6 June: Australian Animals Integrated learning experience

Children worked in pairs to fish out an Australian animal hidden in the big orange tub, then record key facts about that animal on their investigation sheet. They then used the QR code scanner app on the iPads to scan in the code on the animal. This took them to a carefully selected short clip full of interesting footage of that animal.

This integrated learning station was designed to incorporate:
- Australia theme (prescribed term focus)
- Literacy through reading informative texts and report writing, as well as the use of adjectives,
- Math: measurement of length and weight of the animals,
- Science: external features of animals, and habitats
- Information and Communication Technology.

I used QR codes to empower children to resource their own learning about animals. Young children often struggle to key in long web addresses, or perform any online searches. Using the QR codes was a way to overcome this problem.

Our year 1 children used the QR scanners on school iPads (big thank you to Miss Dixon who helped make sure the iPads could all connect to the internet) to access short video clips (about 2 or 3 minutes) full of interesting footage and facts of animals. Each video clip were carefully selected from a variety of sources including National Geographic for kids for their educational value.
This station was also designed to
- Be visually engaging: through the use of natural materials like leaves, bark, rocks, gum nuts in the bucket in which children could fish out their animals.
- Be physically engaging: Children loved the challenge of using the magnetic fishing rods to get the animals, it made the activity fun right from the beginning!
- Promote cooperative learning through pair work

The children loved working at this station, and it was pure joy to see their faces, full of intense concentration while reading the information about the animal, then full of delight and pride when they managed to scan the QR code and watch the video for the first time.

Every single child was engaged in the activity, and I was glad to hear them asking for more even after an hour of work at this station!

The true value of doing such integrated learning experiences, other than literacy and numeracy, is the interpersonal skills and technological skills that children are required to sharpen. After all, it is the combination of all those that will set a child up for a successful lifetime of learning.