Welcome

Welcome to 2017 at the ELC. We have experienced a wonderful start to the term and the children have settled into their learning environment with ease and enthusiasm. I have enjoyed listening to and being part of the wonderful rich conversations between the children and their educators, discovering the children’s interests and observing how they interact with their environment, peers and adults at the ELC. We acknowledge the Reggio Emilia belief that the environment is the child’s third educator and the environment plays an important role in welcoming the child and making them feel safe and secure.

This year we have introduced primary carers for all children. Please refer to the ‘Primary Carers’ document on page 2 to gain an understanding of the role of a primary carer in our setting. Next week we will advise you of your child’s primary carer by email. We value the importance of documenting the children’s learning and believe that having primary carers will ensure that we can form strong relationships with all children which will enable educators and co-educators to share and reflect on our observations and documentations to create a meaningful and relevant program.

Reminders

- If your child attends the ELC on Mondays, they will require a named library bag so that they can borrow a book from the school library.
- All children are required to wear a hat when outdoors.
- Please do not send toys from home to the ELC.
- PE lessons with Justine Smart at the school are held on Wednesday mornings at 9am.
- If you have not collected and paid for your child’s art work from our Ornithology exhibition please do so as soon as possible as we will be dismantling all unsold items within the next week.

Vintage Festival

We are very fortunate to live in a community where we can be actively involved as participating citizens. The Vintage Festival enables us to contribute to, and be visible in, our community. We will be entering the scarecrow competition this year and Nicole has put a very interesting slant on our contribution to this competition and we will disclose our plan of attack very soon. The children will be involved at all levels in this project and when they have finalised their design we would appreciate any help that you as families may be able to offer.

We will also be involved in the Ziegenmarkt which will be held on Thursday 20th April 2017. Traditionally we have had a stall selling cakes, fruit cordial, produce and other products. We will keep you informed about this event throughout the term.

Repair Bird Hide – Can you help?

Last year’s flood washed away our Bush Block bird hide. All of the pieces have been salvaged but it needs to be put back together. Our school grounds person, Mike Sanders, would appreciate help in fixing the structure as it is more than a one man job. He is flexible with times so if you are able to help him out please phone me (0407 976 757) and we can work out a convenient time when this job could be undertaken. Thanks so much.

Dates to Remember:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 7th/Wednesday 8th February:</td>
<td>Welcome Morning Teas 8.30-9.30am</td>
<td>All families are invited to join us as we welcome our new families into the ELC community. Please see attached invitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 15th February:</td>
<td>Parent Information Evening 7.00pm</td>
<td>This information evening is facilitated for our new families but existing families are welcome to join us. Please refer to attached sheet for more details.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday 7th April:</td>
<td>ELC Closure Day</td>
<td>The centre will be closed to students as we conduct Parent/Educator Interviews.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 13th April:</td>
<td>Easter in the Bush Block</td>
<td>This will be held from 12.30 - 2.30pm. More details to follow.</td>
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This week we have presented several provocations for the children. Provocations provoke thoughts, discoveries, questions, interests, creativity and ideas. They can also expand on a thought, project, idea and interest. Artefacts from the beach have been presented to the children at the drawing table and the children have used the languages of drawing and conversation to share their holiday experiences.

A selection of rocks on the science table have been displayed to provoke thinking about the attributes of rocks - educators, through conversations, will invite the children to think about size, colour, texture, similarities and differences. Questions will be posed to extend the children’s thinking and encourage them to hypothesise - Where can we find rocks? How can we change the appearance of rocks? Are there rocks in every country of the world? Are there rocks in space? Conversations with the children create wonderful opportunities for educators and the children to learn together. The outside camp site has been well utilised and the children have used their imaginations to create fascinating play scenarios, often revisiting their own camping experiences and re-creating these outings using the props available to them.

All learning areas have been thoughtfully planned with the intention of giving the children the opportunity to think mathematically, scientifically and imaginatively. The children have opportunities to express their thoughts and understanding through many different languages.

**Christian Studies** this term will involve discussions about Jesus, we will talk about his birth, his life, his friends, the stories he told as we lead up to Easter. I have attached an article taken from Every Child Magazine, ‘Children’s Spirituality’ written by Pam Linke. We are a Lutheran ELC but I enjoyed reading this article and feel it is very relevant, I reflected on the closing line, “It (spirituality) involves being, belonging and believing in something good.”

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**Primary Carers**

Educators recognise the importance of children forming strong relationships to thrive developmentally (emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually). Every child at the ELC has a primary caregiver educator who is responsible for creating a secure attachment relationship with the child and their family. The strong and trusting relationships enable the child and the family to experience consistency in approaches to relationships, interactions and care routines.

Primary Care Giving is established for all children throughout the centre. The primary carer will welcome the child and family to the ELC and support the child with their transition into their new learning environment. A child's primary care giver is someone who will develop a depth of knowledge of the child’s routine and care needs. The PCG will observe the child’s development and make time to spend with the child throughout the day. As a parent this is the person to see to gain feedback on your child’s day at the ELC.

Your child’s primary carer will take overall responsibility for the child’s memory folder but all educators will document the child’s learning journey of exploration and discovery, their interests and strengths, through learning stories and other methods of documentation.

We believe it is important to celebrate the individual skills and abilities of each child’s development, providing support to revisit past experiences, question and extend the child’s thinking and encourage all children to develop their own theories about the world around them and their interactions with it. It is important to note that primary caregiving is not exclusive caregiving. All educators work as a team to ensure positive experiences for all of our children and families.
Invitation

Please join us as we welcome our new families to the ELC by attending a

Morning Tea

on either Tuesday 7th February or Wednesday 8th February from 8.30am to 9.30am.

