

Preshil News

22 October 2010

WHOLE SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

At Arlington

From Kerri McCulloch

Arlington Head of Campus

Throughout this year I have been supporting staff in the development of integrated, multidisciplinary, real world projects that involve children and teachers in research and learning around a specific focus. Meaningful projects are those that generate a sufficient amount of interest and uncertainty to provoke children's creative thinking and problem-solving and are open to different avenues of exploration. Using this approach teachers have been encouraging children to conduct research to find answers to their own questions rather than giving children standard texts with the 'correct' answers. In our classrooms, you can hear and feel the engagement of children deeply focused on research across the curriculum. During project work children frame questions, make predictions, search independently or in collaboration to find answers, and discover multiple ways to determine answers. They also represent their findings in multiple ways which may also include dance, music and art.

Project based learning builds on the work on Margaret E. Lyttle. She believed learning by doing leads to a deeper understanding of what is being studied, especially when children are allowed to experiment.

It is easy to lose sight of our approach to education, which is not that of a 'child-centered school'... (but) a "task-centered school" with its emphasis on learning through research, exploring and discovering, and drawing conclusions about the problem from which the challenge or interest has arisen.

Margaret E. Lyttle, 1978

The range of projects being researched across Arlington is diverse. In the Nursery School children have been exploring 'seeds'. This came from the question 'Do you think we can grow the seeds we find in our fruit at snack time?' Other interests are the explorations of making potions and finding treasure.

Moving to the 5s you can find the children engaged in a project based around the questions 'What is Change?', 'Why do things Change?', and 'How do we deal with Change?' In reflecting on these questions, Boaz, one of the children in the class, felt.... "Change is like in the scientist laboratory and you wake up and you go to the experiment and it's not there. That is change." The conversations and investigations in the 5s will continue.

'Listening to nature' is one of the projects being examined in the 6s and 7s. They have been working with the questions 'How do we listen to nature?', 'What can nature tell us?' The children spent a morning at Rocket Park and listened to nature. They also represented their thought through painting. Many children also took photos which have been printed and reflected upon back in the classroom through writing. In their learning with the children, the teachers have also been reflecting and researching the following quote:

Children experience the natural environment differently than adults. Adults typically see nature as background for what they are doing. Children experience nature, not as background for events, but rather as a stimulator and experiential component of their activities.

Randy White & Vicki L. Stoecklin, 1997

In the last week of August, the 8s and 9s showcased their current project to parents and the other children at Arlington by inviting them to a mock election related to their exploration of the question, 'What is Power?' They have been exploring power within Arlington itself, within the community and also within nature. Lengthy and ongoing discussions have taken place about the lack of children's rights to be able to vote in elections. Aurelea, one of the children in the class, provided us with the following thoughts and ideas. "I think we should all vote. It doesn't really matter if it is children or adults. Sometimes adults have more power than children and I think children should have more power because they hardly get to do anything like that in the world like voting. They only get to do the children's things and they don't get to do some older things. Adults think children are really small and some of us have big brains. We are not really just small and have to do small things."

Students should not only be trained to live in a democracy when they grow up; they should have the chance to live in one today.

Alfie Kohn

The questions are also ongoing in the 10s and 11s classroom where the focus has been on sustainability. Within this concept, the children have been engaged in exploring environmental issues to learn about nature and the environment and to make informed choices about the environment, people and society.

The projects and conversations will continue.....

Reflections from the Nursery School

What is nature?

By Jemima

Nature is trees and plants.
They give us air – we need air to breath.
Trees give us fruit.
I like fruit.

Nature is something that is precious to your heart and is gentle.

Creative Business

*From Dann and Cal
6s and 7s Teachers*

After a trip to Rocket Park last term where the children explored their project *Listening to Nature*, we decided that we really needed some cameras of our own and so Brendan, William and Matt began to organise a stall to raise the money. There were many, many suggestions of what we should sell on this stall and numbers of items and pricing consumed us.

Many kind parents organised cupcakes to arrive on the day and some brave ones came and cooked with the children at school. Some children had been preparing for days and there was a lot more for sale besides cupcakes. There were spiders available: drinks not insects! Some children had been making paper crowns and paper doll chains. There was a group making paper frogs that jumped and a *Beanie Kids* run.

On the day, Angus was very keen for people to guess how many lego pieces were in the model that he had made. He and a friend began collecting money early but then someone guessed it by mistake which led to many complications!

There was a paper aeroplane competition and a hoola hoop competition. The *Soccer Penalty Shootout* proved very popular!

William and Matt took some photographs around the school and had them for sale at their stall with some cupcakes.

