

Practice Snapshot

Milton State School

Investigating and reporting on animals

The Prep teachers at Milton State School were keen to provide opportunities for their children to develop scientific inquiry skills, including questioning, participating in guided investigations, representing ideas and communicating ideas to others. The teachers were aware that the children were very interested in animals of all kinds, so determined that these inquiry skills might be further developed by researching animals. This choice aligned very well with the Australian Curriculum biological sciences content descriptor relating to the needs of living things (ACSSU002). In addition, the teachers were keen to give the children further opportunities to create texts to record and report ideas (ACELY1651).

With these shared curriculum targets identified, each prep teacher collaborated with their children to narrow the focus of this work, inviting them to choose a category of animals and also to identify possible ways to communicate the results of their research.

In Prep 1, the children decided to investigate ocean animals and communicate their findings by creating a poster to be shared on the class Facebook page so that, as one child noted, “the whole world will learn too.” The children each selected a sea animal of their choice and then identified a specific question about that animal. For example, one child chose giant squid and elected to research how big they are, whilst another child chose dolphins and wanted to find out if they attack their predators. Once their posters were completed, a parent visitor, who works at a radio station, was invited in to share her knowledge about how to create and record audio reports. A recording studio was then established in the classroom with the children recording their voices as they excitedly shared the information they had gathered.

In Prep 2, the children decided to investigate mini-beasts, with a variety of options being identified for publishing

their findings. Some children chose to create a poster, while others opted to use the iPad Book Creator to create a written book or to give an oral presentation. During the research phase, a table of resources to support exploration of insects was set up, with children having free access to these resources at break time. There was great interest generated as the children headed to the playground armed with magnifying glasses and collection jars.

The Prep 3 children were interested in domestic and farm animals, and were particularly keen on exploring what vets do. To support this interest, a local vet was invited to their classroom to share expertise and knowledge about how to care for animals. Each child researched an animal of their choice, with posters, videos, presentations and a gallery exhibition being created. In addition, a veterinary surgery play space was set up in the classroom, giving the children the chance to apply their knowledge of animals, and to use the language and resources the visiting vet had shared with them. Appointments were made and animals assessed.

The three teachers observed and recorded the children’s research processes and were pleased with the growth in their scientific inquiry skills. They also noted that the standard of the work produced within the various forms of reporting, assessed against the criteria they had used earlier in the term to assess reports relating to teacher-initiated topics, exceeded the quality of anything they had produced previously.

