



# POSSUM POST

Term 1 2021

Warrandyte District Kindergarten

## President's Report by Nat Mander

Welcome to the first Possum Post for 2021! What a start to the year we have had!

I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say it is nice to have a form of normality and routine back again this year, and less covid distractions for the children to really enjoy their kinder time!

A big hello to Hayley and Chai who are running our Extended Care Programme this year! Chai is also a 3 year old educator with Lyn. We are so excited and grateful to have their expertise and lovely personalities to teach our children.

Thanks to all that participated in our first working bee just before the term started.

Because we are a community run kinder it is really important to have as many people as possible pitch in to help share the load, and it also mean we can maintain the kinder yard for our children to enjoy! Please note down the future working bee dates noted further in the Possum Post, look forward to seeing you there!

The gingerbread cookie sets have been a hit so far, big thanks to the fundraising team for putting together such a great idea! Keep your eyes peeled for more exciting ideas and events coming up during the year!

Have a wonderful and safe Easter break.

### Important Dates:

Term 1 Ends	1 April 2021
Term 2 Begins	19 April 2021

## Holiday Catch Ups/ Working Bee Dates



Do your children miss going to kinder over the holidays and seeing their friends and teachers? At the end of every school holiday we will be running a working bee to tidy up the kinder so it is ready for another term of fun and learning. This doesn't have to be a chore it can be a fun catch up for the whole family. If it's wet then dress the children in gumboots and raincoats and watch them jump in puddles and if the sun is shining let them loose in the garden to pull out weeds, find snails and bugs. Having children involved in a working bee gives them ownership and responsibility for their learning environment.

### Working Bee Holiday Dates:

Term 1	Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2021
Term 2	Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Term 3	Sunday 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2021



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## 3 YEAR OLD REPORT By Lyn De Giorgio: Teacher

### March:

In the last month, the children came together as a larger group. They also started to attend kindergarten for their full session hours. To assist the children with this transition, we needed to continue to provide them with a sense of identity and belonging within the kindergarten environment.

By providing opened ended experiences such as the home corner, the construction areas, the making table, and the painting easels the children were given the opportunity to play to their interests, abilities and strengths. We saw boat castles and garages built out of the wooden blocks, and dollhouses built out of the Magna tiles. Many sea creatures were created at the making table, as well as images of and for family members.



The children's block constructions have been very complex. Although, at times they may have been imagining their construction to be different buildings than what their friends were imagining the children have worked together using trial and error. Through reflection with their peers and educators, they have gained understandings of maths concepts as they think about size, shape, balance, and positionings. They have considered who would be using each construction and how they will enter it. In regards to the boats, they thought about whether the boat would be powered by a motor or whether sails would be used to help their boat move.

Photos are a powerful tool to assist children to reach their goals of identity and belonging. We have used individual photos of the children, Chai and me to create a take-home poster. This poster will hopefully provide an opportunity for the children and their families to become familiar with our kinder community.

We have also used the children's photos to support games during our meeting times. They have been used to support games where the children needed to identify their friends and then sang hello to them. We also played a game where we placed the photos upside down. The children needed to select a photo, identify the child in the photo, and ask that child to go with them to wash their hands before we had a snack. This experience also opened up the opportunity for the children to explore new friendships

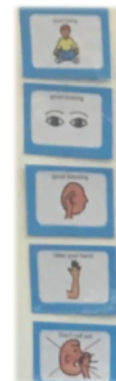


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As the children learn to be part of a larger group, it is important for us to support them to gain an understanding that within this group they have rights and responsibilities. The children are learning their right to be heard and their responsibility to show respect to others so they may be heard. By using visual aids we can support the children to practice skills to take turns speaking and to listen to others when they are speaking. Visual aids have also been used to provide the children with an understanding of the sequence of our routines and to know when their families will be back to pick them up.



Moving into a larger group and being away from their families a little bit longer has caused some children to have a little bit of separation anxiety. To assist the children with any anxiety they may be feeling we have displayed photos of the children with a family member. The children are able to carry these photos around with them for support when needed. We provided the children with the understanding that it is normal to miss your family by introducing them to our owl family and reading their story, The Owl Babies. This story also provides a message that their loved ones will always be back for them.