Some children put on a play as part of our stall. It was a Christmas play that involved Mr and Mrs Claus being kidnapped by an evil witch who put a spell on all of Santa's elves. There were many highlights in the play, especially when Dann (one of the teachers) got a REAL egg smashed on his head. The children worked so hard on developing a story and breaking it into scenes and, as well as all of this, they even managed to design the costumes for the play. Well done to all of those involved and to our lovely audience. We hope to put the play on again at some stage for the whole school to see. We will keep you posted.

We had so many goods to sell that there were enough left over for a return stall the next day. Unfortunately the weather wasn't as good but we managed a few more sales.

In the end we made \$314.15; quite a tidy sum. Counting took ages but it was great fun and we had to add it all up a few times to find the total. There is nothing like counting real money!!! Last weekend Cal purchased 4 new cameras for the group which was very exciting and the cameras were out to immediate use by the children. Some children took photos of trees around the school and then wrote poetry to match their photographs.

Some of our poetry

Whenever I look at it
It makes me happy
It looks like little mountains
And little blue birds
Lily B

The light is glowing bright
Like some sunlight in the shade
It flips and turns
Josels and Jurns Till it runs out
William G

I sleep all night
I sleep all day
I will never
come awake
Sia X

A boy named AA
Kicked the ball
on to the....Goals
It bounced
Into the goals....
And then landed
And hit the top corner
Atticus A

When I look at Mummy Lion
She makes me feel happy
And all of my lions are friends
I love my lions
Tahj

Afternoon Tea at the Museum

Another exciting thing in the 6s/7s classroom was the preparation of the museum for our *found* (living) objects. A group worked hard at discussing and then implementing their ideas to create the museum in the space that they considered and measured. The classification and description cards were finished and the blocks were quite handy when constructing the display. A special thank you to the 5's for lending some extra blocks.

There were many learning opportunities in these activities resulting from, in particular, the logistical problem of supplying the living objects with appropriate habitats within the classroom. For example, worms do not like dry tan bark, and butcherboys and cockroaches are very good at escaping. But all was worked out in the end ready for our Afternoon Tea opening hosted at the Museum for parents and friends toward the end of term so they could enjoy the displays.

AFL Finals – Congratulations!

By Karen and Elissa
8s/9s Teachers

Over the footy season, three teams from the 8s/9s competed in an online AFL Quiz. This quiz is a combination of maths, English and AFL questions that incorporates internet research skills. There is a one hour time limit and the children have to answer 10 quite difficult questions. Team One, made up of Harry L, Harry C and Lucas made it into the finals round. This is impressive considering there were a total of 248 teams competing in the year 4 competition. The boys did Preshil proud scoring 7.2/10 in the first week and 9/10 the following week. Well Done boys!!!!!!

Reporting on the Election – ours that is!

By Marina H

A very big round of applause goes to 8s and 9s for a creative, energetic example of democracy in action. Following class discussions about what is “power”, the 8s & 9s took a very active interest in the concept of ‘political power’ and the build-up to the Federal Election.

The whole class divided up into small ‘parties’, and spent a week working out what their policy priorities were, drafting and distributing policy materials, inventing slogans and advertising materials, writing speeches and setting up a Mock election.

On the Tuesday afternoon after the Federal election, parents and grandparents were invited to come along and listen to these budding politicians. Each ‘party’ took to the podium, giving every child the opportunity to address the audience about issues of importance to them, followed by a short video they had made. After many rousing speeches and enthusiastic clapping from the listeners, the parents were invited to check out the ‘posters’ and then line up at the ‘polling booth’. Here ‘polling officers’ checked off our names and issued voting papers, ushered us to writing booths and then to the ballot boxes. After which we all enjoyed an afternoon tea prepared by the children.

Preshil’s claims to foster the confidence and participation of each and every child, across a broad range of activities and competencies, were very apparent. Every child tried their hand at analytical thinking, negotiating, planning, writing, rehearsing, public-speaking, advertising, and creating persuasive media around issues they care about. How good is that? And they’ve learned much about Australian politics and had a lot of fun doing it. Congratulations to Karen and Elissa for their support in this outstanding project.

Supporting DNS

More from Karen and Elissa

As already mentioned, in the 8s and 9s we started with the big question, *What is power?* The children expressed their ideas through art and during conversations. There was a big interest in the up coming election as well as power in nature and in scientific terms. As the election was coming up soon we decided to look explore in more depth the concept of people power and what power looks like in society. During the process we learned more about statistics and how they can be used to justify your position, particularly in relation to the election. We talked about the fine print as well as what information has been left out to make the statistic seem more impressive. Other opportunities to apply our learnings in maths also arose in response to one of the questions asked by the children, *What are seats?* After watching a short online video called *What is Parliament?* the children then looked at the numbers of seats each party had after the 2007 election. We converted these to fractions and had a guess at what percentages they represented. Each group used different materials to try and model these fractions and displayed our results in the classroom.

