



# Term 4 2020

## News from the Director (Leanne Hunter)

It's done! It's finished! Benefit/risk assessments completed! The long awaited unit 2/3 playground is well and truly christened. It's wonderful!

The children's patience has been rewarded and the learning has been phenomenal. Watching the building progress for some children was like a dream come true. They have a much greater understanding of time, effort, problem-solving and complexity involved in construction. Children who love to know how things work, like the reticulating water system in the water course, have asked many questions about the "Fox demand driven wash down diversion pump". New learning for we adults as well!

Smiles have been on so many faces: children, parents, teachers and the builders who continue to work hard to complete the second section. There have been some unexpected discoveries: "Look you can see the trains (from the top of the bridge)", "It's like being in a shower without shampoo!"

As a staff team we are over the moon as we have watched children's engagement, exchange of ideas, discovery, courage, consideration of others, problem-solving and patience to have a turn to pump or climb the bridge or find bench space on the mud kitchen.

In hindsight, having access to the first half of the playground which involved the use of water both reticulated and 'gone once used' enabled more detailed discussions about benefit/risk and water conservation.

By the time children had access to the second section, they were quite experienced in seeing potential joy and hazards and building awareness of mitigating the risks. Read more about children's thoughts on Page 10.

We are over-joyed that all children this year have had the opportunity to explore and discover more about this long awaited playground both with their own group and play mornings with all children in other groups playing outside at the same time. These 'busy' plays afford opportunities for children to travel and play in either or both playgrounds.

## A good read...

## Stop. Look. Listen. Say

Michael Grose succinctly exemplifies, with an interaction with a four year old, to show the power of our responses in supporting children to regulate and cooperate.

*It was time for bed but Miss Four-Year-Old looked too wound up to go. Her mother calmly said, "Harper....stop!" There was a long pause between the two words, giving Harper time to take notice.*

*"Look at me, please." Harper made eye contact. "Now listen."*

*"I want you to go into your room. Put on your pyjamas. Then choose a book." Three instructions only.*

*"Harper, what did I just say?"*

*"I've got to go to my room. Get my pyjamas and a book."*

*"Great! Off you go!"*

*This mum used the stop, look, listen, say method to get her daughter to cooperate. Her use of clear, simple language was admirable but it was only part of the success formula of this technique. Body language, tone of voice and eye contact all played a part.*

*This mother oozed credibility, so it was little wonder her daughter complied.*

*If you struggle to get your kids to do as you wish, it's probably your body language and tone of voice that give you away.*

*That is, it's less what you say and more about how you say it that makes a big difference. When speaking in a credible or cat-like (a metaphor for credibility) way the following factors come into play:*

**Steady voice**—flat, clipped but friendly tone.

**A Still head**— indicates calmness, confidence and authority. A smile keeps the mood friendly.

**Strong body**— a still, steady posture sends the message that you expect cooperation.

**Palms down**— this indicates calm and authority

**Look away**—take eye contact away once the message had been heard, rather than stay and be drawn into an argument.

Read the full article to understand why these strategies need to be practised in low stress situations to draw on and be effective in higher stress situations.

[https://www.parentingideas.com.au/blog/stop-look-listen-say?goal=0\\_f488c60967-526c2e73e1-180176069&mc\\_cid=526c2e73e1&mc\\_eid=41e676329b](https://www.parentingideas.com.au/blog/stop-look-listen-say?goal=0_f488c60967-526c2e73e1-180176069&mc_cid=526c2e73e1&mc_eid=41e676329b)





Reframing your child's behaviour can have the most extraordinary effect on parent-child interactions. The instant you recognize that your child is not willfully misbehaving but rather, that his/her heightened impulsivity or argumentativeness are signs that he/she is under too much stress, your own stress suddenly drops.

Dr Stuart Shanker

Another useful article to understand more about the importance of adults co-regulating with children before they are able to self-regulate can be accessed at

<https://www.pcot.com.au/post/co-regulation-before-self-regulation>

## Leanne, Vanessa and Jo (unit 1 /2 day group)

Change, change and more change seems to have been the most consistent feature of this year. Thinking about more change will be on the minds of a number of children as more and more children, heading to prep next year, are having school visits. These visits have prompted many discussions as children have shared news about what they did and what they saw. Feelings have also been discussed, particularly feeling both excited and scared at the same time. Being brave was also called on by a child or two.