The children have been exploring colour whilst painting. A rainbow, primary coloured and white paints were added to the easel area to provide the opportunity for the children to experiment with mixing colours.

We extended their understandings of colour mixing through our literacy program with the stories White Rabbit Colour Book and Mix It Up.

Their understanding of colour and colour mixing was further extended by creating paint by adding dye to paste and placing this experience on the light table. This allowed the children to explore how vibrant light can make the colour look. By using primary colours they were able to continue their colour mixing.



With Stage 4 restrictions coming into effect, we thought this would be a good time to teach some hygienic that can help protect them and their friends from all germs. The children practiced sneezing and coughing in their arms. An understanding of how germs are spread and how washing with soap can stop the transmission of germs we experimented with glitter.



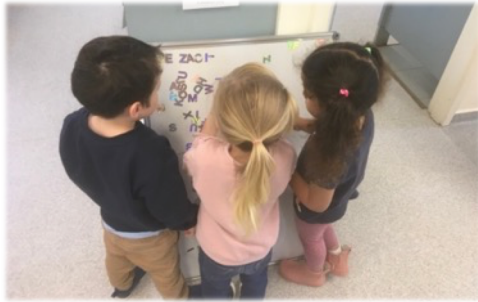


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With many of the children showing interest in writing their names, we have provided some magnetic letters. The children have been supporting each other's learning by sharing their knowledge of familiar letters.



The children are loving our outdoor play space. The mud patch has been used to create many yummy dishes, even dishes for pets.

An interest in soccer supported the development of gross motor and social skills such as turn-taking and inclusion.



The children are also building their confidence on the outdoor playground. They are challenging themselves to go across the monkey bars, climb the high A-frame, balance. They have even taken on the fireman pole which takes a great deal of courage, strength and control.



## Family Picnic Night:

Our Family picnic night was organised to help build the children's sense of continuity between kindergarten and home. The night is also beneficial in building strong reciprocal relationships between educators, the children and families. Thank you to all the families who attended. The lovely warm night saw a good turnout. We were joined by Hayley who is the Extended Care, Group Activity Leader. Chai, Hayley and I had a lovely night as we connected with new families and I caught up with past families and past kinder kids. Another great aspect of this night was watching our families getting to know each other and hopefully building lifelong friendships.





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## 4 YEAR OLD GROUP REPORT By Ronnie Pedersen: Teacher, Nominated Supervisor and Educational Leader

### FEBRUARY

It's great to be back with our team, and now we have Hayley and Chai as well leading our Extended Care sessions. All Educators (and children) are really enjoying sharing experiences and ideas which flow on (emerge) from previous sessions.

What a great settled group of children! They are so eager to explore past and new friendships, as well as trying all of the experiences on offer. The children are creating and building a great sense of Kinder community.

The children are enjoying challenging themselves on the monkey bars. This is not such an easy thing to do as they need to use their upper body strength in order to move through space and hang on! Some children are so determined to master this piece of equipment, that they may come home with blisters on their hands! Does this bring back memories of your own childhood? I know it does mine!!!

Having the children sit together for snack and lunch provides a great social language experience plus also an incidental way to reflect with the children about healthy choices in what they eat. They are always fascinated to discover what Rhonda, Fiona, and I have in our boxes! We have been having such lovely weather for our picnic snacks and lunches. We find the shadiest places available.



We haven't got much in our Kitchen Garden at the moment, as we need to work out our watering system. But the tomatoes are looking great! I hope we beat the snails to them!!! The children had a great time when Rhonda suggested that there were enough tomatoes to harvest. They were very careful in how they twisted the fruit off the vines so that they didn't damage them. The children are demonstrating an increasing knowledge of, growing appreciation and care of, and respect for natural and constructed environments. It's so hard not to pop these little gems in your mouth as soon as you pick them, but the children knew that the fruit needed to be washed first, and then sorted and shared with their fellow classmates. There was also quite a bit of reflection on what colour the tomatoes needed to be to ensure they were ripe enough to pick!!!! Green ones definitely needed to be left on the vine for further sunshine!!

