Topic Ideas

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| Concept | Junior | Middle | Senior |
| Communities  and  Diversity | **Exploring culture through arts, music, dance, song, traditional story, visual arts and crafts**   * Experiencing stories and arts from different places including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures * Identifying and appreciating the places these songs, dances etc originate from * Articulating personal preferences and responses to these Arts experiences   **Family Stories**   * Family stories and family backgrounds * Discovering personal links to different places through family investigations * Identifying and appreciating similarities and differences   **What’s in our Community?**   * Local community walks to discover local resources- places of interest, parks, playgrounds, people, services. * Use these ‘field study’ walks to involve children in creating (through a construction activity) a community. What are the features of a community- what are the needs? What would we include in the community we construct? * How this evolves will depend on what places of interest you can walk to- or consider public transport. Children’s questions will depend on experience but will allow you to explore geography concepts of places and mapping and civics concepts such as people in our community- roles (shopkeeper, police, ambulance, service industries, different types of jobs etc)   **Who are the Aboriginal people? What’s their story?**   * If possible, visit a local site significant to indigenous people (or the Koorie Heritage Trust, Botanical Gardens, CERES) to explore the story of the local Aboriginal people. OR Invite an Indigenous person to share aspects of their culture and history through their story. E.g. Annette Sax from Yarn Strong Sista or contact your local council. * Have students generate questions about Indigenous people. Use the research process plus immersion in the Arts to find out and make connections. | **Why do people celebrate?**   * Australian celebrations and their origins * Multicultural celebrations, meanings and origins * Influences of different cultures on Australia * Cultural diversity * Values and lifestyles   **Active Citizenship- how can we get involved?**   * Exploring services and resources available to members of the local community in a range of areas eg. Health, sport, arts, education etc. * Identifying community issues and concerns and how groups including the council and church are trying to meet these. * Exploring ways of contributing and being involved in the local community * Identifying needs of different groups in the community and taking action   **My story, your story, our story**   * Exploring their own multicultural links and those of their classmates. * Identifying places they have connections to. * Exploring the cultural stories and characteristics (food, arts, natural and man-made features etc) of people and places they are connected to   **Exploring Indigenous culture**   * Being immersed in Indigenous culture both past ad present (songs, dance, celebrations, music, stories) * Investigating The Dreaming as the spiritual beliefs of Indigenous people * Exploring lifestyles both past (traditional) and present (contemporary) * Developing an appreciation of the many different ‘tribes’ languages and ‘countries’ within Australia | **How is Australia developing as a fair and democratic nation?**   * Federation and the events leading up to it * Democracy * Civic rights and responsibilities * Striving for rights, especially for Indigenous people * Key people and movements in Australia’s democratic history   **How much is enough? Closing the Gap**   * Uneven distribution of worlds resources * Needs and wants of different communities * Producers and consumption/Fair Trade * Meeting the needs of local communities * Sustaining resources * Role of governments, organisations and individuals in bringing about equity and social justice   **World Religions**   * Investigating the beliefs, values and traditions that underpin major religions in the world * Visiting places of worship and listening to guest speakers from different religions * Comparing world religions- similarities and differences * Exploring how knowing and understanding differences can lead to greater harmony   **How multicultural is Melbourne?**   * Field study trip to Melbourne to identify the cultures that call Melbourne home * How do we know we are multicultural? What might we see, hear, small, taste or feel? * How do we embrace different cultures in our community? * What contributions have different cultures made to our community? * Investigating cultures in Melbourne or our local community that we don’t know much about. * Identifying ways we can be more inclusive at school and/or in the local community |
| Tradition  and  Change | **Toys and Games of the Past**  **How did our Parents and Grandparents play?**   * Grandparents day. Invite older generations of the family to come and teach children games they used to play when they were kids, or toys they used to play with. * Develop student questions about the games and toys of the past. * Use research process to find out answers to our wonderings. * Learn ‘olden day’ games and teach each other * Explore the toys of the past through play and identify how they are similar and different to what they play with today   **How did people live in the past?**   * Immerse the students in what it was like to live in the past through a hands on experience. Sovereign Hill, Werribee Mansion, Cooper’s Settlement, Yarrabee Old School experience (or equivalent) visit. * Leads to wonderings that allow students to explore what life was like in the past- researching using family members as sources of information, role-playing life in the past. * Examining and comparing aspects such as clothes, jobs, technology, school, childhood | **What was it like to live in our community in the past?