

Mt Colah Preschool Kindergarten



a caring place to learn and grow

We hope you have all enjoyed your start to the Preschool year! The children are enjoying meeting new friends and reuniting with old friends. They continue to astound us with their curiosity and enthusiasm to learn and their ability to pick up our routine so quickly. If you have any questions at all please see your child's educator. We encourage you to read our Newsletter each month as it contains articles on child development, information on the many learning activities the children have been involved in and upcoming events.



February in Review 2024

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Our Preschool Programme in Review

Sweetpeas: Well done to our Sweetpeas who have quickly settled in and are already thriving in their new preschool environment. It has been wonderful watching them form many new friendships already and learning about all the things that make each of them unique. Over the past few weeks we have been focusing on working together, sharing and helping others through a range of group games, stories, play spaces and discussions. Some of their favourite social play spaces have been camping, babies, dinosaurs and telephones which allowed many opportunities for them to practice the skills they have been learning through our developmental focus. The Sweetpeas were recently introduced to our 'Mini Moves' program where we practice a range of core fundamental movement skills including running, jumping, hopping and ball skills as we work towards becoming confident and enthusiastic mini movers and developing our gross motor skills. We look forward to watching the children work towards their goals in all developmental areas this year.

Bluebells: It has been a great start to the preschool year and we hope you are hearing lots of stories when your child comes home each day. We have spent many hours exploring the preschool outdoor environment where the children have the chance to pick herbs, vegetables and water the plants, and try out new skills on the physical play equipment. The children have investigated how to build the strongest sandcastles in the sandpit, and the educators are enjoying the endless coffees and cakes that are made in the cubby house and mud kitchen! The children have also enjoyed looking at the different bugs outside and as a result of this interest, we are investigating mini-beasts some more. We have also been spending lots of time in our smaller groups, which allows the children to learn the names of other children, as well as begin to develop friendships within this group, and playing games such as Duck Duck Goose helps with those connections. We look forward to supporting your child's development at preschool this year, and getting to know you and your family.

Schoolies: What an amazing start to 2024, with the Schoolies settling into Preschool confidently, including building relationships with each other and their educators. Over the past few weeks, Maddie and I have enjoyed getting to know the children and discovering their interests and strengths. We have loved hearing stories about their holidays including camping trips and Disney cruises! After spending one-on-one time with the children, we have been able to establish individual goals for the children, working in collaboration with families. We look forward to working on these goals with the Schoolies to best support them with their transition to 'big school'. Our developmental programme has recently focused on Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 from the Early Years Learning Framework. Maddie and I have supported the children's ability to form friendships including initiating interactions with others and inviting others into their play. We have also been introducing the children to our sustainable practices that we follow at Preschool such as sorting rubbish and gardening to support them with respecting the environment. We look forward to continuing to explore a range of topics and skills with the Schoolies this term.



Filling Buckets/Friendship Week W.C 5th February



The start of a new preschool year is always an exciting time, and meeting new friends is a big part of that. The educators support the development of friendships by having discussions and activities throughout the day to encourage positive friendships and interactions. Learning to take turns, listening to others ideas as well as sharing your own thoughts in a new group setting sometimes takes practice. Filling buckets is a concept that encourages the children to think of other people and their feelings. For example, snatching a toy from someone would empty their bucket, but sharing a toy would fill theirs and your own bucket. During this week, we played games where we had to take turns with others, worked with friends to create the biggest tower using blocks and created a friendship recipe together.

You can find out more about bucket filling from this song, which is a favourite at preschool:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaddbqEQ1NE> The Learning Station Fill Your Bucket.



Our Friendship Recipe	
Ingredients	Steps
10 kind words	1. Playing together
1 billion laughs	2. Say 'I love-you'
lots of sharing	introduce yourself





Healthy Eating

W.C 12th February

This week the children explored healthy eating, discovering what is considered as 'healthy' and 'sometimes' foods. We discovered the health benefits to eating healthy food including how these foods are full of vitamins and minerals, provide our body with energy and support our immune system to prevent our bodies from getting sick. We looked at our own healthy lunch boxes, discussing what foods are important to eat first. The children enjoyed sorting the pretend food into their correct category (healthy/sometimes) and made healthy fruit skewers and smoothies.





