opportunity to scaffold children’s deeper level thinking as they ponder on actions and reactions (e.g. if I have all the blocks how will this make ...feel?) and to facilitate a sense of community as we work through issues together.

- At Ballymore, we make a conscious decision NOT to have an over reliance on “rules” at kindy – which is not to say that we don’t hold high expectations in terms of behaviour! Rather it means that we encourage the children to think about and verbalise why we do or don’t do certain things. Being able to articulate that it won’t be a good idea to run and jump off the forts because someone might be walking beside it and you may not see each other shows much greater thinking ability on the part of a child, than saying “because it’s the rule.” Understanding the reasoning behind required behaviour has greater significance for children’s developing relationships, self-regulation and cognition than mere compliance.

Brain research is demonstrating the important role of executive functioning skills for children’s overall personal development and academic success. These skills include working memory, inhibitory control (linked to self-regulation) and cognitive flexibility. These skills are important for planning and organising, decision making and resisting impulses. They develop throughout childhood and are crucial for adaptive behaviour. Being able to regulate behaviour (e.g. inhibit inappropriate responses and delay gratification) will contribute to children finding school a satisfying experience. Making our thinking, and the thinking of children, explicit, directly assists in building these skills.

Part of our efforts in making thinking explicit has also meant an extension to the vocabulary we use with children and no doubt, over time, many of our words may come home to you. We often discuss our brain (or “mind” – interchangeable terms at this age) and what we want it to do and what it can do, using our memory (“let’s put that into our memory”) and the part of our brain that holds memories – the hippocampus, concentrating, distracting, planning and making decisions to mention a few.

Our goal is for children to see themselves as accomplished thinkers. As with emotions, if we take the time to consider our own thinking and what happens for us when we think, and then share these experiences with children, we will take them some way along the road to refining their own thinking abilities.

- Desley



7 Ballymore Bulletin

Welcome to (Y)OUR Place: An open door in action

It is 8.20 on a Monday morning at Ballymore Kindergarten in Brisbane. The kindergarten's program for 3.5 to 4.5-year-old children is due to commence at 8.30 am. The metal grill and wooden doors to the centre are open wide as they have been since the teacher's earlier arrival. Cars are pulling into the carpark one by one. Three parents are sitting on the carpet doing puzzles with their children and chatting to one another over their children's heads. Another parent sits nearby, about to read a book to her child. 'Which one will it be today?' she asks her daughter. As other parents and children enter the kindy they move to the sign-in book and locker area, complete arrival tasks together and proceed to shared experiences on the carpet.



One member of the staff is in the kitchen preparing materials for the day. As the kitchen overlooks the playroom she is able to greet parents and children as they arrive and engage in conversations. The director (and full-time teacher) is also available to children and families from her office, situated close to the front door, as she continues to make preparations for the day.

Just before 8.30 am, the teacher moves toward the carpet, quietly saying to children, 'It's 8.30. Time for us to start'. Almost immediately children complete their puzzles and return them to the shelves. They give rushed hugs to parents who are finishing off conversations with one another, wishing each other and the centre staff a great day ahead. As parents exit the kindy, the children settle in for a story, some songs and a chat about outside play, knowing that other children will quietly join this group setting as they arrive.

Ballymore Kindergarten has made an intentional teaching decision that families are to be greeted by an open door each morning. The centre's philosophy has an overriding focus on building positive relationships with, and between, children, parents and staff. As they explain to new parents, relationships are crucial to children's learning and development because:

- When relationships are secure and supportive, children feel safe to explore and engage in a range of experiences.
- Learning is a social experience. Children learn through social experiences such as conversations and play.
- Relationships are complex. Focusing on relationships encourages deep-level learning such as understanding other perspectives, complex problem solving, action and reaction.

For staff at the kindergarten, it is imperative to put such beliefs into action and each aspect of the kindergarten day is planned with a priority on building six aspects of positive relationships—demonstrating respect and empathy, providing a supportive base, supporting the development of self-regulation, building a sense of agency, empowering children as problem solvers and encouraging caring communication.

