NEWSLETTER

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

Towards Independence



Term 4 | Week 6



FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Beginning Our Inquiry Journey

Lisa Thomas Principal

This week marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Gordon Education Centre as we began working alongside education consultant David Gilkes to explore the power of inquiry learning.
As a school, we are proud to support every learner to grow with confidence, curiosity and a strong sense of belonging. Through this partnership, we are strengthening our commitment to the values that sit at the heart of our work — curiosity, kindness and belonging — and exploring how inquiry can further enrich learning across our site.

Inquiry learning encourages students to ask questions, wonder, investigate, think deeply and make meaningful connections with the world around them. It supports learners to be active participants in their learning and helps build important skills such as communication, creativity, problem-solving and independence.

Our first days of collaboration were filled with rich conversations, deep thinking, reflection and planning as we began imagining what this journey could look like for our students, staff and community. We are incredibly excited about the possibilities ahead.

A massive thank you to Isabelle and Emma for their deep thinking, collaboration and commitment across the two days. Their contributions were invaluable as we began shaping this important work together.



As we look towards 2027, inquiry learning will become a key priority for Gordon Education Centre. Over the coming years, we will continue building our understanding, strengthening staff practice and creating learning environments where curiosity and student voice are at the centre of everyday learning.

We are looking forward to seeing where our journey takes us and to sharing more with families as this exciting work unfolds.

KEY DATES

2 DECEMBER
Christmas Parade

11 DECEMBER
Graduation

Helpful resources

Here are some helpful resources from our inclusion teacher,

Michelle Adams
Gordon Education Centre



AUTISTIC PEOPLE often have DEEP INTERESTS.

This could be a game, series, historical event, species, or literally anything else.

Deep interests can be extremely important, joyful, and calming. Some Autistic people like to spend lots of time talking about or focusing on their deep interest. They often become experts!

An Autistic person may have strong feelings if someone else is unkind about their deep interest, as it is often an important part of their identity.

Sometimes it's hard swapping from a deep interest to a different topic or activity. Knowing about the swap beforehand can make it easier.



NeuroWild

MELTDOWNS may look like...

Intense EMOTIONS
e.g. sadness, anger, frustration, confusion

Sudden ACTIONS
e.g. running, crashing, throwing, hiding

Changes in Communication
e.g. not being able to talk, trouble expressing needs.

Losing CONTROL of your BODY and THINKING

Meltdowns often happen when an Autistic person's important needs have not been met. They can be very upsetting and exhausting for the person. It can be scary to not have control over your own body.



They can also be very upsetting for us to see. Maybe you want to help but don't know how.

NeuroWild

WAYS TO HELP in a meltdown



Turn off bright lights, music, or noisy toys



Deliver comfort items like blanket, toy



Offer company or space



Avoid asking questions, try to stay calm

Remove unsafe things

Make a plan to reconnect

NeuroWild

ELOPEMENT IN AUTISM



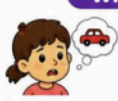
Elopement means leaving a safe area without permission. It can happen fast and may not be safe.



WHY IT HAPPENS



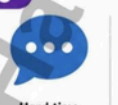
Too much noise or stress



Wanting something (preferred item or place)



Trying to escape something (uncomfortable situation)

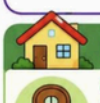


Hard time communicating needs

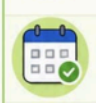


Curiosity or wanting to explore

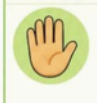
HOME PREVENTION



MAKE THE HOME SAFER
- Use door alarms, locks, or safety gates
- Keep dangerous areas secured
- Consider GPS trackers or ID bracelets



REDUCE TRIGGERS
- Keep routines predictable
- Prepare for transitions with visuals or timers
- Create a calm sensory space



TEACH SAFETY SKILLS
- Practice stopping when name is called
- Teach "wait," "stop," and "hold hands"
- Use social stories about staying safe

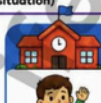


IMPROVE COMMUNICATION
- Teach ways to ask for breaks, help, or favorite items
- Use visuals, AAC, gestures, or simple phrases

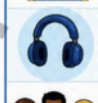


SUPERVISION & PLANNING
- Watch closely during stressful times
- Have an emergency plan and updated photos

SCHOOL PREVENTION



CLASSROOM STRATEGIES
- Seat the child near trusted adults
- Use visual schedules and clear routines
- Prepare the child before transitions or fire drills



REDUCE OVERWHELM
- Provide sensory breaks
- Allow access to calming tools
- Reduce noise and crowded situations when possible



STAFF AWARENESS
- Make sure all staff know the child may elope
- Have clear supervision plans during recess, lunch, and transitions
- Identify triggers and warning signs early



SAFETY SUPPORTS
- Use secure doors or alarms if needed
- Assign staff support during high-risk times
- Teach safe walking and staying with the group



COMMUNICATION SUPPORT
- Give the child a safe way to request breaks or help
- Use visuals or AAC consistently across settings

EMERGENCY PLANNING
- Have a school-wide response plan
- Share emergency contacts and important information with staff

Classroom Hacks

CLASSROOM NEWS

LA1

Tamara Cameron

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

This term, our class has been enjoying a wonderful unit of learning focused on where food comes from. Each week, students are building their understanding through a range of hands-on and engaging experiences.