Bob Perry, an Australian academic and member of an international research team, believes we should change the term school readiness to transition readiness. We should be building children's **transition capital**. He believes that discontinuity is as important as smooth continuity in transitions with children understanding the tensions in change and accepting these. The sentence starter, "When I started....., I felt ....., now I ....." may be a useful way to bring the acceptance of tension into conversations with children.

Having "What if...?" conversations with your child may help build their transition capital tool-kits. (E.G. What if you can't open your lunch-box? What if you can't find your hat? What if you can't find someone to play with?)

Children returning to kindy for another year, also benefit from building their transition capital as, although they will walk through the same familiar front gate, there will be considerable change whether it's the room, teacher and/or children. It's a transition. Children may need time and support to feel secure.

Dispositions such as resilience, flexibility, courage, trust, perseverance, confidence and self-regulation support smooth transitions and these dispositions are built on every day at kindy.

During one week for example, the children adjusted to having a number of changes including:

- a different teacher for one day;
- sharing their playground with children from other units;
- having morning tea in school/kindy groups with all children in the centre;
- investigating a new playground.

Children's understanding and growth of dispositions happens in the small moments.

- Resilience when the child you wanted to play with wants to play with someone else.
- Flexibility when there are too many children at the water pump and deciding to play in the mud kitchen instead.
- Courage to balance along the wobbly rocks in the water course.
- Trust that the child who's helping you move the stove doesn't let go.
- Perseverance in writing your own name when it's really hard.
- Confidence to teach all 66 children a well-loved unit 1/2 song.
- Self-regulating and resisting talking or touching a friend to remain sitting beside them all day.

We will continue to provide opportunities for children to remember, plan, make considered decisions and problem solve throughout the kindergarten day right through until their last day with us.





It's around this time of the year that schools are hosting orientation sessions and school visit days. From an organisational perspective, this could be a time for schools to organise class groups, meet new families, team familiar children together, and get a feel for individual children's abilities. Some children embrace every step of the way to prep entry, others require a little support.

At Kindy, we are supporting transitions by sharing meals and playgrounds between the three units. We are supporting children to meet others who will be attending the same school, and modelling ways to get to know each other, talking about what to say and how to sustain conversations with each other.

Often from a family perspective, parents are promoting school life as new, exciting and a welcome transition for their child. When children have older siblings already in school they assume that school entry for their Kindy child will be a smooth and happy transition because *'they already know kids there', 'they know the classrooms and playgrounds' and 'they know the teachers.'*

Making a new start in a new environment, with a new teacher, new rules, expectations, routines and a whole new cohort of children can range from challenging to extremely daunting for young children. We tend to underestimate the social and emotional challenges associated with transitioning into school. Not knowing what to expect may cause changes in children's generally happy dispositions. Some children show out of character behaviour such as apprehension with known tasks or with people and events, they may become more oppositional, tantrum more, or experience big emotions. Those children who are responsive to change, are flexible in their thinking and who appear to be resilient can also experience nervousness. These feelings are normal human emotions, which children need to experience and learn how to personally manage. Parents become good sounding boards when they discuss feelings and apprehensions with their children. By using everyday opportunities for children to practice positive self-talk, to use calming techniques, and to have conversations around past experiences, parents can ease the 'hype' that comes with school entry. For example, *'I know it was a bit scary when you went for your school visit. But now you know a bit more about what you do at school and what the classroom is like' or 'I saw you being brave when I left you at the school visit today, I know that was tricky for you'.* Some ways to support and nurture positive transitions are...

