

# LEARNING CO-OPERATIVE

alternative primary school

2022 Annual Report to the School Community

School Number: 1721



Learning Co-operative  
10 Laceys Road, Cottles Bridge VIC 3099  
Telephone (03) 9718 1481  
PO Box 140, Hurstbridge VIC 3099  
Email enquiries [info@learningcooperative.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@learningcooperative.vic.edu.au)

[www.learningcooperative.vic.edu.au](http://www.learningcooperative.vic.edu.au)

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## 1. THE BOARD IN 2022

**Chair** Gemma Elliott

**Treasurer** Carl Baxter

**Secretary** Max Fuhrer

**Ordinary Member** Marissa Johnpillai



## 2. THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

The Learning Co-operative Primary School, “the Co-op”, is an independent primary school set on 6.5 hectares of natural bushland. Established in 1973, the Learning Co-operative operates as a consensus-based co-operative of families. The group is committed to working together to create a stimulating alternative to children’s education.

### 2.1. Facilities and Surrounds

The land and buildings are totally owned by the Learning Co-operative. The facilities include a kitchen as an integral part of the learning program, a library, an Arts space, an instrumental music space, a fully equipped theatre space (built with assistance of the BER grant), a small group workspace, a kiln room and a multi-purpose room for indoor games and performing arts.

The surrounds include adventure play equipment, cubbies and plenty of space to play. There is an abundance of creative garden spaces, a chook shed, and an organic kitchen garden including wicking beds and a food forest. The facilities accommodate enrolments of 30 – 35 students from ages 5 – 12 and include shared open classroom spaces that encourage and support multi-age learning, interaction, and child-to-child mentoring.

## **2.2. Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility**

The Learning Co-operative supports environmental sustainability through its use of solar energy, tank water only supply, and is working towards becoming a carbon neutral environment. The children participate in the “Kids teaching Kids” conferences where environmental issues are explored as part of the learning program. The Learning Co-operative manages the bushland around the school and holds regular ‘Bushcare’ working bees to conserve the habitat. Children are involved in regular gardening activities in our organic kitchen garden.

## **2.3. The Learning Environment, Philosophy & Curriculum Model: Overview**

The Learning Co-operative Primary School offers learning opportunities based on our own unique philosophy, while adhering to Victorian Curriculum, in an environment where children are given a true voice with regards to their learning. Working within a dynamic educational framework, we provide a learning environment which is creative and constantly evolving; children work with their friends, in a peer-based but cross-aged learning environment, guided by parents and teachers to develop their unique passions. We do not use age-based grade levels, preferring broader groupings of ‘Biggies’, ‘Middlies’ and ‘Littlies’. We believe that every member of the community can contribute to the education and raising of its children.

*Choice, co-operation, open-mindedness, non-judgmental attitudes, wonder and curiosity are defining features of the learning environment. Free play is a feature of their learning environment, whether it be social skills or physics in the sandpit.*

Core units of numeracy, literacy and the other competencies of the Victorian Curriculum are delivered via a range of experiences to cater for all learners. Where possible, the children learn outside and in the bush. The teaching staff and parents offer two focus-time sessions per day, where the children work on core competencies based on their individual needs and interests. The remainder of the day is spent on child-initiated projects and tasks, as well as activities created by the parent-body and teaching staff, with plenty of time to play.

An Indigenous cultural program, through the Boite schools chorus experience and related activities and stories, has been a feature of the learning program at the Learning Co-operative.

Our multicultural mix leads to many informal comparisons of language and culture and celebrations of food and festivals from many countries.

We also incorporate learning units on the environment, sustainability and social justice.

The school has a long history of performing arts and LOTE (Italian) and these form a central part of our curriculum. Learning is showcased through drama performances, songs and games. The annual concert features a wide range of plays written and directed by students

and each year includes a Shakespeare play and Italian play. In 2022 they performed Twelfth Night and Cappelli in Vendita.

Themes in the concert included instrumental performance, solo and group singing, dance items, stilt walking, fantasy, comedy and puppetry as well as a series of child-created animations and movies.

For more detailed information please refer to Student Learning.

#### **2.4. Parent Involvement and Responsibility**

Since inception, parents have been heavily involved in the management and student learning journeys of the Learning Co-operative. Responsibilities include parent involvement in presenting activities and participation in the learning programs at Learning Co-operative, administration, governance, maintenance, cleaning and transport. Decisions regarding all aspects of the Learning Co-operative's activities are made via consensus at fortnightly adult meetings attended by all staff and a parent representative from each family.

Typically, meetings include discussion about what occurs in the school, organizational matters and planning. Importantly, they provide a forum for philosophical debate and an opportunity to discuss the challenges and milestones occurring for individual child and their families. The first meeting of each term is a curriculum meeting where ideas, activities, excursions and camps and necessary resources relating to the theme of the term are discussed.

