

# Ballymore Bulletin



+think + play + learn + grow =



Ballymore Kindy



Term 1  
2021

## Desley's Dialogue



Dear Parents,

Our first term at kindy is rushing to an end. No doubt you have found your child a little weary. This has been a time of enormous change and adaptation for all the children as they settle into the expectations of life at kindy. While we are encouraged to see child care and kindy as extensions of home, the reality is that group life can be **very different** from life at home. The greatest learning curve for the children has been the acceptance of being one of 22 children with only 2 adults at everyone's disposal. Needless to say, this means that for many there has had to be a major adjustment in their levels of self regulation, patience, turn taking, listening and showing consideration for others. Over the past few weeks we have witnessed a significant level of development in all of these areas as we settle into life together.

Many may think that our focus on relationships, and children's social and emotional development in these early years, is a soft option in terms of education. In fact, it is crucial and will contribute to laying important foundations for each child's social and academic growth – throughout life.

At our Parent Discussion Night, we talked not only about our focus on relationships and children's make believe play, but also about *executive function*. In this newsletter I am including an article titled:

**Executive Function –**

**Looking through a new lens.**

This article was written as a journal article for Gowrie Australia's online publication (*Reflections*) but I think

it will shed more light for parents on what we do at kindy. You may also like to take a look at this article: ***The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children***. It is available at:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/142/3/e20182058.full.pdf>



I hope you find both articles interesting and would encourage anyone who may have questions or comments to please see me.

I look forward to catching up next week for individual discussions with parents. These are important opportunities to share information about your child in the group setting. Sharing knowledge between home and kindy helps us to know, and to plan for your child in the most appropriate way. If anyone was unable to find a time that suited, please let me know and we can make other arrangements.

*Desley*

# President's Report



Hi Everyone,

Welcome everyone to Ballymore Kindy! I hope that your children are settling in well and finding their feet. No doubt everyone feels fortunate to have their children at Ballymore Kindy with not only fabulous grounds but also experienced and calm staff. As a testament to the dedication of the staff at Ballymore Kindy the changing landscape that came with COVID in 2020 was seen as a challenge, not a barrier to deliver the quality education program here at Ballymore Kindy. Desley, Yvonne and Karen took this opportunity to reflect and review the way they deliver early education in a changing world with ongoing focus on children developing their executive functioning, building relationships and resilience and maintaining consistency (where possible) and the fun in what was for many a stressful year. For families who have had children here before, you may notice a couple of changes that have been adopted moving forward (e.g. drop off at the door in the mornings) this follows reflection on what aspects of changes from last year further added to the core of the education program that is offered here at Ballymore Kindy.

I would like to sincerely thank the previous committee, who also continued to steer the Kindy through 2020 via Zoom meetings and the like. They have continued to maintain a beautiful environment at the Kindy and have paved the way for further upgrades to the outdoor play areas, which will come later in 2021.

In February, Ballymore Kindy held its AGM and it was great to see a large turnout of parents to this event. This year's committee members are: Christine Smith, President (Emily, group 1); Damien Harrison, Treasurer (Eadie, Group 2); Joseph Lee, Secretary (Julian, group 2); Megan Harrison, Social Co-ordinator (Eadie, group 2); Sam Scharf, Maintenance Officer (Lainey, group 1); Lindsay Salmon, Promotions Officer (Isla, group 2); Dave West, WHS Officer (Phoebe, group 2). We have met as a committee in March and April and will continue to meet throughout the year. All members of the committee are available to chat about any questions regarding the running of the kindy. All parents are welcome to attend the Committee meetings. The next meeting will be held on May 6<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Future dates will be posted on the notice board.

With the year already off to a great start, there are some notable events. The first kindy working bee for the year was heralded by Desley as, and I quote "one of the best ever". So well done and thank you to everyone who contributed - the grounds look great. They are certainly going to be a tough act to follow! Many of us have also been able to attend the first Parent Discussion Night on 25<sup>th</sup> February. There will be more Parent discussion nights throughout the year. These are discussions led by Desley and provide a unique insight and evidence behind the value of a play-based learning model for all aspects of children's growth and development. As for social events, keep the morning of March 28<sup>th</sup> free, for a casual family bowls morning for all Ballymore families. There will also be more social events to come throughout the year.

Finally, I would like to invite you to like or follow Ballymore Kindy on social media – Facebook (Ballymore Kindy) or Instagram (ballymorekindy). Also, the Kindy would welcome your Google Reviews, as positive reviews help maintain the exceptional reputation of Ballymore kindy.

