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Transforming Classroom Practice

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TRANSFORMING

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

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A journey into the amazing world of seeds

“How can seed pods encourage a sense of awe and wonder in young learners?”

As a teacher within the room for 4 – 5 year olds at Avondale Early Learning Centre I am continually looking for a spark of interest within the children to foster their sense of awe and wonder, and a consequent choice to learn.

This journey began during a game of memory with natural objects. “What is this?” the children inquired, indicating a brown spiky object. I explained it was a seed pod. “But what is a seed pod?” Xavier queried. This simple question began a child-initiated journey of discovery that spanned a term. The children’s investigation throughout the week led to an accumulative sharing at group time on Monday afternoons as they revisited and reflected on their weekly findings. Excitement, expressed as “What are

these wonderful things?” both prompted and enabled their natural curiosity and inquisitive natures into a quest for knowledge.

Utilising children’s learning dispositions to explore and discover, I empowered them to determine the learning path that was applicable to their personal needs. By creating opportunities for the children to interact with technology, nature, peers and myself to research, gather, explore, draw and wonder at the diversity of the seed pods they encountered, each gained unique, yet shared learning. Following a project approach scaffolded the children’s learning beyond their Zone of Proximal Development to interact, question, problem solve, communicate, reflect, and more as they marvelled at these wonderful objects found in God’s glorious world.

Through the reflection and discussion with the children the seed pod collection grew beyond the Avondale Early Learning Centre to the children’s homes and extended families, as children and educators formed collaborative partnerships finding and sharing contributions from many different environments.

The seed pod journey inspired many hypotheses regarding what the children could see, feel, hear, and their understanding of what they knew. The assistance of the other educators within the room created the opportunity for me to focus my attention on providing myself as a tool to enable the children time and opportunity to direct their means and style of learning. This included sharing their ideas to clarify their thinking, providing open-

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Figure 1. April and Hannah sharing Hannah’s discovery with the class.



Figure 2. “Why are seed pods spiky?”



Figure 3. "Do the seeds come from a plant or a tree?" Tayla

ended questions such as, "What characteristics do you see?" and most importantly listening to discover what they required, wanted to know and had discovered.

Through the facilitation of their interest the children collaborated on future directions for learning. On a nature walk the children discovered a Liquidambar seed pod and asked "Why are seed pods spiky?" This provided the opportunity to resolve the answer through open-ended questioning; they have spikes on the outside to protect the seeds.

Presenting a seed pod from home, Charles raised the question, "What is this seed pod?" and requested the laptop to further his research. Provided support, Charles searched images, then followed links to reveal, "This is a Hakea seed pod".

Comparing Marigold flowers to similar ones Tayla had planted at home prompted her question, "Do these seeds come from a plant or tree?" This required hypothesising, observing and comparing the features of seeds. After sharing knowledge through discussion, Tayla determined they came from a plant similar to the ones found in her garden, as opposed to a large tree which has seed pods.

Jennifer's interest pursued, "How does a seed pod get from green to brown?" This was a reflection on the Lotus seed pods she had at home. Bringing in green seed pods, which her mother had retrieved from the dam with a canoe enabled Jennifer to develop her scientific skills as she observed the changes occurring and discussed these over the coming weeks. This partnership with Jennifer's family also provided opportunity for the children to see, smell, feel and taste the fresh Lotus seed pod. This journey lasted longer as at Jennifer engaged with technology and investigated the Lotus seed pod at various stages drawing the conclusion, "When they lose moisture the seed pod turns brown". She visualised this concept through her artwork.

My personal philosophy reflects that a Christian worldview in the early childhood setting is reflected within everything we encounter, value and share with the children. It is not a separate entity taught, but rather an acceptance and understanding that is shared daily with the children - that God cares for everyone, surrounds all of us, is seen everywhere and this is evident in the wonderful environment He created.

The acceptance of a Master designer is concluded beautifully by Tayla; "In the Bible when God made the world He gave us trees and seed pods on the trees, so that we could always forever and ever have His trees in our world. Seed pods are special".

Psalm 89:11 "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all it contains, You have founded them". **TEACH**

“
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Figure 4. "What is this seed pod?" Charles