*“Learning Cooperative is a place we fell in love with the moment we walked in. It was a space that felt full of choices and opportunities for our son and for our family. Of course, like every relationship of love there have been ups and downs but, in the end, finding a community that is so diverse and passionate and “I can trust our children with” has been a fulfilling experience.” (Maneesha, Parent/Volunteer)*

### **3. STUDENT LEARNING**

At the Learning Co-operative, we **can** adapt the Victorian curriculum to suit our broader, more **creative**, and **individualized** style of learning, heavily embedded in our philosophy developed over the nearly 50 years of the school. The children benefit from the richness of the passions and abilities of the parents, who spend a minimum of half a day per week doing ‘time on’ with the children. This may be supporting the children in Focus Time, **initiating**, and sharing activities, interests or excursions, reading or talking to the kids, helping in the eternal creations at the art table, playing poison ball or soccer, watching over while the children play and **socialize**. And finding the lunchbox that got left down bush somewhere.



The Learning Co-operative highlights personal growth and strives to create individual learning streams for each student across their primary years rather than relying entirely on the more concentrated and specific standards expected through the Victorian Curriculum. This approach allows the teachers and community to take each child's specific circumstances into account on a daily, and even momentary basis.

In 2022 we had one full-time teacher/school coordinator supported by a classroom teacher specializing in science four days a week. We also had 3 part-time teachers in the areas of Aboriginal history and culture, music/Italian and art. This strong core of teaching staff enables the school to focus on each child's passions, learning needs and desires as outlined in their Individual Learning Plan with the active and engaged support of the parents.

The school has implemented changes in Curriculum and Learning to ensure a more comprehensive program. 'Focus-time', the twice-daily session that focuses mainly on core literacy and numeracy, continues to be an important part of each day. These scheduled focus times not only improve literacy and numeracy, but also have a positive effect on the children's interest in these subject areas. As outlined in the 2022 School Improvement Plan, our curriculum development focus this year was math, especially hands-on methods. The children especially enjoyed the math games that have become part of Co-op life, whether in or outside of focus times.

The Learning Co-operative gathers performance data via student portfolios that encompass the spread of the Victorian curriculum, student feedback, teacher observation and small-group intensive focus times. Parents, with teacher support, are also involved in monitoring student progress, meeting with the coordinator on a fortnightly basis. This allows for a targeted response to each child's individual learning needs.

### **3.1. Engaging Children**

Co-op children are engaged in their learning and enjoy having access to programs that provide them with a target for their passions. They benefit from the breadth and richness of ideas and activities offered by parents during their time with the children, supported by the teachers and coordinator. Each term has a theme chosen by the parents and staff, in close consultation with the children. At the start of each semester, the children are asked about their interests, and these are included in the adult curriculum meeting discussions of the first Monday night of every term.

***Term 1 Micro***

***Term 2 The Earth***

***Term 3 Concert Theme***

***Term 4 The Human Body***

These were enriched by our extensive concert and camp programs.

Learning activities link in with integrated theme studies or are multi-faceted and involve a

high level of student decision-making and participation. The range of activities offered during 2022 was varied and vibrant and demonstrates the Learning Co-operative's commitment to providing a tailored, inspiring education for our students and families.

*This year, a profound milestone was reached in my child's journey – she graduated to a 'middlie' status. As she entered this new dimension to her learning journey, a world of opportunities and privileges awaited her. She got to attend the biggies and middlies camp at the start of the year and take part in the Boite choir and participated in exciting excursions and workshops filled me with excitement for all the wonderful experiences she would have. While the structure of the day had not changed, there was no grand reveal of a change in "classroom," there was growth.*

*Along with these privileges came important lessons in responsibility. My child was now entrusted with the task of being a mentor and a caring guide to her littlies buddies, setting an example for the younger ones to follow. Her world had expanded, relationships flourished, friendships burgeoned, and the learning co-operative community became a nurturing haven for my child's growth. Fueled by her passions and guided by a harmonious blend of curriculum, my child progresses in the curriculum at her own pace, guided by the exceptional teaching staff and the nurturing parent community.*

*Now, in her third year within this cherished community, the foundations of her being have been fortified. Every child's potential is nurtured here and my child is reaping the rewards not only in academic growth but in the blossoming of her entire being. Each day at the co-operative is a testament to the profound impact of this journey, a beautiful mix of love, learning and lasting connections.*

**Omrita Baskar (Omi)**

### **3.2. Student Council**

Student Voice and student empowerment is an integral part of the Learning Co-operative's philosophy. Each week, during face-to-face teaching, the middlies and biggies met for a student council meeting. Here they discussed items that wanted to bring to adult meeting, set up new initiatives, talked about ideas and suggestions from the kids' suggestion box, planned camps and excursions, researched budgets, made suggestions for the school master plan and took part in leadership, well-being and team work activities to help build their skills. They took it in turns to present the outcomes of their meetings at adult meetings. The grade 6 students coordinated the production of an illustrated student code - compiling the answers to a whole student school questionnaire to produce a child code of conduct that all the students were happy with. (Amy, Classroom Teacher)

## 4. ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

The following groupings are arbitrary, as many of the projects listed are aspects of larger integrated projects and therefore include invaluable social and interpersonal learning, as well as providing authentic avenues for students' ideas and passions.

### 4.1. Language and Literacy

Co-op kids are encouraged to develop a love of literacy through open access to the library, playing games that involve writing, nature journals, camp and excursion recounts, Writing Camp descriptive and creative stories, script writing, recipe writing, science reports, projects following their particular interests and passions, broad discussions and debates, book clubs, chairing, speaking and listening at the daily student meetings, student council and taking turns to report to the evening adult meetings, games and hands on activities for basic literacy, online program for spelling.



