

From Janet Beyrooti's Desk...



Dear Parents,

Welcome back to the autumn term, traditionally a very busy term in the run-up to Mother's day, father's day and our annual sports day. During the school holidays Nicole Botha, Angie Roncara and I were privileged to attend our Curro Preschool conference. Exciting times ahead for our preschool children as Curro run full steam ahead in 21st thinking skills which are now being encouraged at all our Curro Castles, from the young age of 3 months! The conference provided an awareness that children are confronted daily with rich opportunities to solve problems and exercise their own independent judgment when they are given the chance to safely explore the world. These problems, which might involve physical challenges, social relationship issues, or understanding of how things work, often seem minor to us but provide great opportunities to practice critical thinking skills. For example:

- An eight-month-old has crawled under a chair and now cannot figure out how to get out. He wonders what to do.
- A two-year-old thinks: "My teacher put out tongs for us to pick up marshmallows, but I cannot figure out how they work. Do I keep trying or just use my fingers?"
- A four-year-old thinks: "I am trying to get the water in the sandpit to stay in the 'moat' I'm building round my castle, but it keeps disappearing into the sand. How do I make the water stay?"
- A seven-year-old speculates: "Several of my friends are teasing a child in our class about his clothes. Do I join in, not participate, or tell them how I really feel about what they are doing?"

Each of these problems offers our children chances to exercise and build a foundation for critical thinking and are not minor to children. Our role as the adults in their lives may sometimes be to offer guidance for creative problem solving. In other cases, it may be more useful to let a child experiment on his/her own for a bit. How and how quickly we respond can have a significant impact on children's development of critical thinking skills learning to think critically may be one of the most important skills which today's children will need for the future. Ellen Galinsky, the author of *Mind in the Making*, includes critical thinking on her list of the seven essential life skills needed by every child.

Tips for Teaching Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

So how can we best support and teach our children as they are developing critical thinking skills? Here are some tips and ideas to help children build a foundation for critical thinking and grow them into problem solvers:

- **Provide opportunities to play.** It is during play that children test their thinking whether dropping a spoon over and over again off the side of a high chair tray; rolling two marbles down a chute to see which is faster; seeing what happens when you dip chalk in water or mixing cornstarch and water to make "goop." Providing space for playing, including time for outdoor or pretend play, can provide open-ended opportunities to try something and see the reaction; try something else and see if you get a different reaction. This informal process of testing how things work is crucial to critical thinking.
- **Help children view themselves as problem solvers and thinkers by asking open-ended questions.** Rather than automatically giving answers to the questions your child raises, help them think critically by asking questions in return: "What ideas do you have? What do you think is happening here?" Respect his or her responses whether you view them as correct or not. You could say, "That is interesting. Tell me why you think that." Use phrases like "I am interested to hear your thinking about this." "How would you solve this problem?" "Where do you think we might get more information about this problem?"



- **Don't solve all problems immediately for children.** Instead, ask some of the questions above and provide enough information, so children do not get frustrated, but not so much information that you solve the problem for them.
- **Help children develop hypotheses.** "If we do this, what do you think will happen?" "Let us predict what we think will happen next."
- **Encourage thinking in new and different ways.** By allowing children to think differently, you are helping them hone their creative problem-solving skills. Ask questions like, "What other ideas could we try?" or encourage coming up with other options, "Let us think of all the possible solutions."
- **Support your child to research further information.** You can help your children develop critical thinking skills by guiding them towards looking for more information. Say, "Now how could we find out more? Your dad knows a lot about this. Shall we ask him? Or shall we try searching on the computer?"

Of course, there are times when you cannot take this much time for your child to reach an answer on his or her own. At those times, it is okay to take short cuts. Children also learn from observing how you solve problems. However, when you can, taking the time to allow your child to think through problems will be hugely helpful to developing your child's critical thinking skills in the long run.

So what has been taking place in some of the classes so far this term!

