



THANKS TO ANDREA'S PARENTS ANNA AND ANTHONY FOR THE VEGIES IN THE GARDEN

The Pied Piper Paper

FEBRUARY 2014

Welcome back to 2014

Welcome to old and new friends. We're so glad you've chosen to spend the year with us at Pied Piper.

We've had a remarkable start to the year with very settled children, so congratulations to all our parents who have prepared their children so well!

We also know you've had lots of new routines to get used to, so thank you for getting into the swing of these so quickly.

So remember, if there is anything you're not sure about or something that we haven't told or shown you, please ask....we really want you to feel at home at Pied Piper.



Toilet training?

We'll support you wherever you're up to with toilet training your child, and we can also help with some information on how to go about it if it is your first time. Click [here](#) to go to iTunes for the app (*Toilet Training for Children With Special Needs*). Although designed for

parents of children with additional needs, it seems really useful, and is presented in pictures and has a boy and a girl section. It has been recommended to us at preschool.

We have a website!

We're online at last! Click [here](#) or go to www.piedpiperpreschool.com.au. On our website (which still has a few pages under construction) you'll find information and pictures about the preschool, as well as a copy of the Parent Handbook and the newsletters.

Over time, we'll develop this website further to contain parenting information and more about what the children are up to. If you have any suggestions for things you'd like to see on the website, please talk to Trudy.



We are an egg and peanut/tree nut free centre in 2014

You will have received a note by now telling you about some children at the centre with serious (life threatening) food allergies. To support these families and keep their children safe, we are now both egg and peanut free.

Your support and our vigilance will help give these children the same opportunities by coming to preschool as all other children. We'll give you more information as we have it, but the main exclusions were listed on the note that went out recently.

Enrolment catchup

If you received a little reminder checklist recently, it means there are still a few bits and pieces to do before your whole enrolment process is complete.

For some it will be a simple matter of a family photo, and if it's easier, just ask someone to take one on your phone and email it to: admin@piedpiper.ngo.org.au and tell us which family it belongs to.

For others, you may still have to have a mini interview with Trudy – this is just to go through your **All About Me** sheet.... it only takes 15 minutes so see Trudy or Cathy and make a time today.

What's happening in the Little Room?

The Little Room children have been settling in so wellthere have been very few tears and lots of excited little people coming in to explore this new environment. There's been a focus on getting to know each other and the educators in the room – developing that sense of belonging that is vital to the wellbeing of young children - especially when they are away from family and familiarity for the first time.

As you can see from the photo, we are learning to sit together in a small group, learning to follow a simple routine and learning where our locker is.

There has been lots of sensory play in the room....sand, water, shaving cream.....sensory play allows children to explore the properties of materials in a very free-form way, and it is a very soothing experience.

The children have been learning some new songs: [This is The Way We Wash Our Hands](#), [Incey Wincey Spider](#) and our afternoon [Goodbye Song](#).

We have a focus on hand washing this month, and the children have also met Bullowa, our indigenous friend (doll) who will form a big part of their awareness and understanding of indigenous culture. They are also learning to say "We know we are on Wiradjuri lands" – our acknowledgement of country.

The children are also learning to greet in Arabic: "Marhabam"you might like to practice this with your child too.



OUR PARENT COMMITTEE FIRST MEETING COMING UP

You – the parents are a vital part of our preschool. We are **community based** which means community managed, so we need parent input to make sure our preschool runs to its best potential.

Our meetings are generally on the last Monday of the month at 4 pm at preschool, and free childcare is provided.

However, in March, our first meeting for the year will be held on Monday 3rd March at 4 pm.

At this meeting, we'll be setting our fundraising goals for the year, so we need lots of ideas to help achieve these.

We have a very small committee, so it would be great not to leave all the responsibility to them. You don't need to take on a position, but we know that more heads can be creative and it's great to have a variety of opinions when we are making decisions.

Here are some things Trudy and the staff would love to aim for in our fundraising this year.....do you have any great fundraising ideas or energy? WE NEED YOU!!!



What's happening in the Big Room?

The Big Room has been a hive of activity since our return. Just like the Little Room, we have been settling children into the change of routine – especially those who have come up from the Little Room and the children are adjusting remarkably well. Welcome in particular to our new friends Holly, Jordan, Beau and Ava who are new to Pied Piper.



We've been celebrating Chinese New Year in the room, and have been learning all about the Year of the Horse, the Chinese Zodiac Story, and the traditions surrounding New Year. We made dumplings together one Thursday recently (see picture above) which was a big hit!

Exploring other cultures is important to us at Pied Piper Preschool – we believe that children are world citizens and we hope to support you in preparing your children for the wonderful diversity they will come across in our Australian community and the wider world.

We are also practicing lots of social behaviours....

- ✓ Saying please and thank you
- ✓ Asking for a turn by saying "Me next please"
- ✓ Putting things away when we've used them
- ✓ Thinking about what we can do or say to help rectify the situation when we've hurt or upset someone (restorative justice) rather than just saying sorry and moving on.

Other things we've been doing in the Big Room include:

- ☺ enjoying having the train set on the big play table
- ☺ hammering, screwing and nailing
- ☺ experimenting with the planks of wood and bricks in the building site in the playground (see pictures below)



We have also started preparing the children's portfolios, so keep an eye on the cupboards under the sign-in book to see if there is an entry in your child's portfolio yet.

The children who are new to the room have been getting used to signing on.....don't worry if your child is not writing yet.....part of the journey towards literacy is being exposed to print and the purposes of print...scribbling and drawing are the early stages of writing, so they are heading off in the **write** direction (pun intended!)

