

# Breeding butterflies at Bialik

**A** MAGICAL butterfly enclosure is being developed at Bialik College, to be populated with butterflies which the students are breeding.

The project is part of Bialik's innovative STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) initiatives which have proven to be immensely popular with the students and, further, have successfully engaged more girls in science.

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, year 4 students were responsible for making sure there would be a sufficient food supply. Upon investigation, it was learned that this particular species of caterpillar eats sweet potato plants, which the children were able to find in Bialik's kitchen garden. The sweet potato seeds were planted, and as they flourished, offered students visiting the garden an opportunity to track and document their growth and growing conditions.

Once there were enough mature plants to sustain a whole community



An ELC student's drawing of the life cycle of a butterfly.



ELC students get up close and personal with a butterfly.

of caterpillars, the eggs and caterpillar enclosures were brought in.

Currently, the caterpillars have hatched and are growing rapidly. Primary students were asked what they think and wonder about when they see the little creatures (the hallmarks of Bialik College's Cultures of Thinking approach) and their questions included: "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 [does it take] for caterpillars to turn into butterflies?" The students are now well on their way to discovering answers to all these fascinating questions.

Through art, discussion and observation, the Early Learning

Centre (ELC) students will be learning about the creatures' 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 school 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, the school 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."