As part of our learning, we have been taking weekly visits to Coles, where students explore different foods and begin to recognise how the items we buy connect to farms, gardens and production processes. We have also been excitedly watching our garden grow, observing how plants develop over time and discussing what they need to stay healthy.

In the classroom, students have been completing a variety of small learning tasks to help them understand how food gets from its source to our tables. These activities have included discussions, sorting tasks, sequencing activities and practical experiences.

Last week, our focus was on where bread comes from. We read the story From Wheat to Bread and learned about the journey from wheat growing in the field through to bread being made and eaten. Students then worked on sequencing the process, showing each step in the correct order. To finish our learning, we had the opportunity to make our own bread, and of course, the best part was enjoying eating it together afterwards.

We have also been busy preparing for our Christmas concert. Together, we have created a story for the performance and have started making our props. The students have enjoyed being part of the creative process, and we are looking forward to seeing it all come together. Next week, we will begin practising our show.

It has been wonderful to see the students so engaged, curious and enthusiastic in their learning and creative experiences.








CLASSROOM NEWS

LA2

Eoin Mcilduff

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

LA2 has been exploring how writing technology has changed over time. Students had the opportunity to try an old typewriter and experience a different way of putting words onto a page. This gave us a chance to compare typewriters with the computers and tablets we use today, noticing what has changed and what has stayed the same. It has been a fun, hands-on way to explore technology from the past.

In literacy, our predictable writing topic, “Fish have…”, has supported students to explore vocabulary about fish, including eyes, fins and gills. Using communication supports, students have been making choices and contributing their ideas to our shared writing.

Interactive learning games have also been popular, with students enjoying opportunities to participate and practise their skills together. We are now looking ahead to our Christmas performance of “Jingle Bells” and getting ready to share some festive fun with our school community!



CLASSROOM NEWS

LA4

Rebekah Eden & Michelle Adams

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

Learning in LA4 has continued to be purposeful, hands-on and full of curiosity. In Design and Technology, we have been exploring food technology through learning about seeds, wheat and where food comes from. Students have been developing their understanding of how food is grown, made and prepared before it reaches our tables. As part of this learning, we are growing our own seeds in zip-lock bags on the classroom window, allowing us to closely observe germination and identify the changes that occur as plants begin to grow. Watching these changes each day has been an exciting way for students to deepen their understanding of the plant life cycle through real, hands-on investigation.

In Numeracy, we have continued to practise counting, learning the days of the week and building our understanding of early number concepts. Through books, hands-on experiences and counting a range of everyday objects, students have been developing important skills such as subitising and one-to-one correspondence. We have also taken our learning outdoors, using the natural environment to count and describe what we can see around us. Alongside this, we have been exploring positional language such as under, over, around, up and down, helping students strengthen their understanding of movement and location in space. A highlight has been putting these concepts into practice by wrapping boxes and decorating them with ribbons in preparation for our Christmas Concert.

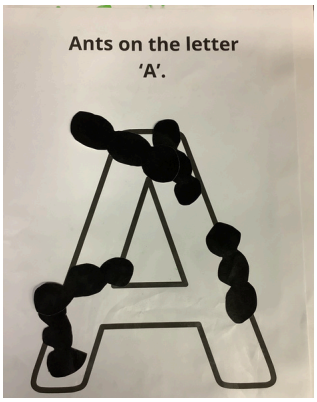
In Literacy, we have continued to explore a new letter each fortnight, recently focusing on Xx, Yy, Zz and Aa. Students have been building their letter knowledge by recognising, naming and engaging with these letters in meaningful and creative ways. Our learning has been highly interactive, with students bringing each letter to life through art and craft experiences. We created collages of ants on our letter A, transformed the letter Z into stripy zebras, and explored each letter in memorable ways that support recognition and recall. Writing has also been a joyful and imaginative part of our learning. Students used photos with funny hats and costumes as writing prompts to inspire their ideas. There was so much laughter as we transformed ourselves into fairies, pirates and mermaids, making writing an exciting, purposeful and highly engaging experience for everyone. As always, we have continued to have fun with our reading while focusing on joint attention and responding to questions. Students have used AAC to share their ideas and have engaged in discussions about food, animals, pets and their favourite things using PODD.

