

National Quality Standard

In Action

Western Australian Schools



Acknowledgment of Country

The three Western Australian education sectors acknowledge that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that the schools featured in this publication are on the Country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. We acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

National Quality Standard in Action: Western Australian Schools

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Foreword

The *National Quality Standard in Action - Western Australian Schools* has been developed by the Department of Education, Catholic Education Western Australia Ltd., and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia to support schools in implementing the National Quality Standard (NQS). The NQS is a national initiative that applies to all 3 sectors in Western Australia, establishing a consistent position about what 'quality' means in early childhood education and care and setting a benchmark to continually improve outcomes for children birth to 8 years.

Within this book you will find contextualised representations of the NQS elements in action from schools around the state, promoting quality practice to optimise the learning and development of children across Pre-Kindergarten to Year 2. The stories are a celebration of early childhood and the commitment of Western Australian schools to continually uphold quality practices that enable every child to flourish and succeed.

Schools are encouraged to use this resource as a supplement to the Guide to the National Quality Standard documents that have been published by each sector. Each chapter shares stories about a quality area, in a variety of contexts, prefaced by an introduction that supports individual and team reflection for continuous improvement. We trust these stories, reflective questions and ideas will provide affirmation, inspiration and provocation as you reflect upon your school's implementation of the NQS.

We acknowledge and thank all contributors to this publication, particularly Dr Dee O'Connor, who has highlighted the evidence-based research that underpins the NQS. Dr O'Connor is currently a Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at Murdoch University. At the time of writing, she was a Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at The University of Notre Dame, Australia.

We also thank the schools and educators who so willingly shared their stories and ideas. Special appreciation is extended to the children featured throughout who have shared their learning.



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Eden, Kindergarten

Educational Program and Practice

QUALITY
AREA

1



'I love my classroom because I love to learn.'

Grace, Year 2

QA1	Educational program and practice	
Standard 1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.
1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
Standard 1.2	Practice	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
1.2.1	Intentional Teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
1.2.3	Child directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
Standard 1.3	Assessment and planning	School administrators and educators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.

Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice

Introduction

Dr Dee O'Connor

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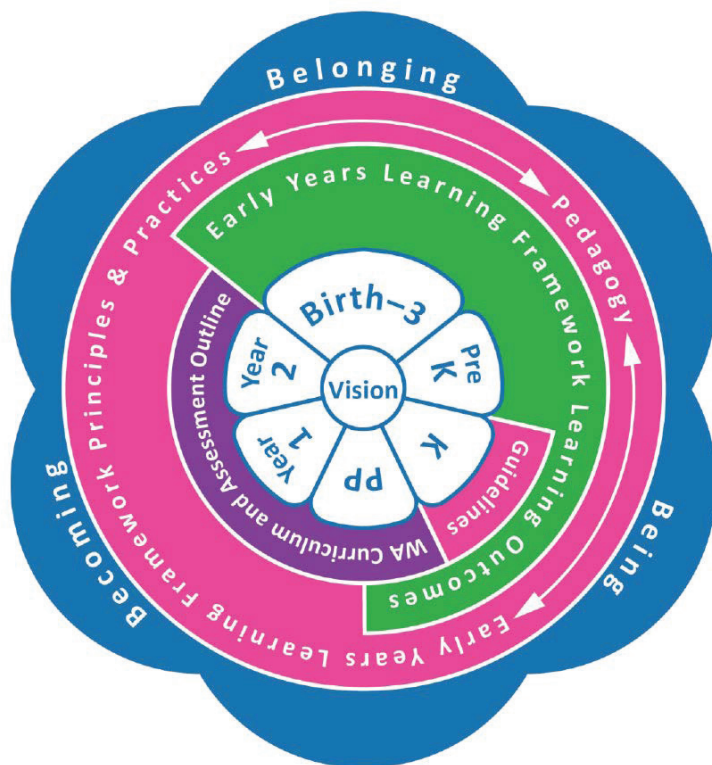


'This is me playing with Nate outside. We learn about gardens. We find snails and do running. We can also make obstacle courses. It can be really fun.'

Schylar, Kindergarten

Quality Area 1 focuses on the educational program and practice. As such, it is centred in pedagogy and the ways in which educators enhance learning and enrich development. The standard requires that every educator brings a developmental alignment to children's learning by integrating the Early Years Learning Framework's principles, practices and pedagogy into all programs up to and including Year 2.

This means that every early childhood educator needs to reflect on and incorporate the concepts of children's agency, identity, connection, well-being, confidence and effective communication into a child-centred curriculum approach that is intentional and responsive¹. The expectation is that every child will contribute to their own learning, be facilitated to actively construct knowledge with their educator and classmates and experience their agency as independent learners². Such practice is deeply embedded into the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The EYLF is underpinned by strong, evidence-based research from educational theorists, psychologists and neuroscientists³. One of the reasons that the NQS was developed was to give a greater voice to the content of the EYLF⁴. The voice of the EYLF is particularly strong within the NQS Quality Area 1, where educators are asked to work with children's ideas, interests, play, strengths and culture in the formulation of their program. Providing the children with choices and facilitating them to lead and direct their learning and experience agency is also a central tenet. Teaching in this engaging way deepens children's learning and content retention⁵. It also develops their thinking skills, intelligence, and the cognitive capacity for greater problem solving², creativity⁶, and their lifelong motivation for learning.



Relationship between the EYLF, Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and the Western Australian Curriculum.

Source: School Curriculum and Standards Authority. (2023, p.3). *Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines*^{7*}.

* Permission to use the School Curriculum and Standards Authority material does not constitute endorsement of this publication or product.

Ewan's Story

This story is told in the voice of Ewan. The words come from his Year 6 graduation speech. In his speech, he thanked each of his primary educators individually for what he felt they had taught him. This is what he said about his Year 2 teacher, Zara:

"Starting Year 2 is a big milestone and the start of feeling like a big kid in our school. Everyone was very excited at the thought of Bush School and it really lives up to its reputation. I learnt so much from Zara, both in the classroom and out in Bush School. Learning in the natural environment of the bush was very exciting, often challenging and never, ever dull. I learned so much about Australian nature, the vegetation, the climate, the animals and insects. I know how to make shelters, find water, what can and can't be eaten and I have lots of other important skills from that time. Bush school also made me feel very confident and capable of solving problems and working things

out. We did lots of science and maths when we were in the bush and it was such a fun way to learn because we were always learning while we were doing something real or making something that we needed. It made the learning come to life. And it was also around that time that I started to see why maths and science were important and useful.

The wonder that is Zara is not limited to Bush School though. She is an amazing teacher indoors too! Thank you, Zara, for the project where we made a town from clay. By making our little town and everything in it, we learnt all about people and our societies. The conversations we had in class while we were working on that project were really interesting and relevant. I learned so much about how laws and politics and systems make communities work. Zara, I think you know that this is an area that I am now especially interested in and I know you were a big part of that. I really enjoyed the official opening of the town, when we invited our families and friends to a grand opening, which we had planned together. From the minute that I brought home the invitation I had made, I was excited to share my



Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: Reflect on an intentional program or project that you implemented in the last year. Write it up as a story using either your own perspective or your perception of the perspective of a child in your class.

Exercise 2: Share your story with a colleague and encourage them to share one with you. Reflect together on your ideas for how to make learning richer for the children you teach. Try to make at least one suggestion to each other about ways of deepening the learning or learning experiences for the children within your story.

Exercise 3: Map your story to Quality Area 1. What were the project's strengths using Quality Area 1 as a lens? Could you have added any other elements to it to make it richer across program, practice, assessment and planning?

Exercise 4: Map Quality Area 1 to the shared pedagogical vision of your team. Are there areas where the school is doing very well? Are there any gap areas or areas that need attention?

Exercise 5: Reflect as a team on your shared pedagogical vision. How did it develop, and does it meet your expectations as educators, or would you like to contribute to developing it further? In what ways can you and your team grow pedagogically?

learning with them. On the day of the opening, I really enjoyed showing them our town and reading them the explanations and posters we had made to explain our laws and systems and decisions.

You also taught us all about Greek Mythology and other really memorable things like mechanisms and simple machines. There are lots of things that I am leaving out because there were so many amazing projects. I think you are a great Year 2 teacher, Zara, because the way you teach makes kids love learning. Thanks for teaching me so much and for making learning so exciting."

If we analyse this story using Quality Area 1, we can see the following alignments:

With Standard 1.1 Program, it is clear that Zara's Bush School program helped Ewan to develop his identity (Element 1.1.1) as someone who is comfortable and capable within complex problem solving, someone who knows a lot about Australian nature and feels connected to it (Element 1.1.1). Ewan's speech also demonstrates that he is someone who has learnt how to

communicate effectively (Element 1.1.1) and has developed confidence as a learner (Element 1.1.1). It is clear that the Bush School Program that Zara ran helped Ewan to value maths and science, and he understands how to use this knowledge in useful ways (Standard 1.2). Ewan's interests were clearly integrated into the creation of the clay town (Element 1.1.2), and the evident learning shows how well Zara organised the learning to maximise opportunities for the children to engage deeply (Element 1.1.3). The event where the families were invited to the town opening is a clever and creative way to analyse, document (Element 1.3.1) and reflect together on the learning (Element 1.3.2), while supporting families to engage meaningfully in their children's learning (Element 1.3.3).

For me, when I reflect on Zara's teaching, it is clear that she particularly excels within Standard 1.2, which focuses on Practice. Her intentional, thoughtful and responsive approach clearly empowers children to direct their learning within a supported, scaffolded and engaged style of teaching.



'At school I play with my best friend, John.'

Izaak, Pre-Kindergarten

Colour inquiry

At **Kearnan College**, Manjimup, much time is invested at the commencement of each new school year to get to know the children and provide an environment that affords children opportunities to authentically express their creativity. The environment is carefully set up with child-sized and independently accessible materials which encourage and enrich children's autonomy and agency. Upon entering the classroom, children encounter a welcoming space which has been carefully organised and arranged to provide order, beauty, and simplistic harmony.

One of the first educator-initiated inquiries of the year was immersing the classroom in colour. The classroom materials were arranged in rainbow order to assist with cognitive processes and enable the return of items to their place, whilst also being visually appealing and presenting both conscious and unconscious learning opportunities.

During initial discussions and observations, the children shared what they noticed about colour in their world. It was observed that children's understanding of colour was varied and could be experienced in different ways. To initiate this inquiry, questions were posed such as: "What do you wonder about colour?" "What would you like to know about colour?"

Recognising the children had many unanswered questions about colour in the world, an invitation to explore colour with a colour mixing tray was made available. The children were free to engage and experiment with colour mixing, discovering cause and effect, making predictions, and comparing and observing. This led to setting up painting trolleys equipped with the primary colours initially, along with a selection of painting implements, palettes and cleaning cloths. How to work appropriately with the colour-mixing

materials and the paint was modelled. This enabled the children to experiment with using primary colours to make secondary and tertiary colours and developed opportunities for noticing different degrees of colour, as well as valuing the clean-up process.

When one child asked, "How do I make pink?", much experimentation followed, though, despite mixing some colours, this investigation still did not reveal pink. Further prompts of, "I wonder what will happen if we add white to each of the primary colours?" encouraged further mixing and discussion about the yellow and blue. One child expressed that, "It got lighter, but it didn't change. It's still blue." Next, another discovery moment emerged when white was added to red and another child explained, "Pink is lighter red." Prompted by this discovery, white paint was then introduced to the trolley, and talk of tint, light and lighter permeated conversations.

Children began matching colours they had created to those in books and making other colours they saw around them. Next, spray bottles with edicol dye – first with primary colours, then adding black at a later stage – were placed on the trolley. One child thought the sprayed colours looked like fireworks, and another commented, "the colours are mixing so slowly", as the dye dribbled down her page. Another was in awe of the rainbow he had left behind on the easel once he had placed his work on the drying rack.

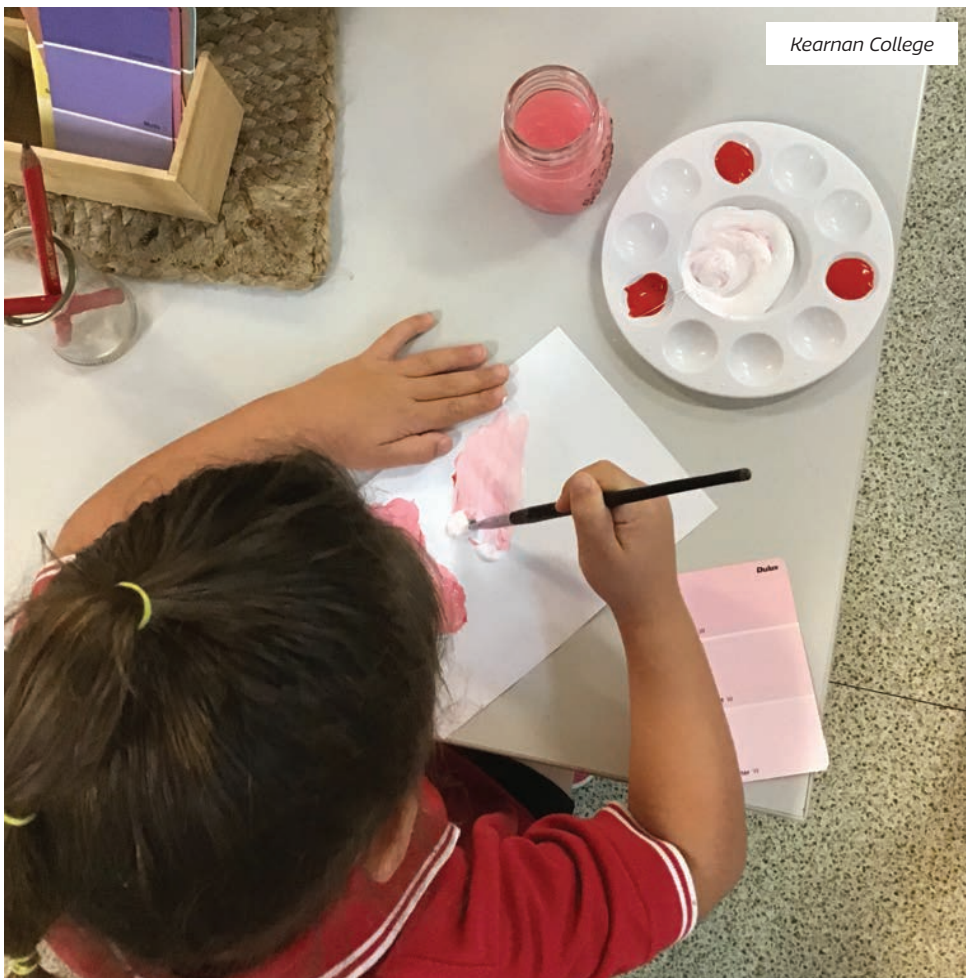
While looking at paint colour cards and discussing the concepts of light and darker, the children discovered that by adding white, they could make a colour lighter. They still wondered how they could make it darker though. One child, whose favourite colour was green, wanted to work on the shades of green. Having already discovered that blue and yellow make green, after his first mixing, he looked at the educator and exclaimed, "This is NOT green". The educator asked what



Kearnan College



Kearnan College



colour the child would call it, and he said, "I don't know, but I can find it." He looked through paint cards and found a colour that was remarkably close to the colour he had made and continued mixing. After asking if the names of the green colour card could be read to him, he laughed at the name, Fizz. "Fizz!" he exclaimed with a little chuckle to himself. After the chuckle about the name, 'Fizz', a discussion took place about paint colours and their names. The children were invited to work on mixing colour and choosing names for these. The result was a collection of very creative names, including Pink Sparkles, Moon, Horse Brown, Greenish Blue, and Sunshine Green. While reading a book about colour, one child asked, "How do you make grey then?" Black was added to the colour trolley. *The Black and White Club*, by Alice Hemming, was a story which linked nicely to early Religion lessons (as did all the colours when talking about emotions in Protective Behaviours) and the children began investigating black and white.

The colour inquiry continued into Term 2 as leaves began to change colour. Many children had noticed the changes that were happening outside, and leaves were collected from the playground, and from home. On a nature walk, the children were asked to find evidence of colour

in nature and as a result collected a big basketful of treasures. The next day the class looked at all the leaves, bark, twigs, and pinecones and talked about the colours they noticed and sorted them accordingly. The children debated amongst themselves as they tried to group the items. The items were used as an invitation to match these colours to the paint cards. Many more leaves were collected to create autumn colour nature frames and leaf rubbings.

This inquiry allowed for the introduction to, and the practise of, different concepts and skills: The inquiry enabled early observations of hand dominance and the demonstration of varying levels of independence and ability, as well as demonstrations of hand dexterity and strength.

Complete agency was promoted while creating artworks, as children were not reliant on the paint that an adult sets out; rather mixing and making their own according to their needs. The inquiry required explicit lessons, presentations, games, songs, rhymes, and pattern work to support the children's knowledge and build understandings. Children were assessed prior to, during and after the inquiry. Assessments which represented student learning highlighted the benefit of allowing children time to experiment, discover and practise.

Planning for Learning

Element 1.1.1 Approved Learning Framework

Element 1.1.2 Child-centred

Element 1.1.3 Program learning opportunities

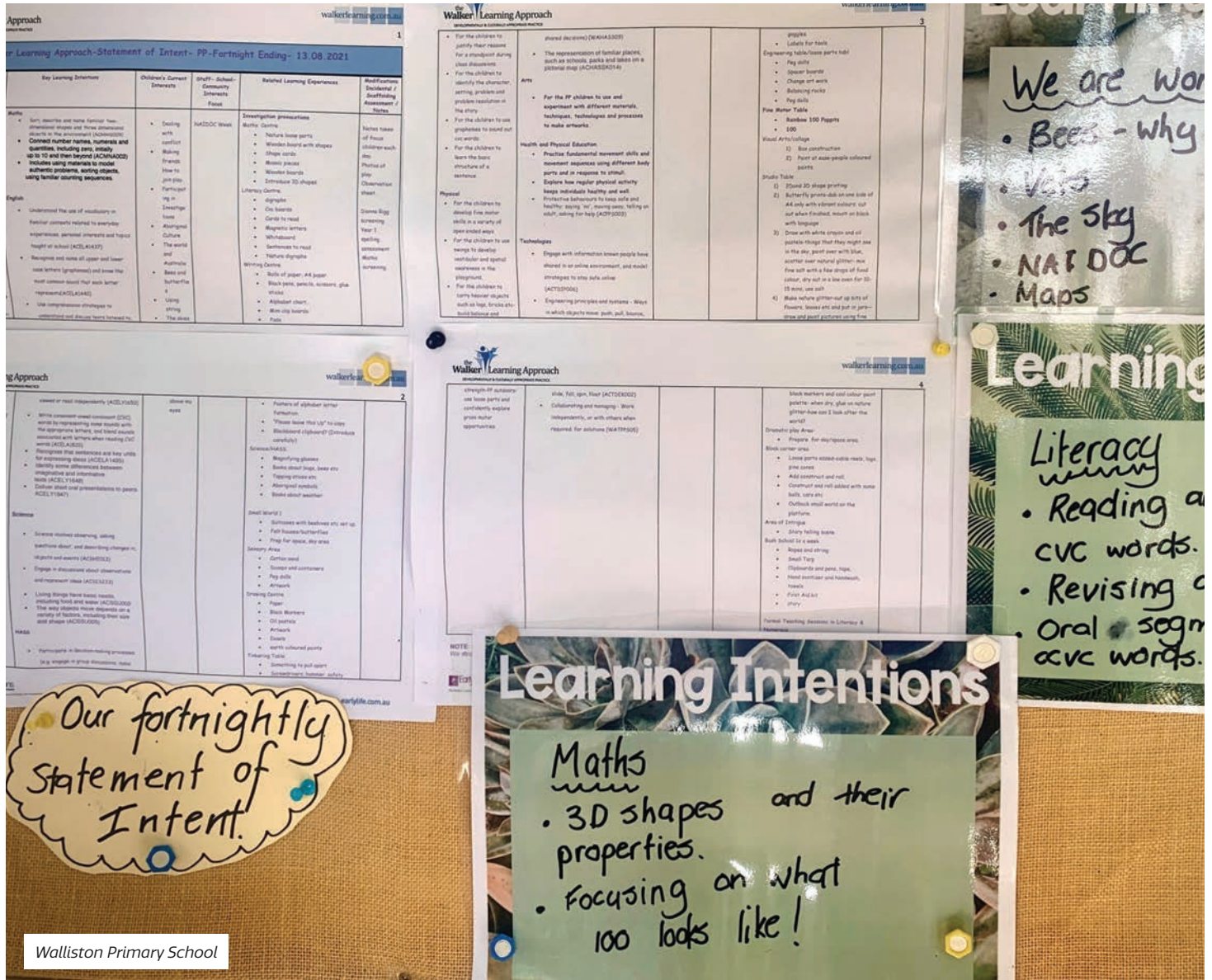
Element 1.3.1 Assessment and planning cycle

'As children participate in carefully crafted, stimulating and age-appropriate learning programs they develop new knowledge, skills and interest and construct their own identities and understanding of the world'⁸.