*“For writing I have been concentrating on letter formation, sounding out, and beginning to get the children to see themselves as writers, making sentences or parts of sentences, stories etc.” (Kurt, Classroom teacher)*



## 4.2. Humanities

### Humanities

As usual, our year was jam-packed with activities exploring the world and our place in it. Here are some highlights.

- Democracy in action every day

We have group conversations to talk about many aspects of our school life at our morning and afternoon meetings, and we often make decisions together about what we'd like to include in our school calendar. Student Council for Middlies and Biggies is every Thursday, and a rotation of two representatives regularly present to the parent meeting with feedback and requests. We learn about taking turns, explaining our points of view, listening and responding to others, negotiation and compromise.

- Community connections

We love our continued partnership with local newspaper *Roundabout*. Students are supported to deliver copies to cafes and businesses in Hurstbridge. This year we attended our local neighbourhood house (Allwood) for a smoking ceremony on Sorry Day. We also participated in the Hurstbridge Wattle Festival.

- Marking time and seasons

With our school nestled in the bush, we observe nature around us change through the year. This year, we established a combined visual calendar of the seasons on an external wall to supplement our personal nature journaling. We also added a new date – a Winter Solstice festival celebrating Warin (wombat season) – to our yearly schedule, which already included café days, an annual teddy bears picnic and COMAD to name a few!

We learnt the Woi-wurrung words for flora, fauna and seasons, and shared First Nations stories and songs. We also celebrated many seasonal holidays from other cultures around the world, for example jumping over a candle for Nowruz (Persian New Year), throwing coloured chalk powder for Holi (Indian spring festival) and sharing a feast, decorating each other with henna and lighting lamps for Diwali (Indian festival of light).

- Going on adventures

Lots of excursions once again this year. We discussed geology at Hanging Rock, experienced Victorian history at Rippon Lea, visited Organ Pipes National Park in preparation for a trek to the city to see and hear their namesake: organ pipes at St Pauls Cathedral. While there, we marveled at an enormous globe installation. We explored nearby locations too: Queenstown Cemetery in St Andrews and walking the Smiths Gully Gold Heritage Trail. Students also decided to use part of the proceeds from market stalls this year to fund a school visit to the snow!

### 4.3. Music

Creativity, passion, inclusivity, encouragement and enjoyment are the keys to a healthy music making environment.



On music-ensemble day with Rod, we begin with group singing at the end of the student-run morning meetings. This often includes call-and-response, singing and sometimes dancing. We sing music from a variety of different cultures, especially Italian, and including Indigenous culture.

In specialist music sessions, students work in appropriate age-based instrumental ensembles (P-1, 2-3, 4-6). Quite often, older students will come and help the younger students. The ensembles consist primarily of marimbas and percussion, with the addition of other instruments (guitar, piano, violin, 'cello etc.) at times, depending on the children's skill and preferences. The approach to learning is related to aspects of Orff, Kodaly, and Jon Madin methods, with students focusing on putting together, in a very dynamic, achievable, and inclusive way, the basic building blocks of music – rhythm, melody, timing and expression. Students at all levels develop skills in rhythm, harmony, and pitch through direct practical experience in the ensemble and exposure to a wide range of music styles and idioms.

Music for the younger students focuses on enjoyment and fun through musical games, but still ultimately with the aim of developing fundamental skills over time. For example, they enjoy music and movement activities, like Seeds, Hairy, Hairy Wombat, and Musical Scarecrows. They love improvised thematic dances and imaginative and creative movement responses to live

improvised guitar music and sung storytelling, as well as the more structured ensemble work. The older children play ensemble music in three or four parts, intuitively performing music structured in bass, melody, and inner harmony.

*They are also frequently given the opportunity to improvise in rehearsals and performances. All musical activities ultimately aim to develop and encourage the child's passion and positive engagement in a range of musical experiences, including singing, musical games, group instrumental performances, and whole school music theatre concerts. These fun and engaging practical musical experiences, and the skills gained in such a positive, inclusive and non-judgmental environment, prepares children well in developing a lifelong love of music, and for the opportunities available in any secondary school music curriculum.*  
(Rod, Music Teacher)

*Upon request from some of the older children, we have started a rock band named the Golden Gummy Bears. Through this, they learn electric guitar, bass, drums, keyboards and vocals (plus cello!) in a real band format, with amplifiers, microphones and PAs. They learn about modern song composition and music history and are gradually building a set list, with opportunities to perform in front of crowds roughly once per term. This helps them build confidence and performance skills, confront nerves head on, and have their moment to shine. Peripherally they also gain exposure to sound design and stage tech, as well as marketing through logo and t-shirt design.*