This is a great opportunity for our existing and new ELC families to meet each other along with our ELC carers for 2017.

We hope you are able to come along for a cuppa and help make our new families feel welcome as they join our ELC community.

Please feel free to join us with your child if your child does not attend on either of these days.
PARENT INFORMATION EVENING

Wednesday 15th February, 2017
at 7pm at the Early Learning Centre

We trust that at least one parent from each family will attend this evening.

Educators at the ELC value the importance of developing relationships of trust and confidence with one another and our parent information night enables us to begin this journey.

Educators at the ELC will introduce families to the routines of the centre and give an overview of the curriculum.

We encourage you to ask questions on this evening so that you can gain a deeper understanding of our program.

'The child, the family and the service do not exist in isolation. They are all part of a much wider community. When educators and coordinators develop links, share information, and work in collaboration... they are better able to achieve the best outcomes for children and families.'


Spirituality is being recognised increasingly as important to children’s development, yet there are often concerns about what it means, how we can include it in curriculum and how to be inclusive in embracing it.

Spirituality has been shown to impact on people’s lives in many positive ways. It is related to less depression and less drug abuse. It is a protective factor in resilience, and associated with enhanced well-being and a role in healing (Grotberg, 1995; Miller, 2016; University of Maryland Medical Centre, 2015).

“The spiritual dimension of children’s development is part of a holistic understanding of the needs and rights of children, young people, families and communities” (Sedan, 2005, p. 4).

Spirituality involves a sense of connection with the world and its creatures, a search for/awareness of the meaning of life and a belief in a higher presence. For some people this higher presence can be nature, peace, the universe or altruistic love of humankind. Generally, spirituality is linked with a sense of awe and wonder, with compassion, creativity and with positive values, encompassing a personal relationship, not just an activity or particular rituals.

Often spirituality involves a religious faith. Where faiths are supportive, they provide a community of belief and care for members which also provides other qualities needed for spiritual development (although some religious groups and practices include aspects such as fear and guilt which are detrimental to both spirituality and resilience).

Children’s spirituality develops in a family, a community, a culture and sometimes a faith group or similarly supportive group. Spirituality begins in the earliest months of life where infants are learning to develop relationships with and trust in those who care for them. For the infant, these people are all knowing and all powerful. It is from these earliest relationships that an understanding of a loving, caring and guiding presence in their lives develops.

Toddlers are meeting not only a wider natural world, but also the world of connections with others. They are experiencing new feelings such as shame, pride, jealousy and guilt. As they experience adults reacting to their feelings and the feelings of others, toddlers are discovering who they are and what they believe, not from what we tell them, but from who we are and how we relate to them.

Older toddlers with language skills and pre-schoolers are also looking to make meaning of their world and themselves and where they fit in, by talking about what they see and feel and asking “why”?

Early childhood educators can support children by respecting and being interested in their feelings and beliefs. Hart (2006), quoted in Grajczowne (n.d.), says that the ‘foremost concern regarding enhancing children’s spiritual life is to respect each child’s innate spiritual capacities’.

There is limited research into spirituality in young children’s education. One research project developed by educators at Tufts University studied kindergarteners’ beliefs (Mardell & Abo-Zena, 2010). The project involved children expressing and sharing their beliefs in different ways. They found that, from this, the children learned tolerance and the educators learned that young children can engage in authentic and civil discussions about beliefs.

Supporting children’s spirituality in public education is a complex undertaking and, in a pluralistic society, should not support one system of spiritual beliefs and practices over another. An inclusive approach embraces features of different faiths and their expression as well as other expressions of spirituality which give joy and meaning to children’s lives. Young children have a natural sense of wonder, awe and curiosity about nature and the world, religions and beliefs and often talk about or ask questions about life and death. As they learn to make meaning of all this, they are learning new values such as fairness and kindness. As educators provide ‘safe spaces’ to explore spirituality and the ways it is expressed, we support children in exploring and developing their own spiritual beliefs and in understanding and respecting others (Baumgartner & Buchanan, 2010, p. 93).
There are many ways in which early childhood educators can support young children’s spirituality. Educators can:

- provide a community of care where young children make connections, have a sense of belonging and learn about understanding and empathy, giving and gratitude, faith and hope
- respond to and explore children’s awe and wonder at tangible things, such as nature and music; and intangible things, such as beauty and love
- support families’ expression of their spirituality through talking with them and their children and giving opportunities for families to share their different rituals and special occasions
- help children enjoy the history of beliefs in the world and what they mean, through stories and myths; and in Australia especially through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- have rituals that support concepts such as joy, beauty, gratitude and empathy, for example make a card for a child who is unwell or a welcome back ritual for a child who has been away, a special place to put objects of awe or beauty, be thankful for a lovely day, have quiet times for meditation
- provide opportunities to contribute to others’ lives and to the world
- be with children as they recover from fear or failure or disappointment
- listen to children’s questions and thoughts about big ideas like life and death and what it all means to them—make space for their voice
- remember always that children learn their spiritual values from who we are and what we say and do, and we need to be intentional in this regard.

By their questions and their interests, their beliefs and their wonder, children give us opportunities to support this important part of their being and becoming. Spirituality is about listening more than telling, wondering rather than knowing, walking with more than leading, respecting others, connecting with others and with the world. It involves being, belonging and believing in something good.

Pam Linke
Early childhood consultant

References
Mardell, B., & Abu-Zena, M. (2010). The fun thing about studying different beliefs is that they are different. Young Children, July, 12–17.


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