Educators in the early years plan rich, intentional learning experiences that enable children to further their knowledge and skills in meaningful and age-appropriate ways. Children's interests, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, prior experiences and level of understanding are central to planning. Educators also draw on their knowledge of relevant curriculum outcomes and the pedagogical principles and practices of the EYLF to plan quality play-based learning experiences that not only enable children to reach curriculum outcomes but also develop their sense of identity, as well as confidence, enjoyment and success in learning.



The EYLF states, 'The planning cycle describes the process educators follow in planning, documenting, responding to and supporting children's learning... The steps, sequences and components of the planning cycle... can occur spontaneously, 'in the moment', throughout the day or over a period. Educators use these 5 components to inform their thinking about children's experiences and improvement of practice to develop and implement a curriculum that is inclusive of all children'³.



Walliston Primary School

Reflective questions:

How do we ensure that experiences and routines are child-centred rather than overly adult-directed or clock-driven?

Do children get the opportunity to work in a variety of ways; individually and collaboratively?

How do you provide a differentiated curriculum that supports children's varying capabilities, learning styles and interests?

How do children's backgrounds, strengths, culture, abilities, interests and ideas inform your program?

Starting points for planning

At **Walliston Primary School**, the Pre-Primary educators aim to provide experiences for children that reflect a carefully crafted, stimulating and age-appropriate learning program, whilst meeting curriculum expectations. The starting point for planning always considers 'Where are the children at?' To answer this question, the educators collaboratively discuss what they are noticing in children's play and what the children are curious about, as well as how the children are progressing with guided experiences. It is important to be responsive; sometimes their interests show up during story time, as they ask questions and appear curious to find out more information about particular topics or concepts. With the learning intentions in mind, experiences are then planned. The educators spend time also planning the learning environment to ensure the learning centres provide opportunities for children to



Walliston Primary School



Walliston Primary School

rehearse and consolidate the focus concepts and incorporate the demands of the curriculum.

The literacy and numeracy centres are equipped with resources that enable children to apply and practise the learning intentions from guided or explicit teaching sessions. The interest centres focus on the topics of inquiry that are currently being investigated in the class. During discovery time, the children exercise agency to engage with the learning centres they feel drawn to and interested in. In this time, educators observe, listen and talk with children during their play. This information is collated through anecdotal records and photographs and then analysed, informing further planning and assessment.

While the educators' plan takes into account the collected information, it is a working document that is used as a guide and adapted, as needed, in response to children.

Addressing the curriculum while delivering kindness

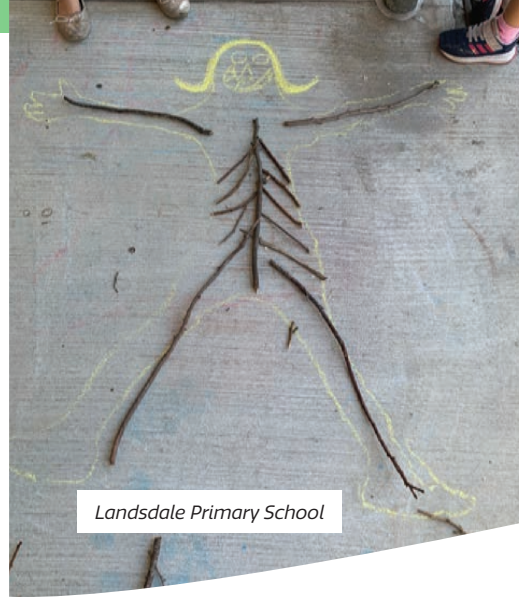
At **Guildford Grammar School**, kindness is a concept the Kindergarten classes delve into each year. One year, it was expressed through the conception and operation of the Kindy Kindness Florist, which became a meaningful and playful vehicle for rich learning across the curriculum. This wonderful initiative helped the students to learn about floristry, types of flowers, how to arrange flowers and how flowers are utilised. It provided authentic opportunity for literacy and numeracy learning. Most importantly, it taught the children about kindness, empathy, collaboration, community and the importance of spreading joy.

Flowers and herbs were gathered, with donations coming in from educators and families. The class wondered who might like to receive flowers



Guildford Grammar School





Landsdale Primary School



and decided educators around the school might appreciate a kindness delivery. A telephone hotline was set up in the classroom where staff could phone in and order a bouquet of flowers for a member of the community.

Children were rostered on to answer the phone, becoming confident and competent at taking orders and recording the required information. After taking the orders, the florists prepared the orders, labelled and created cards and loaded them onto the designated 'delivery tricycle' for a trip around campus to deliver the bouquets. This project afforded the children autonomy in their learning and was so meaningful that it was nominated as a favourite experience in their personal end-of-year reflections.

Children as curriculum decision-makers

When planning for physical sciences for Pre-Primary children at **Landsdale Primary School**, the educator deconstructed the outcomes to identify the key elements. She wanted to listen to the children's perspectives and collaborate with them to design learning experiences that would enable them to meet the outcomes. This is the process she followed:

- 1. Observation and questioning:** To engage them in the topic, the children were encouraged to look at how their own bodies move. Educators prompted the children's thinking by asking questions and recording their thoughts and ideas. Questions included 'I wonder...How can you...Tell me what...?' to help them expand on their ideas and thinking.
- 2. Identified interests and prior knowledge:** From their initial conversations, the educator identified the children were curious and

interested in the human skeleton. She also ascertained the children had limited prior knowledge about the human body.

- 3. Planning experiences:** The educator collaborated with the children to plan experiences that would assist them to learn more about the human skeleton. They explored a large human skeleton model, read books, watched clips about bodies online and then used loose parts to create, draw and label the human skeleton.
- 4. Documentation and reflection:** The educator engaged with the children, watching and listening to them ponder and reflect upon their own learning. She took notes while interacting with individuals and groups of children, documenting their conversations and questions. This later supported her own reflections, about what the children had achieved and how she had supported their learning and could continue to foster their curiosity. She chose to follow the lead of the children and continued to provide hands-on learning experiences, linking to the curriculum learning intentions.
- 5. Planning future experiences:** The children's awareness and understanding of how and why bodies move naturally transferred into them exploring how everyday objects and things move.

Allowing children to construct the learning experiences led to excited engagement in the activities and enabled the children to take ownership over their learning and find answers to their questions, as well as meeting curriculum outcomes.



Rawa Community School: Community meeting to plan for on-Country learning

On-Country learning and teaching two ways

Rawa Community School is located on Warnman and Manyjilyjarra Country in Punmu and Kunawarrtji Communities in the Western Desert. Dedicated to teaching in the context of multiple languages and cultures, Rawa Community School has a clear emphasis on maintaining, supporting and respecting the child's first language and culture.

The basic philosophy of Rawa Community School, as described by the school's first board chairman, Mr Ditch Williams, is to teach "...two ways: Manyjilyjarra on the top and English on the bottom." It does this through its unique Rawa Curriculum Model, which has been developed by Martu teachers, leaders, and family members of the children to ensure the education delivered by the school meets the current priorities of the community and the needs of the children. The curriculum is structured with Manyjilyjarra and Martu knowledge at the core, with Manyjilyjarra language and knowledge leading in front and Western/English following behind. Traditional Ecological Knowledge (in its broad definition, including language, kinship, land, history) is used as the avenue for all teaching and learning. It

is a model of education that has been created specifically for Martu children and children being educated on Martu country. An important component of the Rawa curriculum model is supporting students' connection with country, culture and first language.

A Nature Pedagogy approach was adopted in 2014 to enable children to use their deep relationship with nature to enhance learning in all areas. The approach is based around Traditional Owners teaching students 'on-Country' and making clear links between Manyjilyjarra and English/Western language and knowledge, and between outdoor and indoor learning environments. Learning during on-Country trips is further explored in the indoor classroom through focussed whole group, play-based and explicit small group experiences. The links between outside and inside learning environments are essential to ensure higher order learning occurs.

Each term, meetings are held at the school with the community to collectively negotiate the program focus. In one example, it was decided the focus that term would be bush foods and medicine. A bush planner, created with the local members of the community, Martu teachers and children, helped identify what was known, what they wanted to find out and what they learned. Led by Martu Elders and



Rawa Community School



Rawa Community School

teaching staff, the children searched for bush tucker and medicine. On-Country learning was brought back into the classroom as the children sorted and classified cuttings and studied them under microscopes and magnifying glasses. As part of their classroom learning, the children wrote recounts and developed a class book that documented their findings.

It is believed at Rawa that with this curriculum and a nature pedagogy, children can grow up strong in who they are, with a strong identity, purpose in life and a place in the world. According to Principal, Sarah Mortimer, on-Country learning is gaining interest in many remote Indigenous education settings across Australia, not just a curriculum model to benefit Indigenous children but one that would benefit all. Sarah believes that "adopting Indigenous values, ancient knowledge systems, and ways of learning in an innovative respectful way, that works with what and where Australia has become, is an approach that is worth taking seriously."

Child-centred planning

At **Santa Clara School**, Harmony Week celebrations sparked discussions amongst the children about cultures and sharing of their own cultural backgrounds. The educators were able to use the emerging interest in culture, which sparked children's conversations, as a provocation for integrated planning.

There were authentic opportunities to incorporate culture into English and mathematical learning, along with big books about different countries to read during literacy focussed mat sessions. Book topics were also used as a tool for provoking further ideas when writing information reports.

In geography, the class investigated oceans from around the world and in health, foods from other countries were explored. The interest in foods around the world naturally led to discussions about favourite foods, with the class discovering



Santa Clara School



Santa Clara School



that pizza was the most popular food. The popularity of pizza was incorporated into the dramatic play area, with the children assisting with the set-up of a pizza shop. The children's access to this space during the mathematics and English blocks helped to facilitate Mathematical and Literacy learning through a play-based approach. Materials within this space were selected to promote and offer appropriate levels of challenge, while encouraging children to explore, experiment, solve problems, create, and construct.

Through the implementation of the pizza shop, children engaged in concepts of time, fractions, money, procedural writing, and labelling. Children purchased different sized pieces of pizza according to their fraction, set different opening times for the shop, made signs, calculated money through selling pizza and filling out receipts. The inclusion of this play area gave the children an authentic opportunity to engage with the applications and development of a variety of learning concepts within a collaborative and social play context.

Learning to build success for life

Durham Road School specialises in educating children who have complex developmental, physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities that impact their ability to access a program. The school's vision is that 'all children experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life.' Children are grouped to best meet their needs on the main campus. The school's early years program has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the curriculum elements and importance of communication, language, and social-emotional development. Evidence-based pedagogy and best practice are used alongside other innovative approaches to ensure all children flourish.

Materials used are personally relevant to each child to promote interest and increase understanding. A daily alphabet instruction routine is used to provide predictable, consistent instruction that children can understand and respond to. Tactile resources are utilised, such as an alphabet bag with items starting with the letter of the day, or a water trolley filled with letters.

Teaching and learning programs are adapted in numerous ways, including visual schedules, opportunities for sensory learning and access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) supports.

Infusing culture throughout the curriculum

Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School has a strong cultural emphasis within their curriculum. The school was started over 30 years ago by Gija families and these community origins have created a school tradition of trust and confidence between the school and its families. The school has an open, respectful and collaborative way of working with the children so that it is a space for safe cultural expression.

For the school's 30th anniversary, the community and the school worked together with a linguist who has been documenting local Dreaming stories from the 1970s to the present day. The community chose one of the local stories for the children to learn and to perform for the anniversary celebrations. The school worked with local Elders to teach the children the traditional elements of the music, song and dance. As the children wrote and learned their lines and practised their performance elements, their confidence grew. They made props and traditional garments, and they planned the hosting of the anniversary event.

The performance became a core element within the children's learning and the educators infused curricular content into the performance preparation and event planning. This included the language, arts, technologies, science, history, geography, and math curriculum. The event itself was a wonderful success and gave the children and the community a great sense of accomplishment and cultural connection.

In documenting the learning that had been infused through the performance preparation and presentation, it became clear to all involved that the learning had been rich, meaningful, curriculum aligned and culturally responsive. This resulted in a decision to establish a Dreaming story approach to curriculum. The school has collaborated with the community to put together a suite of stories and will be working through them to provide the children with engaging and meaningful learning on an ongoing basis. The next performance is a digital animation, based on a local Dreaming story about the Thirringgenji (Owlet nightjar) and Joowijgarneny (Bowerbird). The learning approach will mirror the approach taken in the 30th anniversary celebration performance. The children have been working with an animator to storyboard and animate their story and record songs. This level of pedagogical innovation within programming is exciting for the community, the educators and the children. It provides a fresh new take on infusing culture throughout the curriculum in fun and engaging ways that support the children's identities as members of the Gija Nation.

Representing children within the program

At **Braeside Primary School**, families are encouraged to share information about their child and family background, to assist educators to provide child-centred programs. As the school



Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School



Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School

population is diverse, with a variety of cultures, there is a particular focus on cultural identity and how each child experiences 'belonging, being and becoming' in different ways. The Kindergarten educator gains further information by spending regular time with each child, sharing personal anecdotes and encouraging children to share their own experiences with others. These conversations inform the program, as well as the provocations set up in the learning environment.



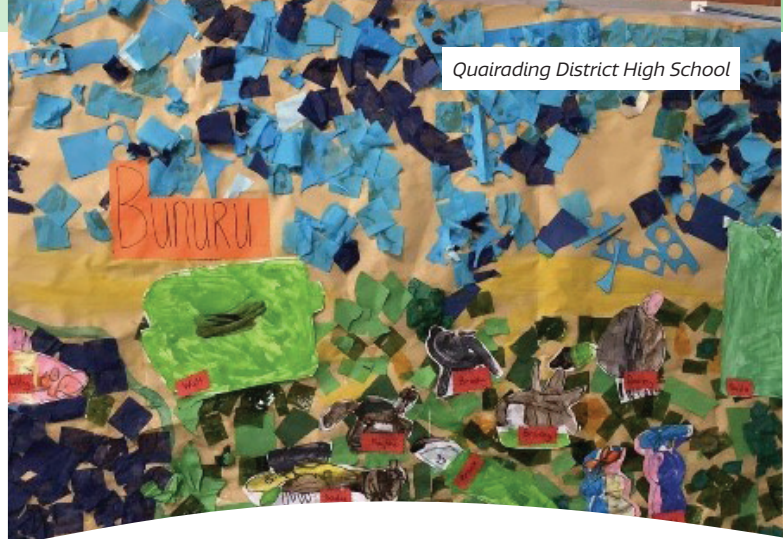
Braeside Primary School



Braeside Primary School



Quairading District High School



Quairading District High School

As part of their Statement of Intent document, the educators have a cultural learning centre set up in the classroom at all times, which is reflective of the HASS curriculum and encourages the children to explore various aspects of the different cultures within the classroom. These learning centres might include artefacts contributed by the children, books, sensory activities, loose parts, different languages and a variety of tools for learning. Educators adapt and change these centres on a regular basis, adding items to extend and further children's learning and interest.

Curriculum On-Country

At **Quairading District High School**, there are multi-aged classes in the early years. Located on Noongar Ballardong country, the school sought guidance from key Ballardong Elders to further embed cultural responsiveness within the school and learning programs. This is an ongoing process of building relationships, listening, guiding and working together. The Elders meet regularly with a small team of staff, discussing ways to embed the *Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework*. This team has reflected, planned, and implemented a quality improvement plan.

Part of the plan has been for an Elders' group to teach Ballardong history and culture to the children and staff at the school. They ensure learning is meaningful, engaging, hands-on and

taught through a two-way approach. Staff meet with the Elders to collaboratively develop a term planner of topics and learning experiences, with a focus on building on prior knowledge. One term was around the topic Bunuru (The Second Summer). The Kindergarten/Pre-Primary class sat and listened to yarns, with the opportunity to ask questions. On return to class, the children created a Bunuru landscape with paint and collage mediums. Following on from this, the class were taught Noongar Ballardong numbers, from 1 to 5 (1 = keyen; 2 = koodjal; 3 = daambart; 4 = koodjal koodjal; 5 = maar). They played games, where the children moved like an animal when a number was called out; for example, if 'keyen' was called out, the children were to jump like a 'yongka' (kangaroo). Other experiences included making and eating damper and taking part in growing bush foods in the school Bush Tucker Garden.

Having the support of the Ballardong Elders group has enabled children to learn about local history and culture in a hands-on way. Children are given opportunities to listen, participate in experiential learning and partake in on-Country experiences. Staff are also able to transfer the knowledge and skills they themselves are learning into the classroom, beginning to provide a more inclusive classroom for Aboriginal children and build relationships and connections with community members.

Capitalising on Incidental Moments

Element 1.1.2 Child-centred

Element 1.2.2 Responsive teaching and scaffolding

Educators are receptive and responsive to the interactions that children have with their peers, educators and the environment, as these moments provide engaging opportunities to extend children's knowledge and understanding. Remaining alert and observant to children's curiosities, enthusiasm and interests enables educators to seize these rich and meaningful opportunities to scaffold children's learning and assist children to develop skills and dispositions in relevant ways.

Reflective question:

How do you capitalise on teachable moments?

The joy of a puddle

On a very wet, wintery day, the Kindergarten educator at **Mary's Mount Primary School** kept a close eye on children's explorations in the nature playground. To the children's great amazement, the water tank was overflowing and had created a puddle. The educator observed the children first jump in the puddle with joy and lots of laughter. One little boy then realised that as the other children jumped in the puddle, some of the water

would overflow and trickle down the slope of the hill. He found a stick and started digging away at the ground. Other children watched and soon realised what he was doing.

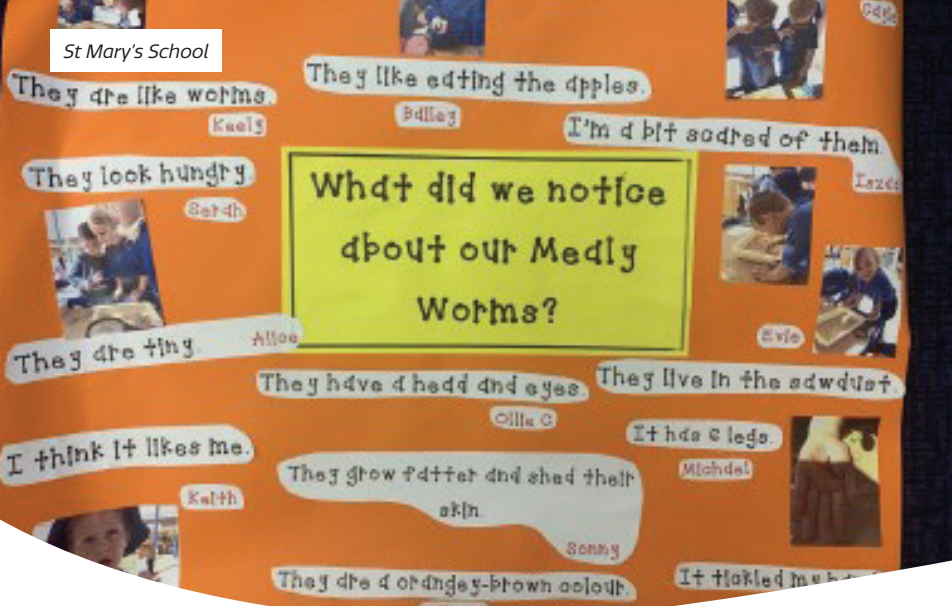
They in turn found sticks and together created a pathway for the water to follow. Soon a creek had formed, and water began to flow down towards the sandpit. Several children who had been playing in the sandpit saw the creek coming their way and tried to stop it. They collected rocks, logs, and sticks and began to build a wall. "A dam!"



Mary's Mount Primary School



Mary's Mount Primary School



shouted one of the boys with pure exhilaration. Another enquired, "What is a dam?"

