

Mt Colah Preschool Kindergarten



a caring place to learn and grow

Reflecting on the use of technology and the development of language in children.....

Baby's brains are elastic, so the first three years of life are critical for both language and overall brain development. Unlike other animals, humans are born with embryonic brains, rendering babies helpless and in need of caregivers while also providing a developmental advantage. The connections between neurons that are used repeatedly get reinforced and more engrained in a baby's mind, while those connections that are not used as much get "pruned away," severing that connection. This process is typically healthy..

In the first three years of life, the brain triples in volume due to these synaptic connections, making it critical that stimuli and challenges babies receive within that time frame are the kinds of challenges that help babies build creative, flexible and resilient brains.

A similar early critical stage can be seen with language development. The first nine months of life are important for a child's understanding of sounds and how they should be interpreted, and children are often capable of understanding language long before they can actually speak it. When babies sign with very simple hand signals, they actually develop language structures even earlier than when they start babbling. It is essential to communicate with the child by whatever means as early as possible, so they get used to hearing the sounds and understanding the meanings as they build their brains. This early communication could be signing, speaking or both, as long as it helps introduce language early on.

A recent study focused on how screen time impacts language development in children, finding that children who spent more time on a screen instead of talking suffered in their language development. This is concerning because face-to-face interaction is drastically different than what a screen can offer. When you are talked to by a human being face to face, you're getting a whole lot more than just the sounds that are coming out of that box, whether it be television or a computer. **Face-to-face communication with another human being is much richer, much more protective and meaningful in the sense of human connection.**

It's the quality of the interactivity - children need to hear language and practice language to develop articulation, meaning, visual cues and develop vocabulary.

Please read the entire article: <https://www.wrvo.org/post/technologys-impact-childhood-brain-language-development#stream/0>



May 2021

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Our Preschool Programme Past Month in Review

Sweetpeas:

The Sweetpeas have all enjoyed participating in crazy fun days over the school holidays. There were many sensory experiences such as Cooking with Jo, making sandwiches for Teddy Bear's Picnic, Crazy Sock Day, Gardening and of course the very popular Messy Play Day. It was lovely watching those, who were a bit hesitant at first about messy play, inch forward and find the thrill of digging into the cold spaghetti, plunging hands into warm goop and leaving little paint hand prints on paper. Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling are all ways children learn to explore their environment developing a strong sense of identity. Using multiple senses at the same time stimulates learning and language development, especially by learning descriptive words. Children also discover new things about themselves and their world by being connected. We have continued with cooking experiences which has been so popular. After learning about Bush Tucker and exploring many interesting things indigenous people of Australia gathered and hunted for in the bush, we made delicious damper with Jo. We also made ANZAC biscuits and spoke about remembering, on, Sunday 25th April, the very brave soldiers who risked their lives to keep us safe in our beautiful country Australia, which we all call home.

'Sorry about the mess, but we are learning here.' - Unknown.

Bluebells:

Term 2 is upon us already and we are looking forward to the next few weeks. Everyone enjoyed the holiday programme and the wide variety of activities that went on, including cooking, sport, messy and dress up. The Bluebells have been enjoying spending time together as a group and there are some lovely friendships being developed. The children have been joining in games such as Duck Duck Goose, Ring a Ring A Rosie and passing the ball. These games are a lot of fun and also teach the children about sharing, thinking of others and fairness. When we play these games, we talk about making sure everyone has a turn and not always picking the same friends and the children are developing a good understanding of why this is important. Games such as these also encourage our counting skills as well as our gross motor skills. If your child is talking about a particular friend at home, we are happy to support you in organising a playdate outside of preschool, please just let us know.