Our investigations culminated in the Mock Election wonderfully reported by Marina above. Thank you to everyone who took part in this day by turning up in person to vote or by sending in a postal vote. Our day book has all our photos and comments by the children.

After the election, votes were counted by the children. Primary votes were tabulated and a group of children also distributed preferences. This underpinned our focus in maths that week on bar charts where we looked at some examples of bar charts and interpreted the information contained in them. Each child did their own bar chart by hand showing the election results after the preferences were counted.

Congratulations went to David, Sam H and Nick whose party, *DNS*, won the election. We talked about how the government would be organised. The children divided into groups, mostly according to their interests, and brainstormed ideas about how we can help *DNS* achieve their election promises. We are going to help *DNS* achieve one of their election goals by the end of the year.

The election platform of the *DNS* party is set out below – many thanks to Elissa who worked extremely hard to interview each party and find out in more detail what their priorities were in the Preshil election.

An Interview with the DNS Party David C, Samuel H and Nick J

What are your priorities for the up coming Preshil election and why?

Our priorities are the environment, homeless people, education, health, racism, anti-smoking and animal cruelty.

If there are no trees and the world is polluted all the humans and animals will die. Smoking can kill you. Homeless people don't have homes or money and they need

another chance. Education is important because there won't be a future if there is no good education. Racism is an important issue because we are all the same. Animal cruelty is an important issue because we came from animals and we don't want animals to be extinct.

If you are elected how will you address these issues?

We will encourage people to get renewable energy by putting up posters, making ads, writing letters and making phone calls, making a website and YouTube videos.

We will make a stall to raise money to buy a solar panel for the class.

We will encourage people to stop smoking by again putting up posters and making ads and You Tube videos.

We will raise money for the homeless people by means of a stall and busking because we all play an instrument.

Why do you think you are the best party for the job?

Most other parties are really only focused on one issue but we are focused on quite a few. We are a good team; we usually work well together. Generally, always. We will listen. We won't be typical politicians. We will give good reasons for what we do. We will do the right thing for the school.

Where to with our project now?

We are hoping to pick up on the children's interest in science and direct the power project towards that area now that the election hype is over. (Hopefully we won't be going back to the polls!)

Coming Up

RADIO SHOW

Tuesday October 26: 4.00 – 5.00 pm

Thanks to Harry M and his mum, Cathy, the 8s/9s have been offered the opportunity to put together a radio programme on 9413WBC. The whole class has been working in teams to create the hour long programme around the theme of *Power* and 8 children will have the opportunity to go to the station and present it on air. Don't forget to tune in!

Extreme Ornithology

By Rod Waterman

The Wednesday afternoon Years 7-10 *Extreme Ornithology (Bird Watching)* elective is running again this term – read more about it at <http://extremeornithology.blogspot.com/>

Lolly Sculpture

From Jane Sawyer



These lolly sculptures were a result of the Edible Art Elective *Preshil Chef Challenge* held last term. There were three sculptures (three teams). The challenge was to create an abstract sculpture, 30 high, from lollies using only tooth picks, dental floss and icing sugar to help. Sounds easy huh? You should try!

Pizza Oven Elective

By Jane Sawyer

This Elective comprised five children from the 8s/9s at Arlington working with five children from Blackhall/Kalimna Years 7 to 9. The task was to design and decorate the pizza oven, both to protect it from rain damage and to brighten up the area.

The pizza oven was built last year with the expert help and donated mud bricks from Rob, a past parent. A dedicated group of students and staff worked to build the oven over many weeks and then the pizza oven elective took over in second term to complete the construction.

During this design process much discussion was had about the sort of messages the images could convey. The finished result became a combination of all the children's designs and is dedicated to Rob's son Eddie, who was a Preshil student and sadly died of cancer last year. RIP Eddie. You live on!



Nursery School Fundraising: Phenomenal Success

A very BIG thanks to everyone who supported the nursery fundraiser.

The sales of brooches, generously provided by one of our parents who is also a professional artist, dramatically exceeded expectations, enabling four rugs to be purchased for the nursery. The teachers report that they make the room cosier in many ways and the children love them – there is more room to spread out during reading time, they love the warmth of carpet in the block area and seek out the softest patterned rug for other floor activities.

Two existing nursery rugs have been donated to the 5s and there was enough money left over to buy materials for a nursery Term 4 cushion project and a light table for the 5s.

Maths News

Welcome to Andrew Belegrios as our numeracy support person. Andrew has a wide range of teaching experience and has also worked on the development of animated multimedia content for VCE Mathematics textbooks.

Andrew has been working in close cooperation with teachers to give extra assistance to students in their mathematics classes. Most of Andrew's time is spent in Years 7 and 8 mathematics classes and in a couple of Year 10 classes.