Through intentionally created learning opportunities the educator supported the children as they continued to discover what a dam is, including who builds them, and how they can be built with no gaps. The children then challenged themselves to see who could build the tallest dam and a dam that wouldn't leak.

From an initial investigation into water that was overflowing, a precious learning moment was born, and the planning cycle took shape. For the next two weeks, the educators provided opportunities for the children to continue investigating dams. This involved the children engaging in an array of experiences, starting with an investigative component involving visiting the library to view books about famous dams. The children also watched YouTube videos to learn

about the purpose of dams. They then sourced their own materials and started building dams in the water trolley as well as in the nature playground. The children used nature items such as sticks, logs, bark and rocks, as well as construction materials, such as wooden building blocks, Lego and Mobilo.

Finally, the children documented their process in their 'Talking and Thinking books' with photos, annotations of conversations, and photocopies from books that they chose to record in their journals. The children documented their hypothesis about their own dam, and what they thought might happen to each other's dams. They then recorded what happened to each of their dams for their families to watch.

Through this rich experience, the development of language, vocabulary, design processes, research, scientific skills, and numeracy were scaffolded. Children also took part in authentic opportunities to develop valuable learning dispositions like cooperation, risk taking and problem solving.

Curiosity begins with a question

Curiosity often begins with a question, problem, or idea. For the Kindergarten/Pre-Primary class at **St Mary's School**, Northampton, an inquiry arose from children's initial interests in 'bugs'. While using a KWL chart, the educator quickly realised during a whole group discussion that the children had a lot of questions about the mini beasts in their garden and wider environment. She also realised that through an inquiry project, she could intentionally and naturally facilitate a meaningful learning experience. The discussion prompted children to be involved in the planning and implementation of investigations linked to the science and Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum.



An observation that sparked much discussion was how different mealy worms looked to earthworms. Armed with magnifying glasses, the children went outside and looked closely at both worms, making comparisons and communicating the similarities and differences between the two. Children came up with theories and built upon their own thoughts and understandings through further investigations. This led to even more questions about why earthworms live in soil. Children explored this question in the outdoor environment.

Throughout this inquiry, the educator intentionally modelled herself as a learner by also asking questions and sharing with her class that she too was looking for solutions, alongside them. She believes it is essential for children to see that the teacher doesn't always know all the answers either, and that they too need to explore, investigate, and build on their knowledge base.

During this inquiry experience, the children developed habits and skills. The children were able to think independently, use their imagination, were open to new ideas, questioned, and challenged themselves to take risks by trying new things. It was also exciting to see the children develop the confidence to acknowledge when they did not understand a concept.

Engineering

At **Southern Grove Primary School**, all Kindergarten to Year 2 classes begin their day with 90 minutes of investigation time. Children choose where they would like to work within the indoor and outdoor learning environment. Investigation time is highly valued by the educators as it affords opportunities to be invited into the children's learning and to scaffold and extend their understanding. In one Pre-Primary class, the educator observed two children who were working in the collage area, who then invited her to join their play. The class had previously been taught the design process, so the educator capitalised on a teachable moment and prompted the children to consider what they might create. They talked about available materials and how they would go about creating a car. The educator continued to scaffold the children through the design process as they designed and then constructed the car over several days. When the car was complete, the educator asked the children questions about their design, the final product and whether there was anything they might change. The children identified possible changes, with the help of the educator. When the car was finished the children worked out a schedule for when each of them could take the car home to show their families.



Southern Grove Primary School



Southern Grove Primary School

Carey Baptist College



Carey Baptist College



A project approach to learning

When the children are engaged in nature pedagogy programs at **Carey Baptist College** in the bushland that surrounds their campus, incidental moments often inspire integrated learning projects. One such project grew out of a conversation raised by the Pre-Primary children about who lives in their house, different family structures and different types of homes. The children continued the conversation as they walked in the bushland and this led them to wonder what type of homes insects need. When the children returned to the classroom, they worked together to create large wooden structures that form the basis of insect shelters. They planned to make a community for insects and to research what insects need by observing them inhabit the spaces. The children took their frames into the bush space and added bush materials they thought might be desirable within an insect shelter. They soon became aware of the

wide variety of insects that were all around them. They started to discuss how families of insects live and work together. They saw colonies of ants and hives of bees in close proximity and talked about how they were different but lived together in the bush community.

The children's interest in the wellbeing of the insects grew and they began to study them in earnest. Through regular observation, the children concluded that the insects needed protection from the elements and predators. They were motivated to help and eager to design shelters that offered such protection. These discussions, alongside further research, led to illustrated designs and written explanations. They worked together to design insect hotels which they placed in the bush. The Pre-Primary children's engagement and motivation were high as they took the lead in their learning throughout this project, supported by educators who recognised the rich learning potential within an everyday conversation.

Intentional and Responsive Teaching

Element 1.2.1 Intentional teaching

Element 1.2.2 Responsive teaching and scaffolding

Element 1.3.1 Assessment and planning cycle

Children's learning and development is holistic. Educators are therefore intentional in the way they interact with and respond to children to nurture their linguistic, physical, creative, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive development. To do this, educators draw on a wide range of strategies to engage children in the process of learning, foster their creativity, and develop their capabilities, communication and critical thinking skills. Educators listen to and respond to children's funds of knowledge, curiosities and perspectives and extend their ideas, enabling them to build upon their strong sense of identity, self-efficacy and confidence. They intentionally plan, implement and evaluate learning experiences and environments that enable children to feel safe and secure as they participate in the program and experience success as individual learners.

Reflective Questions

How do you continue to build a thorough understanding of each child, in order to scaffold their holistic learning and development?

Do you provide opportunity for peer scaffolding?



Mount Barker Community College: In her first attempt, Jessica could not get her bridge to go across the water.

The Gingerbread Man Conceptual PlayWorld

The *Conceptual PlayWorld* is an evidence-based model of intentional teaching developed by Laureate Professor Marilyn Flear at Monash University. A PlayWorld starts with a story, with

children invited on an imaginary journey where they encounter challenges and solve STEM concepts, all while playing alongside educators. In Pre-Primary at **Mount Barker Community College**, bridges were explored through a PlayWorld of *The Gingerbread Man*. After reading many versions of the story, including *The Gingerbread*



Mount Barker Community College:
In her second attempt, Jessica understood parts of a bridge and used pillars to create a longer bridge.

Girl, each child and educator in the class entered the PlayWorld of 'The Gingerbread Man' as their chosen character. There was a selection of gingerbread men, old men and women, cows, horses, farmers, children and foxes. One educator was a gingerbread man, and another was a little old man. Once in the PlayWorld, a problem arose when the Little Old Man received a voice message on his phone. The class listened together to a warning: 'The fox is dangerous and will eat you. You must think of another way to cross the river!'

The children had discussions about ways to get across a river, which in turn naturally led to them experimenting with and constructing bridges. The children and educators left the PlayWorld and began further investigating at once. The educators had many pictures of bridges from around the world to show the children. The children's conversations about bridges began with safety and strength so that the Gingerbread Man

would be safe from the fox. As they each made their first bridge many challenges arose during construction.

The following day, the educator read a book on bridges and searched online to research different types of bridges, including those found locally. The children then drew plans of new bridges they wanted to build. Construction the second time around was different! The children were able to iterate their designs, addressing the construction challenges from their first attempt, inspired by their research.

As a result of their engagement in the PlayWorld, STEM ideas became real, and imaginations were ignited. The plot problem from the story extended learning purposefully, with exciting outcomes. The ideas, concepts and characters kept building because the children had been immersed in the play environment, which held their attention, motivation and interest.

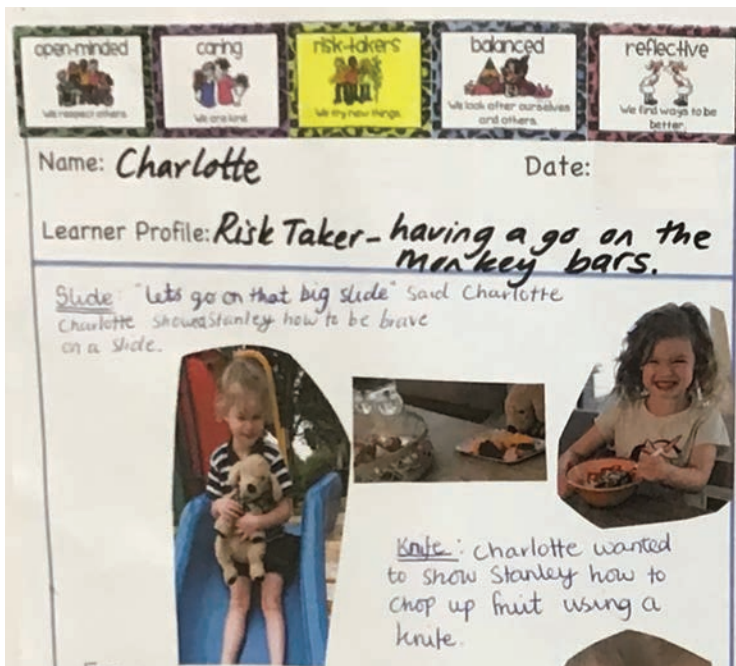
Intentionally cultivating children's learning dispositions

At **Presbyterian Ladies' College**, students from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 6 undertake the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme. The ultimate outcome of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognising their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. Central to all IB programmes are 10 Learner Profile Attributes (LPAs): *Inquirers, Knowledgeable, Thinkers, Communicators, Principled, Open-minded, Caring, Risk-takers, Balanced, and Reflective*. These are used explicitly as a powerful tool to foster and cultivate children's learning dispositions. Used by every staff member to intentionally plan for and guide the development of each student, the LPAs provide a common metalanguage for every member of the school community. Examples of the LPAs in Early Learning classes include:

- **Creating classroom Essential Agreements:** The LPAs provide a robust framework through which educators and children co-construct their classroom Essential Agreements to frame the expectations for all members of the learning community.
- **Formal and intentional planning:** Two or three LPAs are intentionally chosen as a focus within each Unit of Inquiry. Educators consider the LPAs and how they can create authentic opportunities for children to explore, reflect



Find further information about Conceptual PlayWorlds here



Presbyterian Ladies' College

on and develop the selected attributes. All 10 attributes are explored across the year.

- Incorporation into well-being program:** Kimochis, a social and emotional learning tool that help children learn how to identify and express feelings, are used to support children's well-being. Staff have aligned each of the LPAs with a Kimochi character, giving further opportunity for students to develop their understanding of the attributes. For example, students reflect on their achievements, correlating these to one of the characters, e.g. "I was a Risk-taker like Bug today; I tried something new for the first time and my wings came out."
- Building self-efficacy and learner agency:** The Kindergarten children experience authentic opportunities to engage with the LPAs with 'Stanley', their Learner Profile mascot. As the LPAs are introduced, children are encouraged to engage with the focus attribute throughout the week.

Stanley is always looking out for these being demonstrated, and a child is selected to take home Stanley and his journal. At home, children teach Stanley the LPA as they go about their day-to-day activities, documenting Stanley's achievements in the journal before sharing with the class.

The positioning of the LPAs at the centre of the programme is highly intentional, based on an understanding that people who embody each of the attributes daily to the best of their ability will develop into human beings who will make a positive and impactful influence on the world.

Creating programs of interest

Building on an idea gleaned from a professional learning session, a Kindergarten educator at **Our Lady of Good Counsel School**, started using a picture each day from National Geographic to help teach the thinking routine 'See, Think, Wonder'. Conversations with the children revealed their rich wonderings and enabled the educator



Our Lady of Good Counsel School



Our Lady of Good Counsel School



to adapt learning experiences based on the children's' interest. One such interest was space.

Open-ended questions were used to encourage the children to share their curiosities about space and they were encouraged to identify particular ideas that they wanted to know more about. The children's ideas and questions were displayed on a 'wonder wall' and it was soon evident that a particular interest in rockets had emerged. The children wondered things such as: How large they are, how fast they can travel and how far they can travel. The educator prompted the children to think about how they would go about finding answers to their questions. Their responses included searching in books, the library, television, internet, newspapers, and magazines. While the children were learning about rockets, a suggestion to create a space station was put forward by one of the children.

The process of creating and engaging with a space station dramatic play area encouraged the children to interact, take turns and share, and enabled the children to creatively express their new learning through the playful experiences. By asking questions and allowing time to identify children's interests and ideas, the educator was able to draw upon an interest within the group that could be leveraged into many weeks of valuable learning.

Intentional teaching within play in Year 2

Early Learning pedagogy at **Frederick Irwin Anglican School** encompasses intentional teaching through play. Play is purposeful and reflects the interests of the children whilst addressing the standards of the curriculum. Kindergarten to Year 2 educators curate engaging and highly intentional learning environments that enable children to

explore curriculum-connected learning intentions within daily, play-based investigations. Learning intentions are shared with children and families, and children articulate how their investigations align with these intentions. In addition to intentional teaching that occurs during tuning in, reflection and explicit teaching times of the day, educators are also actively engaged in children's play during investigations, extending learning through scaffolding, modelling, questioning, as well as observing and assessing. The following examples offer an insight into two intentional teaching episodes from a Year 2 classroom:

Arrays

As part of a focus on recognising and representing multiplication as groups, repeated addition, and arrays, the educator planned an explicit teaching lesson on everyday arrays around us. This prompted the children to observe and identify many examples of arrays within the classroom, at home, and in the community. Their excitement flowed into the Investigations session, with children proudly finding arrays everywhere. Those using water colours identified the palette as an array, and the list continued to grow: Classroom trays, a game board, cake trays, a chocolate box. These were shared during the reflection session. This inspired the children to make their own arrays using materials such as natural resources, Lego, counters, gemstones, and playdough. The educator extended the play by inviting the children to record the related equation for each array, both during the investigative learning sessions and explicit teaching lessons throughout the week. The educators have found that links and connections such as this between Investigations and explicit teaching sessions help embed the concept for children.

Dragon City

Investigations sessions promote children's agency, encouraging imagination and creativity in their learning processes and ways of demonstrating their understanding. In Year 2, a Physical Sciences learning intention focused on forces and how they impact our lives. A child had visited a revolving restaurant in the city and was keen to replicate this building as a collage project. There was a discussion about the types of forces that would be involved in making a revolving building, including, gravity and push and pull forces. The educator was able to make links to some of the experiments conducted during explicit science lessons to support the child's investigation. Different methods were trialled to make the restaurant turn before success was achieved. Seizing an opportunity to extend the investigation, the conversation led to the types of customers that may visit the restaurant, and Dragon City was born. The children suggested animals that would live in the city and the educator, recognising an opportunity to consolidate Biological Sciences understandings, posed the challenge of ensuring the inclusion of appropriate habitats and food sources to ensure each animal's survival. This project was seen as a work in progress and continued over several days. Construction required using a range of resources and tools. Noticing an opportunity for instruction when the children created a sign, the educator discussed the spelling choices for the /ee/ phoneme in 'City', and the children brainstormed other words that contained the same grapheme. During the reflection session for Investigations, the children shared their learning from the project with their peers, making connections with the focus learning intentions and other key learning. Their sharing was subsequently used as a provocation for explicit teaching throughout the remainder of the day, including in an explicit phonics lesson when spelling choices for the /ee/ phoneme was reviewed with the class.



Explicit teaching finger knitted beanies

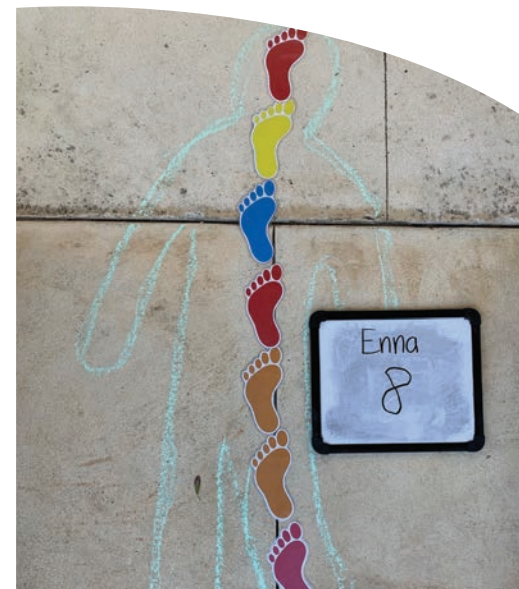
Every year at **West Coast Steiner School**, the Kindergarten children begin the finger knitting journey that will culminate in the wearing of their own finger knitted beanie to the Winter Festival. This is a semester long process that requires hand-eye coordination, concentration and perseverance. It builds dexterity and strength in the many small muscles of the hand, fingers, and thumb; skills that are essential for later handwriting.

The educator begins this process by introducing finger knitting through verse and an imaginative picture of a bird finding a worm. Once the basic finger knitting is mastered, the children are shown how to 'join' the wool - a process where fine motor skills separate the filaments of each end of the wool, the two are intertwined and then, with the aid of water and soap, are felted to form a single strand... no need for knots or joins. The children then continue to 'knit', joining new colours as they go.

Craft time is a deliciously social time, for sharing and laughter, in an atmosphere of industry. The educators reflect that, "Small wriggling bodies become still and focussed as the concentration on the fine muscles of the hand allow the gross



Helena College (Darlington campus)





muscles of the body to give way to a deep, settled stillness."

Scaffolding learning of measurement through inquiry

At **Helena College (Darlington Campus)**, the staff have developed a comprehensive program of inquiry across Kindergarten to Year 5. The educators ensure the curriculum is addressed within the scope of cross-curricular inquiries in each year level, which are each framed around 'big ideas' and include an explicit focus on specific learning dispositions. While the curriculum links have been carefully mapped for each inquiry, the educators also remain open to new ideas suggested by the children. During an inquiry into relationships, children were investigating similarities and differences among their friends when an interest arose to determine who was the tallest in the class. Knowing the mathematics curriculum, the Pre-Primary teacher saw this as an opportunity to build measurement understanding, so she posed a challenge to the class to find out. This led to a mathematical inquiry into what and how we measure, particularly focused on direct comparison and use of non-standard units. The children initially suggested standing next to each other to compare heights. From here, the educator prompted them to look around the room for resources that could help them measure.

Several children decided to use a variety of blocks when measuring their friend, leading to a discussion about consistency of units to ensure accuracy. Maintaining an inquiry stance towards learning and teaching, the educators used strategies such as questioning to stretch and support the children's thinking and investigations. For example, to guide the next step of this extensive inquiry into measurement, the teacher asked, "How might we record our findings?"

Assessment was incorporated naturally, in the form of documented observations of the children's learning during the playful inquiry experience.

Reflection also played a key role in the inquiry experience. The children were invited to reflect on how they were a mathematician during the experience, with their responses documented in the class Floorbook, alongside reflections about discoveries about measurement. Key concepts of form and function were explicitly reflected on, including the children defining measurement, describing how to measure accurately, and considering how measurement is used in their everyday lives. Extending these reflections to the wider community supported the lines of inquiry in their broader inquiry into 'Relationships'. These types of authentic, integrated inquiry-based experiences ensure children recognise the connection of mathematics to their learning and their everyday lives.

Collaborating to achieve curriculum outcomes

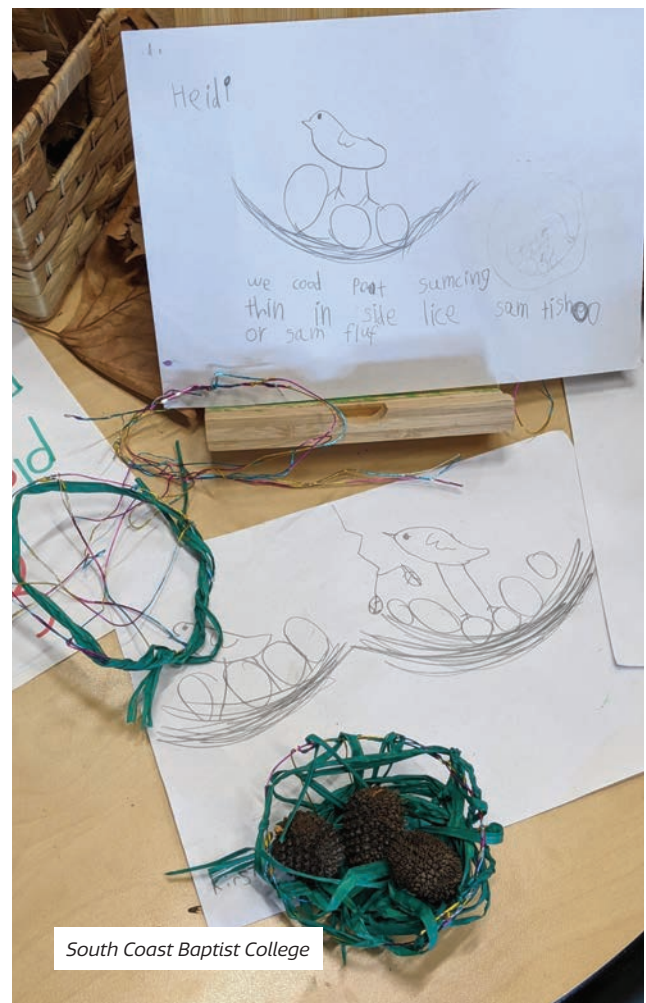
At **Infant Jesus School**, while the Year 1 class were learning about informative texts, they were active contributors in building a zoo which showcased various animals of choice and provided provocations that enabled valuable learning experiences. By participating in group work and peer presentations, and sharing the property of others, children developed literacy and social skills that included writing and presenting information reports, building trustful relationships, gaining a sense of ownership for learning, and demonstrating respectful behaviours.