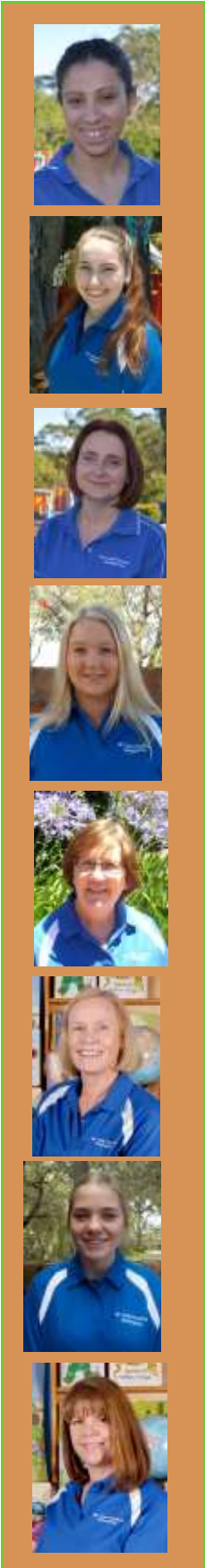


Our Preschool Programme Past Month in Review

Schoolies:

This month the Schoolies have been applying a variety of thinking strategies and learning dispositions such as curiosity and creativity as they explore, inquire and investigate their natural environment. Educators have been scaffolding the children's strong interest in search for different flora and fauna within our outdoor environment here at preschool by providing various investigative tools and equipment like binoculars, magnified glasses, telescopes, insect hotels and temporary bug catchers. Educators have also listened carefully to the children's attempts to hypothesize and have enjoyed expanding on their thinking through meaningful conversation and questions. The children spent countless afternoons this month searching high and low for a big find and something to explore further. It was not until Emily brought in some herbs from her garden during the holiday programme on 'Gardening Day' for a sensory smelling table, that a big discovery was made. One of our friends Addy was exploring her sense of smell at the sensory table, then looking up at Steph she said "Steph, this basil smells like meat". The children at the table and Steph giggled as we couldn't work out why it smelt like that, until Steph had a closer look and there was in fact a big fat caterpillar on a stem of basil curled up in what looked like the beginning of a cocoon. Instantly the connection was made by many of the children "It's like the big fat caterpillar from the 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' story." The children made predictions and shared their ideas about what might happen next while observing the caterpillar closely in a bug catcher. The children made sure to set the caterpillar free when it was time to go inside and educators continued discussions and read some stories relating to our natural environment and the different bugs and creepy crawlies that make up our beautiful and diverse ecosystem.

- L.O 4 Children are confident and involved learners.**
- 4.2 Children develop a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching, and investigating.**





Child Safe Environments

The Preschool seeks to create a safe and supportive environment for the children who attend and for their families. To this end, the Preschool ensures that processes are in place to identify harm or suspected harm to a child and that the Preschool's response is lawful, professional, and immediate.

In New South Wales, legislation requires educators to report any risk of harm to a child, as they are mandatory reporters. Educators are encouraged to uphold the wellbeing and safety of children at all times by seeking immediate support from appropriate educators within the Preschool and/or from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

In a nutshell all our Educators have a legal requirement to identify and respond to children and young people at risk—we are Mandatory Reporters.

Child Safe Behaviours

This is in many ways a difficult subject as the thought of our children being taken advantage of in any way is abhorrent to us all. Educators recently completed Child Protection Training and discussions about how to teach children to stay safe were discussed. Personal safety, also known as protective behaviours, is a powerful way to teach children about safety, and what they can do when they feel unsafe. Children who are confident, assertive and have good support networks are less likely to be at risk of **abuse** or find themselves in dangerous situations. Your children are never too young to start to teach personal safety behaviours. Here are some great ideas:

- Teach children the "Safe Hand" concept, choosing 5 people (for each finger of the hand) promoting the concept of your child having a support network of five people they can turn to if they feel sad, scared or upset. It aims to undermine the use of secrecy that many abusers rely upon. It also helps children understand there are always people they can turn to for help.
- Have regular conversations with your child to help them recognise when they are feeling sad, scared or upset and this shows them that it's fine to communicate these feelings. These regular conversations allow children to build confidence so that they have a voice and a sense of empowerment.
- Have open conversations about 'private parts' using correct physical terminology so children are comfortable talking about their bodies. This openness gives children the confidence to speak up if ever uncomfortable and again, undermines the use of secrecy that many abusers rely upon. If children do speak up calling their private parts different names this can be misconstrued by the person they are reporting to as they won't understand what the child is talking about.
- Teach children that nobody has the right to touch them, especially their private parts and encourage them to say no if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable as they are boss of their own bodies.

Please visit the Office of the Children's Guardian. They provide some great resources for parents. There is a series of SAFE books you can read with your child to introduce discussions about child safety behaviours.