- Keep conversations simple and factual- *'starting school is still a long time away'*- focus on the here and now.
- School is definitely not always fun, exciting, happy and enjoyable. Be honest in your conversations. Making comments like, *'You are going to love school, it's so much fun!'*, are not helpful. Try instead, *'school will be different and new, and I know you are really ready to learn about being at school'*.
- Recognise and acknowledge the learning gained from past transitions- *'When you started Kindy you didn't know anyone or the teachers. You had to practice being there and now you know what to do'*.
- Give children some down time. Life gets busy, but remember young children cope far better if they are not tired, rushed or over-extended.
- Some schools give their incoming Preps a 'Coming to Prep' type book. If not, take photos of significant areas in the school - playground, eating areas, classroom verandas, bag racks, toilets, library and tuckshop, and make your own book to help orient children prior to starting school.
- Drive by the school and talk about the outdoor spaces and equipment.
- Most importantly, recognise and acknowledge that your child is taking a big step into the unknown and will respond better to positive and honest conversations.

A few comments about our last few weeks of kindy... We have a calendar with important daily events mapped out. We have also talked about what Christmas means, and not just about the presents—but about being kind and considerate to everyone whenever you can; about sharing what you have with others, and about thinking about and helping others who really need our help. Some of the children's plans for the coming weeks are to...

Play!      have a pyjama day      eat lots of ice-blocks and popcorn      learn new songs and share lots of stories  
sing all our favourite songs      have the greatest fun enjoy 'wet play' days  
go to the Bush Park      play Christmas games and build a 'Santa House' to play in  
wrap and keep secret the Christmas gift to our families      decorate our own Christmas tree and sparkle our room all over  
share a sing-a-long with family      have a party lunch on the last day (11th December).

More information soon!

Jo, Yvonne, Louise and I, have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know all our Unit One families and your children, and appreciate the support and friendship you have shown us over the year. We wish you all a happy remainder of the Kindy year.

I attended a conference a while ago and the speaker (Desley Jones) addressed the 16 Habits of Mind. (Costa and Kallick) I found these to be a very powerful. They link with what we do throughout our kindy day and they have a strong connection with our curriculum framework *The Early Years Learning Framework*. They also support the values we strive as parents to give children to purposefully move through their lives. I have shared the website for you to read through further if you wish but here is the list for you to consider. <https://www.habitsofmindinstitute.org/>

## The 16 Habits of Mind are:

- Thinking about Thinking
- Remaining Open to Continuous Learning
- Thinking Flexibly
- Persisting
- Finding Humor
- Striving for Accuracy
- Listening with Understanding and Empathy
- Gathering Data through All the Senses
- Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision
- Thinking Interdependently
- Creating, Imagining, and Innovating
- Responding with Wonderment and Awe
- Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations
- Questioning and Posing Problems
- Managing Impulsivity
- Taking Responsible Risks

## Basically what this means:

Learning to stick to something, learning to restrain themselves emotionally, truly hearing what someone is saying, trying something different - giving it a go, reflecting on how things went and would you do it differently if given another chance, trying your hardest, wondering how to solve the problem, thinking about what I have learned or tried before that could help me solve this problem, using good communication, using all our senses to understand, creativity, recognising the 'WOW' moments in life, taking responsible risks, being able to have a laugh at ourselves or a situation, thinking together and cooperating and always wanting to learn more.

**At Kindy, we try to teach these skills in our daily practice with the children and also model these so the children can see them in action. Take some time to catch yourself doing the same thing...you will be surprised just how much they are a part of 'your' day. Now try and catch your child in a moment and help them see 'The Habits of Mind' that are taking place in their days.**

## Do you know what the colours in the flags mean?



1. 2. 3.

1. Black – represents the Aboriginal people of Australia. Yellow circle – represents the Sun, the giver of life and protector. Red – represents the red earth, the red ochre used in ceremonies and Aboriginal peoples' spiritual relation to the land.
2. Blue - vigilance, truth and loyalty, perseverance & justice. White - peace and honesty. Red - hardiness, bravery, strength & valour.
3. The green stripes represent the land, the black stripes represent the people, and the blue the sea. The flag as a whole symbolises the unity of all Torres Strait Islanders .



This year has been different to any year we have ever experienced. However, as the year nears to the end we are flooded with similar emotions. Excitement about what lies ahead for the children next year, joy in the everyday, nostalgia thinking back to the beginning of the year and how every child has travelled their own learning and development journey.