As a variety of animals began to arrive, each was researched to determine the continent from which the animals were native to and where they might belong in the class zoo. As families were well informed about the learning that was

taking place, many children also independently researched animals at home and shared this knowledge with the class. The class researched the various needs of animals and what each required for a suitable habitat. As the children engaged in their zoo space, curiosity around certain animals began to build. To ensure all students were included, stuffed toys that are not animals usually kept in a zoo, were also utilised as 'gift shop' items.

During literacy, the structure of an informative text was taught and modelled, enabling children's learning to be scaffolded and ultimately demonstrated independently. Initially working in pairs, children wrote notes according to a teacher-selected animal's appearance, diet, habitat and other fun facts, and shared these with the class. Using collaborative note taking, children then independently wrote an informative text. To further increase student agency, the next writing session prompted children to work collaboratively in pairs or groups to research a chosen animal together before completing an informative text, which they cross-checked with a partner.

Visiting the Perth Zoo was a fun and much-anticipated culminating activity. Family volunteers collaboratively assisted small groups of children to record information about various animals during



South Coast Baptist College



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the day. The opportunities to work collaboratively during this learning experience helped to build student confidence and their relationships with each other, it helped students feel secure in the learning task and resulted in high levels of engagement for all students.

Responding to children's theories

In Year 1 at **South Coast Baptist College**, a Reggio Emilia-influenced approach provides opportunities for hands-on learning. The educator initiated a bushwalk provocation, hypothesising that the children would notice a variety of natural materials. Fascinated by the trees and bushes around them, the children brought back items to their classroom, including seed pods. Seizing the opportunity to extend their learning, the educator added some items to make a provocation box, including a glass bird, a nest, bark, tree branches, seed pods and leaves, pictures of bees, and a blue tongue lizard skin. The students unpacked the items in small groups while educators scribed their questions, theories and thinking, which included:

"The seeds grow into trees. We think the seeds vanish like magic".

The Banksia seedpod captured the children's interest, and they named it "a seed spitter". The gathered documentation was reviewed by the educator to determine the next stage of the project, based on children's theories, curiosities and questions.

These questions were brought to small groups for discussion, as they again explored the real-life materials. They posed questions such as, "what is inside the seed pod?" And "where do trees come from?" The children theorised about how seed

pods might open, prompting the educators to suggest experiments that could test their theories. Predicting and observing how seed pods reacted when different forms of heat were applied, they experimented with a hairdryer, fire, boiling water, an oven and sunlight. A variety of additional research was conducted, including an experiment to explore how seeds move and the distance they travel. Whilst investigating where trees come from, the different seeds collected from seed pods were placed into containers to grow. Students removed seeds from 'crunch and sip' fruit and wondered, "Are these seeds or seed pods?" "What will happen if we put them in the ground? Will an apple tree grow?" The project moved into its second phase as children researched what different seeds look like. Seeds were harvested from fruit and vegetables and research conducted into how to prepare the seeds for planting in the garden.

Independent research opportunities were provided around the classroom to supplement these guided experiences. While some provocations were designed by the educators, other experiences arose from child-led interactions with open-ended materials. These included creating a tree, observational paintings, construction using wood, sorting and classifying different seeds on a light table, creating clay trees, designing insects from seed pods, researching on iPads, recording observation data in Inquiry books, observing and creating bird nests, and designing and constructing a home for a squirrel. With an abundance of research completed, the educator felt the inquiry was concluding, so a discussion was held with the children to reflect on their learning. It quickly became evident that many questions remained for the children, and so the inquiry continues!

Valuing Children's Agency

Element 1.2.3 Child directed learning

Children see themselves as capable and competent when they exercise their right to actively contribute to decisions about the classroom, the program and their own learning and wellbeing. When educators listen to, respect and value children's ideas and they trust their ability to solve problems and make decisions, children develop a strong sense of identity and recognise their significance as an important member of the classroom and school community. When children are active decision makers, they progressively take more responsibility for their own learning, think and act with greater independence, develop more complex thinking and problem-solving abilities and build integral skills and dispositions such as curiosity, creativity, determination, persistence and resilience.

Reflective questions:

How do we ensure children authentically influence what happens in the program and in their learning?

How do we equip children to develop decision making skills?

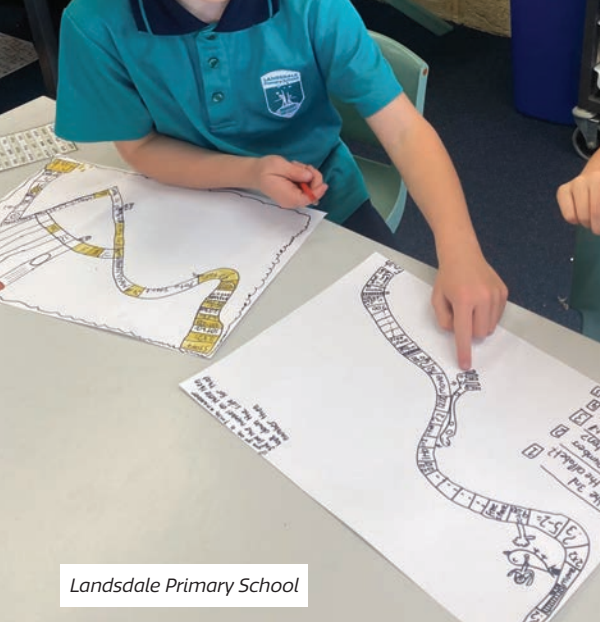
Empowering capable learners

At **Landsdale Primary School**, educators value children's agency and empower children to view themselves as capable and competent learners. When setting up learning experiences in her Year 1 classroom, the educator uses open-ended materials, providing an intentional play-based program that supports learning across the curriculum and encourages children to direct their own learning.

During mathematics sessions, the class begin with a whole group teaching and learning discussion and are then free to engage in a variety of experiences around the classroom and veranda, to explore, practise and consolidate their skills and knowledge. There is a mathematics shelf, on which a variety of resources, including loose parts, manipulatives, books, commercial games, and inquiry questions are available for children to access and use autonomously each day. During

this time, the educator works with individuals or small groups, or roams around the room to support and scaffold children's learning.





Landsdale Primary School



Landsdale Primary School

A group of children were engaged playing Snakes and Ladders and curious about who made the game. Based on this interest, the educator provided a basket of open-ended resources and posed the question, 'Can you make a maths game?' This resulted in a project that lasted several weeks. The children designed and created games, determined the rules for their games and reflected on the suitability of materials for the task. They asked peers to play their game, following written instructions, and gave each other feedback. They questioned, laughed, collaborated, and inquired through meaningful and purposeful play, using the open-ended resources available to them. The educator guided and scaffolded the process to ensure Number, Measurement and Data Interpretation curriculum outcomes were being explored, and children experienced the joy of leading their own learning throughout the project.

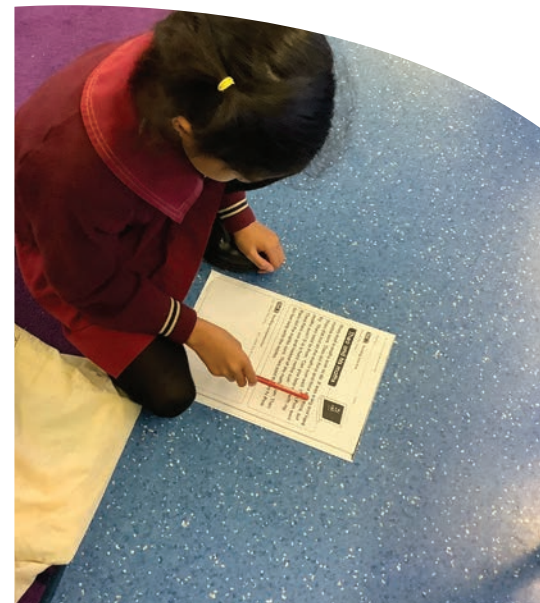
Agency in literacy learning

Santa Clara School values a play-based approach in combination with intentional and

deliberate teaching. In Year 2, the educator creates opportunities that promote child directed learning and agency with open-ended experiences. During literacy sessions, the educator has established a routine which facilitates choice and gives children access to open-ended materials, enabling them to practise and consolidate learning. After the children participate in the literacy mat session, they engage in 'Daily Five'. 'Daily Five' includes children completing writing and spelling tasks using a range of options, including read to self, work on writing, word work, read to someone, and listen to reading. Children choose their own writing topic related to the learning genre and the book they would like to read to themselves and record, before uploading to Seesaw. They also decide how they will practise their spelling words using a variety of materials. The flexible learning options give children the freedom and opportunity to choose how they want to learn and provides the children with more control and ownership over their learning, whilst also enabling the educator to weave through curriculum requirements. This has resulted in increased engagement and more meaningful experiences being undertaken by the children.



Santa Clara School



Feather investigation

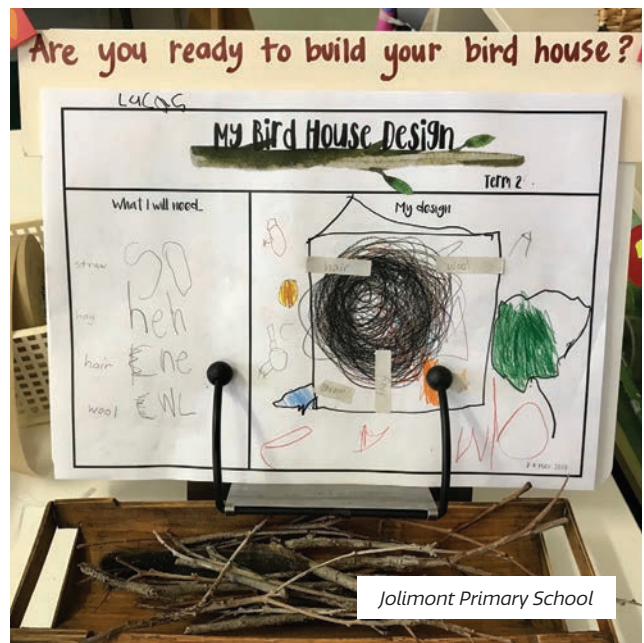
Behind the classrooms at **Jolimont Primary School** there is an area of natural bushland, within the school boundary. The children often visit this space and educators find it provides provocations for many inquiry projects where the children can steer their own learning. During one Pre-Primary class visit, a child very excitedly found a feather, which was brought back to the classroom. Many of the children wondered, 'What kind of bird dropped this feather?' Animated discussions went on for days, so the children and educators decided to try and find out. They began to look at birds within the playground area and research the types they could see. After taking photographs, they created a bird-watch chart where the children monitored their outdoor area and placed a sticker next to each bird type they observed. This excitement spilled over into their home life. The children began bringing in all sorts of different feathers they had found in local parks. One child reported to the class that rainbow lorikeets steal other birds' nests. The children were intrigued at this idea, and a little outraged, so they researched together and discovered that this, in fact, is true!

This inquiry lent itself to cross-curricular learning. The children created bird art and enjoyed labelling and using informational texts to research different bird types together. They also made binoculars and went birdwatching, tallying the birds they saw as they walked around the school. During a school walk, the children noticed bird houses that had been placed into trees by the local council. This discovery led to a collaborative project with the Pre-Primary class next door. The teacher posed the question, 'If you were going to keep birds safe, how would you do it?' The children designed a bird house, considering the materials they would require. After planning time, the children had a bird-house construction day. Some children chose to work on their own, others collaborated with a partner or in a small group. The children then spent time evaluating the process and comparing the product with their design. Following this, they shared their bird houses with the other class, describing the features and function to peers. As a celebration of the inquiry, families were invited to an exhibition to view the children's research and final products at a showcase.

After all their investigating, the children think the feather could have come from an owl or a kookaburra. More likely the kookaburra, as they frequently hear them laughing from the trees in their nearby bushlands.



Jolimont Primary School



Jolimont Primary School



Jolimont Primary School

Contributions in Kindergarten

Children in Kindergarten at **St Gerard's Catholic Primary School** contribute to the program and make choices about how they participate every day. Children share their ideas about learning centres including dramatic play. Once their ideas are shared, they vote to decide which theme will be created. The classroom is designed to give children choice about the learning centres and readily accessible resources they can utilise and engage with. They can also determine how much time they need on a task and can identify their work as 'in progress' until they want to return to it. The children's ideas and questions are recorded on the Wonder Wall and used in programming.

Autonomy and independence

"Independence contributes to the development of self-esteem, identity and wellbeing. Doing something for yourself produces a powerful sense of achievement and success. When children have opportunities to make choices, to attempt tasks for themselves, and to take on increasing responsibilities, their sense of themselves as competent members of society grows"⁹.

The Kindergarten teacher at **Geographe Primary School** provides every opportunity for children to do things themselves, within their capability. She scaffolds independence with verbal and physical prompts and through signs in the environment. She has high expectations that children are capable and competent and encourages them to open food packages themselves, pack their own bags and access wet weather gear when needed. These examples of scaffolds and expectations provide the children with a sense of ownership, autonomy and responsibility, and an opportunity to practise independence.



Documenting and Sharing Learning

Element 1.3.1 Assessment and planning cycle

Element 1.3.3 Information for families

'Documentation occurs at every stage of the planning cycle'³.

The EYLF emphasises that, 'Documentation of children's experiences makes learning visible to children, educators and families and demonstrates shared learning and collaboration'⁸.

Reflective questions:

How do you monitor, document and share children's learning and progress?

How does your assessment of learning inform future planning?

Are the educational programs or focus areas for learning available and communicated to families?

Documenting learning through play

To provide meaningful opportunities for children to learn through play, the Year 1 educator utilises

learning centres in **Beaumaris Primary School**. Learning intentions guide the design of the learning centres to enable children to practise and consolidate what they have been learning in class. As children engage with the centres, the educator observes the children at play. For example, the children might be focusing on a particular letter sound, working on turn-taking, or writing a sentence. The educator is intentional in what she is looking for and carries an observation grid to record the actions of the children and their achievement against the learning intentions. She observes their play and listens to how they explain their thinking as they have conversations with the other children and respond to her questions. The children have been taught how to capture their own learning using a digital platform. They might choose to take a photo or video to explain what they have been exploring in the learning centers. These photos and videos are shared with their families and the educator also sees this as evidence of learning to understand each child's level of development, which then informs further planning.



Beaumaris Primary School



Beaumaris Primary School



Rainbow Books

At the commencement of the Kindergarten year at **St Mark's Anglican Community School**, the children are provided with a journal-like book called a 'Rainbow Book'. Together with their families, the children spend time decorating the cover of their book to reflect their personal interests and lives. Every Rainbow Book, therefore, is returned to school looking unique and special to each child and may include photographs of family members, favourite toys, friends, or pets, alongside personalised decorative items such as stickers, sparkles, or images.

At Kindergarten, the books are accessible to children throughout their day. Children glue, sticky tape or staple their choices of learning into the book, such as cutting, drawing, and writing. Educators add narratives and photographs of special events and of the child's moments of being a focus child. Each day, educators take many photographs of the children engaging in play within intentionally designed indoor and outdoor environments. These photographs are printed and distributed into plastic sleeves that are attached inside the cover of each Rainbow Book. Educators encourage the children to spend time discussing the photographs, retelling the experiences in their own words. As the child cuts out and sticks the photographs into the book, an educator sits alongside, scribing the child's narration whilst modelling writing.

Over school holidays and at the end of each fortnight, the Rainbow Books are sent home for the children to share with their family. Whilst at home, the children add photographs, cut-outs, drawings, or brochures of places they have visited. Families scribe text alongside the added material.

With COVID restrictions limiting families attending Kindergarten, this connection between home and school has been critical in building trust and understanding about the Kindergarten program and their child's progress in meeting the weekly learning intentions. For educators, the information provided in the Rainbow Books has served as a window into the children's home lives that can be responded to at school.

Back at Kindergarten, the children share their books with their friends, laughing and excitedly recalling both school and home experiences. The tactile experience of flicking through the pages of the Rainbow Book has proved to be a delightfully positive sensory experience, as opposed to flicking through images on a digital device. At the end of the Kindergarten year, the Rainbow Books are taken home as a permanent keepsake of experiences and record of progress. When the children begin Pre-Primary, they are provided with a similar opportunity to document and share their learning by means of a 'Magic Moments' Book.

Pedagogical documentation

At **Carmel School Kindergarten**, documentation is integral for educators, children and families, with a focus on making both learning and joy visible. The educator capitalises on the power of documentation to celebrate and acknowledge the process of learning, beyond what is visible in final products or creations. The documentation that adorns the Kindergarten walls, children's portfolios and weekly newsletters is thoughtfully and beautifully composed. Learning is documented in the form of narration and images, alongside quotes from the children, educators' reflections and research questions, and prompts for families to ponder. However, a large amount

The Colour of Rain...

Each morning we acknowledge the beautiful country we live on by singing and signing our special 'good morning' song. Part of this routine invites the children to discuss what they are noticing about the weather.

Hmm, I *wonder* what we mean by the word weather?

The weather changes like sunny then rainy then sunny then rainy then sometimes cloudy - Hannah

If it is windy or rainy or really windy - Ruby

It could be hot or cold or windy or sunny - Daniel

I wonder what makes these changes in weather that you are describing, occur - Morah D

We shouldn't say a very, very cold, or freezing day because under zero is colder than ice. That is not in Perth, only in Canada. That is because Perth is closer to the pipe and Canada is farer so that means it doesn't have the hotness from the pipe, so that is why Canada is cold - Jacob Leal

Sometimes the seasons change. It goes Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn - Hannah

In Spring some animals come out - Jacob

And in Autumn the leaves fall down and get red and yellow.

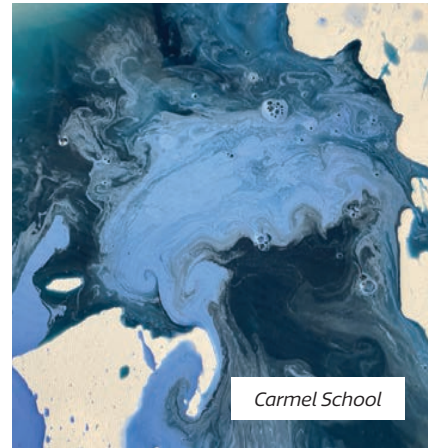
The leaves are colourful and get crunchy - Talla

All days change and Hashem makes all day's change - Kayde

The Indigenous season **Makaru**, or Winter as we more commonly know it, certainly has showered us with a deluge of rain. Looking out our window most days, we saw and even heard the rain! At Kindy, we always try and seize opportunities, and the incessant rain certainly provided just that!

Inspired by the sound of the raindrops and even the intermittent claps of thunder, the children used their bodies as percussion instruments to create a soundscape; starting by gently rubbing their hands as the wind, tapping the palm of their hands with a finger, clapping their hands and then slapping the floor to build to the stormy weather crescendo, before repeating the actions in the reverse order as the rain gradually slows to a stop and then complete silence.

Motivated, the Kindies were ready to *explore* further!



Carmel School



Kinetic Art

As part of our journey into inquiring about ourselves the children sat in small groups and were invited to give thought to *all* the ways in which their bodies can *move*. I *wonder* what parts of our bodies actually enable us to move in these many different ways? Can we *all* move in the same ways?