**   * How the local community has changed over time- physically * How lifestyles are similar or different to the past (eg when parents and grandparents were children) * Local Indigenous people and their lifestyle- then and now * Using local walks, photos, artefacts and interviewing older residents to build a picture of what it would have been like to live here in ‘the olden days’   **Changing Lives, Changing Ways: How did the arrival of the First Fleet change Australia?**   * Nature of life for indigenous groups pre-contact * Stories of First Fleet * Reasons for colonization * Nature of ‘contact’ and impact on Indigenous people and the land   **Melbourne’s story**   * Investigating the history of Melbourne (including a visit to Melbourne to explore first hand) * Who are the Indigenous people who live in and around Melbourne? * What was life like for the Indigenous people before settlement and how did this change? * Key people involved in the development of Melbourne (eg John Batman, John Pascoe Fawkner, William Barrack, Robert Hoddle * Significant places, buildings, events, landmarks. | **From Little Things Big Things Grow**   * Exploring the concept of change through the lens of people who took a stand for justice (Australia and world) * Exploring some case studies eg. Vincent Lingiari, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Peter Lalor, Nicky Windmar, Mary MacKillop, and identifying the cause and effect of their actions   **Gold Fever**  **A deeper study into the ‘Gold Rush’**   * What was life like for the people living on the goldfields? * Exploring different perspectives * Identifying the impact the gold rush had on the development of Victoria/Melbourne * Exploring concepts of equity, discrimination and conflict   **Windows on Australia**   * Looking at snapshots of events and people that are significant in bringing about change in Australia (or the world) in the past 200 years * Identifying cause and effect and ‘patterns’ that are emerging * Students select an area of interest to explore more deeply then share their findings with others   **How has migration contributed to Australia’s identity and story?**   * Historical context of migration- waves of migration and why they happened * Concept of ‘First peoples’ * Personal stories of migration including refugees from diverse places * Family migration stories- exploring where their own families have come from * Journey and change |
| Identity  and  Wellbeing | **What do different foods look like, smell like, feel like, sound like and taste like?**   * Fruit and vegetable tasting experience, use 5 senses to describe and compare different foods (could use a company like market fresh) * Student questions could lead to exploring different types of food, food categories, and cultural foods. * Exploring seeds and propagation   **How does our body work?**   * Drama Tool Box- Full Body Investigators * Generate student wonderings after the experience about the body, how it works, and what it needs. Use the research process to help students find answers to their wonderings. Use resources such as information books, websites, animations, 3D models, posters and photographs, video clips and people (doctors, nurses, health professionals, sports people, and nutritionists) as ways of finding out. * How can we keep our bodies fit and healthy? * ‘Let’s get physical’ day- rotating workshops involving nutrition and being active activities * Use the workshops to generate questions about how to keep ourselves fit and healthy with an emphasis on nutrition and being active. Investigations may involve research or trying new things. Guest speakers such as: health professionals, people in the fitness industry or sporting coaches/players, and nutritionists as resources for finding out. | **What choices can we make to help our wellbeing?**   * Wellbeing- mind, body, soul * What strategies can help to keep our minds (mental and emotional), (bodies (nutrition, physical activity, hygiene) and souls (spirituality) healthy?   **Body systems**   * The human body- the body as a complex system * What is needed to keep each system functioning well? * Exploring through investigations the impact of exercise, rest, nutrition, hydration on different parts of our bodies   **How do people learn?**   * Investigating learning styles * How does the brain work? * Self reflection and investigation- what kind of learner am I? What helps me to learn? * Switch ons and switch offs to learning * What it means to be in the ‘learning pit’ | **Why is my body changing and what does it need?**   * Human development and life cycle * Puberty- what changes occur physically, socially and emotionally and how can I manage this? * Importance of making good and healthy choices   **What influences me, and the choices I make?**   * Self-image and awareness * Peer pressure * Pop culture * Making the right choices * Media influences   **How can I take my learning to the max?**   * Developing deeper understandings about themselves and their personal preferences for learning * personal strengths and challenges * Memory and the brain * Dispositions for learning * Understanding the Learning Cycle * Taking on a personal challenge for learning |