We have created a 'Calm Cubby' in a quieter part of the Kinder playroom. This is for children who need a bit of space away from others; who would just like some time to be by themselves or with one other. We reflected on not annoying anyone in there, respecting the need for them to have some quiet time, and could only join that person if they asked, and that the relaxing person said that it was OK. We reflected on the need that EVERYONE has to sometimes just have a quiet time for themselves!! And that's O.K!



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Yay!! Our jellyfish are having fun 'swimming' in the water!! They are floating above our "Swimmy" mural that a teacher created for us many years ago (based on the Leo Lionini book), but with a message that is still so relevant today.

When the session is really hot, we try to have out as many 'watery' activities as we can...Aqualab, 'fishing', dolly washing, washing rocks, etc. As well as the coolness it provides, it also provides a calming sensory experience. Children also have to learn to take turns, and share, just like "The Rainbow Fish" did. It's amazing how many friends you can make when you have mastered these skills!

One of the children was talking about a dragon, and this led very easily into exploring how many people all over the world celebrate different occasions. We have just finished celebrating Christmas and New Year, and now it is the Chinese (or Lunar) New Year (This year being the "Year of the Ox"). We reflected with the children about how they may see many celebrations in many areas that may involve dancing, and so we had a look at some Chinese Lion and Chinese Dragon dances on our interactive whiteboard. We were able to see that they weren't REAL lions or dragons, but were a bit like puppets, with people moving them underneath. I thought some of you may be going to view some of these celebrations (before news of our Lockdown!!!), so thought that this would be a general introduction for the children about something that could possibly have scared them previously. Hayley (our Extended Care Teacher) has brought along her large Chinese dragon puppet, that she has allowed us to use. Children are fascinated by different cultural celebrations especially if it means fun for them!!!!



## MARCH

The children really enjoy the story of "The Rainbow Fish", even though they have probably heard it many times before. It's a great reinforcement of the life lesson of it's better to have only a few possessions and a lot of friends, rather than have a lot of possessions and few friends. The children are able to make connections between experiences, concepts and processes. We followed on from this by reflecting on similarities and differences when playing the Rainbow Fish Memory Game - using the words 'same' and 'different'. I can't emphasize enough the importance of the children understanding this concept, because it is like a 'golden rule' in any learning they do, now and in the future, e.g. understanding if letters, numbers, etc, are the same? finding differences in in how on look, feel, taste, sound, etc. This concept underpins all learning we do.



We are helping the children to understand the rules/etiquette of group games by going around the table clockwise, taking turns, not getting up from the table until the game has finished (even if you don't like the game!) and cheering on their fellow players. We also try to have the children understand that they are not the 'winners', but have 'finished first'. Children at this age can unknowingly undermine other children's confidence in themselves, so this is another golden rule we will continue to advance!!!



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As a change from using the softer playdough, we explored the terracotta clay. As it hadn't been used this year, it had slightly hardened and therefore not as pliable. The children used the wooden mallets to pound away at it. This is a great way to use excess energy!! One of the children then wanted to join 2 pieces of clay together, but they kept falling apart. We brought out a wooden tool to show them how to 'score' the clay before joining it, but the children preferred to just dig the tool into the clay and make wonderful landscapes!

Our Family Night was a great (albeit chilly) night. It was so lovely to see our families chatting together, and all of the children running around together. I think there were some new friendships made on the night! Thank you all for making the effort to come.

'Reading' pattern cards to follow through with the placement of the Duplo pieces when doing the Animal Families puzzles is quite a difficult task for the children on many levels. Educators watch the children carry this out in many many ways, all of which are OK. At this stage we aren't too concerned about whether the children get the pattern right, but just that they recognize that there is a process that can be used to get a particular outcome, if they want. Everyone does things in their own way. It is amazing though for us to see how the children's thought processes work! The children are able to persevere and experience the satisfaction of achievement, whilst they manipulate resources to investigate, take apart, assemble, and construct.