Fire Drill



This month we conducted our quarterly fire drills with the children.

Everyone did a great job of following educators' instructions in the event of this emergency, especially as it was the first fire drill for many children. During our fire drills we have discussions about what to do in the event of a fire. We discuss with the children calling 000, knowing where they live (suburb and state), getting down low and go go go. We also advise that if a fire were to occur at your home, best practice is to make your way to the front mailbox.

These are all important conversations to have with your children and the whole family. As a family you can devise a fire safe plan for your home. If your family has one, we would love to hear about it.



Food for Thought

Please remember we have children with allergies. Please do not send to Preschool foods that contain whole egg or nuts and this includes hazelnut flavoured products.

Please do not send children's lunches in insulated lunch bags.

They stop the food from being kept cold in the fridge and cause space issues in our fridge.

Thank you!





Benefits of getting your children involved in cooking experiences.

This month the children have enjoyed being involved in a variety of cooking experiences. We have made banana bread, damper and Anzac cookies. Cooking, whilst a fun activity for children, also supports early childhood development in many ways:

- Increases language development
- Enhances fine motor skills
- Provides the opportunity to discuss math concepts
- Literacy development
- Introduces scientific concepts
- Practice focus and attention
- Teaches life skills
- Boosts self confidence
- Encourages family bonding

Easy Apricot Slice

Ingredients

- 2 cups (400g) dried apricots
- 2 cups (180g) desiccated coconut
- 2 tbsp (30g) coconut oil

Method

Process all ingredients in a food processor for 2-3 minutes. Press a small amount of the mixture between your fingers to make sure it holds together. If not, process for a little longer. Press firmly into a slice tin lined with baking paper. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours to firm. Slice into 24 small squares.



So much fun was had in our cooking experiences. We even made a batch of gluten free damper and this led to some great shared conversations about how some people can be affected by allergy and food intolerances.





Assessment and Rating

The Preschool has submitted our Self Assessment against the National Quality Standards, We are now awaiting the 5 day notice we will receive as to when our Assessment and Rating visit will occur.

As soon as we know we will pass this date onto families.

Scholastic Book Club

Issue 3 is now available in your communication pocket. Please have all orders into preschool by Monday 10th May. You can return the order form with cash to preschool or you can order via the LOOP app. Please see Deon if you have any questions



National
Simultaneous
Storytime...
From Space!



The Preschool has registered to take part in the **National Simultaneous Storytime on May 19th**. The story is called **Give Me Some Space** by Philip Bunting. The story will be read from the International Space Station and we will have more details nearer the time.

May Birthdays

A big Happy Birthday to all of our children and teachers having a birthday this month.

Juniper 4 yrs

James 5 yrs

Natalie 4 yrs and Emily ??

Tyler 5 yrs



UPCOMING EVENTS

We have a busy month ahead please take a look at these upcoming events.
Information for these events coming home to you soon.

May 6th—Mother's Day Dinner

Mum's you are invited to attend our Mother's Day Dinner to celebrate the important role you play in your child's world. This is a fabulous opportunity to meet new friends which maybe the beginning of a lifetime friendship!



May 10th—Post Office Excursion



The Schoolie Monday Group will go on a walking excursion to the Post Office to post a letter to a loved one. This supports our developmental focus during that week on expressive language skills. We need parent helpers so please put your name down to help out if you are available. Thank you!

May 27th—Feature Creatures Incursion.

This is a highlight of the Preschool year when we welcome the Feature Creature crew who bring this hands on experience to us. The visit promotes individual participation, group activities, some singing and plenty of time to pat, touch, hold and explore the animal's and their unique behaviours within the comfort of the children's limits. Notes coming home soon.



HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

What a fantastic Holiday Programme we had this month! The children were enthusiastic participants as they engaged in our fun themed days.

A big thank you to our family helpers John, Robyn, Briony, Jodie, Ash, Suzie and Taryn! We love our families participating in our Preschool programme and value your contributions.



Our Let's Get Active Lesson with John, which helped to develop our gross motor skills and promote team work. A big thank you to The Byrne family for donating all the active play resources to the Preschool.