| Understanding  our  World | **Properties of water**  **What can we do with water?**   * Free exploration with water. Water tubs, different containers, sponges, eye droppers, squeeze bottles, sieves, egg beaters, washing up liquid. * Student questions could lead to questions and investigations about capacity, dissolving, where did the water go (make a puddle on the ground, draw around it, soak it up with the sponge- where did it go?) Which container holds the most? How can we change the water?   **Floating and sinking**  **What happens when we put objects in water?**   * Science experiments: have big tubs of water and a wide range of objects such as wood, paper, plastic, heavy things, corks. Encourage children to find out what things float and what sink. * Use the experience to develop questions/wonderings that can be tested. Eg do heavy things sink and light things float? Do all things made of plastic float? Do bottles float? * Further exposure to learning that you can ask questions and experiment to find the answer. May also lead to designing and making things that float (boats)   **Bubbles**  **How can we make different types of bubbles?**   * Bubble blowing activities and experiments * Leading to children using senses to describe, creating wonderings about bubbles, eg how big, how fast, what shape, what mixture, and learning that you can ask questions and experiment to find the answer.   **How do things move?**   * Movement exploration experiences and experiments. * Have a wide range of objects eg cylinders, balls, cubes, heavy objects, light objects, slinkys, their own bodies etc. In an outdoor environment with different surfaces and some slopes give students time to explore how things move in different ways. * Develop and explore student questions about how things move. Establish scientific language to describe how things move and formally introduce the scientific process * Explore how things move through the air, through water, on land, with wheels   **Light and Sound**   * How can we make light? * Science experiments, free exploration of the concept of light using torches, light boxes, sun and shadows, glow in the dark materials, mirrors, material, cellophane, water. * How can we make sound? * Science experiments, free exploration of the concept of sound using musical instruments, containers, rice, stones, sand, string, elastic bands, jars with water, natural materials * Students explore further questions they have about light and sound through hands on exploration and experiments   **How does the sky change?**   * Possible experiences to launch the topic include: Visit to the planetarium, Starlab incursion. Night time BBQ and star gazing * Shadow and sun experiments * Student questions could lead to an investigation into day/night, weather, seasons, sun, moon and shadows or space depending on student interest. * Wonderings may lead to using the research or scientific processes to find out. | **How do toys work?**   * What they are made of (materials) * How they move (systems) * Purpose * Design process * Making and evaluating own toys * Force and movement * Floating and sinking * Toys with an energy source (batteries, lights, sounds, magnets)   **How does matter change?**   * Exploring how different substances change through heating cooling and mixing * Solids, liquids, gases * Scientific processes of experimentation * Impact of chemical science on our daily lives * Applications of chemical change in eg cooking, art, industry   **Marvellous Machines**   * Investigating the 6 simple machines and how they work * Identifying simple machines in everyday devices and tools * Creating simple and complex machines to meet a purpose or need   **What do scientists do?**   * Exploring the ways in which scientists investigate * Exploring a whole range of fields of science and identifying their importance eg: astronomy, medicine, marine biology * Regognising the impact of science on our daily lives * Exploring a branch of science they are most interested in   **How does the weather change?**   * Describing and measuring weather * Scientific process- predict observe, explain * Seasons * Day and night * Water cycle * How weather affects us | **How do scientific discoveries impact on the way we live?**   * Scientific processes (chemical and physical change) * Scientific method * Contributions of science to the community * Exploring scientific breakthroughs in different contexts eg medicine, communication technology, sports, and how these have impacted our lives   **Going Beyond: Why do people continue to explore and push boundaries?**   * Contemporary exploration (eg into space, beneath the sea etc) and the scientists who are making this happen * Why can we go further, deeper than we have before? * What discoveries have been made through exploration and what is the impact?   **Energy**   * How is energy generated * What different forms of energy are there? * Exploring the characteristics of energy and energy transfer by conducting experiments and using the scientific process   **Our Restless Earth**   * Investigating natural systems (atmospheric and geological) and how they happen * Structure of the Earth, tectonic plates etc * Ancient earth eg: Gondwana, Ice-Age,- how the Earth has changed over time due to atmospheric and geological impacts * Natural disasters and their impact on communities and environments   **What causes change?**   * Using the scientific process to identify and describe change in different contexts eg: chemical change, physical change, changes to materials, changes in the environment, changes in states of matter * Exploring how scientists pose questions and design fair tests to prove or disprove a hypothesis * Exploring the importance of fair testing and changing variables one at a time * Students then pose their own questions and design fair tests to prove or disprove their hypothesis * Sharing their results and conclusions |
| Imagination and  Innovation | **How can we create objects that move?**   * NB this builds on well from the Science and Discovery ideas above as matching topics. * Identifying the different systems that make objects move * Eg. Planes, trains, cars, robots, bikes, machines, kites, boats, rafts, hot air ballons, rockets, * Implementing the design process * Materials and their characteristics   **How can we grow/make our own food?**   * Either visit a local vegetable garden and/or walk to the local supermarket/green grocer to buy ingredients to do some cooking. * Designing and making own healthy recipes/café using the design process * Designing and making cultural recipes * Could lead to planting own vegetable garden   **What can we make with rubbish?