Healthy Bodies and Hygiene

W.C 19th February

This week the children have been learning all about what makes up a healthy body. We have had many group discussions on the different ways we can look after our bodies and have incorporated a variety of new forms of movement and exercising into our daily discovery group times, (yoga, pilates, meditation, workout classes and more). We also used the Community Garden as an opportunity to further our gross motor skills. The children have loved sharing their pre-existing knowledge and sharing what sports and exercises they do outside of preschool.

We also explored basic hygiene. Learning how to wash our hands and clean our bodies properly to prevent spreading any germs.



Chinese New Year

W.C. 16.2.24



As we celebrated Chinese New Year (CNY), the children discovered the zodiac animal for the year 2024—dragon, as well as learning their own zodiac animals. They watched CNY performances including dragon dances followed by creating their own paper dragons. There were plenty more craft activities throughout the week including making lanterns for good fortune and prosperity and creating envelopes that are used to wish others good luck.

During group time, the children learnt songs and words in Mandarin (Twinkle Twinkle), watched clips of families celebrating through decorating their homes and eating meals together and performed their own dragon dance. Children who celebrate this occasion at home, shared some items from their culture including stories, clothing and CNY envelopes.

A popular play space was our Chinese Restaurant where the children employed their social skills to enjoy noodles, rice, dumplings and other delicious meals together. On Friday, we made delicious fried rice (a traditional Chinese meal), with the children assisting with measuring the ingredients, stirring and eating of course!



Why Fine Motor Skills are Important



Many of your child's daily activities—like getting dressed, eating, and writing—require control of small muscles in the hands. We call these skills fine motor skills. Fine motor skills are necessary to engage in smaller, more precise movements, normally using the hands and fingers. Researchers acknowledge that fine motor development is essential for children's emergent and later writing skills and that is why it is important for children to experience a range of activities to support and strengthen these developing skills.

Fine motor skills involves so much more than being able to hold a pencil or use a pair of scissors. Before children get to this stage, they need experiences that will help increase muscle strength and coordination. You can support your child's developing skills at home by providing opportunities to;

- * Play with dough. Roll, squeeze, stretch, pat, pound or use tools such as plastic knives, scissors or rolling pins for cutting and rolling.
- * Finger paint. Use fingers to paint pictures, letters or numbers.
- * Tweezers, threading beads, clothes pins, kitchen tongs or chopsticks. Use tweezers, clothes pegs or chopsticks to pick up and sort objects like beads, cereal, cotton balls, pompoms or other small objects (watch closely for choking hazards).
- * Crayons, markers, pencils, chalk. Draw, scribble or write.
- * Plastic containers. Allow children to open and close empty plastic containers with lids.
- * Buttons and zippers. Practice buttoning and unbuttoning, zipping and unzipping.
- * Pouring. Place objects (corn, beads, cereal, etc.) in one small container, then have children pour the objects into an identical empty container.
- * Lego and blocks. Connecting, stacking, building with Lego and blocks.
- * Loose change. Sort loose change into different containers with fingers.

If you are concerned about how your child's fine motor skills are developing, please have a chat with your child's educator for support and other strategies.



Floorbooks

You may have seen our Floorbook on the table as you come into preschool, showing lots of photos, drawings and comments from the children about an interest we are researching. You may also be wondering "What is a Floorbook?"

A Floorbook is a documentation approach we have adopted, that uses a large book with blank pages for children to record different aspects of their learnings in small groups or as a whole group. It is called a 'floor book' because the book is used on the floor so that the children have close access to it. It explores the shared thinking in a more formal way so that children recall each others ideas and record them through writing, drawing and photographs. The educators support this by writing children's comments as they say them, document questions and help with gluing in photos.

Our most recent documentation focuses on the children's interest around Filling Buckets and healthy eating. You can look through the book anytime and discover what we have been talking about, where the children's interests lie and next steps the educators can take to continue to support the learning taking place. We would also appreciate any feedback you may have on the Floorbook.



Little Endeavours with Jo

It is great to be back at preschool and spending time with the children during Little Endeavours. The children are already realizing that I come in to do activities with them that could be craft, cooking, working in the garden or even 'playing' with the worms. These activities promote all the skills required for a successful start to school.