I wish you all the best for the year, and look forward to spending more time together through the year.

*Christine Smith President 2021*

## Kindy Wish List

When you have your next spring clean please keep us in mind. There are lots of things we can reuse at Kindy:

- ❖ Mobile phones
- ❖ Laptops
- ❖ Small flat screens
- ❖ Cardboard boxes of all shapes and sizes including very big ones.
- ❖ Lengths of material
- ❖ Ribbons
- ❖ Paper – any shape, size, colour, thickness, lined and plain
- ❖ Used envelopes
- ❖ Cardboard rolls – gladwrap, paper towels
- ❖ Old saucepans and plastic cookware
- ❖ Anything lends itself to being glued sticky taped or painted – corks, bottle tops, ribbons.

THE LIST IS ENDLESS!

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BALLYMORE KINDY

**Kindy closes on Thursday 1 April for School Holidays**

**Term 2 starts Monday 19 April**

**Kindy will be closed for public holidays on Monday 5 May (Labour Day)**

**"Rainforest Experience" Puppet Show – Tuesday 8 June and Thursday 10 June**

## Executive Function – Looking through a new lens

A group of children are heading inside to the carpet after playing in the outdoors. I have asked them to “please sit on the edge of the carpet beside someone who you didn’t play with outside.” So...what is significant about this request? Fundamentally, it is acknowledging our program’s focus on building positive relationships with, and between, children. I want the children to build confidence in being with, and interacting with, a range of individuals, not just those they choose to play with. But just as importantly, this request will provide practice for the children (and allow me to observe) their executive function abilities. Will they:

\* Remember what they were asked to do or will they sit anywhere – perhaps in front of my chair rather than on the edge?

\* Resist the urge to sit beside someone they played with, someone they know well? and

\* Be able to shift their attention to the wider group of children and be able to choose another child to sit near?

“Executive function is an umbrella term used to refer to a variety of interdependent skills that are necessary for purposeful, goal-directed activity from learning to hold a crayon to engaging in more complex social play” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p116). As early childhood teachers and educators, executive function affords us another lens through which to consider the behaviour, development and learning of the children with whom we work. Through this lens, we may find that we observe, respond and plan for our children in new ways.

Executive function is generally considered to consist of the following three elements:

1. Working memory – the capacity to hold and manipulate information in our heads over short periods of time.
2. Inhibitory control – the skill we use to master and filter our thoughts and impulses so we can resist temptations, distractions, and habits and to pause and think before we act
3. Cognitive or mental flexibility – the capacity to nimbly switch gears and adjust to changed demands, priorities or perspectives. It enables us to apply different rules in different settings. (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011).



From these definitions, it may be obvious that executive function underlies human behaviour across the lifespan and in all contexts. As I write this paper, I am using my working memory to keep in mind what I am writing about. My inhibitory control means that I am resisting the urge to procrastinate, to turn on the TV, put the laptop away and ‘zone out’; and my cognitive flexibility is also allowing me to consider how to incorporate the points I think are paramount to consider – that executive function requires opportunities for practice and scaffolding in the context of secure relationships to fully develop, or that it offers a significant link between the play based, social-emotional development of early years education to the more academic focus of formal schooling (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011).

Executive function impacts on both children’s social interactions and their engagement in learning experiences. Children with poorly developed or under-developed executive function will have trouble recalling instructions or holding information in mind for short periods of time, they will be restless and likely to respond inappropriately when things don’t go their way. They may find it hard to wait in turn, to keep their hands away from others or to remain focussed on the task they have been given. Their abilities to fully engage in experiences is limited as they will struggle to adapt to changes or to consider more than one piece of information at a time (eg considering two clues at once as they guess what’s in the bag). Likewise their ability to consider different solutions to problems or their ability to incorporate another child’s ideas in play may be compromised.

“Executive function skills are crucial building blocks for the early development of both cognitive and social capacities.” (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011, p3) As such, executive function skills provide an important link between the traditional focus of early childhood education on social/emotional development and the more

formalised academic learning of school, thus providing a new way for teachers and educators to communicate with schools and parents about the importance of early education curriculum in relation to their transition to Prep. Blair and Raver (2015) contend that self-regulation (including both the cognitive regulation of executive function, and social/emotional regulation) provides an appropriate framework for considering school readiness.