It's time for a treasure hunt! Some of the boys were digging for gold and pirates' treasure, so Fiona and Rhonda 'salted' the sandpit and digging patch with coloured pebbles, and then there was a 'gold rush' effect!!! Treasure hunters abounded!! Using shovels, sieves, and hands! There was lots of dust flying!!!! Certain coloured treasure seemed to be more sought after than others! Some children just stood at the side and watched and expected the 'gem hunters' to share their finds! Uh Oh!! Not going to happen!!! The children are playful and respond positively to others, reaching out for company and friendship. They participate with others to solve problems and contribute to group outcomes.

But then let's compare. Who has the most? Who has certain colours? Who had the biggest? and so on went the deliberations! The children begin to sort, categorise, order and compare collections and attributes of objects and materials in their social and natural worlds. This is where the serious reflections come in to play!

Following on from the children's interest (and excitement!) of finding 'treasure', we asked them if they would like to make pirate hats. "Yes", came the resounding answer!! So hat making went in to production! That skull and crossbones was a bit tricky to cut out though!! We had a few very creative insignias!!! The children follow and extend their own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration.

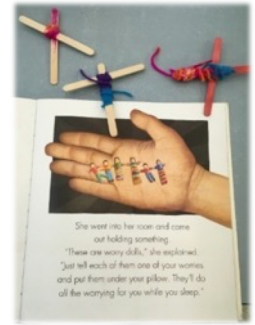


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Some of the children had been talking about having bad dreams, and we reflected on what they should do when that happens. We read the story of "Silly Billy", by Anthony Browne, to the children about a boy named Billy, who worries about everything, who was given some Worry Dolls by his Grandmother. Browne explained at the end of the story about the origin of Worry Dolls. After the children reflected on what they worried about sometimes, they then made their own Worry Doll. Some children made one, some made lots, and others weren't interested! And that's OK! A few of the children were so thoughtful that they wanted to make a Worry Doll for each member of the family, how thoughtful of them! Gorgeous! The children are beginning to express a range of emotions, thoughts and views constructively.







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## WELCOME HAYLEY AND CHAI!!



### HAYLEY

Hi my name is Hayley and I'm very excited to be joining the team at Warrandyte Kindergarten. I'm thrilled to be your extended session teacher together with Chai. I'm looking forward to a year of learning, fun and adventure!

I can't wait to learn more about your child and your family, but first I'll tell you a little about me. I have 3 children, Ashton (11), Gracie (10) and Quinn (3) and 2 rescue cats called Nala and Luna. I love to go to the beach, be creative and I'm currently working on my New Years goal of getting back into running again with an end goal of participating in some form, at the Melbourne Marathon later in the year.



### CHAI

Hi, my name is Chai who believes that all children can learn, and they learn well in a safe, comfortable, and supported environment. I'm a mother of a couch-bound 12-year-old girl and a very active 9-year-old boy. I'm also a wife to a very busy husband. I have a dog named Morris, two indoor rabbits named Cooper and Heather. I love working with kinder aged children in the Early Year Learning setting.

## EXTENDED CARE By Hayley: Extended Care Activity Group Leader

We have enjoyed establishing our new program at Warrandyte Kindergarten providing Extended Care for our community and families. We have formed some lovely relationships with the children and families and love being part of the dynamic and supportive team, where we are able to collaborate with both the 3year old and 4year old educators to support our children further.

We have been and will continue to run an Emergent Curriculum for our sessions. This allows us to respond to every Child's interests individually and in small groups, in a play-based environment. We have created many open ended, parent initiated and self-directed experiences for our children to explore.





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One of our topics we have explored is Colours and mixing colours. We have performed experiments as groups and individually, danced and sang songs about colour, read books and have many discussions about colours and mixing. The children loved mixing coloured water and paint together to create their own colours. This experience has opened up opportunities to share our ideas with the group and exploring the concept of putting forward our ideas as hypothesis.

We have also worked a lot on our Gross Motor skills with many opportunities, all child led to develop a range of skills. We have performed football drills, soccer and tennis drills as well as free play ball games. The children have also enjoyed setting up their own obstacle courses with various items to crawl through, jump on, jump through, cartwheel and tumble on. Our bikes and fabulous bike track are always a much in demand providing many learning opportunities.