Over the past few weeks, we've asked the children to reflect on their time at Kindy and for the children heading to school, "What are you most looking forward to in Prep?" Popular answers have been, 'Playing on the school oval and learning to read and write'. It's often comforting for children to know that they have already started the journey in their ability to read.

Being regularly 'read to' and 'talked with' is a fundamental stage in developing oral language and reading awareness. Every day, children are reading body language and environmental print to make meaning of the world around them.

**Environmental print** is the text that surrounds a child, which he/she sees regularly. Signs and logos on stores, bags, buildings, and product packaging become the text that children see daily and can begin to "read." Leivan 2019

During our recent walks out the gate to "Bush Park" the children noticed cups in the drain and are quick to point out they have come from McDonalds. When we asked the children for further information they said "The big 'M' on the cup stands for McDonalds". The trolley that was abandoned in the bush park belonged to 'Coles' because the red writing told us so. {Children also discussed their concern about seeing rubbish and an abandoned trolley and found it difficult to understand that someone didn't put their rubbish in the bin and return the trolley to Coles}. The children know that the 'green man' means we can walk across the railway line but the 'red man' means we have to stop and wait for the train.

While watching the playground builders, the children noticed they had a bucket from Bunnings because the 'red hammer' is the logo to that business.

When children are excited about reading and understanding environmental print, it is significant for them. They will learn much faster and begin to make connections to the world around them. Reading 'environmental print' and engaging in book experiences are a great way to build a love of reading.



When we pause and take a few deep breaths before reacting in just about any situation, things usually feel better, right? As adults, we know this strategy along with tensing and relaxing muscles, can help to calm bodies and minds, help focus and think more positively. Imagine how practising this could help your child when they are feeling worried about a situation, upset, frustrated, jumpy or over excited.

Mindfulness is simply the practice of being in the moment - stopping for a minute to listen to your body and be aware of how you are feeling inside. You don't need any equipment and it can be done anywhere, at any time. Practicing mindfulness is incredibly empowering for children (and adults). It can help them better manage stress and anxiety when it does occur. It helps with self-regulation, promotes positive emotions and self-compassion. When children feel empowered they are more likely to try new things and take more risks. Mindful awareness can also help children be more resilient when they make mistakes and can promote self-love and self-esteem, reducing negative self-talk.

Any activity can be done with a sense of mindfulness, even eating dinner with your family. For example, you can teach your child to pay attention to the texture and flavours of the food. You can guide them to think about how the food nurtures their body and keeps their body healthy.

Another great mindful activity to use when your child is worried, upset or angry is a glitter jar or snow globe. They are a great visual tool and children of any age can create a glitter jar with you. The next time your child is upset or anxious simply have them shake the glitter jar and remain quiet and still while the glitter is settling. The glitter in the jar represents your child's thoughts and you can even encourage your child to think about how their thoughts are like the glitter, rushing around in a mad dash. As they breathe deeply they can watch the glitter float around in the jar and finally settle on the bottom. As the glitter settles down into the bottom of the jar, the mind becomes calmer as well. {As an aside, if you, like us, have old containers of glitter but are concerned about adding these micro plastics to the environment, it is a great way to use it effectively.}



At kindy one of our mindful moments we practice is **Star breathing**.

Holding one hand up with fingers spread you trace around your fingers starting at base of your thumb. As you trace your finger up your thumb take a slow breath in and breath out slowly as you trace your finger down the other side. Keep tracing around your fingers, breathing in as your finger traces up and breathing out as you slowly trace your finger down. Do this slowly to slow down your breathing and feel your body slow down as you do this. Star breathing can be done anywhere, at any time, as you only need your hands to do it!



You may have noticed the carpet of yellow tipuana flowers in the playground growing. We love this tree and it provides us with great shade and a safe place for animals to nest, rest or live and it provides us with another opportunity to investigate bees which may be visiting the flowers to collect nectar and pollen. Some will be our stingless native bees and other varieties with stingers.

Children are working out ways to be safe alongside the bees with making bridges, sweeping and the like however the most effective way is for children to wear closed in shoes while in the playground. Could you please prompt your child about the importance of wearing shoes to kindy at the moment.