The Penguin Class – Teacher Sarah-Jane

Autumn is well and truly on the way and in the Penguin class we are tracking the change of seasons by the leaves on the trees outside. We've noticed that they've begun to change colour and fall off! One of our favourite times of the day is to read books. We love to listen to stories but also to read in a group setting, together, quietly looking at the pictures and sharing with our friends the interesting things that we see on the pages. Our imaginations come to life! Another favourite time of the day is when we use our creative skills at the art table, our thoughts again come to life as we eagerly use what's available to create our own unique works of art!



The Jellyfish Class – Teacher Claudia

This term started with a positive and exciting mood, the Jellyfish Class were so happy to come back to school. They were full of holiday tales and detailed stories of how their time was spent. We started off the term getting them all back into routine and settling the children. The past week has been full of imagination as we have been learning about fairytales. We have been discussing what fairytales are, the different characters, settings, good and bad, damsels in distress and the hero's that help save them. The Jellyfish have been playing with different types of dress up and portraying characters found in these wonderful stories. They also had a chance to create and draw their own fairytales. Each child had a chance to tell their class mates about their drawing creating their very own story. What a fulfilled week.



The Crab Class – Teacher Isobel

Splash splash, lots of fun in the pool to be had. The Crab Class are enjoying their swimming lessons this term and are taking to the water like real little fish. They have been working on perfecting their strokes and most are now proficient in "make a pizza, cut it in half" for breaststroke. I am very proud of all my children with how brave they are with putting their faces in the water and blowing big bubbles. Water safety is such an important and wonderful gift to give our children!



The Seahorse Class – Nicole Botha

This term has been all about harnessing each child's creativity and encouraging critical thinking.

We had very exciting ring time discussions and every child showed a keen interest in the themes. They were then all encouraged to let their creativity flow and create their own unique interpretation in the creative lessons in class. Every child created a beautiful piece of artwork that they were all super proud of and showed a great deal of intuitiveness in explaining what they had made and why to the rest of the class. I am very impressed and proud of all my Seahorse's and their outstanding work and with this kind of creativity they will be able to accomplish anything!



The Clown Fish – Teacher Tammy's Class

The children getting technical and designing their own royal attire.



The Whale Class – Teacher Sadie

The children took turns this week in reading a story to their peers.



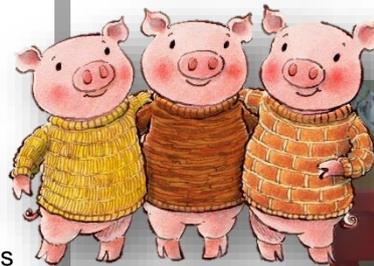
The Turtle Class – Teacher Samantha

Teacher Sam says.....Learning how to solve problems will provide a number of unique benefits to your child. Some of these benefits are:

- Development of confidence and courage.
- Creating a dynamic personality
- Enhancement of self-image and self-esteem.
- Better classroom learning
- An ability to face any odds or difficulties

Be a problem solving Ninja by using these 5 steps:

1. How do you feel?
2. What is the Problem?
3. Come up with a solutions
4. What would happen if you chose each of the solutions
5. Try the solution



The Seal Class – Teacher Angie

During the school holidays I had the amazing opportunity to go on a work conference, teaching in the 21st century. Children need to be encouraged to think for themselves, solve problems and use their imagination. We as parents are so focused on the end result of an activity and not the process that is needed to get the result. When it comes to creative activities we need to encourage children to express themselves. If they paint a tree that looks nothing like a tree we shouldn't tell them it's wrong, it's their perception of what the tree looks like. PRAISE THEM for the creative masterpiece they have created with their imagination.





The Dolphin Class – Teacher Bongki

Last week we enjoyed a walk around our beautiful school. The children climbed the rocks, looked for insects and picked up autumn leaves.



today YOU are YOU!
 that is TRUER than TRUE!

there is NO ONE alive
 YOUER than YOU!
 Dr. Seuss