

How Bialik builds Zionism

BIALIK COLLEGE

At the heart of Bialik's vision is a commitment to the centrality of Israel to the Jewish people. Bialik College is proud to be labelled a Zionist school and has many formal and informal approaches to inculcating a love of Israel in Bialik students.

Starting from the youngest kinder 4 students, a unique friendship is developed with children from the Israeli Arava region. The ongoing relationship involves Skype sessions and the exchange of festival greetings by personalised cards, books of drawings, electronic presentations and videos.

Students look forward to receiving communication from their friends in the Arava and there is great excitement when creating videos and artwork that will be shared. The children are able to understand, through this relationship, what it's like to go to kindergarten in Israel and the differences and similarities in our cultures.

As a cross-communal Jewish Zionist school, Bialik welcomes the opportunity for its students to develop a feeling of kinship with their Israeli friends.

The relationship between Bialik and the Arava is reciprocal and deepens with student and teacher exchanges.

For example, every winter a delegation of year 10 students from the Arava region visit Melbourne and immerse themselves



Ava Wilson, year 3, during Balagan Week.

in Jewish Life around the city. Bialik hosts these students, giving them a true taste of life and schooling in Australia.

The students spend time in their peers' classrooms, as well as in the early learning centre, participating in special activities with the youngest Bialik students. The delegation are billeted by Bialik families and strong bonds are forged between the Australian and Israeli students, many of these resulting in friendships for life.

Throughout the year, many programs

are designed that bring Israel closer to the hearts and minds of our students.

One of those programs is Balagan Week – a high-spirited celebration during which the informal Jewish education team bring the land of milk and honey to Melbourne. Activities during the week include making pita bread, Israel-themed arts and crafts, Israeli dancing and music and games that explore Israeli cities, towns, landmarks and lifestyle.

The year 5 and year 12 leadership programs at Bialik both offer Zionism portfolios, giving the students an opportunity to run events for their peers that celebrate Eretz Yisrael. In the coming weeks, the Zionism Mazkirut (year 12 leaders) will create a shuk (market), with all the buzz of a real market in Israel. Students and staff are invited to host stalls offering baked goods, arts and crafts, second-hand items and food for the exchange of buttons.

Not only will students witness the atmosphere of Israel, but they'll also be contributing to the collection of buttons for Bialik's Button Project, an ongoing appeal to the community to help the college collect 1.5 million buttons. The buttons will eventually be housed in an artistic sculpture at the school in order to commemorate the lives of the children lost in the Holocaust.

At Bialik, Hebrew is taught as the living, breathing language of the people of Israel. Since its earliest days, the college has been teaching 'Ivrit B'Ivrit', an idea that

deeply engages students in the language, increasing their understanding.

Students in years 3 and 4 even study in the bilingual stream. For more advanced learners in years 6 and 7, there is the HEBJ program that teaches Jewish studies in Hebrew. Students in years 9 and 10 have the choice of continuing their studies informally through Hebrew theatre, film, conversation and other media. The years 8-11 students also have the opportunity to join the annual Hebrew camp, a fully immersive language camp.

Encouraging our students' strong connection to Israel would not be complete without a real-life Israel experience.

The December-January Year 10 Chavayah trip to Israel is an opportunity for the Bialik students to learn first-hand about the land, the people, the culture and the beauty of the Jewish State. It is also a chance for them to reunite with their friends from the Arava.

During Chavayah, Bialik students enjoy a five-week academic program at the Alexander Muss High School and have the opportunity to spend time in the Arava region as one of their experience week options. Bialik students also board with an Israeli family for a few days, giving them the full Israel experience.

As a Zionist school, Bialik is fully supportive of Israel and committed to its wellbeing. Am Yisrael chail