As we approach the end of the year we begin to think more about how to best equip the children with the skills, strategies and dispositions as they transition into their new groups in 2021.

All too often it is easier for us as adults to do everything for children simply because that's what we're used to or just because it's quicker. But is that the most beneficial strategy for the children?

Jordy and I spend large chunks of our day simply observing the children and from this we have learnt so much about them and their personalities. We are able to anticipate problems, step in to avoid potential conflict before it escalates or simply avoid a meltdown. Term 4 is the time to begin to take a step back and encourage the children to begin to work out ways they can solve problems for themselves as well as improve their self-help skills. We are stepping up our expectations of them and intervening less often allowing the children the time to work out what to do themselves. This is particularly useful during routine times that the children have done each and every day at kindy: tidying inside after games, packing away after morning tea or lunch as well as during their interactions with each other. It could be something as simple as watching as conflict occurs during play to observe how each child manages the situation before simply jumping in to assist or taking a step back as adults to allow children the time to follow these routines in their own time without constant reminders from adults.

You can do many things at home to help your child's growth and independence. Give your child some more responsibility such as a job chart for getting dressed, cleaning their teeth, packing away their toys, setting the table for dinner. Before you automatically go to do something for them stop and think if they could do it for themselves or if it is a new skill/task you could help them learn. If your child always approaches you for help, encourage them to have a go first before you step in. Picking your battles is always a useful strategy but continuing to think about not always giving your child what they want. Challenge them to cope when things don't go their way.

With only a few weeks left Jordy and I are looking forward to sharing them with your children. We feel very privileged to have been a part of the lives of these 22 precious little people and their families. 2020 has challenged us in ways we never thought possible and we are immensely proud of the way the children (and families) have coped with what life has thrown at us this year. We have learnt to be adaptable, resourceful and flexible, all whilst doing our absolute best to maintain a consistent, safe and caring place for your children to be. It has been an absolute joy to share the journey of MPC 3's with you all and we are looking forward to watching them develop more next year.

## Snippets from Before & After Kindy Care



The new playground definitely has the thumbs up!

Josh says, *"The monkey bars are cool. You have to turn around and go back to the beginning because there isn't a step there now."*



# Sustainability: Children contribute to new playground benefit/risk assessment

The new playground has afforded many opportunities for children to build sustainability understandings both by being involved in benefit/risk discussions for various parts. The other significant factor, which was highlighted in many of the children's discussions, was 'wasting water'. Some children's comments below:

## What we like:

*Everything is higher! It makes it easier to swing. There's a sink in the mud kitchen.*

*There's a water pump in the creek.*

*The bridge going over and under.*

*The water tunnel is in the sandpit.*

*We can look out and see different things.*

*I can balance on the rocks.*

## Ways to stay safe:

*Don't run; don't throw things-rocks; hold on and go slow over the bridge; keep feet out of the gardens; **re-use the water in the mud kitchen and the sandpit**; don't jump off the bridge; no climbing over the sided of the bridge; don't go over the builder fence; don't squash plants; don't jump on the stairs; keep the mud in the mud patch; don't stand on the log in the sandpit; **use little bits of water**.*



Children's focus on conserving water as well as the centre focus on sustainability has prompted many discussions about water use in the creek, mud kitchen and sandpit. We investigated how the new water pump works including how the water is reticulated (used again) so that we are not wasting water.

The taps, however in the sandpit and mud kitchen need our thinking and self-control to ensure we don't use too much water. Negotiation and compromise form many

discussions between children about when they can turn on the tap. We consider our use of water with the importance of children having an opportunity to play with water for all its inherent learning opportunities. The water is captured in containers and when play is finished, it is used to water the plants.



## Parent and child surveys

It's free

A big thank you to parents who have already taken the time to complete the emailed survey. There's still a little time to add your thoughts. We value the contributions which family and community members make in supporting MPC. The feedback you provide helps to inform decisions in relation to future practices and processes at MPC.

Thank you also for helping your child complete the **Children's Surveys**. We are keen to provide another way to capture children's thoughts too. Could you please help your child to complete the survey and return ASAP.

