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Learning for Life

In the midst of yet another Level 4 lockdown, another period in time of both quality and quantity with our family bubbles, another juggle of work, online learning and cooking, it is good to be able to pause and remember what is important in these moments. Making memories with your children, looking after everyone's health and wellbeing, and remembering the life skills that will help them succeed as they get older.

The focus of Preschool education varies slightly from Primary education, with our curriculum being grounded in the all-important 'soft skills' and holistic growth of our children, preparing them for living successfully in a democratic society and flourishing as they move through life.

A report released in Canada in 2017 stated that for every \$1 spent on Early Childhood Education, the economy yields \$6 in economic benefits over the lifetime of a child. Unfortunately, a similar study has not been undertaken in New Zealand, but the results would undoubtedly be similar.

Interestingly, these results gained are through the general life skills learned in Preschool that go on to ensure children are prepared for the 21st century - equipped with competencies such as creativity, problem-solving, social-emotional literacy, collaboration, grit and resilience.

Life- Long Learning

At Saint Kentigern Preschool we focus on all of these skills, alongside one other, with a passion for life-long learning. The enthusiasm to hypothesise and test their own ideas, the ability to see the joy and wonder in the world, and the eagerness to be the protagonist of their own learning journey. We prepare our children to be lifelong learners by providing a place where confident children learn to collaborate with others as they tackle problems, along with questioning and debating their ideas during their investigations and their play.

Social-Emotional Literacy and Collaboration

Social and emotional literacy is recognised as the most important skill that can be acquired in Preschool. Not only do we aim for children to be confident, participate in the classroom, manage themselves socially and emotionally, take responsibility for themselves and others, but we also aspire for them to be empathetic to others, to look at the world through other

peoples' perspectives, and to understand that other people can have feelings and ideas different to their own. Learning to be part of a democracy, learning to connect and collaborate with others whilst acknowledging and embracing people's differences is one of the most important skills need for life today. Through the understanding of the importance of these traits, children are empowered to thrive in environments where they work and live alongside others, as well as be successful in their everyday lives.

GRIT and Resilience

Angela Duckworth presented a Ted Talk in 2013 saying Grit is a significant predictor of success in adults. So, what does this mean for our children? Not a day goes by that adults don't admire the persistence that develops and unfolds in our children through their play. They imagine, create, negotiate and they compromise, they can focus themselves on a task for hours on end. This free play allows them the time to get 'gritty', when an adult does not fix it, solve it, make it, giving the children have the freedom to practice their own real-life skills. When we see a child's creation not work out as planned, or if their project collapses into a thousand pieces, but they manage it, without falling to pieces, we feel huge pride. They bounce back even though it's hard and they look adversity in the face and rise above it. These experiences, when life is not going 100% to their plan is the time that GRIT grows! This gives them the foundations to 'bounce back.' We all know that it's not what happens in life but it is how we react to it and manage what happens next that makes the difference.

Creativity, Innovation and Critical Thinking

Edward De Bono said, 'There is no doubt that creativity is the most important human resource of all. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would forever be repeating the same patterns.'

The 21st Century requires individuals to be creative: to drive innovation, to come together to solve difficult problems and develop innovative solutions that meet the changing needs of the world, to solve problems, to succeed, to increase engagement, to make them 'future-proof' and most importantly, to promote well-being and happiness. Children who have the opportunity to express their creativity (whether it be on paper, with Lego, or by using their imagination), and have more skills for solving problems, are more resilient in the face of change and more fulfilled in their daily lives, lending to positive physical wellbeing as well.

Whilst as teachers and as families it remains important to focus on preparing our children for their ongoing learning, remembering that academics are only one part of this preparation, but that these 21st Century Skills are of equal importance for their overall success both now and in the future.

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Nikki Joyce
Preschool Principal



A Visit from 'Nano Girl'

With thanks to Eileen Coghlan

Our Mother's Day Celebration was an opportunity for us to celebrate our wonderful Mums and the support they give to our Preschool. The children loved welcoming their special guests for the morning and were excited to show them around their special place of learning. There was plentiful morning tea for everyone, including heart-shape cookies baked and decorated by the children. Handcrafted necklaces were also gifted, and songs were sung as they excitedly waited for the Nanogirl scientists to set up.

The science show was spectacular and had the mothers, children and teachers constantly intrigued as they watched scientists, Super Snapper and Rocket Girl experiment with different types of liquids and gases. The children enjoyed observing the difference in reaction when bubbles were filled with either carbon dioxide gas or helium. It took everyone by surprise when the scientists created human-sized bubbles, enclosing every child, even some mothers inside the bubbles! It was a lot of fun!

