

## What is Bitaa?

Bitaa is an app designed to assist child care providers, early childhood educators, and parents with program and activity planning. The app is created based on the idea that children grow best when they can direct their own learning, and therefore most of the activities in this resource are simple and open-ended. Bitaa makes it so that educators, parents, and most importantly, children, can take the ideas or activities and put their own spin on it. Bitaa is also a compilation for educational ideas as it pulls ideas, and activities from a variety of sources, making it a hub for the exchange of educational information.

## Who is Parkland Players?

Parkland Players was established in 1995 to fill a community need for quality daycare and education. Our child care centers have been founded on the philosophy that children, their families and the community benefit from high quality Early Childhood Programs. We strive to allow each child to openly explore their individual interests through a variety of programs. We provide a warm, safe and nurturing environment to cultivate children's optimal social and emotional growth as well as their physical and intellectual skills. In addition to promoting confidence and success, we also encourage children to learn to be creative and independent. Our centres are inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education, which emphasizes inquiry-based learning, children directing their own education, the teacher as a facilitator and guide, and the environment as a third teacher. Our centres provide care for children aged birth to ten. We implement the Reggio Emilia perspective across these age groups.

## Why the Bitaa Initiative?

In 2016 Parkland Players endeavoured to fill a gap in Early Childhood Education program planning. Teachers at our centre have always worked extremely hard to plan daily activities, following children's interest and educational goals. However, in order to support our educators in their lesson planning, the administration at the centre decided to create a resource that educators could refer to throughout the school year for those moments when they were uncertain of what themes to explore next, or how to expand on concepts, or even where to start in a new unit. And so, Parkland Players began compiling activities from a variety of sources and organizing them into themes. This new compilation of information, activities, and resources would later become Bitaa!

## How does this origin story make Bitaa special?

Although Bitaa is a separate entity, the collaboration between Bitaa and the educators at Parkland Players is ongoing. The educators and administration at Parkland Players continue to contribute, ideas and feedback to Bitaa, as well as implement the activities in their daily educational method. This gives Bitaa a number of advantages in terms of the validity of the resource. First of all, it helps Bitaa to keep a fresh perspective. Bitaa is continually changing and being updated to better fit the needs of children and their development based on the work of teachers at Parkland Players. In this way, Bitaa is frequently being tested and improved through its proximity to a thriving childcare centre. Secondly, implicitly embedded in the resource are decades of experience from Early Childhood Educators who give their thoughts, approaches, and personalities to the resource. Lastly, collaboration with Parkland Players, a Reggio Emilia inspired centre, means that this resource is also focused on the fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach. Activities are inquiry-based, flexible, and open-ended so that children across a variety of age groups can get the most out of each learning opportunity regardless of their individual developmental location. Essentially, Bitaa continues to support the educators at Parkland Players to be the best they can, and reciprocally, the educators at Parkland Players challenge Bitaa to continue to grow and improve its ability to contribute in meaningful ways to Early Childhood Education.