*Rock on!*

*(Dave, Parent/Volunteer)*

#### 4.4. Health and Wellbeing

As a parent-run school one of the things, we do is time-on where we bring in activities that we can offer to the children. As someone who works in mental health well-being is something I feel passionate about and have really enjoyed bringing that to the co-op. Children's social and emotional well-being is a key component of mental health and wellbeing. So, my emphasis has been on behavioral and emotional strengths, finding and making connections amongst each other and the ability to adapt and deal with daily challenges, and building on resilience and coping skills. As part of this focus, some of the activities we have done have been about understanding different emotions, talking about distressing emotions, and what can be done at the moment we experience them (using breathing techniques, talking to someone, changing the environment). In the meetings and focus time, we discussed the importance of respecting each other's differences and similarities and shared emotionally engaging stories with each other. We have engaged in activities to understand how we connect with each other and learn about the diversity that brings us together. We have only begun on this journey, but I look forward to working with children and building on their emotional well-being and resilience by building on positive emotions such as Gratitude, Empathy, Mindfulness, and coping skills. *(Maneesha, Parent/Volunteer)*

#### 4.5. Visual Arts

We have a very artistic community, and the visual arts were explored in a multitude of ways. Painting, drawing, colouring and claywork are always staple activities, with more 3-D models often in progress from any resources available to hand. As students explore the Visual Arts world, they are building strong physical skills such as fine motor control, and hands on experience with a number of media. They also develop mentally, through problem solving, story telling, and gaining an understanding of the processes behind each of the different arts. *(Dave, parent/Volunteer)*





#### 4.6. Project Rubbish Art 2022

What is Project Rubbish Art? Rubbish Art began as Bush Art, using only craft from the bush and nature. Rubbish Art has transpired from our junk, plastic craft items and anything that would become rubbish/landfill. This project commences our 5-year journey into Zero Waste schooling and demonstrates to the children how we might use rubbish in art works. This is not a new concept, with many existing & up-and-coming artists demonstrating exceptional art pieces from the rubbish that they have collected. Through this project may we all see our 'junk' in new and different ways, diverting landfill and creating useful items into our young futures. *(Julianna, Parent/Volunteer)*



#### 4.7. Maths & Logical Thinking

Numeracy at Co-op is a mixture of hands-on activities, inside or outside, often on the basketball court or in the bush, math games, shared problem solving and Math Box cards. In 2022 the teachers and some parents attended maths games workshops run by Michael Minas, that have now become part of our maths environment. Maths was our curriculum focus in 2022, as set out in our School Improvement plan, and a lot of research and discussion amongst the Co-op community has enlivened the program and built up the confidence of the parents to partake in maths activities with the children.

#### 4.8. Science

Science at the Learning Co-operative focuses on science inquiry skills and curiosity driven science exploration, particularly around nature and the outdoors. During remote learning students enjoyed weekly science zooms, carrying out guided investigations using everyday materials around their house. During face-to-face learning, activities students particularly enjoyed taking part in included:



- *Different engineering challenges to explore forces - building boats, catapult launchers, bridges and earthquake proof buildings*
- *Constructing a wave machine using skewers and marshmallows*
- *Nature journaling*
- *Minibeast projects*
- *Electronics projects*
- *Bird surveys*

(Amy, Classroom Teacher)

*The learning co-operative is perched on a stony ridgeline in the heart of Wurundjeri country, there are no lines or fences that delineate the school from the bush; nature from the places of learning and play. Leaves fill the gutters, rainbow lorikeets nest under the eaves and Bunjil circles overhead. The children climb trees and occupy bushes, spying on kangaroo picnics and mushroom circles. Marking the changes we see as the year turns once more and helping the children make sense of the phenological circles that we see year after year, the patterns and the changes. Building a sense of place and understanding within their growing minds and bodies.*

*This year we took advantage of the lush La Niña cycle planting out hundreds of seedlings, kindly donated by Rotary in Eltham, in the hope of thickening the undergrowth, sorely missing due to years of overgrazing by rabbits. And with the hope coaxing back the tiny birds and animals that were once found in abundance on the property.*

*This past year we have also been developing a relationship with our local Landcare group. With them we have begun assessing the impacts of weeds and erosion on the property and planning future collaboration to tackle these issues.*

(Rebecca, Parent/volunteer)

#### **4.9. Languages: Aboriginal and Italian**

The children are exposed to other languages through songs, stories, games and an annual play for concert, and by regular sharing of words, customs and festivals that naturally arise from our multicultural community.

We have been working with familiarizing all children with doing a regular Acknowledgement of Country, getting them accustomed to using some indigenous words (Woiwurung version of "Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, Pidjin version of "Waltzing Matilda" among others) and working with indigenous teachers (Ian Hunter of the Wurundjeri and Michael Whyman from Malyangappa country in western NSW). Uncle Ian brought boomerangs and gave a brilliant lesson on the physics of how a boomerang works and how it was traditionally used. Michael taught us about some bush medicine – Emu Bush - and shared some of his language and stories. (Kurt, Classroom Teacher)

#### 4.10. Performing Arts

Each year in the depths of the Melbourne winter we escape the deary ground hog days of drizzle and icy winds into a world of magic and make believe. Third term at Co-op, for as long as anyone can remember, has been dedicated to a deep dive into the performing arts. Music and dance, and all things theatre. Into Shakespeare and fairy tale we plunge. Pulling on costumes and putting on voices. Practicing, practicing, for the big night of concert, the last night of term when out comes the red carpet and onto the stage strut our shining stars. Assuming characters big and small, with ringing voices telling tales true and tall. A magical tangle of shows, a fabulous collaboration of children, parents, and teachers. This year was a treat as the littlies re-enacted 'The Gruffalo', in all its cleverness and bravery. We were treated to belly laughs as the knights of NI did a special appearance and of course the incredible wig wearing antics of the biggies secret play were not to be missed. The students also tackled a most challenging Shakespeare play, and amid numerous absences due to the midwinter sicknesses that plagued the school, managed to pull of co-op's own version of 'Twelfth Night'. A play rife with humour, mistaken identity and misunderstandings. The students bravely juggled character and costume changes galore, pulling off a fabulously bewildering and hilariously cheeky production.