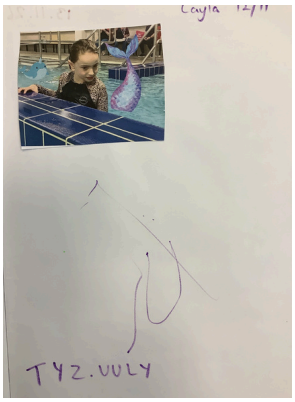












CLASSROOM NEWS

LA5

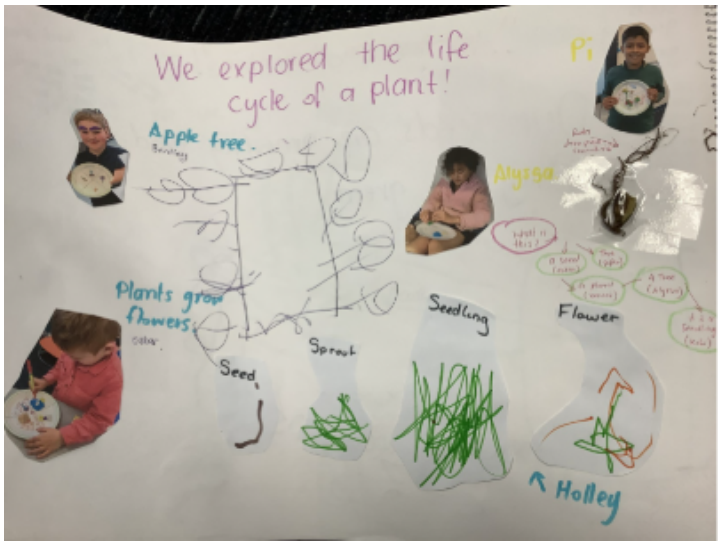
Emma Bramich

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

The student's interest around space and our space seeds have continued over the last few weeks. The students have been busy looking at the life cycle of a plant exploring the different stages and what these look like. Exploring what plants need to grow and the importance of each element to plant growth. The students have been using their observations to lead their writing lessons and share their observations with others. Science lead us into making some exploding planets. This was a great hands on experiment observing the changes in properties.

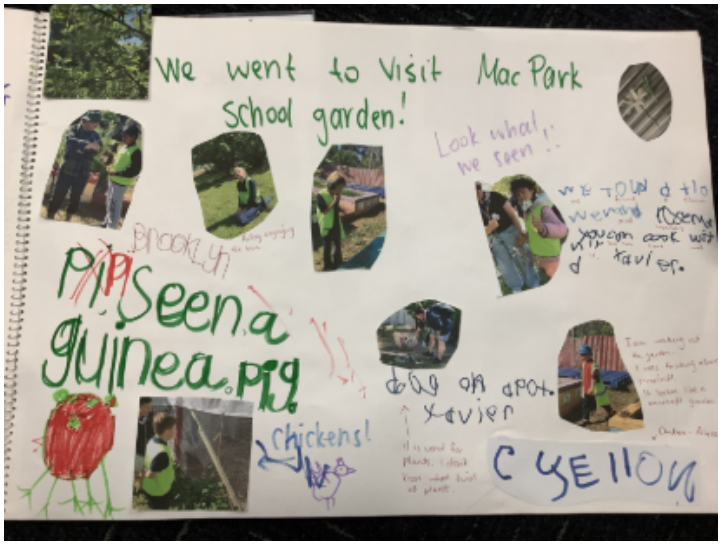
One highlight was our excursion to the MacPark Primary School Stephanie Alexander garden. The students had a wonderful time exploring plants and identifying different fruits and vegetables. We even got to see the chickens and guinea pigs!!

During Numeracy we have had a focus on position and location. The students have been working hard on their grid referencing skills and engaging in lots of space themed activities around this.









CLASSROOM NEWS

LA6

Madison Thomson

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

LA6 has started talking about the jolly man in red who will be visiting soon, and we have been beginning to bring some Christmas spirit into our learning.

In Literacy, students have been writing Santa a Wishlist. This has been a wonderful way to support communication skills through PODD, while also linking to Maths as we explored the different numbers and prices associated with items on our lists. Our letters of the fortnight have been O and P, and students have been exploring their letter names and sounds through a range of engaging activities. We have also loved writing about different toys we might include on our wish lists and responding to a variety of Christmas-themed writing prompts.

In Maths, we have continued our learning in Statistics, and our weekly bus trip has been a real highlight. During these trips, students have been collecting and discussing data about different vehicles, the colours of cars, the animals we can see, and the shapes we notice in our environment. Up next, we will be exploring the different shops we can find in Mount Gambier. The children have especially enjoyed that our Statistics learning has included a focus on food. Incorporating fun and familiar topics such as food has definitely increased students' curiosity and enthusiasm for the subject.