When collaborating with the other educators we are finding with the smaller group in the afternoon in our extended care that some children are more willing to sit down and work on construction, craft, puzzles or various activities that they don't necessarily participate in within a bigger group. So, this is nice to see also. The activities seem to be holding the Children's interests for longer periods of time, which is one of the advantages to having a smaller group.

In the past week I have noticed lots of talk about who's turn it is, its my turn, etc. We have been exploring ways in which children can help navigate these scenarios independently or within the group. The children came up with the idea of timing children on popular activities. They have really enjoyed watching the sand timers. With many children completely engaged in watching the sand fall to the bottom. I'd like to explore this further in the coming weeks and next term if the interest is still present to develop their knowledge of time further.

Other emerging interests are magnets, scales and weighing things and Emergency Service Workers that we will take through to next term if the interest is still present.

Well done to all our children for a great start to 2021. We can't wait to support your learning and interests in Term 2.





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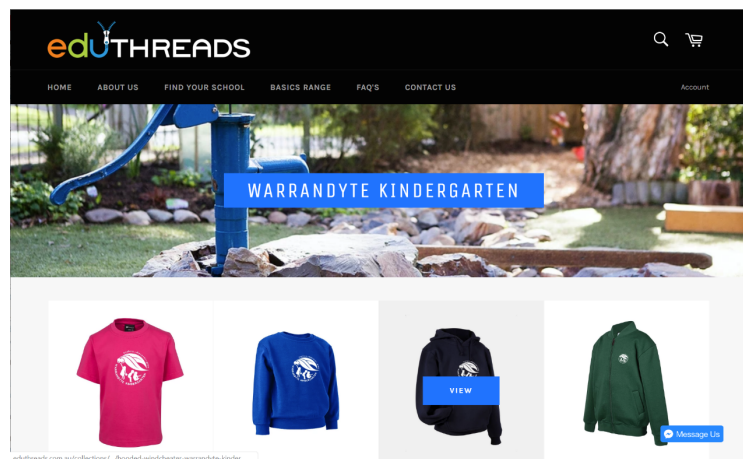


**Do you shop at IGA?**

Choose Warrandyte Kindergarten and scan your  
Quinton's Rewards card everytime you shop to donate  
points to our kinder!

## ***New Kinder Uniform Supplier***

*Don't forget to visit to check out the range of uniform items and available and purchase some at any time!*



***Do you have something you think should be included in the next possum post?***

*Email [wkpossumpost@gmail.com](mailto:wkpossumpost@gmail.com)*



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## FUNDRAISING

### The House of Gingerbread Warrandyte



This year, instead of doing a chocolate fundraiser, we have decided to support local and sell yummy gingerbread from the House of Gingerbread Warrandyte.

Each family should have collected a box of 12 cookies to sell. These are \$4 each with \$2 from every cookie going to the kinder!

If you have not yet collected a box or would like another box please let your class representative know or contact our President Nat Mander at [president.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au](mailto:president.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au) to arrange this.

***If you could please have the money back by the last week of term starting 29<sup>th</sup> March that would be great. Please place the \$48 in a sealed envelope in the fundraising cupboard with the parent and child's name on it.***

Thanks for supporting the kinder and a local small business with this great fundraiser!

## FUNDRAISERS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

### Tea Towel's

The teachers and children have been working on special tea towels that will be available to purchase. Please keep an eye on your child's pocket for order forms. You don't want to miss out on ordering this special keepsake.

### Rob Dolan Wine Drive



Last year this fundraiser was very successful for raising funds for the kindergarten and we are planning to run this again in Term 2. More information will be coming out soon.



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## SENSORY RECIPES TO TRY AT HOME

SOME OF THE RECIPES THAT WE USE FOR SENSORY EXPERIENCES AT KINDER:

### PLAYDOUGH



#### INGREDIENTS

- |                               |                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 cups plain flour            | 6 tablespoons of oil |
| 1 cup salt                    | 4 cups boiling water |
| 4 tablespoons cream of tartar | Food colouring       |

#### RECIPE

- Mix all dry ingredients together.
- Add oil and food colouring. (If wanting several colours from this one batch, add colourings when kneading, after separating into several balls)
- Add boiling water.
- Mix well.
- Turn onto bench and knead until smooth. (TAKING CARE AS THE MIXTURE WILL BE VERY HOT STILL).