Preschoolers Bunting - This is our first activity of each year as each child decorates their person and with their name added underneath I join the bunting and we hang it in the hall. While they created their person the children confidently shared information with me about themselves and their families and we learnt about each other. The children love looking up and seeing themselves and their friends, creating a sense of identity for them at Preschool.



Annie Apple Tree – As a group project the preschoolers and I made an apple tree to celebrate the sound /a/. It was a great activity to develop fine motor skills and creativity, with the favourite part being the stitching of the bark to hessian to make the tree trunk. We will extend this interest with some more stitching activities in the coming weeks. All the preschoolers showed their confidence and personalities as they cut out and decorated their individual apples. The preschoolers collaborated and worked together to make our tree, with each child recognizing the part they contributed to in our finished display.





Phonemic Awareness Programme

During the month of February, the Schoolies have been learning about the focus sounds /s/ and /a/. The children have been engaged in a variety of songs, stories, activities and craft experiences with the Letterland characters Sammy Snake and Annie Apple.

Wow, what a great first fortnight learning about the /s/ sound with Sammy Snake! The children enjoyed producing the /s/ sound through a range of different activities related to the topic—sun safety. This included a fun beach scene in the sandpit where the children needed to apply sun protection to both themselves and the babies. Children also shared some of their sun safety items with their peers, followed by wearing them out to play. Our Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide song was very catchy with the children singing it throughout the day. Lastly, the children developed their fine motor skills as they created sunny suns using colourful buttons. Other activities were set up throughout our play space to further promote the /s/ sound. This included a sea shells sensory tray, stegosaurus exploration and slithering snakes play space.



Our second Letterland sound for the year was /a/ with Annie Apple. Jo made an apple tree with the children, developing their cutting skills as they cut out paper apples followed by decorating them. The children experimented with the red and green playdough to strengthen their fine motor skills and make apples with as well as making delicious slinky apples using the slinky apple machine. Lastly, we explored the life cycle of an apple as well as how apple juice is made.



SUSTAINABILITY

MCPK Clothing Swap

This year we have decided to try our very own clothes swap due to a winning vote from our preschool families at the end of 2023. This is now displayed out the front of preschool during opening hours. The clothes swap is designed for families to donate pre-loved children's clothes (Sizes 2-6) and have the option to take some second hand items home.



The idea of our new clothing rack is to help reduce the amount of landfill each year.

We aim to recycle and reuse items that are still in good quality and to re-think where we dispose of our unwanted goods to better the environment.

Did you know more than 183 million items of kids' clothing are thrown into landfill each year.



Book Library

As part of our sustainable program, we will be continuing our community book library to encourage the recycling of preloved books by borrowing and donating books for all to enjoy. Our book library has been met with enthusiasm and children have enjoyed taking books home to read.

This is a fun way of encouraging the love for reading. Please feel free to borrow, keep or donate any unwanted books you might like to share with others. Happy reading everyone!



Veggie Gardens

The children tend to our veggie gardens. We love growing our own produce which we can enjoy for afternoon tea. This month we enjoyed yummy home grown capsicums.

This month the educators collaborated with the children to construct simple rules for our Preschool for 2024. We discussed how these rules help everyone feel safe and secure within our environment. Encouraging the children's participation in the process of developing the rules supports the development of their autonomy and independence, their self regulation and helps to create a caring and empathetic environment. Our rules are displayed at our group time area and on our notice board. Regular discussions are had around these as we promote a safe and positive Preschool environment.



Preschool RULES!

We are bucket fillers who fill each other's buckets with kindness

We use kind hands and feet

We use our manners

We listen to the speaker

We take care of our toys and preschool equipment

We walk on the pavers and inside

If you didn't make it, please don't break it

We keep sand in the sandpit and don't throw it

We respect and look after our environment

We wear hats and sunscreen outside

Quality Improvement Plan



FEEDBACK WANTED!