Over the year, you will see lots of opportunities for the children to use writing (real or pretend) in meaningful and useful ways in the room.

Keep an eye on the whiteboard in the foyer which will tell you about some of the experiences that are happening within the room. You are also welcome to read our reflective and Planning Journal which lives on the back cupboard.



Natural Playgrounds - why do they matter?

Here at Pied Piper, we believe in the value of a play space that contains grass, bushes, sand, bark, gravel and trees – the things we find in our Australian bush. We found this article at *Science News* at www.redorbit.com/news/science.

Children who play on playgrounds that incorporate natural elements like logs and flowers tend to be more active than those who play on traditional playgrounds with metal and brightly colored equipment, according to a recent UT study.

They also appear to use their imagination more, according to the report.

The study, which examined changes in physical activity levels and patterns in young children exposed to both traditional and natural playgrounds, is among the first of its kind in the United States, according to Dawn Coe, assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies.

"Natural playgrounds have been popping up around the country but there was nothing conclusive on if they work," she said. "Now, we know."

For the study, Coe observed children at UT's Early Learning Center. She began in June 2011 by observing the children while the center still had traditional wood and plastic equipment. She logged how often they used the slides and other apparatus, studied the intensity of their activity, and how much time they spent in a porch area to get shade from the sun.



The Early Learning Center staff then began renovations of the playground and over several months added a gazebo and slides that were built into a hill. They planted dwarf trees, built a creek, and landscaped it with rocks and flowers. They also added logs and tree stumps. They turned it into what Coe called a "natural playscape."

Coe, working with Cary Springer, a statistician with the Office of Information Technology, returned for follow-up observations this year and found significant differences between usage of the traditional and natural playground.

The children more than doubled the time they spent playing, from jumping off the logs to watering the plants around the creek. They were engaging in more aerobic and bone- and muscle-strengthening activities.

"This utilized motor skills, too," Coe said.

She also found that the children were less sedentary and used the porch area less after the renovation.

Coe is preparing a manuscript of the study to submit for publication.

"Natural playscapes appear to be a viable alternative to traditional playgrounds for school and community settings," Coe said. "Future studies should look at these changes long-term as well as the nature of the children's play."



National Quality Standard information for you

In case you haven't read the parent handbook yet (although we hope you do soon!) here it is in a nutshell....

The *National Quality Standard* sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. The National Quality Standard is divided into seven Quality Areas:

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children

6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

7. Leadership and service management.

The National Quality Standard aims to promote:

- ☑ the safety, health and wellbeing of children
- ☑ a focus on achieving outcomes for children through high-quality educational programs
- ☑ families' understanding of what distinguishes a quality service.

We will be assessed some time this year on the 7 Quality Areas. To find out more, have a look at the whiteboard at the front foyer....



To find out what we're working on to in our **Quality Improvement Plan**, there's a copy for you to look at in the front foyer....



We're about to set our goals for **Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety**. Do you have any ideas that you'd like to share with us about how we can improve in this area?

Healthy Food at Preschool

We've seen some fantastically healthy lunchboxes coming to school. Our focus this month is on fruit, so we love to see all the fruit coming to school. If you're buying expensive packet snacks, even if they're healthy, fruit may be a great substitute. Here are some other healthy snack and lunch ideas.

- ✓ Rice crackers
- ✓ Fruit salad
- ✓ Fruit kebabs
- ✓ A piece of fruit
- ✓ Yoghurt
- ✓ A tiny container of salad with dressing
- ✓ Snow peas and cherry tomatoes

- ✓ Cheese and crackers
- ✓ An extra sandwich
- ✓ Celery and carrot sticks
- ✓ Cucumber sticks
- ✓ Cold meat and salad
- ✓ Wraps
- ✓ Hummus and crackers or veggie sticks
- ✓ Falafel
- ✓ Tabouli
- ✓ Mini tins of tuna
- ✓ Grated carrot, cheese and avocado
- ✓ Avocado and crackers
- ✓ Poppadums
- ✓ 4 bean mix
- ✓ Baked beans

These foods are **not very healthy options** as they are higher in salt or sugar. We recommend that you try to make other choices than these foods:

- Shapes biscuits
- Muffins and cakes
- Tiny Teddies and other sweet biscuits
- Fruit bars
- Yoghurt topped bars
- Jelly
- Fruit in jelly
- Fairy bread

In other nut-free news, did you know that some of the Uncle Toby's Muesli bars contain nuts? The strawberry one does, but the apricot one doesn't!

Anything that contains almond meal or any other nut meal is also not nut-free so will need to stay at home.

Please note that removing the nuts from a food (e.g. muesli) does not make it nut-free! Unfortunately there is still cross-contamination from the nuts.

A reminder about fees

As it is the start of a new year, we would just like to thank everyone who has been paying their fees regularly. Fees are due by the end of the week for which your child attended. Please talk to Cathy or Trudy if something happens and you are unable to pay that week.

With our funding situation so tight, we are unable to carry debts, so we will be cancelling places if fees are not paid unless you have let us know of a situation that has arisen and a payment plan has been agreed upon.

We find it challenging when parents just do not pay and do not speak to us at all and need multiple reminders to catch up fees. It is embarrassing and uncomfortable for Trudy and Cathy as well as creating a lot of unnecessary work chasing unpaid fees – time that would be best spent doing things for the children!

If you want to pay bulk fees in one payment it will need to be in advance, not after the care has taken place. Preschool has a large wages bill, and we really need your support to ensure we can meet it each week.

Thanks so much for listening to this difficult message. If this is you – make it your New Year's resolution to pay on time in 2014!