After being taken on a journey through the scientific process of making predictions, testing predictions, and discussing their outcomes, everyone walked away having had a great morning and feeling like they had learned something new. We are sure that the memories of popping a bubble from the inside will certainly stand the test of time!



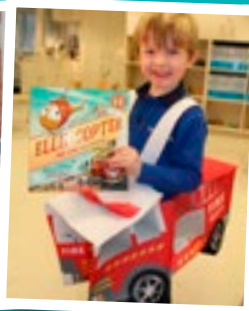


Who Said Giraffes Can't Dance?!

With thanks to Eileen Coghlan

We were very fortunate to have two groups of special visitors from the College come to Preschool to share their Performing Arts expertise with us. The first show was an engaging rendition of a favourite story 'Giraffes Can't Dance.' Our youngest learners were enthralled by the imposing animal costumes and the superb dance moves and acting skills. The older students were very impressive with their ability to engage with their younger Preschool peers. We quickly had groups of children joining in on the animal dance party. The second performance also involved a friendly group of animals, this time enjoying a picnic together. The children's willingness to be active participants in this interactive show highlighted the positive impact these experiences have on their holistic learning.

Here at the Preschool, we always value and appreciate the older students coming in from the other schools within the wider organisation. These opportunities are two-fold in that our younger children can be inspired by seeing older children's skills and talents. Likewise, we are sure that coming into to the Preschool environment presents opportunities for the College students to engage in Service whilst building on their repertoire for confident acting - and of course, being extremely entertaining at the same time!



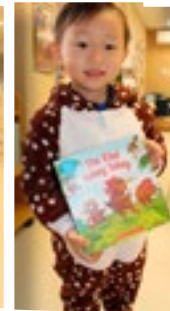
Book Day

With thanks to Eileen Coghlan

To celebrate Literacy Week, we invited the children to come to Preschool dressed as a character from one of their favourite books. We were so impressed by the vast array of costumes and creativity shown by our young friends as they arrived for the day. With treasured books placed proudly on display on the shelf, so began our day of rich immersion in the joy of reading and listening to stories together. The children were so proud to hear their chosen book being read out to the rest of the group. Their attention and focus had to be commended, as we made our way through quite a significant number of books together.

Book Day also presented an opportunity for the teachers to embrace their flair for dressing up as well. We had an array of enchanting literacy characters, with Mrs Wishy Washy being by far the most memorable and entertaining.

Whilst the love of literacy is fostered daily here at Preschool, Book Day presents an opportunity for children and teachers to celebrate our collective love for stories. We learnt a lot more about our children's interests and the sentimental role favourite stories play in young children's family lives and the enduring place they hold in their hearts.



Interest-Led Curriculum in Action

With thanks to Eileen Coghlan

At Preschool we strongly advocate for a curriculum where the children are at the heart of everything we do. The children have shown a longstanding interest in animals and to weave this into their learning environments, we have had many group discussions with the children to understand the particular aspects that capture their attention. The children have shared their favourite animal during these discussions, giving an explanation for their choice. The children's responses to these questions reflect their confidence to express their thinking using increasingly descriptive vocabulary.

The teachers embraced this group interest through the provision of intriguing provocations and materials both on table tops and throughout the learning spaces. Investigation times presented opportunities for children to draw their 'favourite animal,' challenging themselves to draw with detail. They also worked in small groups on animal pictures to develop their collaborative skills.

Within these drawing experiences the children are encouraged and show great pride in writing their names next to their work. Inadvertently the children are creating visual stories about their favourite animals that are accompanied by emerging print and letter shapes.

An Interest-Led curriculum means that the children determine the trajectory of their explorations and discoveries whilst the teachers offering guidance and support.



The Olympic Flame

With thanks to Eileen Coghlan

With the Summer Olympic Games underway in Tokyo, we decided to offer the children provocative learning opportunities to explore in relation to this important global sporting event. The children embraced the idea of making flags and Olympic medals, with the absolute highlight being creating their very own Olympic torches. Children carefully folded paper, adding coloured cellophane to represent the Olympic flame. With torches held proudly aloft, the children made their way around the Preschool making sure they kept their line of procession intact.

The processes of creating are actively supported throughout our learning programme. This empowers children to develop skills and dispositions necessary to realise their own thoughts and ideas. The crafting of medals invited the children to practise their scissor skills and to navigate the sticky tape dispensers.

As early childhood educators, we value offering children experiences that support them to make meaningful connections between their own lives and the wider world around them. Our young learners never cease to amaze us with their innate curiosity about current events! Discussions around different flags invite consideration and celebration of diversity within our own Preschool community as well as within a wider global context. Our role as teachers is to share in this by offering thought-provoking materials and to initiate conversations to scaffold children's understandings and knowledge building.

