

Dear Parents of Bear Park,

In this issue you will discover further interesting ideas from the Bear Park teams and build upon previous activities outlined in recent editions.

We would just like to remind you all of the importance of keeping up a strong immune system and especially at this time, so we wish to share with you this extract from the Heart Foundation website -

"As with general heart-healthy eating, there is no one food or nutrient that is going to be the key to a strong immune system. All foods contain a variety of vitamins (i.e. vitamin C, E and A), minerals (i.e. iron, zinc, calcium and magnesium) and fibre that all play a role in keeping your immune system and body in good health."

As well as considering carefully what we eat, it is just as vital to ensure that we are well hydrated, getting enough sleep and daily exercise.

Stay warm and safe

Sue & the Bear Park Team

Learning to Move

We all know that children love to move at what sometimes seems like a hundred miles an hour and this is because they enjoy utilizing their energy, whilst exploring and discovering their own body and its limits. Encouraging children to be active and practice movement also assists them in the overall promotion to healthy growth and development.

A fun and easy idea activity to do at home, to support movement, is through setting up a simple obstacle course that will invite your child/ren to practice using their various gross motor skills. It is truly amazing what one can find around the house that can be used in the design of these courses and still provide that physical challenge.

A cardboard box can be an exciting resource offering your child/ren endless possibilities for exploration and imagination. Try opening either end of the box so that it creates a tunnel for your child to crawl through. See if they could create a maze with several boxes joined together or perhaps it could become a type of wondrous space transport. Ideas are limitless.



Perhaps you have a ladder sitting in your shed? If you lay the ladder flat on the ground you could then encourage your child to step or leap through the gaps. Or is there an unused broom in your house? Put it to use by either laying it flat on the ground or elevate it slightly, depending on how old your child/ren are or where they are developmentally, and see if they can jump over it, or crawl under it?

Maybe you could even use some cushions and place these some distance apart on the ground for your child/ren to zigzag through or jumping from one to the another like a frog jumping on lily pads.

Perhaps you could even have an old tyre that you could place in the middle of your lawn and see how they can navigate their way over it, around it, balancing on top of it and perhaps even through it whilst you vertically hold it.

Get imaginative, think outside the square and invite your child/ren to find things around the house that they can use in their own obstacle course designs. They may invite you to try!!!

Bear Park from Home

Lockdown Family Time Capsule

As we are living in a time that is unprecedented for us all, taking this opportunity to reflect upon the things that matter most to us, is so relevant and important. Creating a time capsule is one way in which we can show what these things are and we can have fun in creating the best "story" of your family life during this nation-wide lockdown.



The first thing we need to consider is what you will use to create your capsule. This could be any shape or size and of any material that you can think of that will last over a period of time. Possibilities could be a shoebox, plastic milk bottles, soft drink bottles cut to fit over each other, or tins (particular a formula tin) would be perfect.

You may wish to decorate your capsule and choose to paint it, or use collage with newspaper, or old magazines as well as other recycling paper from your atelier areas. If you have access to a printer at home you could print small photos of your family and cut and glue these onto the capsule - your options are endless the choice is yours.

The next decision is what to put inside the capsule and this can be a great discussion with your family as to what really matters to them and what they wish to share. How can you best show what your family is like, what their interest are, what are their favourite activities, their favourite stories or songs, their favourite memories etc....

Some suggestions maybe:

- A picture of your family drawn by your child/ren (perhaps a printed family photo also)
- A letter written together about what the lockdown was like and any advice that you would give.
- Sharing the most fun exciting experiences you have been having together.
- Special items or photos of special items that are important to you e.g. a storybook, a toy, a pet ...
- A favourite game you like playing
- A picture of your home
- A favourite hair clip or ribbon or flower or leaf

to list a few....

Also remember it is important to decide where you are going to place or hide this time capsule for discovery in years to come. This is a great way to look at the positives of this time and how you are spending time together, the games you are playing and the memories you are making.



