Dear Families

On Tuesday 8th March staff were fortunate to attend the National Nature Play Conference ‘Create, Play, Connect’ in Adelaide. Crystal Brook Kindy staff felt privileged to be among 450 educators in attendance.

Keynote speakers were Tim Gill and Claire Warden. They both gave powerful presentations on risk and learning in nature. 31 South Australian presenters shared their knowledge and stories on a range of topics in break out sessions.

Another highlight was the organized visit to the Adelaide Zoo to view the newly developed nature play space and playground.

Staff have come away with new knowledge, understandings and insights. I have since joined some of Claire Warden’s Facebook groups and am enjoying my newsfeed being filled with inspiring articles about nature pedagogy.

Some immediate changes we would like to implement at the centre are ‘talking tubs’. The tubs are filled with provocations that stimulate conversations and a line of enquiry to explore. The idea behind the talking tub is ‘to stimulate thinking and encourage communication’ This learning is documented in a floor book that shows child’s voice, adult’s voice and possible lines of development (plods). Children like to revisit their learning which develops their meta cognition. Floor books engage children in a learning journey that empowers them to choose where they are going. Claire spoke of children experiencing flow learning where they engage in deep, fascinating learning that is ‘long, fluid and flexible’.

Claire has a fabulous sense of humour and was a highly engaging speaker!

Karena Wilson

An afternoon with Simon Hutchinson …

We are extremely fortunate to have a session with Simon Hutchinson from Climbing Trees at our kindy TOMORROW, Tuesday 15th March. Simon will be running a session with kindy children and room 1 school students from 2-3pm. Room 1 were selected as they were exposed to loose parts play in 2015. Parents of kindy and school children are welcome to attend the loose parts session and talk with Simon about loose parts.

Simon will be running a second session, specifically for parents from 4-5pm on Tuesday, and it is our preference that children are not at this session. We understand for some families that this will be difficult, so will be offering a crèche to assist families to attend. This session will focus on outdoor yard design and provide inspiration for taking our site to its next phase of development. Ideally, we would love Dads, Grandparents and interested community people to come along as well. Simon’s consultancy for the two sessions are being funded by DECD, a generous offer as we narrowly missed out on a preschool outdoor yard upgrade.
**TAFE student placement**

We welcome Alana Kirk who is studying for her Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care with TAFE. Alana will be on placement on Mondays, working in the Occasional Care and Preschool programs. We wish Alana a very beneficial and enjoyable time with us, and know families will make Alana feel welcome at our Centre.

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**Crystal Brook Playgroup**

Playgroup is on Fridays at the Kindy from 9.30-11.30am.

Keep your eye on the Playgroup and Kindy Facebook pages to see what the weekly activity is. Please bring a piece of fruit or a healthy snack for a shared platter. All families are welcome!

The CaFHS nurse visits on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month.

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**Breakfast bar @ Kindy**

The “breakfast bar” operates daily at kindy and provides children with the opportunity to fill their tummy with a healthy, wholesome breakfast before they start their day. It is up to each individual child if they want to access the breakfast bar.

We started the breakfast bar in 2015 as we noticed some children were hungry once they arrived at kindy and were wanting to start on their lunch box early in the day.

We have noticed that children enjoy socializing with their peers around the breakfast bar, which gives them the chance to develop their oral language skills through asking and responding to their peers. The educator supporting the breakfast bar engages in quality conversations with the children and assists them to settle positively into kindy.

Last week we had weet-bix with banana and strawberries on top. Children also get to experience new foods that they may not usually eat at home, but are willing to try at kindy!

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**My best childhood memories…**

Growing up on a farm at Kimba (close to the train line that carried the wheat / barley to Port Lincoln for exporting) provides me with some of my best childhood memories. I was 2nd eldest in our family, with an older brother, younger sister and younger brother all born within 5 years of each other. Most of the time we were great mates!

We would spend hours outside at a time riding our bikes, making BMX bike tracks and jumps in the scrub and carving out incredible cubbies near the railway line amongst the broom bush. Our most favourite was an extravagant 4 room cubby that had a kitchen, lounge, garage for our bikes and separate long drop toilet! We broke off parts of the broom bush and used the branches to sweep our cubby floors to a state of being immaculate. We carried an orange table and chair from our house to use in our bush cubby, and spent hours making paths using the granite, mossy rocks found nearby that would lead from one room to another. I can never remember seeing any snakes, but definitely lots of blue tongue ‘sleepy’ lizards.

We certainly self assessed any risks and self regulated any danger that came our way! Some of my best childhood days without a doubt.
Our next visit to the Southern Flinders Health Service, Crystal Brook Campus will occur on Monday 21st March from 10am. Our first visit was very successful with 33 children visiting, doing jigsaw puzzles, playing lego, using paint stampers and looking at books together. So many positive connections were made between the elderly and young people.

Simon Hutchinson is the Director of Climbing Tree, a nature play and sustainability consultancy. He is passionate about children and creating beautiful spaces and opportunities for them to enjoy. Simon is father to three children and has ensured they have the best backyard mud kitchen and climbing wall in Adelaide! An educator for over 10 years, he is a qualified Level Three playground inspector and has worked with renowned play space designers, Adam Bienenstock and Rusty Keeler.
In 2015 we began visiting Mercowie Park, the natural area directly opposite the kindergarten. This provided children with the opportunity to make cubbies, climb trees, collect wood and explore the rocky creek bed. We want to build on these experiences for children again this year, to allow them to create, play and connect with nature in a play space that is literally ‘on our doorstep’.

In Claire’s key note address at the conference she spoke of children’s learning being on a continuum everywhere, from the inside environment, to outside environment and connecting beyond. Through visiting Mercowie Park again in 2016, we plan to connect children to the ‘beyond space’. Through curriculum pedagogy Claire said that “everyone, everywhere, and everything has got potential for learning” While visiting Mercowie Park staff will ensure they are ‘mindfully present’ but will allow the environment to do its thing in promoting learning experiences for children and their young, enquiring minds.

Another break out session that I attended at the conference spoke of the role of adults in the outdoor environment. As adults, it is our role to be an active observer, provisioner, monitor, mentor, companion (be present), guide (intentionally interact) and be a connector. Through connecting children to the natural environment we can provide opportunities for them to grow physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially, emotionally and creatively. Children learn in their own individual ways, and as educators we need to support and nurture this.

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around”
Leo Buscaglia

We would love families to reflect on their best childhood memories. We want to collate these and add them to a ‘reflection board’ as inspiration for reflecting on your own magical moments of your childhood.

Please spend 5-10 minutes hand writing or typing your memory and return to kindy. It will be wonderful to share these with your children.

"Connecting children to the 'beyond space'"

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