Inspired by the art of Heather Hansen, Ruby was invited to use her body as a drawing tool on large sheets of paper. Taking chalk pastels she *moved*, performed and *created* as a simultaneous experience. How fascinating to make marks through engaging the motions of her whole body. "A line is a dot that went for a walk." - Paul Klee. Where on the paper are these marks being made? What do these marks look like? How do these marks change when Ruby uses different parts of her body to create...





of gathered documentation is better described as 'raw', including jottings, photos, and audio recordings. All educators in the room contribute to this daily data collection.

Photographs document children's learning processes, capturing the children in action, rather than posed 'happy snaps'. Reviewing these images supports the educators' awareness

of the children's learning and can serve as a prompt to reconsider the learning environment or ways to deepen each child's engagement. Voice recordings, captured using standard apps on a phone, hold the memory of conversations. Reviewing these recordings affords an opportunity to reflect on the children's learning and has also supported the educator's refinement of her own dialogue and questioning. Photos, recordings and jottings are integral to analysis of children's learning and decisions about the next steps.

Weekly newsletters are compiled using this documentation, which always share the stories and conversations behind any photos to provide deeper insights into the children's learning. One recent example is the 'deconstructed role play' space, which sees the children creating their own dramatic play environments using a provided collection of large boxes, fabrics and loose parts. What might look like just a pile of boxes to families is actually an area of deep engagement, imaginative play and endless possibilities. Documentation which includes photos and narration of these experiences makes the deep learning that is happening in this space more visible. The culture of inquiry that is fundamental to the Kindergarten program is also communicated to families through these forms of documentation, by highlighting the importance of wonder, conversation and time to think together. These newsletters also provide a forum to share the playful ways that literacy and numeracy skills and understandings are intentionally taught at Kindergarten.

As an inquiry project unfolds, the educator refers to raw documentation to support reflections on the learning occurring and decision making about possible next steps that may hold the most potential for expanding children's perspectives and understanding. Snippets of these stories are shared in the newsletter. When a project reaches its conclusion, final culminating documentation of the entire learning journey is composed and included in a sharing journal that lives at the entrance to Kindergarten, as well as in relevant children's portfolios. Children enjoy looking at the sharing journal and displays on classroom walls, discussing their learning with one another and with visitors to Kindergarten.

Raw documentation also serves as a memory-keeper and possible provocation for later. Recently, a child noticed a rainbow under the mud kitchen and a group gathered, sharing theories about how it was formed. A photograph and jotted notes documented the moment, and while there was not time to immediately respond, this



documentation can be used with children later as a way of relaunching a deeper inquiry.

Making learning visible

The educator ensures learning is visible everywhere in the Pre-Primary classroom at **Jolimont Primary School**. All work displayed has associated language or an explanation of context and learning. The educator also sends photographs, video recordings and an explanation to families via an electronic application, which is particularly valued by those who are unable to come into the classroom regularly. The children's inquiry and learning area workbooks are always available for viewing and families are invited to a sharing session once or twice per term, where the children can show and discuss their learning.

There is an area inside the classroom door where families can view the learning intentions for the following weeks. These are usually based on literacy, numeracy, integrated studies and wellbeing. The educator also includes learning intentions with a wider community focus, based upon school or cultural events happening at the time. These help to highlight for children that they are part of a wider community that encompasses them, their families and their school. In addition, the learning intentions are uploaded in the secure online platform, alongside a regular classroom newsletter, in order to ensure every family has knowledge and connection to the ongoing learning.

Initiatives to provide information to families

At **Our Lady of Fatima School**, Seesaw is used regularly by both educators and administration to provide information to families. Learning that is intentionally selected by the educator and linked to the curriculum for children to complete during class is shared on Seesaw. Other learning tasks that promote practice of specific curriculum skills are available to be completed

by the children at home. Some specific tasks this year were also intentionally set up to facilitate family engagement and ensure the Seesaw platform was accessible and running smoothly. This enabled Seesaw to be used successfully by families during lockdown and subsequent remote learning, supporting families to remain informed about their child's learning progress during this time.

Messages to communicate school events are also shared on Seesaw, such as the student engagement and collaboration that was happening during self-directed buddy-time between the Pre-Primary children and their Year 4 buddies. Simple snaps of photos are regularly shared with all families to keep them informed about what is happening at the school. One example was a short message sent to all parents to say thank you for the lovely World Teachers' Day morning tea. Photos of families involved in classroom learning are also shared, which reflect a message of valuing the important contribution of parents to student learning. Seesaw is regularly used for general family notes to inform families of termly overviews, upcoming events and reminders.

Sharing the learning: Djerap - Birds of Galup

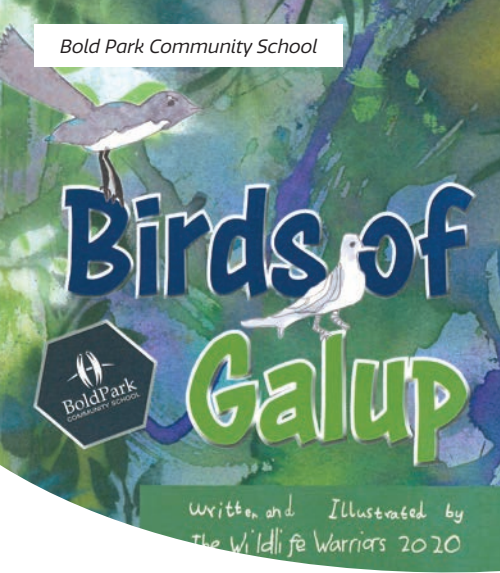
At **Bold Park Community School**, taking time to build strong connections with place empowers a group of young people to take action to care for a place that they love: Galup, the lake beside which their school is situated. Through regular visits to Galup, the Year 1/2 Wildlife Warriors spent the year learning how to best care for the lake by actively spending time in this beautiful place. They picked up many handfuls of rubbish, planted over 100 native seedlings and carefully studied the birdlife of the lake. Neville Collard, their dear friend and Noongar Elder, helped the children better understand the history of Galup and provided guidance as they continued to learn



Our Lady of Fatima School:
"We harvested our peas"



Our Lady of Fatima School:
The buddy challenge



Written and Illustrated by
The Wildlife Warriors 2020



BiyaaKoo

Description

The Galah has a high pitched call. It is mostly pink and grey. Galahs have a blue or pale pink crown. They're also on a long acrobatic flight.

Diet

Galahs mostly eat seeds from the ground. They normally eat in flocks.

Breeding

the Noongar names of the animals that call the lake home. This nurtured a close connection and sense of responsibility to protect Galup and a desire to encourage other people to feel the same.

Towards the end of the year the children discussed how they might share this important message and the knowledge they had gained with as many people as possible. In their deliberations they considered what they knew about their own ways of learning to better understand how others could access the information. They thought about the type of information they wanted to share, who their target audience was, the type of format that could be easily accessed by people in multiple locations, as well as their own skills to create a product.

As the children had been inspired by many remarkable books during their research it was unsurprising that they chose to share their information in the form of a published book. The book Birds of Galup became a project within a project, as a small team of children took on the responsibility for managing its production.

With the end of the year approaching, it took genuine collaboration, patience, enthusiasm and commitment to see it through. However, when a project has emerged from student interest and they feel truly empowered, these attributes seem to come very naturally and easily.

The children combined their factual knowledge about the bird species, their passion for protecting wildlife and their creativity to publish a full colour, 94-page book. Their hope is that people will use this resource in their own studies of the birds to deepen their knowledge, to learn the Noongar names of our local fauna and to provide a constant reminder to care for our environment.

"Please make sure that you take care of our incredible birdlife. Keep the lake clear of rubbish, pick up any rubbish that you find and put your rubbish in the bin. We respect what the birds and wildlife need, and we give them space. Galup is a very special lake and we are very lucky to have it."

The Wildlife Warriors



Reflecting on Programs and Practice

Element 1.3.2 Critical reflection

'Reflection occurs at every stage of the assessment and planning cycle as educators think about their practice and decisions, and children's engagement and progress.'⁸

Reflective questions:

How do you effectively review and refine learning experiences, environments, and pedagogy and practice?

Reflective practice: Educators as researchers

At **Perth College**, reflective practice and a commitment to continuous improvement is fundamental to the work of leaders and educators. Research and reflection on programs, practice and learning environments are encouraged as part of the school culture. An educator, who is influenced by the educational

project of Reggio Emilia, considers themselves a researcher, learner, and co-constructor of knowledge, alongside children. They embrace opportunities to try new ideas, such as introducing a digital atelier in the class after encountering this idea in Reggio.

Research into the Reggio principle of 'progettazione', translated as learning design, has shaped thinking and practice for many years. In the classroom, documentation is a way of sharing learning with families and an integral element of progettazione as it helps determine the path forward; it supports children's reflections on their own thinking and is a key strategy for reflecting on practice. Through analysing documentation, the educator listens closely to children's thinking, discoveries, passions and curiosities and makes decisions about how to respond. The educator states, "We question, wonder, explore and discover together. I am always thinking and asking, *What can I*



Perth College: A cafe dramatic play space, created in collaboration with children in response to a child's request.



Perth College



add to our environments and experiences, that show that I see you, I know you and I care about what you are asking and noticing?

Materials that can be accessed throughout the classroom are meaningful choices that have been made through observing, listening, and talking to the children and their families. A recent influence on the educator's practice is play schemas (sometimes referred to in literature as 'schemes'¹⁰, which are described as patterns of repeated behaviour, including transporting, connecting, rotating and enclosing. The educator now listens more closely for schemas, ensuring

the environment is richly resourced with loose parts and other materials that intentionally amplify schematic play. To support children's transformation scheme, for example, provisions include cooking experiences, clay that dries and becomes hard, paints for colour mixing, and opportunities to pick herbs outdoors for creating potions. When two children created a boat with skis on the bottom, large slabs of ice were frozen so they could test their design whilst exploring the water's transformation from a liquid to solid, and back.

Everyday moments also inspire reflection and deeper thinking about 'why'. Traditionally, when Kindergarten children brought items from home, they would be asked to put these back in their bag, but the educator recently decided to observe more closely. There was a realisation that these items were a way of forging a connection with a peer: A bridge to enter play, to share and to build friendships. This inspired a change to what had previously been a 'taken for granted' practice.

Through ongoing commitment to critical reflection, the educators and leaders at Perth College strive to understand the impact of their practice, and to ensure it remains consistent with their own philosophical beliefs and values, as well as those of the school.

The puppet theatre

Critical reflection is an integral part of the educators' practice at **Vasse Primary School**, as they continually learn from and about the children, and develop their own skills. They strive to always think about learning intentions and how the learning environment reflects the learning purpose.



Children were creating puppets in the craft area of a Year 2 classroom. They were writing scripts, then moving to the dramatic play area to perform puppet shows where a shop was set up. This was not the educator's intent for the shop; however, after seeing the interest in puppets and an opportunity for connecting with literacy, the educator changed the shop to a puppet theatre. Beautiful plush puppets were added, along with interesting paper and writing implements.

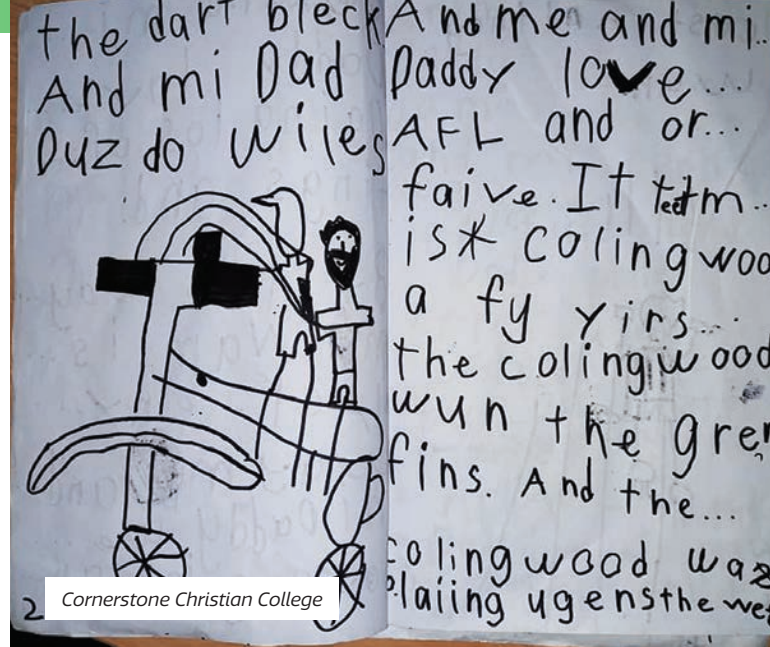
The educator was surprised when the children didn't engage as often with this area after their keen interest in puppets. By taking time to reflect on why this might be, she recognised that with the removal of the creative, open-ended opportunities from the areas, the children lost interest. She could see the children were not as engaged when interacting with the adult-made puppets, so she added hot glue guns and fluffy fabrics so that children could make their own puppets instead. This created a flood of excitement among the children and the educator watched as the children began to create a variety of puppets that were used to tell stories.

By taking the time to observe the children's level of interest and then reflecting upon the impact of her changes to the learning centre, the educator was able to find a way to keep the children engaged in dramatic play, whilst encouraging creativity, innovation and motivation.

Reflecting on a writing program

Reflecting on the use of writing weekend recounts as a tiring and meaningless way to engage children in writing, the Year 1 teacher at **Cornerstone Christian College** was keen to find an alternative that would cater for all children. Inspired after attending professional learning on the Bookmaking approach, she began to change the way she provided opportunities for writing in her class. This approach resulted in children transforming as writers: those who were initially reluctant became unstoppable, with writing being their favourite time of the day.

Bookmaking is a pedagogical approach based on a strong belief in capable children with significant prior knowledge and the capacity to make books. The educator designs the learning specifically for the group of children they are working with, based on assessment information and curriculum goals. Underpinned by an emphasis on literature, rather than directing children to write following a text-type 'recipe', they are intentionally taught how to read like a writer, noticing what other authors and illustrators do, that they can try in



Cornerstone Christian College



Cornerstone Christian College

their books, too. Methodologies such as shared, modelled and interactive writing are used alongside these mentor texts.

Whole class mini lessons see educators focus on certain teaching points that include (but are not limited to) genre studies. Discussions about the writing process and ways of crafting books are held. During independent writing, educators engage in short conferences with each writer, discussing the child's writing and nudging them to the next level, based on the child's zone of proximal development. Importantly, these conferences are focused on developing the writer, not fixing a piece of writing.

As the teacher states, since reflecting on her writing instruction and transforming her pedagogy to one that embraces Bookmaking, "All my children have happily engaged in making books at their own level and very often they even choose to create books during play sessions or lunchtimes. What more could an educator wish for?!"



April, Kindergarten



'At school I feel safe when I go to the reading garden because I can read stories. I go with my friends to read. I like the soft pillows.'

David, Pre-Primary

QA2	Children's health and safety	
Standard 2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
Standard 2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child Protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

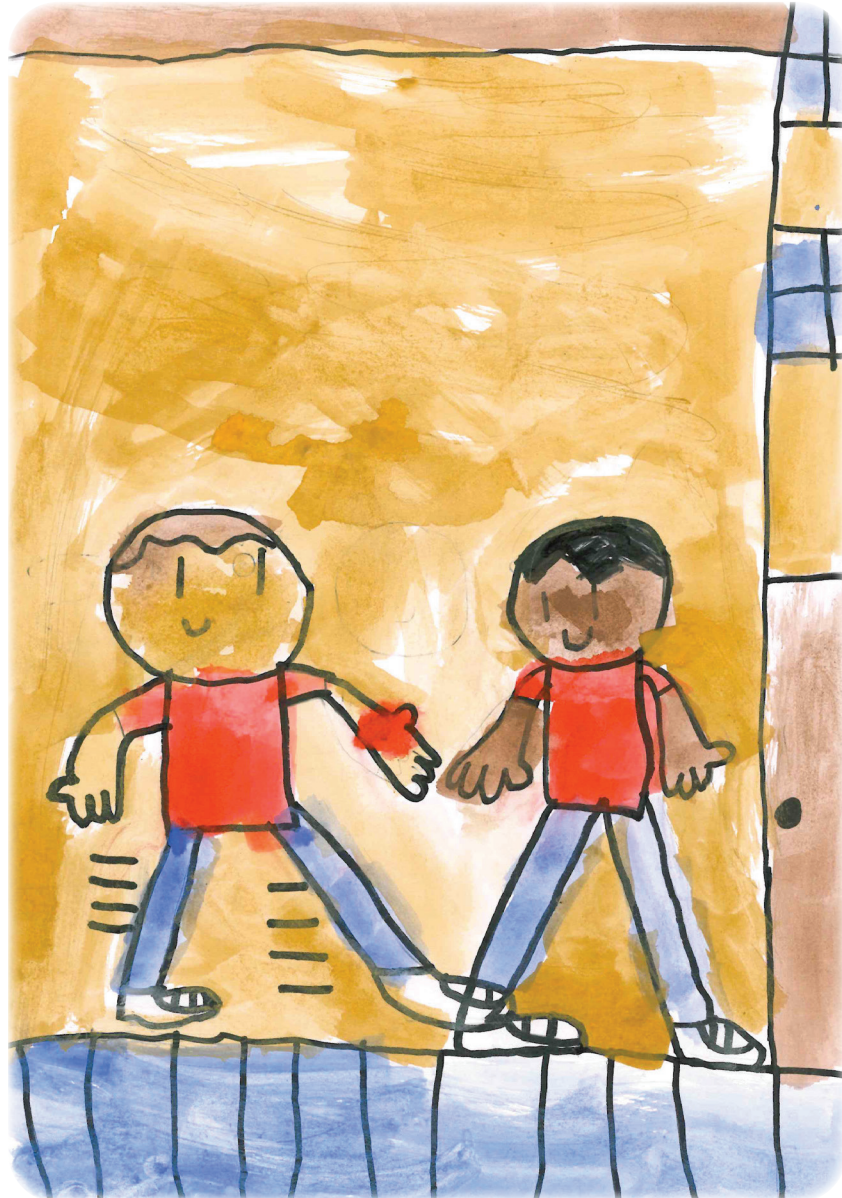
Quality Area 2 – Children’s Health and Safety

Introduction

Dr Dee O’Connor

Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University.

Previously, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.



'I have learnt how to tell someone to stop hurting me and then if they don't stop to tell a teacher or trusted adult.'

Sami, Year 1

Quality Area 2 focuses on health and safety and asks educators to prioritise and provide for children's wellbeing by meeting their primary care needs; promoting health practices; and supporting healthy lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity and healthy eating. This quality area also requires schools to provide adequate adult supervision, well-thought-out child protection practices, and clear incident and emergency procedures.

Primary care of children includes thoughtful provision for their mental and physical wellbeing¹¹. It encompasses such considerations as their rest and relaxation, their food, the hygiene of their environment, and their levels of engaging and challenging activity, as well as their safety during that activity. These factors also have an impact on their positive mental health development⁴, as being cared for and feeling cared for is an important ingredient of emotional wellbeing, as well as physical wellbeing¹². This quality area is not just about having and implementing health and safety policies: It is also about doing so with warmth and thoughtfulness so that the impact of the inherent care is felt by the children and their families.

Developing health and safety policies should be a school-wide conversation that allows for widespread input and alignment with values. This allows for deeper consideration of complex tensions, such as how to balance beneficial risk-taking with safety measures, or how to respond with warmth and affection in a way that dignifies child protection principles. A school community should ideally discuss these complexities and agree on policies that honour childhood, support holistic development, protect children and promote their overall wellbeing, in accordance with the EYLF³. If they can achieve this, the practices which bring the policies to life are much more likely to be aligned, supported and effective¹³.

Leisha's Story

This story captures twenty minutes of Leisha's busy day as an educator on duty in the playground one sunny Wednesday afternoon. She watched while the children played and smiled warmly in encouragement as they climbed and ran and twirled and jumped. She watched proudly as Lee completed a round of the monkey bars, enjoying the look of achievement that shone from his face. *How wonderful*, she thought to herself, *that Lee can manage the monkey bars this week. Only last week, he was dropping to his feet after three rungs.* She watched Jorge, Jedda and Ash in the sand pit preparing a magic pie that turned anyone who tasted it into their favourite colour. Leisha smiled as she listened to Jedda explaining that her favourite colour was rainbow. Leisha could remember when her favourite colour was rainbow too.