Once again a night to remember.  
Rebecca (Parent)



#### **4.11. Camps**

*Camping in tents and school sleepovers are a very popular part of Co-op life.*

*The journey begins with sleepovers at Co-op and culminates with Touring Camp for the Biggies in November, who by this stage are independent enough to plan the menu, shop, cook and clean, put up their tents with minimal help and support each other away from home.*

We generally camp in a variety of national parks to introduce the children to temperate forest, marine, alpine and mallee environments. Bushwalking, flora and fauna watching, journal writing and drawing, ukulele playing and singing are an integral part of the camp but also of course lots of playing and chatting, deep discussions, experience sharing and exploring.

##### ***Middlies' and Biggies' 3-Day Camp at Wilsons Promontory***

One aim of this camp is for the Biggies to train the Middlies in camp skills, including sharing their favourite games and camp legends. There is always a strong focus on desserts. The other aim of course is to have a lot of fun and adventures, socialise and learn about the marine environment in the process. They record their adventures and any wildlife they see in their Nature Journals. The students develop their resilience and deeper friendships on these camps, supported by the older kids and adults. On Friday afternoon we packed the trailer and head to Cape Paterson for Co-op's much anticipated Annual Family Camp.

##### ***Writing Camp on the Mornington Peninsula***

Aimed at enriching the children's creative writing, we visited 3 different landscapes (beach, river and Port Nepean historic buildings and wartime relics on the headland). The children wrote a detailed description of each, including specific wildlife or flowers they saw. At the end of the week, they created their own characters and wove their story through these landscapes.

##### ***Touring Camp at Halls Gap and the Northern Grampians***

At the end of each year, the biggies head off on touring camp, this year to Gariwald, the Grampians. This is the chance for the biggies to be as independent as possible and put into practice the camping skills they have honed over the years. We spent the first couple of days in cabins due to the torrential rain, then camped at the Mount Stapleton campground for the rest of the week. We went on some challenging bushwalks where the children delighted in the rock climbing sections. We stopped frequently to look at birds and the spring flowers. Lots of cooking and eating. Sitting around a campfire discussing a broad range of topics. Playing ukuleles and singing. Reading and sharing books. Journal writing. Drawing. Perusing bird books. Laughing and playing. (Liz, Coordinator)

## **Family Camp**

*The frequent question that is asked in our household is, 'how many months/weeks/days/hours 'til family camp?' One of the most anticipated co-op events of the year. Every year at the end of summer and the start of a new co-op year we trek to the peaceful seaside town of Cape Patterson to meet up with our co-op family for a weekend of fun, and food and laughter. Family camp is held at a bushy campground with a beautiful, protected swimming cove, with new and old families attending as well as our teachers and their families.*

*The last family camp was filled with swimming, beach combing, crab finding, hours on the beach as the weather was beautiful. The chai tent is set up in a communal site where you can find most people in the afternoon waiting for the shared feast to start. Last year the cricket game went for hours! And the crafting session was continuous, with little hands making and making.*

*With co-op taking up most of the campground the kids have the run of the place and many many games of cops and robbers are played, creative challenges made by adults (a series of challenges that ended in a prize, this year) and running, running, playing, hiding and more running.*

*It's a great way to start our year, welcoming the new, strengthening our current community and keeping in touch with the extended community (Only 7 months, 1 week and 2 days until the next one!).*

*Gemma (parent)*

## **Warin/solstice**

At a chance break in the midwinter jicker, the co-op celebrated the solstice and the season of the warin/wombat with what we hope to be the start of an annual tradition. The first sunshine in weeks shone down on us as the kids frolicked and flogged their wares at market stalls, raising money for a long-awaited excursion to the snow. Music got our toes tapping and the night started and as the sun set on the shortest day we sparked up a larger than life, roaring wombat bonfire. Lighting lanterns we walked out into the darkness and then back into the light of the next bright year. With pizzas springing from a raging woodfired oven and mulled wine steaming we warmed ourselves with fire, food and merry company well into the long winter's night.