How can we, as early childhood teachers and educators support the development of children's executive function? Most fundamentally is the need to base our teaching/learning programs within a context of positive and supportive relationships with, and between, children (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011; Nagel, 2012; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). According to Blair (2003, p5), "Learning occurs within relationships. Early learning environments in which teachers are attuned to temperamental differences among children may help to provide a comprehensive basis for the development of skills important for learning."

Such "growth-promoting environments provide substantial 'scaffolding' to help young children practice emerging skills before they are expected to perform them on their own." (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011, p6) Knowing children well means that teachers are able to provide the individualised scaffolding required for these developing skills; when more help is required and when it is time to withdraw assistance. "When information is too complex and environments are stressful, executive functions shut down; when information is too simple and environments are uninteresting, executive functions are not called on. This...is the basis for the Vygotskian notion of the zone of proximal development." (Blair & Raver, 2015, p718)

Children's social pretend play is considered to be an important practice ground for developing executive function skills (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011; Nagel, 2012). In this play, children test for themselves the skills that adults have been scaffolding. They have to generate an idea for play, communicate it to other players, resolve issues in socially appropriate ways if the play is to continue, recall what is happening in the play and adapt to new ideas or scripts inserted into the play.

Executive function can be seen to be in operation throughout the day. Because these skills underpin all aspects of our life, it is possible to both observe and plan for them across the early childhood curriculum.

An experience as commonplace as drawing has the potential to engage children's executive function skills. As they draw, children focus attention on particular aspects of an experience they consider important, inhibiting distractions. Cognitive flexibility is demonstrated as the drawing and the children's thinking transforms and as they shift back and forth from their mental thinking to the visual representation of the drawing. As children's use of drawing becomes more complex, they recall previous ideas and thinking, making use of working memory (Sonter & Jones, 2018).

If we consider routine and transition times in an early education program, we can again see executive functions in practice in the basic experiences and games that might be played: children recall instructions (working memory), resist the impulse to deviate from what is required (inhibitory control) and respond to unexpected developments eg if the morning tea mats have been placed in a different location (cognitive flexibility).

Understanding executive function and its role in human development is important for early childhood teachers and educators to explore. Its potential lies in providing us a much richer way to understand children's learning and development, to recognise how we can appropriately scaffold such foundational development, and to communicate the value of our early childhood programs to the broader community.

#### References:

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## Thanks for the Working Bee

Thank you to Liam, Giovanni, Ryan, Roshma, Long and James who worked alongside our Working Bee Co-Ordinator, Sam Scharf last Saturday on our first working bee for the year. You did a FABULOUS JOB!

It was great to return on Monday and finding the whole centre in tip top condition.

Our ongoing improvements to the outdoor environment make this such an enjoyable space in which to work and play, and everyone's efforts at our working bees and on the mowing roster help to keep it that way throughout the year!



# BREAKFAST & BOWLS

SUNDAY 28TH MARCH 8AM - 10AM

COME AND MEET YOUR KINDY FRIENDS &  
FAMILIES

ENJOY BRUNCH AT THE BEAN ON THE GREEN  
CAFE AT GRANGE BOWLS CLUB

& ENJOY A GAME OF BAREFOOT BOWLS

\$10 PER ADULT (ALL DAY)

*please rsvp on the sign in sheet at Kindy*

# Recycling at BK

## Have you seen the coloured bins in our courtyard?

We are collecting **L'OR** and **MOCCONA COFFEE CAPSULES** and **ORAL CARE PRODUCTS**

Please collect from workmates, neighbours, friends, relatives and bring along to kindy and place in containers in our Front Courtyard.

We are hoping that through this recycling activity we will support the children to build an attitude of caring for the environment (reusing materials to make new products) and caring for our wider community (**all money raised through our recycling efforts will go to Ronald MacDonald House**). Last year we sent through a **\$150.00 DONATION!**

Given our proximity to the hospital, we regularly hear and watch helicopters landing on the roof of the hospital and have many conversations about why people might be in the helicopter – are they having a baby or are they very sick or have they had an accident. Being able to help families with sick babies who may be staying at Ronald MacDonald House makes sense to the children in the context of their own experiences of wanting to be with family when they are unwell.



## Playdough Recipe

From Mrs Matthews and Mrs Curling

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 a large saucepan
2. Mix thoroughly and consistently, until it all comes together
3. Knead well
4. Enjoy!!