### FINGERPAINT

Mix about 1 cup cornflour with a little cold water to make into a paste. Add approx. 2-3 cups boiling water, stirring constantly, until desired consistency. If the mixture doesn't thicken to your liking, put into microwave for a minute, or alternatively, cook on the stove, as if making a sauce!

If wanted, add a few drops of food colouring...or let the children add this themselves and experiment with colour mixing.



### SLIME



1 cup of Lux Soap Flakes...add boiling water, mixing constantly until all dissolved. This mixture will thicken as it cools. Can be kept for about one week. Colouring can be added...green for dinosaur swamp? Red for volcanic environment? Blue for ocean play? Add plastic figurines, animals, stones, beads.....whatever takes your fancy!!

Have fun!!!



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## Important Information!!!

### Working with Children Checks

Warrandyte Kindergarten is very fortunate to have a large number of friends and family volunteer to help us with our activities at the kindergarten, including help during our kindergarten sessions. This involvement is something that we very much value as part of our kindergarten. However, more helpers are always greatly appreciated!

All of our helpers require a Working with Children Check card. If you do not have a card, it is a very easy process that is confidential and free.

Step 1: Complete an online application form at [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au).

Step 2: Finalise your application at an Australia Post outlet. This will include presenting one acceptable proof of identity document such as a driver's licence or passport. Australia Post will take your photo for the card free of charge.

If you need any further information or assistance in applying for a card, please speak to our Administration Officer, Carolyn Camm at [admin.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au](mailto:admin.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au).

***Please ensure you have listed Warrandyte Kindergarten as a nominated location for your WWCC. People with existing WWCC can visit <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> to update their details and add Warrandyte Kindergarten as an organisation.***

## Resources for Parents

- **Australian Parenting Network Raising Children**
  - [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)
- **Poisonous Plants and Children**
  - <https://raisingchildren.net.au/toddlers/safety/poisons/dangerous-plants>
- **Value of Reading with Preschoolers**
  - <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/at-home/reading-with-preschoolers/>
- **Sue Larkey**
  - <https://www.facebook.com/SueLarkeyTeacher/>
- **Spectrum journeys**
  - [https://www.facebook.com/pg/spectrumjourneysinc/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/spectrumjourneysinc/posts/?ref=page_internal)



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## Kinder Committee 2021

<b>President</b>	Natalie Mander	president.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au
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<b>Vice President</b>	Andy Wilgose
<b>Secretary</b>	Merryn Platt
<b>Treasurer</b>	Kylie Smith
<b>Fundraising Coordinator –</b>	Georgina Hannan
<b>Fundraising Officers</b>	Rachel Gittus
	Tricia Canny
	Cat Duncan
	Naomi Greenwood
<b>Festival Float</b>	Bec Asquith
	Julia Slussareff

<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	Bec Asquith
<b>Marketing</b>	Kimberley Hall
<b>Social Media</b>	Katie Pelosi
<b>Market Parking</b>	Kimberley Hall Jim Sill
<b>IT Support</b>	Lauren Wilgose
<b>Maintenance</b>	Lauren Wilgose
<b>Kitchen Garden</b>	Kate Misra
<b>4YO Group Parent Rep</b>	Cat Duncan
<b>3YO Group Parent Rep</b>	Nikki Teggelove

To contact committee members, please email [president.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au](mailto:president.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au) and Joanna will direct your enquiry.

## Kinder Staff Contacts

<b>Ronnie Pedersen (4YO)</b>	ronnie.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au	9844 3363
<b>Lynette De Giorgio (3YO)</b>	lyn.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au	9844 3363
<b>Carolyn Camm (admin)</b>	Admin.warrandyte@kindergarten.vic.gov.au	9844 3363

Our Kinder staff are always more than happy to talk to you about questions or concerns about your child. Please ensure this communication is in person at the beginning or end of a session or using the official contact details listed above only.