**   * Exploring the possibilities that reused and recycled materials present * Using our imagination and creativity (eg a plastic bottle- what could we turn this into? What are a hundred different possibilities for reusing a plastic spoon?) * Using the design process to create useful things from recycled materials   **How can we create a puppet show?**   * View a puppet show and brainstorm/explore different types of puppets we could make * Introduce students to some standard puppet design styles eg sock puppets, finger puppets etc then let them innovate on the design to create their own puppets * Explore different types of cultural puppets * This topic can combine well with narratives in literacy where students create puppets to retell their favourite stories or write their own. | **How do products from the farm change?**   * What products come from farms? * Food and non-food products * How are they grown/cultivated? * What processes do natural resources go through in order to become products that people buy? * How can we design and create products using natural materials from the farm?   **What makes a successful market stall?**   * Creating products to sell at a market (to raise money for a cause) * Investigating elements that may lead to success eg. Market research, advertising, gaining feedback, testing and evaluating, collaborating * Using the design process to investigate, design and create goods to sell at a stall * Working to a budget and calculating profit and loss   **Using the design process to create an event or purposeful product eg:**   * Graduation film * Mini-golf course * Puppet play * Carnival * Christmas gifts or decorations that either moves, lights up or makes a sound * Reusing and recycling materials to make useful products | **Why do people constantly design and innovate?**   * Design process- taking an idea from conception to reality * Where do people get their ideas from? * Design in our world- where do we see design and what impact does this have? * Creating own innovative products to meet a particular purpose eg. A dress to wear to graduation * Creative thinking * Change- how products impact lifestyles   **How can we design and create goods or services to meet a need or solve a problem?**   * Identifying the role of designing and innovating to solve problems and meet peoples needs * Investigating real life applications eg. A cat feeder that the birds can penetrate * Identifying personal or community needs or problems * Creating design solutions using the design process   **Using the design process to create an event or purposeful product eg:**   * Graduation film * Social Justice Fete * Graduation ceremony or celebration * Teaching resource for younger students (eg about dispositions, the real meaning of Christmas or Easter, or an aspect of health, or environmental issues) * Sensory garden or vegetable/herb garden, or indigenous garden |
| Sharing  the  Planet | **What do gardens need to flourish?**   * Investigating, designing and making a sustainable garden * Composting * Different types of gardens- indigenous plants, vegetables   **Animals and their habitats**   * What are the different features of animals? * Where do animals live? * Animals in the classroom, pet parade, or incursions eg. ‘The Zoo Comes To You’, Zoo excursion * Student questions could lead to exploration into the features of animals, classifications, similarities and differences, of animals they know or see at the zoo, or habitats * Leading to an introduction to the researching process at the whole class level- model how you can ask a question then use sources of information to find answers.   **What do animals need to grow and survive?**   * Hatching chickens (or rabbits, butterflies or frogs) and/or * Visit to the local Vet or guest speaker (Vet, animal rescue worker, animal lover) * Develop student wonderings and investigate using the research process ways find out more about animals they are interested in, how animals grow and change, or how to care for animals. * Use observations over time to identify and record changes they are seeing   **Mini-beasts**   * Use the field study process and go on a mini-beast hunt in the school grounds or a local natural area. Take magnifying glasses, ipads to record, specimen jars, gloves, etc. OR book a mini-beast incursion. * Generate student wonderings after the experience and use the research process to investigate mini-beasts and habitats that students are interested in. * May lead to creating a worm farm or a mini-beast habitat as a sustainable action. | **What do living things need to survive?**   * Mini-beasts or animals * Life-cycles * Needs * Habitats * Interdependence of living things within a particular eco-system (local field trip) * Importance of a clean and healthy environment   **How do eco-systems work?**   * Study of a variety of eco-systems (eg. Waterways, pond-life, extreme environments) * Characteristics, living and non-living * Similarities and differences of diverse eco-systems * Significance of location and climate * Food chains * Impact of humans * Impact of natural processes * Sustaining environments   **Wildlife in Danger**   * Endangered species * Why are some animals (and plants) in danger of extinction? * How are humans contributing to this in positive or negative ways? * What can we do to help protect these animals? | **How are the world’s environments changing?**   * How humans use and impact the environment * Natural process and changes * Diversity of environments * Interdependence of living things within these environments * Sustaining environments   **Sacred Land: What can we learn from Indigenous people about sustainability?**   * What are the views and beliefs of Indigenous people about the land? * Sustainable practices used by the Aboriginal people) * Why is it important for us to act more sustainably? * What places are important to us?   **Climate Change: Fact or Fiction?**   * Investigating the real world issue of climate change * Cause and effect * Different perspectives and views * How are people and groups going about bringing positive change? * What can we do? Taking action and persuading others |