Leisha looked around the playground. She saw Clive, the other duty educator, and waved. He waved back and started to walk over to say hello but got sidelined by a disagreement over by the water pump. Leisha thought that the water pump caused a lot of disagreements, but she understood that it was popular because it allowed the children to make so many new creations and mixtures. *They need to experience life*, she thought, as she watched William climbing the big tree, *and working out disagreements is a part of life.* She focused on William again as he paused mid-climb to wave at his friend, Yas. Yas didn't see him, so William put his hands to his mouth to call, lost his balance and fell. Leisha was already running as William hit the ground, landing on his knees. She knelt beside him with concern on her gentle face as he sobbed in pain and shock. Leisha sat beside him and put her arm around him when he buried his crying face in her shoulder. She was calm and kind as she assessed the situation. She saw his cut knee and heard his subsiding sobs as he gathered himself. *More of*

Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: Discuss the supervision arrangements in place. Do you consider them to be adequate?

Exercise 2: Reflect on how Leisha responded to William. What do you think she did well? What would you have done differently?

Exercise 3: Leisha recorded the incident and communicated it to William's teacher and mother. She had ready access to a device to facilitate this. How does your school manage incidents and their communication? What do you think should happen?

Exercise 4: Reflect on a point of complexity within health and safety relevant to your school community. How could you discuss the issue to develop a more cohesive policy and practice?

Exercise 5: The school in the vignette allowed tree climbing and monkey bars. Research shows that these are positive healthy activities. However, the school should engage in a process to communicate the benefits and ensure the benefit is maximised while any safety concerns are addressed. What should Leisha's school do to ensure that there has been a careful review of the risks and mitigation of any hazards?

Exercise 6: Use Standards 2.1 and 2.2 to analyse Leisha's story. What elements do you see present within Leisha's practice? Reflect on how Leisha might have come to respond in this way. What school documents and communications might have guided her understanding of her duty?

a fright than anything too serious, she thought. She made some soothing noises and handed him a tissue for his tears as his sobbing stopped.

'What do you say we go get a drink of water and a Band-Aid?' she said. William nodded and they both stood up. Leisha looked around for Clive and signaled to him that she was taking William to the first-aid station. Clive walked over to see how William was, and he agreed that a Band-Aid would help things along.

When Leisha had cleaned the cut and applied the Band-Aid, William was feeling much better. Even though she had seen it, she asked him how it had happened.

'I forgot about keeping three points of contact', he said, 'and I lost my balance.'

Ah well,' said Leisha kindly, 'we live and learn, and you've done well to know what happened. If we know how things happen, that means we can do something to stop them from happening again.'

William was happy heading back out to join his friends. Leisha watched as Yas put his arm around William, and Leisha hoped that he would have the courage to climb the tree another day. She sat on the steps and used the first-aid device to log onto the incident report file and fill it out. She also sent a message to William's mum using the school parent portal. She explained that he had fallen during a climb and cut his knee, which had been cleaned and dressed. She wrote that he seemed fine now and was in good spirits again. Leisha also messaged William's classroom teacher to let him know what happened and asked him to keep an eye on William for the afternoon. Leisha then returned the device to the first-aid station and went back to the last few minutes of her duty, watching the children play and learn and grow.



'I can be healthy at school by having a good lunch and recess.'

Sharon, Year 1

Health and Wellbeing

- Element 2.1.1 Wellbeing and comfort
- Element 2.1.2 Health practices and procedures
- Element 2.1.3 Healthy lifestyle

Campfires

In Year 2 at **Vasse Primary School**, educators check in with children multiple times throughout the day to ensure they feel safe and supported. Each day begins with circle time, around the classroom 'campfire'. A poem and visual posters set expectations for the group and remind the children what caring for themselves, others and the school should look like. One of the children acts as campfire leader, going through the timetable for the day and any special events the class will participate in. This sets the children up for the day, so they feel prepared and are aware of what is ahead.

The class reconvene around the campfire after recess and lunch times. This gives children an opportunity to share positive and negative experiences with their peers. During these sessions, the children reflect and problem solve, using the class 'blueprint' to solve any conflicts and discuss strategies for collaboration.

At the end of the day, the class sing a beautiful

song together, standing in a circle. As each child walks out of the classroom, educators say 'good afternoon' looking directly at each child and praising them for something they have done during the day before they leave.

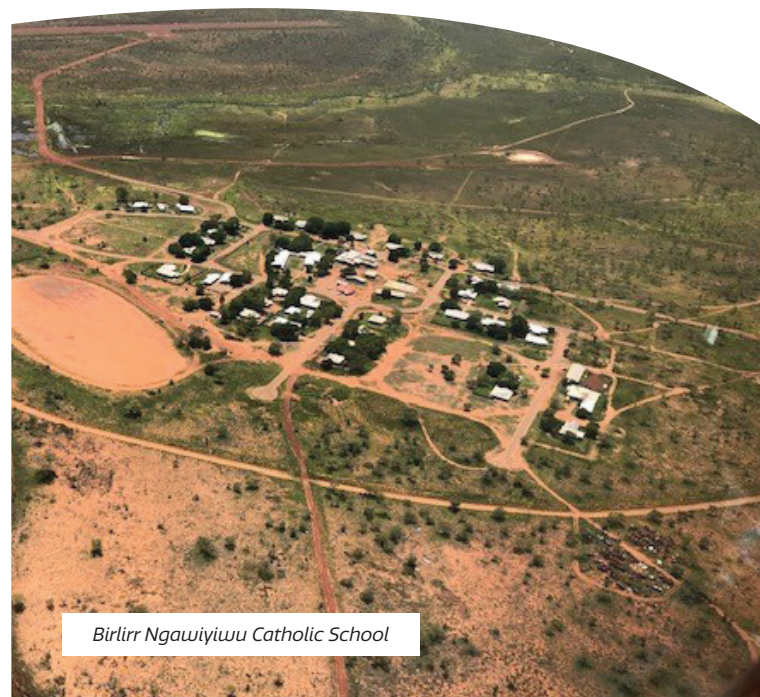
Educators create a class community with an emphasis on developing a strong sense of belonging that acknowledges each child's need to feel safe and secure. These group routines help children to feel empathy for others, to identify their own emotions and label them, and to have permission to share how they feel and ask for help to feel regulated and happy.

Commitment to maintaining health practices and procedures

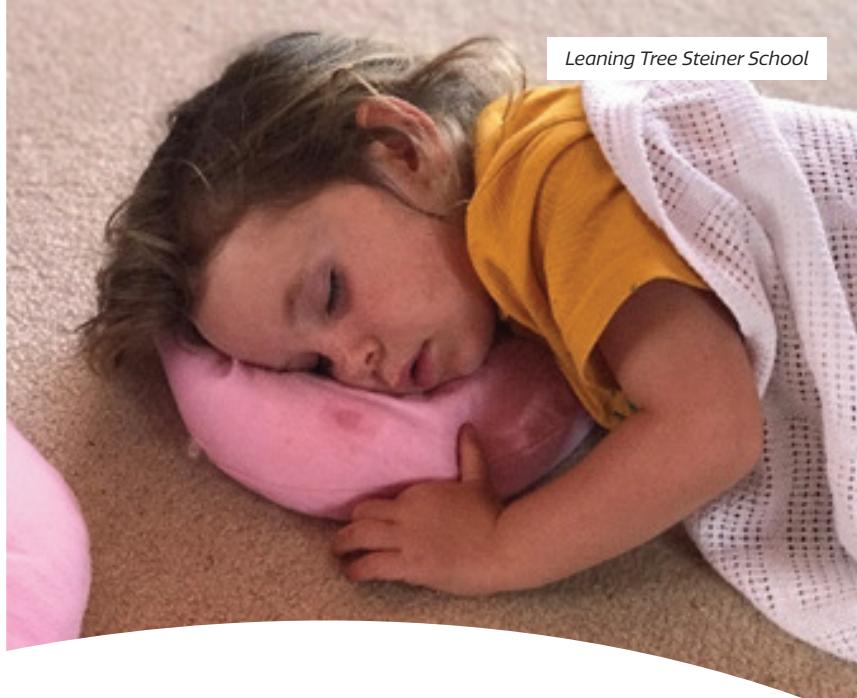
Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School is a remote Catholic School in the East Kimberley, on the lands of the Jaru people. The school's morning routine commences with a breakfast program. Staff arrange a selection of seasonal fruit, cereal, juice or milo for the children to enjoy. Children take turns assisting with the clean-up after



Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School



Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School



Reflective Questions

How do we seek information from children and families about children's wellbeing, physical comfort or personal needs?

How do we maintain children's dignity and privacy while at school? What practices are applied to support children sensitively and discretely during toileting, dressing, and times when they may be distressed, anxious or experiencing behavioural challenges?

Are we flexible in our approach to comfort, relaxation, comfort and eating? How do we canvass children's preferences?

breakfast; washing bowls, wiping tables and putting everything away. They are then encouraged to participate in outdoor activities.

The school day commences with brushing teeth, blowing noses, washing hands and faces, and brushing hair before collecting their school polo shirt. Children are ready for their day of learning. Conversations with the children range from Jaru, Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English.

A staff member prepares lunch for the children and staff, with lunches delivered to each classroom. The children are encouraged to socialise whilst enjoying their meal together.

The children change out of their uniform at the end of each day, with these being washed by staff and ready for another day of learning. The school's commitment to health-promoting practices supports healthy bodies, minds and wellbeing for all children.

Rhythm, ritual and rest

Rhythm and ritual support children's healthy growth and development as they navigate their



way through their Kindergarten days at **Leaning Tree Steiner School** in Geraldton. A predictable routine wraps a child in a blanket of safety and security. Daily, weekly, termly and yearly celebrations allow children to feel the rhythms of nature and develop understandings as to what to expect next and what the expectations of them are, keeping discipline to a rare event. There are specific routines and little songs that help the children on their way.

One rhythm is afternoon rest times as it brings balance and calm back to the children after outside play. The educator sings a pack-up song and slowly starts to pack away the outside equipment, which prompts the children to tidy the materials, too. Educators celebrate a bit of chaos and vibrant play, but it is always balanced with order in a calm and gentle manner.

As the children enter the Kindergarten they are greeted with a calm atmosphere. The curtains have been closed and children's personal angel cushions (that their families lovingly embroidered) are laid out on the floor, with a little blanket next to each pillow. An educator will be playing the lyre and if talking is necessary it is done in a whisper. Children are encouraged to take some deep breaths. Lyre playing continues as the children make their way from the toilet to washing hands to meeting another educator, who is waiting for them with a little shell of lavender essential oil. She dips her finger into the oil and gently presses it into the child's hand. The educator then presses gently but firmly over the child's heart space and back together and whispers in their ear, "it's rest time". The children make their way to their cushion which has been strategically placed to provide success at resting.

Once all children are laying down, the educators join them on the mat. The power of imitation is at play here, the adults in the room are modelling what they wish the children to do. Then everyone rests in quiet. Just the noise of the birds and sometimes a deep breather as they drift off to sleep. In the beginning many children struggle with laying down; it is very hard to lie still when you are four. The educators have expectations that everyone rests, but not that they sleep, although many do and yet some never do. If a child is struggling, they tell them that they are giving their body a gift, the gift of rest. Although they encourage resting, some children will be pointing and whispering, reciting songs from the morning circle or story, which the educators recognise as necessary processing time to digest the morning activities. After 20-30 minutes rest, the afternoon continues in a calm and mellow

Reflective Questions

What is the purpose for this space? E.g., to find quiet, seek solitude, regulate emotions?

Do the resources and layout enable children to regulate their emotions, seek relevant ways to soothe and calm their bodies?

Is the space away from noisy areas to enable retreat and solitude?

How are numbers of children monitored and managed to avoid the area being overcrowded?

manner with quiet play, free drawing, creating, and checking on the chickens.

Quiet spaces for rest

Quiet spaces in indoor and outdoor environments provide children with opportunities for rest and relaxation.



Connolly Primary School



All Saints' College Year 2



Connolly Primary School



Beaumaris Primary School



Cable Beach Primary School's KindiLink, where children and families can read and relax.



At Marmion Primary School, children like to draw pictures for their friends at the table.



St. Mark's Anglican Community School



Zen garden sensory space at Frederick Irwin Anglican School.



St Michael's School



Kensington Primary School



St Luke's Catholic Primary School's Rainbow Room



St Michael's School



Orana Catholic Primary School



Our Lady of Good Counsel School



Hygiene practices

Effective illness, injury management and hygiene practices are implemented at **Good Shepherd Catholic School**. The staff recognise that while it is not possible to prevent the spread of all infections and illnesses, the risk can be reduced through effective illness management and maintaining high standards of hygiene. Hygiene practices are maintained, modelled, and reinforced throughout the day and all children are supported to learn these practices. Communication in newsletters assists families to support the procedures that are being adopted and encouraged at school.

- Children sanitise their hands prior to eating
- Before mealtimes, children are encouraged to first use the bathroom, wash their hands with soap, then immediately get their lunch boxes to begin eating.
- In clear weather, children are encouraged to eat outside where there is more space and open air.
- When children cough, sneeze or blow their nose, they are encouraged to immediately wash or sanitise their hands.
- A cleaning checklist is displayed in the bathroom and completed by staff when the area is cleaned, which considers disinfecting and cleaning surfaces and toilets, bin emptying, sweeping, mopping spills, and replenishing supplies.
- Different cleaning cloths are used for food and play areas, and these are stored separately.
- Children's toys and equipment are washed regularly, including dress-up clothes and a

Reflective Questions

How often do we reflect on the effectiveness of our hygiene practices? How do we determine what is working well and what could be improved?

How do we find out about individual children's health requirements, and ensure all relevant staff members are informed of these?

record of when the equipment was last cleaned is kept.

Life skills

The everyday routines incorporated in the 'Practical Life' exercises within the prepared 3 to 6-year-old environment at **Beehive Montessori School** provide engaging opportunities for children to develop daily life skills by independently following a complex motor sequence that fulfills their needs. 'Practical Life' activities focus on *Care of Self*, *Care of Others*, and *Care of the Environment*, whilst promoting independence, social skills, grace and courtesy, concentration, and coordination.

Care of Self activities such as fastening buttons or washing hands provide purposeful challenge to a child. The child satisfies their own desires and begins to take increased responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. Children are drawn to discovering each step of the handwashing activity – immersing their hands in the cool water, rubbing the soap into bubbles over their fingers

and scrubbing their nails before patting each finger dry and finishing off with rubbing in some sweet-smelling cream to keep little hands soft!

The *Care of Environment* activities teach children how to take care of the space around them, from physically cleaning to appreciating their environment. These activities may include washing dishes, watering plants or scrubbing a table. From the moment water is first poured carefully into a bowl, to the final spot being rubbed dry on the table (very vigorously, and from left to right) and the cleaning supplies packed away, the child is joyfully engaged in an activity that promotes their health and wellbeing through purposeful movement that leads directly to a shiny, clean table, ready for use. Indirectly, it results in a deep respect for their surroundings and the community they share it with. These practices promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all.

Voice and choice in healthy lifestyles

Principles of democracy and community help define **Child Side School's** philosophy and practice, with all interactions based on the basic premise that children and adults have equal dignity. Their approach is to maximise learning opportunities through real life projects, processes and issues, problem solving wherever possible. The educators uphold children's right to agency, which they term 'voice' and 'choice'. This approach empowers children as learners today and throughout their lives. As part of authentic learning about the meaning of service, children regularly experience working in, with and for community, whilst developing self-care competencies through a program of voice, choice and shared responsibility that supports healthy life skills.

As an element of their approach to physical health and wellbeing, in the Early Childhood Cluster (ECC), children help design and build the daily obstacle course, considering types of movement, direction, and safety. Educators enhance this experience while the children use the course, guiding their coordination and confidence, and modelling positional and perceptual motor language. The children are responsible for ensuring the care of equipment, including packing materials away.



Child Side School



Child Side School



Child Side School

Every Child Side building has its own kitchen by design, which is testament to the value placed on such experiences. Paired with an abundant kitchen garden, deemed the Bountiful Backyard, these kitchens are used daily as an active workspace by children. Every day, each child in the school is provided with morning tea and lunch, completely prepared by the children. Younger children are involved in making parts of the meals to share with the rest of the school on a Wednesday. As children progress towards and into the Middle Childhood Cluster, they assume ownership of planning the weekly menu for their Cluster. Rich with opportunities to authentically inquire into concepts of healthy eating, budgeting, food storage and safety, quantity, ratios and measurement, the children source ingredients from local growers, order these online, or grow them in the school's kitchen garden. They are part of the whole process of planning, ordering ingredients, harvesting crops, preparing, cooking, cleaning up, recording recipes, and learning to be part of a collaborative team. Ongoing care and maintenance of the kitchen garden is also a shared endeavour.

ECC children engage in Community Service Skill Builders, with a task assigned weekly to every child, which includes tidying floors, organising chairs and shelving, sweeping, washing dishes, and wiping tables after removing and folding tablecloths. When required, educators provide workshops so children can build the skills needed to satisfactorily complete these service tasks. Everyone is expected to join in and participate in this intrinsic and explicit part of their daily work and learning.

Recently, after washing became contaminated on the return journey to school, the educators decided to integrate laundering into their life skills curriculum. This new project offers a rich cross-curricular opportunity for children to be involved in developing plans and installing a laundry facility that will utilise sustainable water sources and direct grey water to the kitchen gardens and citrus grove. Once operational, the laundry will be another key element in Child Side School's extensive shared responsibility program as the children learn new life skills specific to laundering such as washing, sorting, pegging, and folding, whilst building relationships and mentoring one another's skill development.

Promoting healthy eating

As part of a healthy eating initiative at **St Michael's School**, discussions between educators, leadership and families led to the addition of new garden beds outside Pre-Primary. Seedlings and seeds have been planted by the Pre-Primary class, creating opportunities for children to learn more about where fresh produce comes from and the life cycles of vegetables/herbs/fruits. They have enjoyed harvesting and eating the vegetables they have grown.

The children have become more aware and excited about healthy eating. During crunch and sip time, the children are encouraged to have fruit or vegetable snacks and they pick vegetables from the class garden to enjoy. The children have opportunities to try unfamiliar vegetables, herbs, and fruits. Many conversations and learning experiences have come about



St Michael's School



St Michael's School

from the introduction of the garden beds. Lessons about food cycles, *The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*, farms and the farm to plate process are concepts that have been explored and developed within the curriculum from this initiative.

Reflective Questions

How do we promote a healthy lifestyle in our program?

How do we incorporate opportunities to learn about and practice healthy eating, physical activity and safety into everyday experiences to build children's understanding?



Children's Safety and Protection

Element 2.2.1 Supervision

Element 2.2.2 Incident and emergency management

Element 2.2.3 Child protection

"All teachers have a responsibility to take reasonable steps to protect children from risks of injury, including psychological distress, as well as risks within the centre or school and in the online learning environment ¹⁴."

Incident and emergency procedures

In collaboration with the staff at **Francis Jordan Catholic School**, the appointed medical officer has developed and implemented a variety of procedures, assisting staff to effectively manage health alerts and any incidents or emergencies. These procedures safeguard children's safety and wellbeing and meet the requirements of workplace health and safety policies. Processes incorporate the management of risk for children with anaphylaxis, allergies, asthma, diabetes and epilepsy. Having clear plans and procedures assists educators to calmly and effectively manage incidents and emergencies, while reducing further harm or injury.

Upon enrolment, children identified as high risk are issued with a subtle yet visible cloth badge, which is attached to their uniform, allowing easy identification in the case of an emergency.

Children with severe allergies who require an EpiPen also purchase a bum bag to enable them to always carry their EpiPen with them.

The suite of resources and processes which have been developed include:

- Anaphylaxis and Allergy Management Procedures
- Asthma and Diabetes Management Procedures
- Epilepsy and Seizure Management Procedures
- Heat Health Procedures
- Incident Reporting Processes
- Off-site Emergency Response Plans
- Food Allergen Matrix
- Canteen Photo Identifier Poster for children with Allergies
- Student Illness and Injury Procedures





- Individualised Anaphylaxis Care Plans
- Student Medication Procedures
- Duty files, which include specific information about enrolled children who are at risk
- Emergency Cards
- Staff room Identification Matrix

Risky play

Whilst it is important to ensure children are effectively supervised and safe within the school environment, staff should also consider the benefits of risky play. When we provide opportunities for children to engage in risky play, we are working to develop confidence, skills and resilience.

For schools who are trying to find a balance between safety and challenge, it is important for educators to have a consistent mindset and approach. Consider the following:

- *How does your school provide an effective balance of safety and risk for children?* Developing guidelines may support consistency in the opportunities children are given to engage in risky play. It is important these guidelines are developed collaboratively by staff, ensuring every educator is comfortable with the challenging opportunities children are provided with.
- *At what point should educators step in to support a child engaging in risky play?* Consider what is developmentally appropriate for each age group and the level of support children might need to feel safe. Include this information in the guidelines. This promotes a consistent approach for staff and children.