### **4.12. Technology**

- **Stop-motion animation**
- **Film making**
- **Movie night showing movies made by students**
- **Scratch coding program**

- *Photoshop editing*
- *Boat building for dam*
- *Easter Egg drop*
- *Aboriginal artefacts research and stone tool making*
- *Bird and animal nesting box construction*
- *Cubby building and maintenance*
- *Cardboard constructions and creations*
- *Playing with motors and electronics*
- *Building props for Concert*
- *Using a sewing machine*
- *Woodwork*
- *Building insect hotels*
- *Kite making*
- *Sand pit creations*
- *Board game making*



#### **4.13. Sport**

- *Swimming - Term 1 and 4*
- *Gymnastics Terms 2 and 3*
- *Bike riding at Diamond Creek*
- *Basketball, soccer, tennis*
- *Ball games, especially poison ball*
- *Yoga*
- *Stilt Walking*
- *Running Games*
- *Dance*
- *Crocodile, crocodile (In Italian!)*
- *Bush walking*
- *Outdoor games – Capture the Flag, 40/40 etc.*
- *Skipping*

### **5. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING**

The Learning Co-operative requires parents to participate and contribute to the learning programs for a minimum of half a day per week for each family. This involvement allows an intimate understanding of any issues regarding student engagement and wellbeing and enables appropriate support to be given. Individual family/teacher meetings are held at the start of each semester so individual learning plans (ILPs) can be tailored for each child. The fortnightly Monday night meeting of all families and teachers is the forum for discussions and the development of strategies to support individual needs.

The teachers/coordinator are also available to privately consult with parents regarding student engagement and wellbeing whenever needed. Student engagement and wellbeing is also addressed through whole-school student meetings held twice daily and stand-alone weekly Focus times. The children lead meetings and are part of a democratic process that promotes inclusion and respect for their views. The children have a voice in any issue that may affect their engagement or wellbeing through weekly meetings of the student council. The children then take turns to take their concerns and requests to the adult Monday night meeting.

The Learning Co-operative uses inclusive approaches to empower children to manage social interactions. The groupings for learning vary; often they are interest-based, but

when appropriate, age-based groupings are organised. The children negotiate the context for learning and this greatly enhances social maturity and engagement. The children take part in regular wellbeing discussions and journal entries.

The emphasis on play in learning also supports the development of social skills and results in a high level of proficiency amongst all the children within the social-emotional context. Areas of interest and passion are identified, as are gaps in knowledge, skills or proficiency, and activities are tailored to address these areas and maintain a high level of student engagement and inclusion.

The school provides a camping program for the older children; it involves a number of five-day under canvas experiences, in a range of national park environments, where the children are expected to erect their own tents and share in the day-to-day responsibilities of camping. The children are directly involved in the planning and costing of the camp. The children plan the menu, cooking and cleaning roster, activities, and are responsible for budget-management and shopping. The school also includes sleep-overs for all children at the school as part of the transition to this extended camping program. The development of stronger emotional and social skills is often an informal result of this program. It is also extremely enjoyable!

An extracurricular support program is provided for children who it is felt will benefit from personal growth and social skills development and utilises equine therapy with a qualified psychologist.

The school is a very close community where children can develop sibling-like relationships with the other students that often last into adulthood. The parents are supportive of each other and contribute to the wellbeing of families with their natural generosity and support.

## **6. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING**

School performance data collection involves examination of the value added for each student as they move through the school year. Students' progress is carefully and regularly monitored, mainly through teacher observation, and work portfolios chosen according to the children's needs and interests, influenced by our school philosophy, and annotated in accordance with the 8 Learning Areas and 4 Capabilities of the Victorian Curriculum. Diagnostic tests are also used as an aid in mathematics so the students and teachers can see where more learning is needed.

All relevant families are given information relating to the NAPLAN testing scheme. In 2022 there were 7 children in the relevant NAPLAN cohorts. Most families choose the Learning Co-operative as a school where their children will not be compared to their peers. The families of all the year 3 and 5 students submitted a request to withdraw from the NAPLAN test. As a result of this, there is no NAPLAN data available on the My School website.

Methods of recording the learning program include a daily Chronicle kept by the children and a Daybook which records the activities, participation and achievements of each

student, referencing the Victorian Curriculum. English and Mathematics are taught as stand-alone subjects but are also integrated into other areas of the curriculum.

The school uses ongoing fortnightly discussions as one means of measuring student performance and readiness for learning. All parents are involved and guided by the teachers/coordinator in these discussions. This forum supports planning and provision of learning opportunities for the next fortnight. The school uses semester-based Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) to facilitate parent/child development of specific goals and to create strategies to address learning needs for each child. This process is a collaborative exchange among the parents, child, and the teacher/coordinator and the goal is to create a balance between interests and learning needs.

In 2022 we continued to streamline the Individual Learning Plans in a format which includes all eight learning areas. The plan is to further support child-initiated learning through these ILPs. Each family is encouraged to develop goals and agreed measures of achievement in these eight areas. A folio is also kept of each child's work to complement the ILP and to monitor student progress, along with teacher and parent observations.

In 2022 written reports were prepared as per requirements but not provided. All parents wrote letters expressly requesting not to have such reports provided, preferring to communicate directly with the educators and other parents in the community regarding their child's progress.

## **7. STUDENT PATHWAYS AND TRANSITIONS**

*The Learning Co-operative has specific strategies to support Student Pathways and Transitions:*

- *Preps for 2022 – Inclusion in Term 4 2021 in the Co-op learning environment*
- *Year 6 – Transition Program to secondary school*

In term 4 we invite children enrolled for Prep in the following year to engage in our programs for one day a week. The parents attend with their child; this provides a gradual introduction to the Learning Co-operative's approaches and operation. By the start of the Prep year, they are ready for a full day at school. Preps attend only a maximum of four days a week until parents feel they are ready to come full time.