Families, our Quality Improvement Plan and Self Assessment has set goals against the National Quality Standards as we continually try to improve the service we provide. Please refer to our QIP display for regular updates as we focus on our goals. We would love your feedback on our strengths and areas of improvement over the 7 quality areas. Please feel free to add these to our board, or speak to Lara if you need some guidance. We value your feedback 😊

Cultural Responsiveness

As part of our Quality Improvement Plan, we are working towards the goal of embedding cultural responsiveness throughout our daily routine and programmes. This is highlighted in the ***Early Years Learning Framework - Being culturally responsive includes respecting and working collaboratively with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.***

Our aim is to create an environment for all children, families and educators through respectfully embedding our families cultures into our practice, play spaces and learning opportunities. Educators have been working on ways in which we can effectively embed more cultural responsiveness into our daily routine. We thank the families who completed our recent form on greetings and cultural celebrations. We are grateful for our family connections and we would love to celebrate this more, so if you would like to share any part of your culture with the preschool e.g. cooking, language classes, stories, dress, please speak to an educator.



LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

This month we have been practicing our lockdown procedures with the children. This aims to provide a safe and secure environment for our educators, children, families and visitors to the centre in the event of a threat, dangerous situation or natural disaster within the community. Further, the Preschool aims to minimise the risk of harm or the exposure to danger for anyone on the premises through the implementation of this procedure. The children have all done a great job of following the educators instructions during these times as we practice a variety of pretend scenarios from medical emergencies to snake sightings. If you are ever present during a lockdown drill please follow educators instructions. On days when we are practicing a drill you will notice a sign on the iPad to notify families that a lockdown drill will be taking place at some point that day.



March Birthdays

A big Happy Birthday to all of our children and educators having a birthday this month! What a busy month!



Bobby —3 years

Kobe —4 years

Jacob— 4 years

Darcy —3 years

Maverick—3 years

Sam L—5 years

Abril—5 years

Educator Maddie

Educator Jo



Community Connections



Support MY Inclusion

For Educators, Therapy Assistants and Parents

Empowering Autistic Children by Upskilling their Adults

Whether you are an Educator or Parent, these Workshops will help you to Understand Autism and its Impact on a Child's Learning and Development. You will learn how to Engage and Teach Autistic Children and Understand and Support Co-regulation.



"My son was diagnosed with Autism, selective mutism, cognitive and developmental delay, as well as behavioural and emotional dysregulation. To say that the ESDM workshop has changed his life is an understatement. It has changed all of our lives and empowered my son to have an equal opportunity to a future, in the most naturalistic manner." Shabnam, Mother and Teacher, UK

Support My Inclusion Educator and Parent Workshop Content

- ✓ Understanding Autism and its Impact on a Child's Learning and Development
- ✓ Becoming the Child's Play Partner as a foundation for Learning
- ✓ Assessing and Programming for Autistic Children and Collecting Child Data
- ✓ Finding their Smile, Capturing their Attention and Building Back and Forth Interactions
- ✓ Using the ESDM Teaching Principles to Guide your Practice
- ✓ Promoting the Child's Development across all Domains
- ✓ Understanding and Supporting Co-Regulation
- ✓ Creating Effective and Responsive Learning Environments

The ESDM is a naturalistic play-based early education that can be embedded in multiple settings, including Intervention Programs, Therapy Clinics, Early Childhood Education and Care Settings, Primary Schools and the Family Home. It has been manualised which helps to bring all the adults in the child's life working towards the same goals. The teaching principles used in this model are informed by expertise from early childhood education and allied health professions. Major learning goals include skills that enable social learning and engagement in naturalistic play and cooperative activities.



*"My experience with the ESDM Workshop through Early Start - University of Wollongong, was one of the most amazing experiences of my life, an absolute Godsend." **Danielle, Parent, Queensland***

- ✓ Support My Inclusion Workshops are delivered remotely as a series of 5 x 2 hour sessions, each a week apart.
- ✓ This allows flexibility for working professionals and parents
- ✓ It also allows time between each session for reflection and practice back in your own workplace or home, so that you can become more proficient more quickly.
- ✓ You will also receive online supervision to assess a child with ASD and then develop and implement your ESDM intervention program.
- ✓ Coaching and feedback will be provided by your Certified Trainer across the 5 sessions to build your understanding of the model, your skills and your confidence.

**The workshops run throughout the year and on demand.
So book now through our Website: www.esdmtaining.com.au**

*"The ESDM has had a dramatic impact on the way we are able to support and include children with Autism in our Community Based Preschool. Educators feel empowered to support and redirect interfering behaviours using the skills and strategies learnt throughout this workshop and implement these in fun, caring and playful ways" **Danae, Director Wongawilli Preschool***