- *How do educators respond to children when they engage in risky play?* The response is key to whether engaging in challenging activity is considered a positive or negative experience. For example, an educator who demonstrates fear or anxiety when a child is engaging in risk taking is likely to create a similar response from that child. On the other hand, remaining calm and positive should support the child to feel safe and develop confidence to undertake similar activities in the future. If educators wish to instil confidence in children, they too need to display confidence.
- *How can educators support children to develop an understanding of how to manage risks to themselves?* It is important for educators to model ways to problem solve and make judgements about what is achievable and safe for each child to participate in. Educators might demonstrate skills or support children to navigate a challenge by verbalising the process.

Ailsa Earley – Consultant School Psychologist

Taking risks in the outdoor environment

Staff at **Braeside Primary School** have been focusing on developing a sense of risk taking within children. Educators have identified that children do not always have the opportunity to explore the outdoor environment at home and in their local community and have worked to create a place where children can have freedom and agency to engage with nature while at school. Under supervision from staff, children are encouraged to run, climb trees and use a variety of resources that support their social, emotional and motor development, as well as independence skills. Educators and families understand the



benefits of risk and the importance of balancing this with adequate supervision. In each classroom, the children regularly talk about how to keep themselves safe and how to ask for help if needed.

Risk taking: A mindset for children and adults

At **Lance Holt School**, educators believe risk-taking is vital, so their programs offer many varied opportunities for risk, including through nature pedagogy. Apart from general safety expectations, there is no simple 'one size fits all' approach to risk-taking. Each child is unique in their journey to expand upon their current practice, but every child must be supported to be cognisant of their personal abilities for growth.

In Year 2, the children travel to various Bush School sites throughout the year, carefully considering the affordances each place offers for learning: Tree climbing, fire lighting, deepish wetland wading, heavy duty construction and the use of sharp tools to name a few, alongside the many inevitable encounters they have with insects, spiders and reptiles. Increasingly there are children who have never experienced play beyond the 'safety net' of an adult's viewpoint.

Children are empowered as capable risk assessors, with educators speaking often to determine children's answers to the following questions:

- What is the potential risk?
- What may be the consequences for that and how severe might they be?

- What messages do our bodies give us to help us recognise these?
- How best can I mitigate that risk?
- Does the joy or benefits received really outweigh those potential consequences?

It is from there that educators determine their approach to teaching new skills or supervising child-led activities as they proceed. Inexorably there will be impulsive, even somewhat reckless children, alongside those who may be apprehensive or over-cautious. They are equally in need of guidance, but in different forms. Prior to being guided or permitted to engage in any serious risk-taking activities, regardless of competence, all children are led through safety procedures. Tree climbing, for example, requires awareness of the need to create a safe fall zone, three points of contact climbing techniques, how safely to 'anchor' oneself, and very importantly how best to descend! Safe lifting, carrying and sturdy construction advice may also be offered during Bush School experiences, but the educators at Lance Holt School also recognise that failure is important for learning. They often watch as plans go awry, knowing that the very best problem-solving skills arise from real problems.

The educators believe metacognition is the most important skill children can be assisted to develop. Risk taking is indeterminate. Little children become bigger ones, then adolescents and adults. The circumstances will change, but with solid foundations, the educators hope the procedures stay intact.



Bold Park Community School



Heritage College Perth



John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School



John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School



Kalamunda Primary School



Methodist Ladies' College



Methodist Ladies' College



Kearnan College



Methodist Ladies' College



Perth College

Safety in nature

Carey Baptist College have developed clear and comprehensive health and safety policies for their outdoor learning spaces. As a school that operates a nature pedagogy program in the bushland surrounding their campus, the considerations around health and safety have been wide-ranging. These have included: establishing rules and session procedures, sourcing and maintaining equipment, clothing requirements, parent volunteer training, procedures for toilet breaks, sun care procedures, accident prevention and response, fire lighting and bushfire prevention and reaction procedures, snake bite and tick bite procedures, procedures for using tools and a complete benefit-risk assessment for the full site. Families are walked through the outdoor learning approach prior to enrolment and informed of the expected risks and mitigation procedures for a broad range of activities. It is made clear that the children need gumboots and alternative clothes suitable to outdoor learning activities. A parent handbook reinforces all policies and procedures.

The school has also developed a detailed handbook for staff, so that each educator knows what to do in the event of a health or safety issue. This handbook accompanies training to ensure everyone feels confident in undertaking learning in the bush. When an educator is new to the school or new to nature pedagogy at the school, they are taken out into the bush so procedures can be shown in situ. The allocation of a mentor ensures they have someone to talk these things through with as they begin to experience them. Such an approach minimises

hazards and dangers but maximises learning opportunities for the children.

Assessing risk as a teachable moment

St Bernard's School, Kojonup, implements a play-based, inquiry learning approach to teaching and learning and believes that children learn best when they are actively involved in leading and exploring their learning.

One inquiry in the three-year-old program came about when the children noticed strange-looking, orange mushrooms growing in the playground garden. The children expressed excitement each time they found more mushrooms. Staff kept pulling these out of the garden in case they were poisonous. After approaching the gardener for further information, a child returned with the good news that the mushrooms were not a poisonous variety. This extended the children's interest and curiosity and prompted sharing of existing knowledge. As well as discussing the safety aspect that some mushrooms are poisonous, the class also discussed the need to take care of living things. It was decided that not touching the mushrooms was the best way to avoid damaging them.

The class used their observational skills to draw the mushrooms and, as the inquiry progressed, the children used information cards to identify the mushrooms growing in the garden. The texture was explored, and the children used mushrooms to create prints with paint. One-to-one conversations along with group discussions took place throughout. Open-ended questioning



Carey Baptist College



St Bernard's School



was used to extend the children's thinking and learning. The class decided to grow their own mushrooms inside the classroom with the help of a mushroom growing kit, which was a highlight. Learning was also extended beyond the school as families became involved by discussing mushrooms at home, going on mushroom hunts, and sharing photos and stories of their own findings with the class. The inquiry concluded with a taste test of the mushrooms from the garden, along with a variety of other mushrooms.

From a boundary to wellbeing

Margaret River Independent School got more than they bargained for when they added a boundary fence to an underutilised space to make it safer for children to explore the wildness of the area without danger of wandering into the bushland beyond the school. The way children engaged with the space changed dramatically, leading the educators to a deeper understanding of the structure of an environment and the learning that takes place. Now, children choose to come into this space and engage in meaningful experiences with nature. Just around the corner lies a fast-paced active playground with running, jumping and swinging, amid loud conversations and laughter. But in this little natural haven, the play is very different. Here, the children lie on the ground and gaze at the clouds; they gather in small groups to quietly follow the movements of wild frogs. Natural materials are collected, and children invent things together, intentionally, collaboratively, and creatively. It is a place that provokes calm and a sense of quiet industry, calm reflection, soft smiles and gentle interactions. Such a space represents choice for children to experience quiet. It is also used by children who feel overwhelmed or dysregulated. For the educators who observe how the children inhabit

the area, the space has come to represent a peaceful and happy sanctuary where the children can slow down and connect to nature. Some children choose it very regularly, some more infrequently. The educators are in no doubt that its existence supports the children's wellbeing. As such, while it was established with the installation of a safety fence, its existence has created a space of great value for the children's holistic health.





Pre-Primary and Year 1 children at Lance Holt School conduct a benefit-risk assessment for their upcoming excursion to Bathers Beach.



Moerlina School



Rehoboth Christian College



Southern Grove Primary School



St Bernard's School



St Bernard's School



Tom Price Primary School



St Bernard's School



Vasse Primary School

Physical Environment

QUALITY
AREA

3



'I like playing with building blocks because you can be creative and make anything you like.'

Anaya, Year 1

QA3	Physical Environment	
Standard 3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a school.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
Standard 3.2	Use	The school environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The school cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment

Introduction

Dr Dee O'Connor

Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University.

Previously, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.



'I love to climb trees with my friends. When we get into the tree, we play games that we have made ourselves.'

Chava, Year 1

When we consider our environments, we tend to focus on the physical environment and what we can see around us. However, the environment is much more than visual. It is valued as an additional teacher “because of its power to organize, promote pleasant relationships between people of different ages, create a handsome environment, provide changes, promote choices and activity, and its potential for sparking all kinds of social, affective and cognitive learning”¹⁵.

Quality Area 3 focuses on the physical environment. Inclusive built and natural environments are required and there is a strong focus on providing classrooms that facilitate learning inside and outside. Both indoor and outdoor classrooms need to be focused on providing learning opportunities for children, as well as being well-resourced, safe, supportive of play-based learning, and accessible¹⁶. The environment is considered a highly influential element of children's learning and development^{16,17}. The EYLF suggests that a well-designed environment facilitates independence, wellbeing, creativity and rich experiences for children as well as facilitating high-quality intentional teaching^{3,5}.

Narida's Story

Narida had been thinking about developing her outdoor classroom space for months. She had spent time reading articles and talking through ideas with colleagues and friends. Now that Term 1 was well underway, she felt it was a good time to take action. Pulling her notebook and pen towards her, she wrote OUTDOOR CLASSROOM in capital letters and underlined it twice. Underneath, she wrote a list of things that came to mind. The list read: *swinging, climbing, paths for vehicles, cubbies, wild natural space, trees and plants, gardening, gathering spaces (all sizes), pulleys and mechanicals, sand, water, mud, visual art (painting, sculpture), performance space (music,*

drama, dance), learning materials, weather-proof displays for pedagogical documentation, storage.

Narida sat back and looked at her list. She frowned in concentration and started another list on the next page. She titled it: IDEAS for LEARNING. Narida worked for a long time on this list, referring back to her notes from articles she had read. She left space at the end of it for other concepts to be added later. By the time her initial ideas were down on the page, her list had headings that read: *5 EYLF outcomes, 7 NQS Quality Areas, Specific Curriculum Links, Cultural Connections, Spirituality, Aboriginal Teachings and Heritage, Integrating Technology and Nature, Nurturing Habitats, Environmental and Sustainability Focus, Social and Emotional Learning, Thinking Skills and Project Approaches, Play, Imagination and Creativity.*

Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: Do you think Narida will succeed in her plan? What can she do to maximise her chances of success? What might cause her difficulties? How can she overcome these difficulties?

Exercise 2: What is your outdoor area like? Is it used for intentional teaching experiences with children?

Exercise 3: Do you have any ideas about how your outdoor area could be improved? Discuss them with a colleague.

Exercise 4: One of the elements of Quality Area 3 is to create an environment that is accessible for all and promotes equity. This includes supporting physical access and providing cultural safety. Do you think Narida has included enough considerations of these goals? Support your answer with examples. What could she do to ensure better equity?

Narida could feel her own sense of creativity growing. Her ideas were flowing quickly now. Five minutes later, Narida had finished her third list: This one was called PRACTICALITIES. It read: *Staff meeting, committee, children's ideas, partnership with families (bringing families along, families who can help), funding (Grants and fundraising), expertise, mentoring, accessibility considerations and planning for diverse needs, balancing safety with opportunities for challenge and risk, timeframe for tasks/action plan, organisations that can help (with funding or expertise).*

Empowered by having a clear vision and a strong sense of action, Narida opened her laptop and wrote an email to Mahlee, her Early Childhood Coordinator. She outlined her desire to lead a development process for an Outdoor Classroom. She included an overview of her ideas

but was careful to clarify that she wanted to collaborate with the ECE team, children, families, organisations and experts. She suggested that she start the process by presenting the idea at a staff meeting and facilitating a discussion with a view to seeing who would like to join her on a development committee. When she had finished, Narida read it back to herself, pressed send and started to tidy up her desk. She didn't have to wait long to find out what Mahlee thought of the idea. The reply was rapid and positive. "Love this Narida! Fantastic idea. Is next week's meeting too soon to get the ball rolling?" With a big smile on her face, Narida quickly typed back "not at all" and opened up PowerPoint to turn her brainstorming lists into a pitch to her team.



'I like being in the garden with the chickens.'

Miguel, Pre-Kindergarten

Planning for Learning

Element 3.1.1 Fit for purpose

Element 3.2.1 Inclusive environment

Element 3.2.2 Resources support play-based learning

Reflective questions:

How flexible is the physical environment at your school?

How is the voice of children reflected within the learning environment?

Are there spaces where children have agency, are allowed to be autonomous and can develop an understanding of themselves as learners?

Building a shared understanding of caring for the environment

The Kindergarten educator from ***Our Lady of Good Counsel School*** has been inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach. Her teaching style incorporates inquiry learning and encourages children to be strong, competent learners who draw upon their own ideas from the world around them.

The educator ensures that both indoor and outdoor environments are intentionally designed to nurture children's curiosity and spark moments of wonder by engaging with a range of natural features, both in the school grounds and within her classroom that include sand, soil, mud, rocks, grass, and different plants and trees.

While interacting with the environment and utilising the elements around them to engage and learn from, the educator intentionally



Our Lady of Good Counsel School





Treendale Primary School



Treendale Primary School

fosters children's reflections about caring for the environment by posing questions such as:

- *How can we look after this space?*
- *What do we need to make this learning space special?*
- *What do we need in this space that can help us learn?*
- *How might we utilise this element of nature?*

The educator believes that deliberately inviting input from the children has helped create shared ownership and a sense of personal responsibility to care for and appreciate the many valuable aspects of the environment.

An inclusive learning environment

At **Treendale Primary School**, educators create inclusive learning environments that allow for small group activities, individual learning, and different types of play. Flexible seating encourages children to have autonomy while catering for different learning styles. Options like tall/short adjustable

tables, cushions children can use to sit on the floor, rocking chairs, wobble stools and wobble boards enable children to find places where they feel comfortable and focussed. Each classroom also has accessible sensory boxes, which include tools for children to use to self-regulate, such as weighted toys for laps. Educators model and guide children on how to use the resources. The educators believe these opportunities enable all children to participate in the program, have ownership over their learning and develop a sense of belonging in the environment.

Flexible environments for engagement and agency

The physical spaces in **All Saints' College** influence the way teaching and learning is structured. In the Year 2 class, instead of desks there are larger dining tables, smaller coffee tables and cushions or clipboards for floor work. Children exercise agency as they move around and are trusted to choose whether to work standing up, sitting at tables, or on the floor. There are spaces where children can engage collaboratively, as well as spaces that allow for independent activity.



All Saints' College



All Saints' College



Vasse Primary School



Vasse Primary School

At **Vasse Primary School**, the learning environments in the early years are warm and inclusive, designed to support flexible learning and promote child agency and autonomy. The Year 1 room is organised with a mat meeting space and high and low tables and learning centres spaced around, which are used flexibly throughout the day. Each centre provides a range of open-ended materials that are intentionally displayed in interesting ways to provoke the curiosity of every child and to be used in agentic ways. During integrated investigation time the children decide which learning centres they wish to engage with. In learning experiences such as mathematics, writing or humanities, the children choose a place in the classroom that will assist them to learn. This might be somewhere to work alone, with a partner or in a small group. They choose whether they sit on the floor using a clipboard or whiteboard, on a cushion at a low table, at one of the centres or at one of the larger tables. If required, educators will support and guide the children in deciding whether the space they have chosen to work in is best for their learning.

Both schools believe that flexible seating is more than simply rearranging or removing desks and chairs; it involves a commitment to collaborative

learning, enables agency and student voice and facilitates a deep understanding of the learners and learning needs of the class.

Whilst each classroom in the schools looks a little different, depending on child needs and educator preference, they all aim to create a beautiful, calm environment with a focus on child engagement, giving children agency and easing transitions. The educators believe it is empowering for children to have choice and to understand where and how they learn best. It also supports children to be effective contributors, taking some responsibility for the places in which they learn.

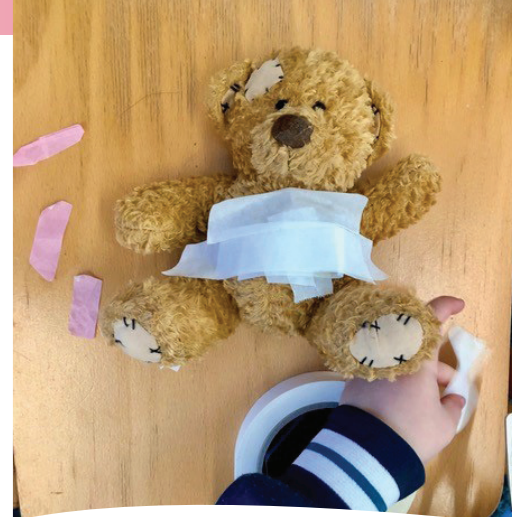
Student voice to revitalise the play space

Outdoor playgrounds that young children enjoy playing in come in many guises. It is often the case that environments designed and created by adults do not necessarily engage and provoke play in intended ways. Elements many adults might not have considered to be important become essential to children's engagement within the space, while others may lie neglected and unused. The educators at **John Wollaston Anglican Community School** identified that there were



John Wollaston Anglican Community School





Bethel Christian School

spaces within the playground that children were not engaging with.

In identifying the need to improve their outdoor environment, the early years team wanted to encourage the children to have a voice in any changes. As a result, they focussed on improving the outdoor area through a Kindergarten unit of inquiry, through which they could consult with the children authentically.

The inquiry began with a mapping experience. Some of the children's responses were surprising, including the things they considered meaningful and integral to the playground, and the things that went unmarked. The children toured the outdoor space before using loose parts to map out the playground. They were engaged in the task as it was meaningful to them.

The classes then researched playgrounds, looking at many different models and contemplated what they might like to add to their space. Some ideas were wildly imaginative and impractical, while others were very thoughtful and drawn from the research they had done.

As the playground plans continue to progress, the educators remain committed to incorporating the children's thinking into the improvements, whilst balancing their ideas with the school's philosophy, educators' knowledge about best practice, and the data they have about the developmental needs of the children coming into the school.

Free-flow indoor/outdoor learning

Bethel Christian School's Pre-Kindergarten classrooms feature glass bifold walls that open to the outdoor environment, providing opportunities for free-flow indoor/outdoor play for the majority of the day. Children exert their agency within the indoor and outdoor spaces as they choose areas

to engage with and how they use materials. They can freely move items from one play space to another, with the exception of playdough and clay.

The educator has observed the vast benefits of providing an agentic learning environment to include:

- Creativity and planning: Children use spaces and resources in incredibly creative and unexpected ways, inspiring and supporting one another's play. Educators enhance the children's learning with books, songs or other materials. A child-led curriculum emerges through their play.
- Independence and a greater sense of self: As the children interact with their environment and initiate their own learning, their ability to independently make decisions and problem-solve flourishes. They grow in confidence, take risks and begin to explore and deepen their understanding.
- Wonder, engagement and connection: As capable learners, the children wonder, explore and share their discoveries with others. Opportunities to connect with their educators and peers often arise as they share their ideas. They begin to recognise how their interactions within the environment can directly affect others around them.
- Communication and collaboration: The natural development of oral language occurs as the children share in rich and meaningful explorations and learn to express their own ideas, listen to others and begin to work together towards a common goal.

Intentional Learning Spaces

Element 3.1.1 Fit for purpose

Element 3.2.1 Inclusive environment

Element 3.2.2 Resources support play-based learning

"A high-quality learning centre is planned with a purpose in mind. It is inviting and aesthetically pleasing, containing an abundance of developmentally appropriate, relevant, interesting, and interactive materials¹⁸."

Intentionality includes designing and constructing warm, inviting and engaging learning environments in which children can access varied opportunities for learning. As children engage with the environment and the materials within the environment, educators are intentional in observing children's interactions and responding to children's questions, actions, theories, problems and decision making to scaffold their understanding.

Considering the physical and emotional environment

Inspired by a professional learning session, the Pre-Primary educators at **Cornerstone Christian College (Busselton Campus)** began a pedagogical journey into inquiry-based learning. The workshop prompted them to examine the connections between their personal philosophies, educational practices and learning environments. Study visits to other schools provided further motivation to create authentic, inquiry-based environments that promote children's higher order thinking. The process of refining their environments was approached through two

complementary lenses: The physical space; and the emotional space.

The physical environment was designed to provide intriguing provocations and spaces of beauty and wonder. These were intentionally curated to evoke curiosity and stimulate children's theories and questions. The educators added mirrors, fabrics, natural objects, interesting images, lighting, and resources they felt made the classroom inviting and inspiring.

