

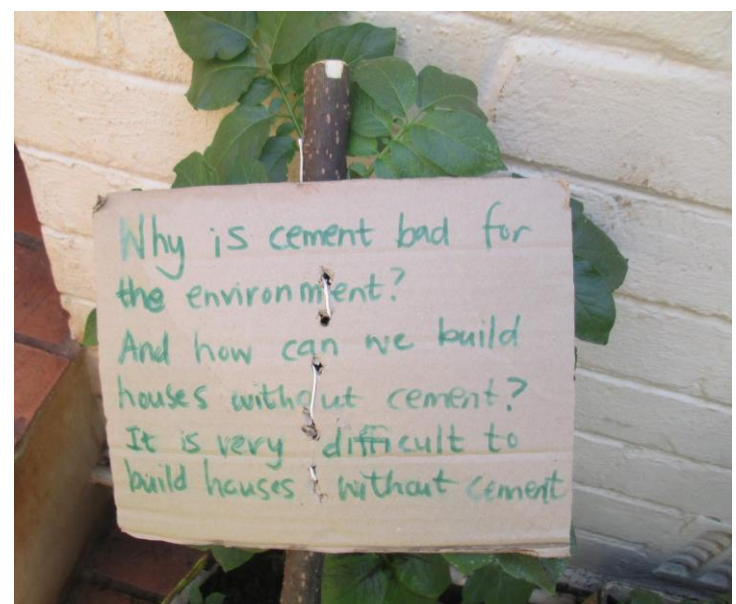
A JOYFUL PLANT PROTEST BY MIMOSA SCHOOL

On Friday 23 August 2019 the children of Grade's 1 to 3 at Mimosa School made posters and marched against the use of cement by developers and builders - because of its high carbon footprint. This was part of their classroom enquiry into what it takes to design, develop and manage a city...



On Tuesday 27 August, the Foundation Phase children invited the preschool to a discussion and debate about this protest, to try understand better what the concern about cement is, and what alternatives there might be. It was a good exercise in how to listen carefully, how to respond, how not to get upset that someone else has a different point of view, and how best to respond to someone with whom you disagree.

This is a sign Hugo (4 years old) made at home, unprompted (his mom taking dictation), after mulling over the protest message on the weekend, and wondering what it means for his future plans to become a builder when he gets older. Quite serendipitously, this sign came to school on Tuesday morning, 27 August, just in time for the debate



Here are some other signs, generated by the Grade 0 group (with their own messaging and designs) in response to their walks on the street - and what they feel we all need to be reminded about...



Reclaiming the future

At this time at Mimosa School there seemed to be an emergent theme around interconnection – as we all started to see in our day-to-day experiences how interwoven the world is, and how much we depend on those around us – human, non-human and more-than-human – if we're to thrive, not just survive. That's why one of our next collective stops as a school, timed to coincide with the global climate strike, was something akin to a joyful plant protest



As teachers and children, we were encountering each other in the outdoor environment more often – and not just during lunch. We found each other composting, marking the movement of the sun, planting seeds, exploring our streets and alleyway, and seeking to understand how the natural and manufactured worlds around us interact and intersect. What did all this encountering and exploring mean, and where was it going?

"The Mud Group (4-year-olds) had been working hard in our garden this term, not only planting, but also coming into a relationship with the garden.

We had conversations about our connection and responsibility to our earth, empowerment through growing our own food and taking a stand for our earth and the possibilities that are gifted to us through this awareness.

Inside the classroom we talked about paper, water and other resources which are so precious and need to be respected.

The recycling bins started to take root and children asked for assistance when something needs to be thrown away.

By understanding that we are a part of something bigger than us and that the smallest action has a large ripple effect, we are creating a new future seed by seed, plant by plant, paper by paper..."



"Our origins are of the earth. And so there is in us a deeply seated response to the natural universe, which is part of our humanity." - Rachel Carson



To the sky...



A highlight of a Tuesday walk amongst the Transformers is Pikitup. "Pick it up, put it down," they chant... But where does Pikitup put our trash down? Transformers have been going out with these questions, and not always meeting Pikitup, but meeting Themba the reclaimer...

Cole: "What if Pikitup thinks we are trash?"

Finn: "They would pick us up."

Yahya: "We will smell like garbage."

Luca: "Our moms will worry."

Cole: "They will call our parent."

(They spot and introduce themselves to Themba)

Yahya: "Themba, what are you collecting?"

Themba: "Cardboard paper and plastic bottles."

Finn: "Did you make the cart yourself?"

Themba: "Yes!"

Luca: "Where do you put them after you take it?"

Themba: "I take it to the scrap in Newtown."

Sam: "Can children go there?"

Themba: "You can arrange with the manager, and he will let you go."

Does nature recycle? If so, what and how?

The Transformers are divided on the issue ("nature doesn't have hands, so how can it recycle?" to "the worms chew on our food and poop it out and it becomes compost" to "the lions eat the antelope, and the antelope eat the grass, and when the lions die, they go into the earth and become grass, and the antelope eat the grass") so we've been devising small experiments to check...

Here you can see how the doing research with children is a process of asking a meaningful question, listening to the children's responses - not just through their words, but in their activities, their drawings, their creations - documenting what you hear and returning to the children to ask for clarification and further thinking. Then you can relaunch the inquiry and see what they come up with next.



Transformers' recycling experiments getting some needed sun...

One of the plants that they were growing was Spekboom, or elephants' food or isiCococo or Portulacaria afra - which was gifted to us by Frejya's mom Kelsey and has amazing abilities of carbon sequestration.

"But that means it's a HERO plant! We should plant it all over South Africa! We should launch it, so everyone will know!... You see, its branches are like swords! It will guard the front door, so global warming doesn't get into Mimosa." – Cole 5 years old



A joyful plant protest

And so, in solidarity with the Global Climate Strike, Mimosa marched with songs on our lips and succulents in our hands. We headed for Henley, in front of the SABC, where we handed out cuttings of spekboom, a particularly awesome indigenous plant, while singing a song for the climate (to the tune of Bella Ciao).

Spekboom cuttings came with messages about the plant, and ways we can all reduce our carbon footprint. So why spekboom?

Cole's (5) description of spekboom as a Hero Plant that we should plant all over South Africa! We should launch it, so everyone will know!" were the seed that inspired teachers and children at Mimosa.

We hope that they and today, together with our songs and our chants and our gifted plants, will grow in everybody's hearts and become a great big forest of hope.