The transition to secondary schools is managed through orientation days and reports to high-school coordinators. Some high schools send a representative to visit prospective students at the Learning Co-operative. This program is largely coordinated by the various high schools. Past Co-op students often visit to talk to the year 6 students about high school to help ease the transition and there remains a strong support network at high school amongst ex Co-op children.

The Learning Co-operative does not use an age-grade approach and we find that the children move through the Victorian Curriculum recommended Levels of Learning at their own pace. For example, we have children of a young age capable of equivalent literacy, creative or

Maths skills of the older children and those children participate at this higher level quite naturally. The differentiated learning available at the Learning Co-operative allows for children to find their own ability level and receive scaffolding into their next level of learning without experiencing undue pressure; children are given many opportunities to choose their learning.

### *Playgroup*

We run our playgroup sessions weekly and we have finally been able to consistently come together each week after a tough couple of years of covid lockdowns. We have four little ones that will join the co-op next year for prep and so, playgroup has been a wonderful introduction for the families to get to know the Co-op community and familiarize themselves with the teachers, school and current students. We've been including things like reading, crafts and board games, as well as the usual free play including dress up, playing on the slide or getting messy in the sandpit. *(Shani, Parent/Volunteer and Playgroup Coordinator)*



*(Shani, Parent/Volunteer and Playgroup Coordinator)*

## 8. STAFF PROFILE

### 8.1. Teaching Staff

In 2022 the Co-op employed one fulltime coordinator/teacher, and 4 part-time teachers and 2 part- time administration staff.

#### *Elizabeth Bennet*

<u>Role:</u>	School coordinator / teacher  Appointed in 2010 as specialist LOTE/music/literacy teacher. Moved to School coordinator/ teacher role in 2014. FTE= 1.0
<u>Qualifications:</u>	VIT registration No: 321908  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education: BA Majoring in French (also studied Italian, music, psychology and linguistics) at Melbourne and Latrobe Universities.</li><li>• Dip Ed (Alternative education stream) 1987 Latrobe Uni. Methods: Modern Languages and ESL</li><li>• Lived and worked in Italy 1984 - 1985 and France Jan- April 1985</li><li>• Cert IV in Education and Training 2011</li></ul>

#### *Amy Rogers*

<u>Role:</u>	School teacher  Appointed 2018. FTE=  0.8  V.I.T registration 404348
<u>Qualifications:</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PGCE Fast Track Science QTS, University of Warwick, UK (2005-2006)</li><li>• PhD 'The Ecology and Song of the Eastern Whipbird', University of Melbourne (2000-2004)</li><li>• BA (Hons), MA (Cantab)-Natural Sciences (Ecology &amp; Zoology), First Class, University of Cambridge, UK (1998)</li></ul>



## *Rodney Waterman*

Role: Music and Italian Teacher  
Appointed in 2022 as specialist LOTE/music. FTE = 0.2  
VIT registration No: 239274

### ***Kurt Shean***

Role: Classroom teacher  
Appointed in 2022. FTE=0.4  
VIT registration No: 271505

### ***Cathrine King***

Role: NCCD Teacher  
Appointed in 2022. FTE=0.4  
VIT registration No: 190507

## ***8.2. Other Staff***

### ***Omrita Baskar***

Role: Administration Appointed:  
2019. EFT=0.3

### ***Shiva Vasi***

Role: Administration/Finance  
Appointed: 2019. EFT=0.5

## 9. STUDENT ENROLMENT DATA

The Learning Co-operative is a small school of around 25-30 students on average, the enrolments were 30 in the 2022 school year.

### 9.1. Enrolment Profile

In 2022, the school had a total of 30 students full-time enrolled (see Table below). The gender mix consisted of 12 boys (40%) and 18 girls (60%). 40% of the students had a language background other than English. We have had strong sustained enrolments in the younger half of the school over the last few years. The school aims for enrolments between 25 - 30 students to ensure that we can maintain the special character of our community.

*Table: 2022 Enrolment Profile*

	Prep	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Female students	1	4	3	1	3	0	0	12
Male students	2	5	1	0	1	0	2	11
Indigenous students	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	3	9	4	1	4	0	2	23

By the end of the year the student numbers were 27, 3 more enrolments in year 3 and 1 in year 1. Enrolment levels are currently within our target zone; we had 3 new enrolments at the Prep level in 2022. We had 2 children who transitioned to secondary school in 2022. We expect the numbers to build up over the next few years due to solid enrolments across the younger levels of the school and a strong waiting list for prep in 2023 - 2025. Discussions will be held in early 2023 at the Monday night parent/ teacher meetings around the possibility of raising the maximum number of students to 35 to cope with the level of interest being shown.

We anticipate that enrolments will remain steady into the future, due to strategies put in place to increase awareness of the Learning Co-operative's programs and approaches and to better explain the nature of the school to potential families. In 2022 we had 23 students as at the August census. By the end of the year the student numbers were 27, 3 more enrolments in year 3 and 1 in year 1. We have strong interest for 2023 due to three Open Days and great interest within the local community.

## 9.2. Socio-economic background

In 2022 the three-year average DMI score for the school was 78. The school had a CTC score of 81.

	Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
School Distribution	12 %	19%	32%	%
Australian Distribution	25 %	50 %		25 %

## 10. STUDENT ATTENDANCE DATA

This report was generated from the school roll and offers a data snapshot of the period February 2nd through to September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Note that prep attendance is not included in this snapshot, as in Victorian schools it is only compulsory from age 6.

Attendance is always very strong at our school. This reflects the extraordinary enthusiasm and engagement of our students; they are usually disappointed when it is holiday time. Absences are all communicated to the Coordinator / Teachers directly. The school is able to address any long-term absence of a child through the community network, though this is a very rare occurrence due to the high levels of engagement of both parents and children. In 2022 we had some families exposing their children to other worthy educational experiences such as travel and outings whilst all other absences were due to illness.

	Semester 1	Term 3
Student attendance rate	90%	98%
Student attendance level*	41%	95%

**\*Proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time.**

## 11. PARENT, TEACHER AND STUDENT SATISFACTION

The Co-op is committed to working together to the benefit and satisfaction of the students, parents and teachers.

The school operates as a consensus-based Co-operative involving parents, teachers and students. Decisions regarding all aspects of the Learning Co-operative's activities are made at fortnightly adult meetings attended by all staff and parents. Students also have the opportunity to express their views and opinions at meetings held daily; these meetings are attended by all students and staff as well as those parents who are at the school on the day.

These discussions provide a forum for philosophical debate and an opportunity to discuss the challenges and milestones occurring for individual children, families and staff.

## 12. FINANCIAL COMMENTARY

### 12.1. Income

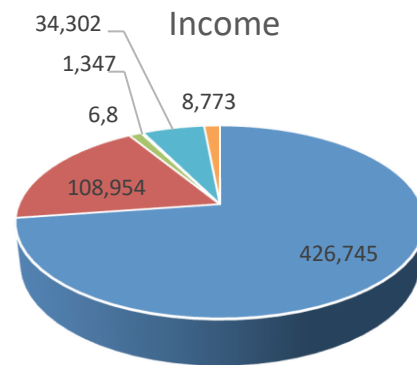
1. Australian Government Recurrent Grants: \$426,745

2. State Government Recurrent Grants: \$108,954

3. Other Australian Government grants: \$6,820

4. Tuition fees: \$34,302

5. Other income: \$8,773



### 12.2. Savings and term deposits

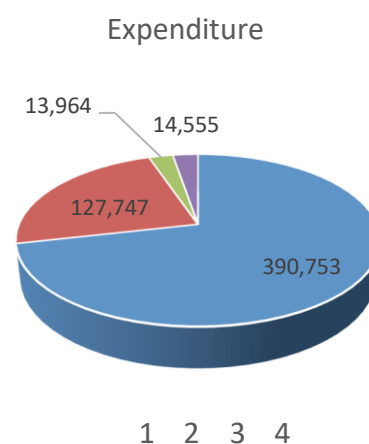
The school has a solid financial safety net. The Investment Term deposits at 31.12.21 were \$430,633.03. The year-end balance of the school's operating account at 31.12.2022 was \$121,908.18. The year-end balance of the school's savings account which consists of revenue from the school fees and fundraising was \$29,184.61

The School maintains a debit card account which is used for small purchases and is kept at an approximate \$1000 balance.

### 12.3. Expenditures

The expenditure consisted of:

- Salaries and oncosts: \$390,753
- Operational expenses: \$127,747
- Property expenses: \$13,964
- Depreciation of owned assets: \$14,555





In order to remain compliant with Covid-19 restrictions the Learning Co-operative invested in furniture for an outdoor classroom and replaced the upholstered classroom couches with vinyl chairs. Total Capital Expenditure: \$5,500

The school continues to maintain a low-fee structure, to enable maximum access. There are social justice policies around fee payments to support families on Health Care Cards or when multiple children are enrolled. In 2022 the school continued to provide free child-minding for single parent families to assist with the demands of evening meetings.

## **13. FUTURE FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

### **13.1. Professional Development**

Budget for ongoing professional Development for staff and parents responsible for:

- *Occupational Health and Safety*
- *Human Resources*
- *Financial management/ Governance*
- *Education*

### **13.2. Student welfareSolar Energy**

Review Grant opportunities to extend current system.

### **13.3. Welfare fund:**

Review methods we use to offer assistance to families facing short and long-term challenges.

### **13.4. Babysitting**

Maintain the current mode of paying for babysitting to enable all parents to attend meetings.

### **13.5. Facilities Upgrade**

Possible strategies/ideas for the future include:

- *The car park area to be planted with trees for future shading.*
- *The installation of big decorative rocks is still being considered for beautifying the entrance area*
- *Plans for the wood working building have been abandoned due to supervision problems for a further learning area.*
- *Plans for an upgrade to the current bus shelter including catering for the second bus and the new trailer are still in planning stage.*
- *The creation of a new office room in the old storage room, adjoining the main building, commenced in 2019.*

## **14. GOALS, TARGETS AND KEY IMPROVEMENT AREAS**

Please refer to Appendix 1 for information regarding forward planning, goals, and targets.

Our comprehensive professional development program is supported by 1% of our annual school budget and has strong links to the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.