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A Mini Investigation; Observing Birds

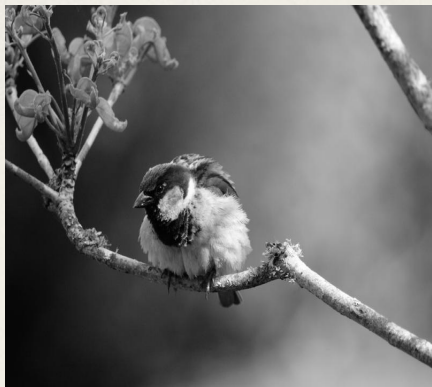
"Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else."
Leonardo da Vinci

In 'Bear Park from Home' issue five, we shared an idea about launching a mini-investigation from home. Here is another suggestion for a way to inspire investigative learning from home, and the great news is all you need to get started, is a window!

Many of you will have noticed that with the national lockdown, the birdlife has become more apparent, likely due to less human activity. While my backyard hosts many a Blackbird, Tui and common Myna, I have noticed Eastern Rosella, Swallows and even Piwakawaka visiting over the past few weeks, the arrival of these rarely sighted guests caused me to stop and ponder *"Have these birds always visited the garden and I just never noticed? Or is it that with current events, that birds are changing their behaviour?"*

Inspired, I began to watch the birds more intentionally, and it occurred to me, this is something I wish I could be doing alongside the children at Bear Park. I tried to consider how the children might view this phenomenon, and their imaginative and magical way of making sense of things.

Invite your child to explore the best possible way to view the birdlife at your home. This might be through a window with a view of trees, a quiet spot on the porch or deck, or if you are blessed to have a yard, you might even consider creating a bird watching space in your garden. With your space established, discuss with your child/ren a potential hypothesis.



- How many different birds do you think you will see?
- How will you identify the different birds?
- Do you know their names or will you have to come up with one?
- Are the birds communicating with each other? If so, what does each sound mean?
- Do you notice more birds than usual? Or different kinds? Why do you think this is?

These open-ended questions prompt young children to feel comfortable giving their original and authentic thoughts as answers, rather than what they think is technically correct.

At Bear Park teachers strongly value children's ability to construct their own intelligence, and we recognize that this is done through having the opportunity to follow their own thought processes and test out their ideas and theories.

As mentioned in our last article about investigative learning, providing a range of languages for expression is crucial. It is through these expressive languages that we come to know more about what children are trying to tell us.

Often young children are limited in their vocabulary and range of verbal expression, they can be restrained by only being able to describe things with the words they know. The way they show their thinking through painting, drawing, clay, dance, photography etc... can provide us with a more authentic understanding.

Experiment with another way of listening to your child, ask if they would like to show you their ideas about the birds they have observed through drawing, painting, dance or clay/play dough. See if you can interpret their movements, lines or sculpture in a way that gives you a window into their thought processes. Allow yourself to be in awe of the way a child's mind interprets something as simple as the bird life that we so often take for granted.

"Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different from before." — Loris Malaguzzi

Nurturing Early Literacy

During a child's first few years of life, their brain is developing at a very rapid pace. Our role as teachers is to offer them a wide variety of tools and experiences so as to support this neurological development.

Reading books and storytelling are rich examples of how we are able to foster this at Bear Park. Introducing the concepts of early literacy to infants and toddlers not only supports their brain development, but also their early literacy and language skills will be strengthened. These skills are vital for learning to read and write later on in their life.

So pick a quiet moment in your day to find a special story to read with your child. Perhaps you could create a special cozy corner in the room with some cushions and blankets. Take your time to look closely at the pictures in the story, describing the colours, the shapes and the patterns that you might see.

Make the story interesting by vocalizing different sounds and varying your tone of voice. Speak to your child as they respond to the different sounds that you make. Repeating these back solidifies their understanding that you want to communicate with them and that you are recognizing their attempts to be verbal. This is an integral part of building verbal literacy, vocabulary and comprehension.



Books and storytelling give children the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to use complex symbol systems that make up our society (education.govt.nz).

Some other ways in which you can support your child's early literacy journey could include:

- Listening to music
- Singing songs
- Speaking (having conversations with your child)
- Mark making (with pencils, crayons, chalk)
- Painting

Book Scavenger Hunt

- Find an animal in a book
- Find the word spring in a book
- Find someone helping someone in a book
- Find a picture of a sun in a book
- Find a book that makes you laugh
- Find a bug in a book
- Find someone sleeping in a book
- Find a character eating in a book
- Find a pet in a book
- Find a cat in a book
- Find a superhero in a book
- Find a bike in a book



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