In keeping with this approach, an open door is seen as being an authentic start to each day of building relationships. While there have been some organisational matters to address, the benefits are numerous and include:

- The encouragement of a strong sense of 'belonging' for the children and their families. It is hoped that the children see kindy as 'their' place, not someone else's environment where they have to wait to be invited, or let, in.
- The open door allows parents and children to take advantage of some quiet time together to read books or do puzzles. This has been identified as an important time for those parents who work full time and are unable to spend other times at kindy. It allows them to have a direct connection with their child's experiences at kindy.
- Time spent on the carpet is also an opportunity for parents to connect with one another. It enhances relationships as parents meet children who they hear about at home, and their parents. Many social events, for both children and parents, have been planned in that carpet time.
- For those children struggling with separation, this morning routine plays a significant role in establishing a predictable daily routine, easing anxieties about when mum will go or what will happen next.
- Parents have commented that the definitive 8.30 am start to the program assists them in making a smooth exit and in settling their child for the day.
- The competing demands on families with school and work drop-offs also means that parents are not left waiting outside (in the car or in a waiting area) between destinations.
- Inclement weather does not mean a rush of wet or hot children as the doors are opened.

The open door has now been in practice at Ballymore for 16 years and has, as with all systems, needed tweaking from time to time. In organising the system, explaining the reasoning behind decisions has been the most powerful way to make the arrangement successful.

Some specifics that have assisted in maintaining the open door include:

- Explaining to parents that prior to 8.30 am is non-contact time for staff and is an important time to allow staff to make preparations for the day. Parents are asked to time their arrival for no earlier than 8.10 or 8.15. This is also explained as an important consideration for the children. To arrive any earlier would mean they spend a significantly longer time on the carpet by the time the first group session finishes—a tough call for young children.
- In cases where parents need to leave earlier, they are asked to request the assistance of another parent to keep a close eye on their child. We have found parents to be more than willing to help one another.
- It has also been important to give explanations for the expectation to *stay on the carpet* when families come in early. This important part of the daily routine means that children do not get involved in other types of play before having the opportunity to reconnect as a group and to share ideas and possibilities for play. That shared time as a group is an essential element of our relationships curriculum.

Our experience with an open door has been a very positive one. Starting the day in this way provides an opportunity to build connections between children and parents, and facilitates a calm smooth transition into the group's kindy day together.

Desley Jones

Director, Ballymore Kindergarten

Some important dates for Term 2:

- Both groups will be visited by the **Evergreen Children's Theatre** - Monday 23 May for Group 1 and Friday 27 May for Group 2. Kevin's puppet shows always share a message of conservation and care for the environment as well as wonderful storytelling, a sense of wonder and imagination. This year he will be presenting a production called "*Reef Experience*".



- In the week beginning Monday 6 June we will host a **Book Fair** with books supplied by Riverbend Books at Bulimba. It may be a great opportunity to stock up on books for home, gifts etc. Any sales made will result in a commission for kindy and we will use it to purchase new books for our libraries. (Please see p.2 for further details)

- Our annual **Family Bushwalk** will be held on Sunday 19 June. Please mark your diaries **NOW**. This is a wonderful morning for a walk through the bush together at Bellbird Grove followed by a morning tea picnic. Details closer to the time.



- Our 2016 **Class Photos** will be taken in the first week of Term 2 - Tuesday 12 July and Friday 15 July.

- We will be holding a second "**In conversation...**" **Parent Discussion** evening on Wednesday 8 June (to be confirmed). Our guest speakers will be: as a former speech pathologist Mrs. Curling (Karen) will share some brief information on speech pathology - when may an assessment be needed - and children's language development; and Keira Louis will be talking about the importance of relaxation to children's development and learning and explaining the scope and purpose of our yoga sessions at kindy.