During Pirate and Princess Day we utilised our wonderful imaginations. Our Treasure Hunt allowed us to apply a variety of thinking skills to engage with others and solve problems



We loved having our Teddies join us for Teddy Bears Picnic Day. This allowed us to further our self-identities as we shared aspects of our life with our preschool family



We engaged our creative skills as we tie dyed socks for Crazy Sock Day. We have loved seeing the children wear these to Preschool.



INCLUSION



Ensuring that all children and families are respected and their values and beliefs are an important component of children's learning and well being leads to a strong feeling of belonging within our Preschool.

Our service has recently updated our Strategic Inclusion Plan which includes short and long-term strategies for improving and embedding inclusive practice for the benefit of all children.

Lara met with our Inclusion Support Agency representative, Deepti, this month. Our centre was once again recognised for the work we are doing upholding the importance and value of inclusive practices.

To see the ongoing ways we are working on supporting inclusion at Preschool please read the Strategic Improvement Plan section on our QIP display in the foyer.

WALKATHON

Our annual Walkathon fundraiser was hugely successful this year. The children did a fantastic job—an amazing effort raising **\$2062** which will be donated to the Children's Ward at Hornsby Hospital. Please read our Walkathon Learning Story at the end of this newsletter for more information.

A massive thank you to our wonderful families for your support of this worthwhile cause.





The Importance of Fine Motor Skill Development in the Early Years

The development of fine motor skill is essential to enable children to complete a variety of everyday tasks as well as supporting their academic and educational journey.

Fine motor skills are required to learn to write and cut, are needed in the manipulation of construction, when manoeuvring puzzle pieces and in self-help skills such as zipping, buttoning and tying shoelaces. To support a child's educational development and independence skills, little hands need to develop dexterity and strength.

Sally Payne, a leading paediatric occupational therapist suggests that the overuse of phones and tablets is preventing children's finger muscles from developing sufficiently to enable them to hold a pencil and various other tools, "*Children are not coming into school with the hand strength and dexterity they had 10 years ago*", as well as also stating, "*Children coming into school are being given a pencil but are increasingly not being able to hold it because they don't have the fundamental movements*"

As early childhood educators and parents, we can play an active role in this process by encouraging children to play, explore and interact in valuable and beneficial learning experiences. Our Preschool educational programme provides a wide variety of learning experiences and opportunities to allow all children to further develop and strengthen these skills. Some fun things that you can do at home that will promote and further develop your child's fine motor skills:

- Assist in the kitchen; spreading their own choice of spread on their preschool lunch
- Assist with hanging out washing; manipulating pegs
- Practice unbuttoning, unzipping, hooking, fastening or tying
- Carrying out two handed tasks, for example, rolling a ball of playdough into a long snake and cutting it into small pieces using a plastic knife
- Attempting simple puzzles where they are manipulating objects through turning, placing and flipping pieces
- Provide an open-ended drawing station that is readily available all the time and that has a wide variety of resources available including scissors, colouring pencils, crayons and textas.
- One of the very best ways to build hand strength is to play with playdough, play foam or a similar nontoxic substance.
- Small piece construction

Building fine motor strength and dexterity is an important and fundamental skill development and can be lots of fun. We encourage you to use the suggestions above or think of your own activities and join your child in fine motor play, they will enjoy it even more if you are there beside them.



Phonemic Awareness Programme

During the past few weeks the children have enjoyed meeting Dippy Duck and during the Holiday Program revised the sounds we have covered during our first term together.



Dippy Duck lives by the Letterland duckpond. When **Dippy Duck** isn't splashing and diving in her duckpond she loves to hang out with her friends **dog**, **deer** and **donkey**. As the children have been learning about people that help us this led to shared discussions about **doctors**.

We read various stories, watched short clips and even created our very own **doctors** kits during craft. The children tested their fine motor skills as they cut, ripped sticky tape, and peeled the backs off band aids. They then used these **doctors** kits as they role played being in a **doctors** surgery and helping sick patients.



During the two week holiday programme the children revisited the Letterland friends they had met during the past term. **Sammy Snake, Annie Apple, Bouncing Ben and Clever Cat**. The children had fun playing lots of games, engaging in craft and dancing experiences to practice each focus sound. The holiday revision period also provided educators with the opportunity to ensure each child is understanding the concept of phonics and their ability to process and produce the focus sounds.





