

# Breeding butterflies at Bialik College

## BIALIK COLLEGE

A magical butterfly enclosure is being developed at Bialik, populated with butterflies that students are breeding. The project is part of Bialik's innovative STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) initiatives that have proved to be immensely popular with the students and has successfully engaged more girls in science than ever before.

With help and advice from Bialik parent and scientist Eddie Tsyrlin, Bialik has acquired caterpillar eggs, which are being raised and cared for throughout their larval and chrysalid stages.

In preparation for the arrival of the eggs, the year 4 students were responsible for making sure there would be a sufficient food supply. Upon investigation, it was learnt that this particular species of caterpillar eats sweet potato plants and so into Bialik's award-winning kitchen garden the students went.

The sweet potato seeds were planted and as they flourished, offered students visiting the garden a wonderful opportunity to track and document their growth and growing conditions.

Once there were enough mature plants to sustain a whole community of caterpillars, the eggs and caterpillar enclosures were brought in.

Currently, the caterpillars have hatched



**ELC students get close and personal with the butterflies as does Arkie Rettig.**

and are growing rapidly.

Primary students were asked what do they think and wonder about when they see the little creatures (the hallmarks of Bialik College's Cultures of Thinking approach) and the questions were very insightful.

"I wonder what type of plant this is?" "I wonder how old is this plant?" "I wonder how the caterpillar got inside the cage?" "I wonder how many degrees it is in the cage?" "Will they stay in the cage when they become butterflies?" and "How

long it takes for caterpillars to turn into butterflies?" They are now well on their way to discovering answers to all these fascinating questions.

Through art, discussion and observation, the ELC students will be learning about the critters' habitat, their life cycle and will be able to observe and enjoy the butterflies once they have been released into the atrium. As the caterpillar enclosures are being housed in the science laboratories, the middle and senior students will also have a chance to incorporate aspects of



the project into their particular learning.

And finally, as community and family learning is prioritised at Bialik, we will be inviting families to visit the atrium once the butterflies have matured.

Assistant head of ELC Helene Oberman said: "Our students showed a natural curiosity about butterflies and being able to be involved in actually breeding them has resulted in very real and meaningful learning experiences for teachers, students and families alike."