In Science, we have continued to enjoy participating in a range of science experiments. Students have been using their PODDs and Proloquo to make predictions before each experiment and to share their observations afterwards. It has been wonderful to see students building their communication skills while engaging in hands-on scientific learning.

We are also continuing with our weekly buddy sessions, with our focus now shifting from cooking each week to preparing for our Christmas concert performance. We cannot wait to show you what we have been working on! Can you believe there are only 3 more weeks left in the school year? We have fit in so much in our first (and second) year of school, and it's been incredible to reflect on the growth of each student. I'm so proud of them all.



CLASSROOM NEWS

LA7

Isabelle Swanbury

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

After exploring how bees live in houses called hives, LA7 has decided to investigate other insects that live in the garden and what their homes look like. We wondered... do other insects have a purpose and a home too?

We used our statistical knowledge to record data of the insects we could find in our school garden. Declan said he wanted to find a "bee" and a "super worm". Declan dug in the dirt to look for the worm. The other students were curious too and helped look in the dirt for worms.

Cassius found an empty snail shell and wondered where the snail was. Cassius found a bug house and wondered who might live inside. "What's that?" asked Cassius. Ambalee suggested that maybe "honeybees" live in the house.

We investigated more about the snails and noticed that they have eyes and like to eat leaves. "Snail family," a student suggested. Cassius added that the snail family likes to "eat". LA7 learnt that insects are alive, so need things to eat and a place to live, just like us!

Inquiry learning extended into our literacy through introducing new vocabulary words to describe and categorise the insects, such as slimy, shell, long, and wings.

Our class was excited to also visit McDonald Park Primary School with a spacious garden full of fruit trees, vegetables, animals and flowers for us to observe and explore. "Curious!" said a student as she wandered through the fruit trees. Another student was excited to run through the garden and said "grass" on his Proloquo and said "see grass". Declan enjoyed smelling the lavender and said he saw "tomatoes" on his Proloquo.

"I see tree garden," reflected a student when she got back to school. "I like green apples," shared Cassius.

Excursions to new places support students' questioning, curiosity and learning about their community. I wonder where our inquiry learning will take us next week...



CLASSROOM NEWS

LA8

Kirilee Chapman

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

The past three weeks have been full of exciting experiences for the students in LA8, with plenty of opportunities for fun, learning and making lasting memories.

A major highlight was our recent three-day, two-night camp, which was packed with adventure, laughter and new experiences. Throughout the camp, students visited a range of wonderful local destinations including Tantanoola Caves, Millicent, Carpenter Rocks, Penola, Kingston, Robe, Umpherston Sinkhole, the Blue Lake and the Valley Lakes. They also enjoyed a trip to the Oatmill Cinema, with camp ending on a high at the Wulanda splash pad.

To make the experience even more special, students also spent a night camping in tents in the school yard, creating memories that will stay with them for a long time.

Adding to an already busy few weeks, students took part in an ABC Heywire workshop, where they were encouraged to create and share their own stories with the world. As part of this opportunity, students made short videos about their passions and entered them into the Mount Gambier regional competition. We look forward to hearing the results next year.

Our seniors have also been working with a group of girls from Mount Gambier High School, who have been helping choreograph the dance for our Christmas concert. This has been a fantastic opportunity for collaboration and creativity.

To top it all off, our Elf on the Shelf has arrived, bringing advent calendars to help us count down the final days of school.

It has certainly been a busy year, but also a fun and rewarding one. We are incredibly proud of how far our students have come and all they have achieved.







CLASSROOM NEWS

LA9

Dakota Miller

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE

We have had a very busy and exciting few weeks in LA 9.

We have returned to our swimming lessons, with students continuing to build their water safety skills while also working towards improving their strokes and diving techniques.

In Science, students have been learning about the states of matter. Recently, they explored how temperature affects water by investigating room temperature water, frozen water, and boiling water.

In Literacy, we have been focusing on sentence structure and supporting students to explain their ideas more clearly in their writing. In Numeracy, students have been learning about budgeting and have been working on selecting the cheapest ingredients for our cooking lessons during our Thursday visits to Coles.

A major highlight of the past three weeks was the senior camp. All students had a wonderful time, and sleeping over at school was a significant achievement for many. During camp, we visited Millicent, Kingston, Robe, Tantanoola, Carpenter Rocks and Penola.

Throughout these visits, students were able to tick off a number of exciting bucket list experiences, including enjoying a milkshake from the Chook House, visiting Millicent's adventure playground, seeing the Big Lobster, walking along Petticoat Lane, and exploring the foreshore of the Limestone Coast beaches.

We are very proud of all the students for their enthusiasm, participation and willingness to try new experiences.









School Value Awards

GORDON EDUCATION CENTRE