So many activities this month as it included the school Holiday Programme. Thanks to the Mum's, Nanny's and a big sister that came in to help. It is always great to have extra helping hands and eyes, especially when we are baking. Apart from all the fun we practiced fine motor skills as we used our hands in all the activities and did lots of counting and thinking as we followed the recipes when we baked, as we made sure we had followed the instructions. The slime was a great sensory experience and the preschoolers used lots of great words as they described how the slime felt and looked.

Easter Eggs - We had lots of fun using a wooden peg to make an egg that opened to reveal a chicken. The children practiced fine motor skills as they coloured the egg, cut it out and then, with help, stuck in on the peg.



Pots and Succulents – After painting pots in the morning the preschoolers were able to choose a succulent to plant in their pot. Lily C's mum helped the children to put soil in their pots and Lily W's mum and big sister assisted with planting the succulent.





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Banana Bread – It was exciting to do our first baking activity since the start of Covid. Everyone had a go as we measured, poured and mixed the ingredients to make our banana bread. Maddie's Nanny came in to help us. One loaf plain and one with blueberries. It was the best mixed banana bread ever with everyone having a go with the wooden spoon.



Sandwiches – There were some interesting sandwiches made with the preschoolers choosing what they wanted to put together. Tex's mum came in to help us put the sandwiches together. Ham, jam and cheese is apparently very tasty.



Damper – More baking as we made three types of damper for afternoon tea. One cheesy loaf, one rosemary loaf and a gluten free loaf. It is simple to make and the preschoolers were all part of the process either measuring, pouring or mixing the ingredients, and then eating it.



Slime – Oh what a mess we made for Messy Day!!!! Definitely the messiest activity. The children loved the fact we made the slime and could then play with it. It went everywhere and the texture of the slime changed as the day went on and it thickened.





The very large gum tree produces a red sap which is used for tooth infections

What is in our Preschool garden?

After discussions about Bush Tucker which indigenous people hunted and gathered many years ago, we explored our preschool garden with a walk about identifying plants which people use for food, medicines, weapons and weaving to make baskets, ropes and nets etc. long ago. We spoke about indigenous people being traditional owners of the land. The land was so well managed, with only food and resources taken as needed so there was no waste. Children have been engaged and interested in these discussions showing an understanding for respecting the environment – *Learning Outcome 2 Children are connected with and contribute to their world.*



If the curly hair is washed off these ferns they can be used for itchy bites



This fern produces a large stick that indigenous people used to make their spears.



The Grevillea, If you hit it on your palm will give you a sweet sugar water. DELICIOUS!



This plant is used for weaving, baskets, mats etc.



This Pig Face produces a pink flower we can eat. It is also used as an Aloe Vera ointment.



Our Lilipilly trees produce berries we can eat – although some may be a bit sour!



SUSTAINABILITY

Return and Earn

We are so please to say that we donate \$100 from all the Return and Earn bottles collected in 2020. Our donation was made to WIRES supporting the rehabilitation of animals and their habitat that was threatened during the devastating fires NSW experienced.

To date have already raised \$50 and we will have discussions with the children to decide on a new charity to support with our earning this year. Thank you to Michael at Berowra Post Office helping us with the recycling of our bottles. Well done everyone and thank you for your support.

Photos of Berowra Post Office Recycling.



Gardening

The children did a wonderful job of planting succulent in decorated pot during the holidays. The veggie Garden is doing so well with all the lettuce sugar snap peas and pak choy the children have been doing a wonderful job watering them since there hasn't been much rain over the past days. Sensory Garden was trimmed and weeded the children were curious to know which plants could be picked and tasted. Thank you, Jack for offering to take the green waste home to his green bin as we do not have one at preschool. We offered oregano and mint trimmed off for families to take home as well as Rosemary taken in time for ANZAC day.



Return and Earn Project

Thank you for your continued donations of bottles and containers. The children are really enjoying being part of this project and look forward to counting and categorising the items as they arrive. The children are having fun whilst learning about one of the many practical solutions in reducing landfill which has such a devastating effect on our precious planet. Thank you to everyone for your contributions. Please keep those bottles coming, it is so much appreciated. Thank you to Michael, at the Berowra Post Office for his continued support in processing your collections. Together we can make a significant difference, no matter how small.