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## Play-based learning can set your child up for success at school and beyond

February 22, 2018 4:23am AEDT

As the new school year begins, many families are deciding where to enrol their child in preschool or school. Preschools and schools offer various approaches to early education, all promoting the benefits of their particular programs.

One approach gaining momentum in the early years of primary school curriculum is play-based learning. Research shows [play-based learning](#) enhances children's academic and developmental learning outcomes. It can also set your child up for success in the 21st century by teaching them relevant skills.

### What is play-based learning?

Children are naturally motivated to play. A play-based program builds on this motivation, using play as a context for learning. In this context, children can explore, experiment, discover and solve problems [in imaginative and playful ways](#).

A play-based approach involves both child-initiated and teacher-supported learning. The teacher encourages children's learning and inquiry through interactions that aim to stretch their thinking to higher levels.

For example, while children are playing with blocks, a teacher can pose questions that encourage problem solving, prediction and hypothesising. The teacher can also bring the child's awareness towards mathematics, science and literacy concepts, allowing them to engage with such concepts through hands-on learning.

While further evidence is needed on cause and effect relationships between play and learning, research findings generally support the value of good quality [play-based early years programs](#).

### How does it compare to direct instruction?

Play-based learning has traditionally been the educational approach implemented by teachers in Australian preschool programs. It underpins state and national government [early learning frameworks](#).

Research has shown the long-term benefits of high-quality play-based [kindergarten programs](#), where children are exposed to learning and problem solving through self-initiated activities and teacher guidance.

In contrast to play-based learning are teacher-centred approaches focused on instructing young children in basic academic skills. Although this more structured teaching and learning style is the traditional approach to primary school programs, [research](#) is emerging that play-based learning is more effective in primary school programs. In these recent studies, children's learning outcomes are shown to be higher in a play-based program compared to children's learning outcomes in direct-instruction approaches.

#### Authors



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<http://theconversation.com/play-based-learning-can-set-your-child-up-for-success-at-school-and-beyond-91393>





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Research has also identified young children in direct-instruction programs can experience negative effects. These include stress, decreased motivation for learning, and behaviour problems. This is particularly so for children who are not yet ready for more formal academic instruction.

### **What can be gained through play-based programs?**

As with traditional approaches, play-based early years programs are focused on teaching and learning. In such programs, play can be in the form of free play (activity that is spontaneous and directed by the child), and guided play (also child-directed, but the teacher is involved in the activity as a co-player) with intentional teaching. Both have benefits for children's learning. To capitalise on these benefits, an optimum play-based program will provide opportunities for both free play and guided play.



Involvement in play stimulates a child's drive for exploration and discovery. This motivates the child to gain mastery over their environment, promoting focus and concentration. It also enables the child to engage in the flexible and higher-level thinking processes deemed essential for the 21st century learner. These include inquiry processes of problem solving, analysing, evaluating, applying knowledge and creativity.

Play also supports positive attitudes to learning. These include imagination, curiosity, enthusiasm, and persistence. The type of learning processes and skills fostered in play cannot be replicated through rote learning, where there is an emphasis on remembering facts.

The inquiry-based nature of play is supported through the social interactions of teachers and children. Teachers take an active role in guiding children's interactions in the play. Children are supported in developing social skills such as cooperation, sharing and responding to ideas, negotiating, and resolving conflicts.

Teachers can also use children's motivation and interest to explore concepts and ideas. In this way, children acquire and practice important academic skills and learning in a playful context. For example, research indicates the increased complexity of language and learning processes used by children in play-based programs is linked to important literacy skills. These include understanding the structure of words and the meanings of words.

Another study found children's vocabulary and ability to tell a story was higher in a play-based classroom than a traditional classroom.



Teacher-led learning and direct instruction methods have their place in educational contexts. But the evidence also points to the benefits of quality play-based programs for our youngest learners. In play-based programs, time spent in play is seen as important for learning, not as a reward for good behaviour. In such classrooms, children have greater, more active input into what and how they learn.

Research shows play-based programs for young children can provide a strong basis for later success at school. They support the development of socially competent learners, able to face challenges and create solutions.