We would appreciate your help in collecting drink containers with the 10c deposit label on the bottle/cans to add to our collection and together we will help make a difference in reducing waste. You will find a big blue container undercover outside in which to deposit your bottles. Once a fortnight this will be taken to a collection point and redeemed for cash.



Eligible drink containers

Under Return and Earn, most empty 150-millilitre to 3-litre drink containers are eligible for a 10-cent refund when presented to an approved NSW collection point.

Container materials that are eligible for a refund include PET, HDPE, glass, aluminium, steel, liquid paperboard.

Containers should be empty, uncrushed, unbroken and have the original label attached.

Wine, spirits, cordial and plain milk containers are not eligible.

Throughout the year we discuss the importance of recycling, you may soon find your children sharing this information with you at home!

Together we can make a significant difference, no matter how small.

LEARNING STORY

Dear Mt Colah Preschool,

We had a BIG event at preschool this week –it was our annual Walkathon! As we got closer to the first day, we had discussions about why we were doing this—to raise some money for Hornsby Hospital Children's Ward. While we talked about this, we talked about how we can help others and many children had stories to share about times they had been in hospital and what they remembered from that time. We also had lots of conversations about what the hospital could buy with the money we were raising with suggestions such as books, new toys, medicine, Xbox games and yummy food!



We had some work to do before the event. The week before we were all hard at work helping Jo and Maddie (Educators) create beautiful number signs to keep track of all the laps. There were some eager helpers tracing numbers onto cardboard while others decorated each number with different collage items. The all-important pom poms were made to cheer friends along. The end products were very impressive.

Sponsor forms started coming in as your family and friends helped us raise the much-needed funds for the hospital. Then finally it was time for the walk. We walked laps around the playground, 10 laps for our Bluebell and Schoolie friends and 5 for our Sweetpea friends. You were all allocated a day of the week to participate in the walk with a group of friends. Each day you eagerly waited for the start. Ready, Set, Go and off you went while other friends shouted 'Go friends, go friends', all the while shaking pom poms to encourage everyone along the way. Each time the group completed a lap someone held up a lap number to keep count as laps were completed. The numbers were laid out on the ground to be counted and recounted making sure the correct number of laps were completed. At the end of the walk there was much cheering for a job well done!

LEARNING STORY

The Walkathon has allowed us all to experience the act of giving and the importance of helping our local community by contributing to help those who are less fortunate. Not only has this been a great lesson for us in empathy for others, there have also been opportunities to learn about teamwork, supporting friends, the importance of exercise and being fit and healthy. By making number signs we developed fine motor skills as we traced and decorated numbers, as well as challenging our math skills by number recognition and the counting of laps walked by friends.

A big thank you for all the wonderful donations we have received. We managed to raise an awesome \$2062 which is always very much appreciated by the hospital.

Our thoughts on your learning: Today you discovered your ability to empathise and express concern for others which enabled you to take action to support others in the community. You also found your collective enthusiasm in participating in this cause allowed you to create a purposeful sense of belonging and connection to our wider community.

(Links: Early Years Learning Framework - Learning Outcome2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world. Learning Disposition: Learning relationships)

Opportunities and Possibilities: It was wonderful witnessing such good team work as you all enjoyed this time together. We will continue to develop your awareness of community support and understanding by engaging in these annual fundraiser events which are so much appreciated by the community.



Quality Improvement Plan (QIP):

Each week educators take time to reflect upon and collaborate ideas in relation to our current practices under the National Quality Standards. From these shared discussions and robust reflection we are able to identify where we are doing a great job and where there may be some room for improvement. Above all it helps educators to stay current with the National Quality Standards and appraise methods of best practice in all areas of our service to children and families. We are looking for family input and reflection upon the standards which adds depth to our assessment of our practices. It is as simple as a single question being posed with regard to a standard and you will be asked for your thoughts on the subject. You can offer to help out regularly or semi regularly. If you are interested in supporting our reflection against the National Quality Standards please let Lara know. *We would really appreciate your help.*



Dates to Remember!

May 6th	Mother's Day Dinner
May 10th	Excursion to Post Office (for Schoolie Group)
May 27th	Feature Creatures Incursion



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