Recognising the importance of a secure emotional environment for inquiry-based learning, the educators considered strategies for community building and ensured the representation of children's identities in the space. They fostered an





Rockingham John Calvin School



emotionally safe space for taking cognitive risks and contributing ideas, taking time to observe more closely, notice details, wonder deeply and pose questions with the children so that a culture of thinking and inquiry evolved.

These changes supported powerful transformations in both teaching and learning. It became clear to the educators that inquiry develops young children's skills and dispositions and nurtures them as curious, creative and metacognitive learners.

Outdoor play spaces

At **Rockingham John Calvin School**, the outdoor environment is a key component of the program. The school is situated in a lovely, private bush setting with a separate fenced playground for Kindergarten and Pre-Primary children. A move for Kindergarten children to start the day in the outdoor area, including time to play with their families, has supported smoother transitions from home. Kindergarten children have access to the playground all day through a large sliding door. Recognising that time outdoors is important for student wellbeing, the educators ensure it is woven into the day.

Situated on a hill, the early years playground has been intentionally designed with play affordances in mind. There is a small flat grass area, a large sandpit with a boat and climbing frames, woolly bushes to hide in and a mud kitchen to concoct in. A running waterway flows down the hill, with a path and bridge leading up to a 'fort' lookout and a tepee space from which to oversee the whole area. There are several picnic tables that have many different purposes. Under the verandah is a chalkboard for drawing, and concrete provides the perfect path for bike riding. A storage shed holds many resources that children can request at any time (if not already set up) and a small loose parts trolley is wheeled out each day, to

allow self-directed imaginative play. Clipboards and drawing materials are provided to promote literacy and numeracy skill development. Activities in the playground are largely self-directed.

Just behind this playground is the school's nature play space, a bush environment made mostly of tall eucalyptus trees and some smaller banksias. It is a space that is integral to the teaching and learning program and has become a favourite area for children and their families. Each week, during the cooler months, the learning program involves an afternoon of nature play where the pace is relaxed, and the focus is on nature, exploration and awe, sustainability, creativity, resilience, collaboration and imagination. During this time, children choose from loose parts that are natural or Indigenous items, which has led to more imaginative play. A focus on local Noongar culture through play and resources also supports cultural understandings.

Resourcing play-based learning

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School create flexible, engaging, and multi-sensory learning environments that support play-based learning. Educators blend both teacher-led and child-led experiences to optimise student learning and engagement with the curriculum. A diverse range of resources are carefully gathered to ensure the classroom supports the current learning. Role-play tubs are often used as a starting point to facilitate children's engagement, and children are encouraged to add items specific to their learning needs and interests.

All learning domains are considered, with resources intentionally promoting construction, fine motor skills, small world play, role-play, literacy and numeracy skills, sensory experiences, and problem-solving opportunities. Quiet spaces and the option for children to utilise both indoor and outdoor learning spaces are also considered.



Educators are mindful of curriculum outcomes, exploring ways to incorporate student interests and ensure experiences are open-ended and flexible to enable children to extend their learning and apply creative thinking processes.

In Pre-Primary, the health curriculum provides an opportunity to focus on the jobs people do. An initial exploration of the question, "What is a community helper?" and subsequent identification of the types of jobs children could see in their own community, prompted the idea of setting up an ice-cream parlour dramatic play area. A group discussion about the different materials needed also led to the creation of a small world area depicting a variety of community helpers, utilising resources including vehicles and wooden people. Through their interactions within these intentional play spaces, children connected with the world around them and developed a variety of skills across language, social and physical learning domains.

Where dramatic play meets curriculum

To enable all children to learn and engage with the curriculum, the Pre-Primary/Year 1 educator from **St Lawrence's Primary School**, Bluff Point, ensures she creates an inclusive environment that provides opportunities for children to learn through meaningful play-based learning. She designs and constructs the environment to ensure that children have opportunities to be creative and think critically through holistic and

active learning, while catering for differentiation. To achieve this, the educator creates spaces for children to engage in dramatic, imaginary and collaborative play which integrates Religious Education and literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Embedded Literacy

Driven by the children's interests, the classroom has previously included a home corner, sushi shop, vet clinic and school. Within these learning centres, the educator embedded numeracy and literacy intentions, including opportunities for writing and reading. For example, adding materials for the children to create healthy eating signs, listen to and write down orders from customers, read and order from menus, write recipes and prescriptions. Different text types, such as recipe books, were provided for children to read and use. When learning centres are first introduced, the educators model the various roles children might take and the different ways they can use the space. They also model and describe new vocabulary.

Numeracy

In the sushi shop, a learning intention was for the children to identify and count money. A cash register, money and menus with prices were therefore included. Play money and clocks are always provided in the dramatic play spaces and the block corner for children to use in meaningful ways. The Vet clinic included a reception area where times were allocated and recorded for appointments.

Oral language

To promote oral language and oral narratives, the educator provided textless books and children's literature with related puppets and small world resources for children to develop their own stories with set characters, setting and plot.

These play-based learning opportunities offer hands-on experiences which enable the children to engage with content in meaningful ways that connect with their interests.

Promoting playful learning experiences

The principal at **St Joseph's School**, Wyndham, who is also an experienced early years educator, recognises intentionally set up indoor and outdoor learning environments as a key aspect in supporting the inquiry process and promoting authentic play-based pedagogies. Carefully planned spaces, equipped with open-ended



materials, ensure learning is supported and creativity nurtured. The classroom includes spaces for nature and science, mathematics, writing, construction, collage and art, reading, tinkering, sensory experiences, prayer and outdoor learning.

The nurturing environment promotes independence and a sense of wonder, investigation and interest, with intentional opportunities for each child to engage with and meet holistic learning intentions. The educator works to afford children the opportunity to become emotionally intelligent self-initiators, who are reflective of themselves and others, strong and articulate communicators with a realistic sense of themselves and others. A variety of Religious Education experiences that capture this attentiveness to the environment are outlined.

Prayer Table

For Religious Education, a prayer table was set up to develop the charism of identity. Children were encouraged to participate in setting up the space, often bringing in flowers and special items from home. They enjoy choosing prayers for the day and thrive on the responsibility of being the class

prayer leader. Children's participation in the ritual of praying together each morning, recess, lunch and at the end of day creates a sense of belonging for the children in the school community.

Biblical Storytelling

During Biblical Storytelling, bible stories are shared in child friendly language, using simple props, without interpretation or moral instruction. After the story is shared, the children are invited to wonder together about parts of the story that spark their interest. The story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem was shared and the class wondered together about what the townspeople might have been thinking, how Jesus and the donkey felt, how far they had travelled, and what might have happened next? After exploring the story with the children, props were set up in a space for the children to re-create the story during play. Photographs of Jerusalem were shared, and the children discussed the interesting and different architecture. The children noticed that many of the buildings had crosses on top, arched windows and staircases on the outside. The children selected art supplies to work with as they created a personal response to the story.





Role play

After reading the story of the Last Supper, the class wondered about what Jesus and his friends might have felt that day. A last supper table was prepared with the children expressing the significance of each of the different items as they helped with the set up. Items included a purple prayer cloth, glass and wooden bottles, chalices, pieces of cloth to create traditional costumes depicting the time of Jesus, and pillows for comfortable seating. These props were used as they re-enacted the last supper using fresh bread rolls and red juice, celebrating a meal together with their friends.

The Florist

At **Santa Clara School**, a florist was created to extend on children's conversations about flowers which took place in the playground. The florist was rich in both literacy and numeracy print and symbols. Coloured flowers and coloured containers encouraged sorting. Flowers were labelled with price tags to promote one-to-one correspondence when counting and seed packets were labelled with quantities to encourage matching. The dramatic play space included a concept-related word wall, paper, gift tags, gift cards, order forms and receipts to encourage reading, writing or mark making to communicate messages.

The open-ended materials supported access and learning for varied abilities. These materials included counting provocations to cater for those children who were at the quantity matching stage and for those children who were still developing counting strategies. Word prompts and blank order forms extended those children who were at early stages of writing. This led to improvements

in the children's letter formation and counting, as it gave opportunity for authentic educator scaffolding.

The Provocations Table

The Provocations Table in the Pre-Primary classroom at **Helena College (Darlington Campus)** is one element within a responsive and intentional program that addresses the curriculum through inquiry and play. Freely accessed by the children during play, the provocations on the table offer opportunities to nudge, provoke and scaffold learning in directions that may not always be initiated by the children. Educators also use the materials on the table to extend and support learning, often prompting the children, "I wonder if there's something on the Provocations Table that might help...?"

The Provocations Table is intentionally curated by educators, with the materials evolving on a regular basis in response to the children's interests and class inquiries. For example, an inquiry into friendships might be supported with texts and Babushka dolls. Inquiries into various mathematical concepts will see a range of associated materials (for example, handprints, blocks, rulers and texts) added to the table. These materials are intentionally selected to spark and scaffold children's thinking and to generate conversations and oral language.

Environments as contexts for research

At **All Saints' College**, Pre-Kindergarten to Year 2 educators begin each year by designing learning environment provocations that emphasise playful investigation, problem-solving and creativity, based on their knowledge of children's passions,

prior learning, and home experiences. Curiosity and questions are sparked through engaging in these spaces, with the unfolding learning documented and reflected upon as the basis of teaching programs and subsequent learning environment provisions. Throughout the year in each classroom, spaces are developed to support the children's research into the class inquiries. Questioning is highly valued, and each class has a Wonder Wall where children's questions are recorded and built upon. In Year 1, the educator selects questions from the children's wonderings, placing these in photo frames, before displaying alongside a carefully curated array of resources that could assist the children's research.



All Saints' College



Helena College (Darlington campus)



All Saints' College



All Saints' College



Kalamunda Primary School



Kalamunda Primary School

Loose parts

“Unlike traditional toys that have limited flexibility and play options, loose parts allow children to use their creativity to experiment and to choose how they are going to use an item in their play experience. Engaging with loose parts provides opportunities for children to build their understanding of how materials work, develop problem-solving, cooperation, decision-making and fine and gross motor skills, independence, vocabulary and their understanding of art, maths and science¹⁹.”

At **Kalamunda Primary School**, the outdoor space has a number of inviting, fixed structures that engage the children in their environment. In recent times, a variety of loose parts have contributed to the play-based environment and created new opportunities for engaged learning in the outdoors. In the early childhood area these have been resourced by staff from several places including REmida, free social media and local groups, as well as the school community. The open-ended materials are made available in the outdoor spaces to support imaginative play. Many children across the school take advantage of the loose parts to build, create and experiment as they move them around the environment to supplement their play as they choose. These loose parts also facilitate inclusion by providing a great springboard into play for children who may have difficulty socially interacting with their peers.



Kalamunda Primary School



A video celebrating outdoor loose parts play at Al-Hidayah Islamic School

Loose Parts



Al Hidayah Islamic School



Al Hidayah Islamic School



Carmel School



Hale School's 'create your own adventure' space offers varied loose parts rather than pre-determined dramatic play resources.

Loose Parts



John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School



Kalamunda Primary School



Kearnan College



Carmel School



Oakwood Primary School



Oakwood Primary School

Loose Parts



Rockingham John Calvin School: loose parts trolley



St Lawrence's Primary School



Oakwood Primary School



Walliston Primary School



St Michael's School

Reflective questions:

In order for loose parts to be effectively used, they require storage and time to set up and pack away.

What storage options are most effective and efficient in your setting? (e.g. fixed storage boxes that remain outside or wheelie bins that can be moved around?)

Will children, families or educators take responsibility for bringing them out and packing them away?

What types of loose parts will be most effective for play in your context, as well as being suitable to store and access?

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Element 3.1.1 Fit for purpose

Element 3.2.1 Inclusive environment

Element 3.2.2 Resources support play-based learning

Element 3.2.3 Environmentally responsible

Both indoor and outdoor environments offer significantly different—but complementary—experiences and 'ways of being' to young children. They should be given equal importance and attention because both contribute to young children's wellbeing, health, stimulation and general development²⁰.

Extending learning to the outdoors

Large, open outdoor spaces and sweeping verandahs are a feature of **O'Connor Primary School**. Inspired by conversations with other schools in the network, the early years educators identified that these areas were underutilised by the children, with minimal connection between the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

The educators discussed how they might go about making changes. One Pre-Primary educator developed a SMART goal:

"To have an outdoor learning experience that runs concurrently with indoor learning experiences once a week for the next 6 weeks."

The educator began planning outdoor experiences that would interest and engage the children on the verandah and grass nearby. Experiences included dramatic recounts of stories, technology coding, practising positional language with concrete materials, measurement, chalk writing, reading and painting. Often, an educator worked outdoors with the children, scaffolding and guiding their learning; otherwise, the children directed their own learning, with supervision from educators through a window.

The educators noted many positives in incorporating outdoor experiences during what was traditionally considered to be 'indoor learning time'. The children were excited to have agency to go between the indoor and outdoor spaces and demonstrated greater levels of engagement. The educators observed that children who were



reluctant to engage in reading and writing tasks were more likely to attempt the same experiences in the outdoors. Additionally, the indoor classroom became quieter when the children moved across the two spaces, enabling educators to focus on supporting individual children and small groups, with fewer distractions.

Connecting Bush School and the classroom

The Bush School program at **Parklands School** in Albany, which sees children taken off site one day per week, has been developed to help children develop a life-long interest in the natural world and the dispositions to appreciate and understand the wonder of natural phenomena in their daily experiences. Here, children learn about nature through interaction, collaboration and conversation. Bush School learning is co-operative and allows children to use trial and error processes. It doesn't matter if ideas don't work at first – the opportunity to offer solutions and try new methods is embraced by all. Children must innovate and adapt their thinking and expectations to meet the challenges that the open bush site presents.

Discoveries made on site are further investigated on return to the classroom. The 'two-way' learning that occurs is rich. Encounters at Bush School provoke the children's questions as they look deep into nature and notice small and miraculous details. Children notice changes that occur every week and begin to understand how all things in nature (including themselves) are connected and part of a delicate balance. Back in the classroom, their wonderings are the catalyst for research and the collation and analysis of data. The children create individual Bush Journals and engage in collaborative and individual artwork as they search for meanings and connections.

Connecting learning at Bush School and back in the classroom cultivates the skills and dispositions that global citizens need to nurture as they learn to care for their world. Through this approach, educators report the children's learning has been rich, challenging and joyful across all domains, and the program has exceeded their expectations. Feedback from families has been incredibly positive, including regarding children's attitudes and engagement. Feedback from the children has identified that the most challenging aspects of Bush School are also "the most fun".

Interacting with our fascinating natural world

At **St Brigid's College** in Lesmurdie, the Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten educator wanted to focus on intentional teaching strategies to promote learning



Parklands School



Parklands School



Parklands School



across a range of contexts and develop a culture of wonder. To begin this process, the educator started by observing the children in the garden play space, outside the Kindergarten classroom. She noticed the children were interested in the natural elements; insects, the holes in the cabbages, bark and the Quenda burrows in the grass.

These observations informed the intentional teaching strategies the educator would implement. She launched a wondering question: 'I wonder who made the world?' To continue to deepen learning, she looked at ways to intentionally create an experience where children could apply these understandings within another context and from a different dimension. The educator decided to bring this learning journey into the local bush land. Before visiting the bush, the children had discussed the five senses and how these might help them to understand and find out about their world.

Whilst exploring the natural elements in the bush the children engaged in many conversations with the educators about what they were encountering and ways to describe these through their sensory experiences. Through observations of the children's conversations, the educator noticed they would benefit from further experiences to enrich their descriptive vocabulary. This led to creating a sensory exploration tray in the classroom where children could investigate matter and educators could scaffold the use of descriptive vocabulary. Through paying close attention to the children's interests, the educator was able to organically cater for the children's needs and abilities through a child-centred approach.

A Bush School initiative

The introduction of Bush School for Pre-Primary at **St Bernard's School**, Kojonup, has seen children flourish. There have been noticeable improvements in children's social and emotional wellbeing, resilience, and ability to negotiate, lead and follow others' instructions. Staff have found Bush School to be a perfect vehicle for inquiry learning.

One such instance was after the Pre-Primary children had finished an inquiry into homes. Guided discussions about bees prompted an investigation into the different types of homes bees use. The children learned about the types of bees they might see in Bush School. During group discussions, they learned that not all bees are honeybees, discovering there are many types of native bees, too.

The children, who were already adept at exploring and carefully observing their Bush School environment, soon noticed nests and gatherings of bees in the area, which suggested there were in fact native bees living in the bush! These discoveries and further conversations inspired the children to create bee homes. The children were supported to research how to make a bee home, and then source some materials to complete this task. Through investigations, they learned that some bees use leaves to create their home, while others use wood, so they created homes to accommodate both kinds of bees.

The children planted seeds that would eventually grow into flowers to invite more bees into the Bush School environment. They made signs to alert others who might be using the Bush School grounds to be respectful about their cultivation of flowers and they also cared for and monitored the



Scroll down the link to view a video celebrating St Bernard's School's Bush School Initiative.

growth of their flowers each week during Bush School.

Another example of the value of Bush School evolving under the guidance of a Kindergarten/ Pre-Primary educator occurred when the class began to create a two-storey cubby house over the course of many weeks. This included a ramp to access the top level, a zip line to send items down, and a pulley system to transport things to

the roof. This necessitated plenty of collaboration, creativity and negotiation. Oral language was promoted during conversations that considered safety and the various roles children would undertake. The children were also observed using their imagination during role play within the Bush School space.

Snapshots of a day in the life of St Bernard's Bush School..

Tuesday 18th May

Some of the Year 1/2 class joined Pre-Primary for Bush School today. At morning meeting, we reviewed last week's Bush School and talked about our plans for the day. We discussed some of the foods that ants might like to eat, experimenting by putting out chopped up fruit, syrup, sugar and a biscuit. During the morning various children observed what was happening...it seemed that the ants liked the sugar and syrup as it disappeared.

Meanwhile, over in the wandoo tree two children made a base up on the platform. They did some adjustments to the platform where they moved planks of wood to make it more secure. We set a fire, because it was that kind of day...everyone helped gather sticks. The Three-Year-Old class joined us, and we happened to have some left-over marshmallows so of course we toasted them on the ends of sticks. It was great fun!



Tuesday 7th June

We were fortunate to have Adele from Landcare visit us this morning to show us how to plant native flora tree seeds: banksia, quandong, pear and hakea. She told us that these types of seed pods need heat or



smoke from fires to open and help them germinate. The children prepared small pots and carefully sprinkled the tiny seeds in, before placing them in a mini-greenhouse. They were placed in a sunny spot near the rainbow room. We will be checking on them regularly. There was time to make bird feeders with pinecones, peanut butter and bird seed, which we hung in a nearby tree for the birds to enjoy.

Tuesday 9th August

At the morning meeting, we went through our plans for the day, which included making soup with the Three-Year-Olds. Sitting in a circle, the adults and children helped in telling the story of 'Stone Soup'. This folktale was about a group of travellers who came to a village where the people were unhappy, so they decided to make them some special 'Stone Soup'. The leader had a 'magic stone' which he put in the pot with water, but he kept deciding that the soup still needed more ingredients. The villagers all helped to bring the food that was needed to make the most delicious soup. After listening to the story, groups of children helped chop up the vegetables mentioned in the story to make our soup. It was great teamwork, and many children were very good at cutting up small, even pieces of vegetables! The fire was lit, and a camp oven put over the fire to cook the soup.

Meanwhile, the children went off to explore the Bush School area. One child found what looked like a seed pod, she noticed a tiny insect crawling out of it. Another tried to break open the pod with a mallet, but it was very hard. One child spotted some tiny orange Fungi growing on the end of the cut logs. An educator picked up some mud kitchen gear off the ground and, to her surprise, inside one frypan were hundreds of black beetles. We looked at them closely using the magnifying glasses and some children tried to find a picture of them in one of our resource books- but we weren't successful. Around midday the soup was ready, and everyone tested it, with some returning for seconds and thirds. One person commented, "It was rock solid soup!". We all agreed.

Enhancing Learning Environments

Element 3.1.1 Fit for purpose

Element 3.1.2 Upkeep

Element 3.2.1 Inclusive environment

Element 3.2.2 Resources support play-based learning



Reflective questions:

How does your physical space affect children's agency and the time they are afforded to engage deeply in their learning?

What creative ways can you use space to overcome limitations of size?

Combining classrooms

The Kindergarten classroom at **Carmel School** is an expansive space, framed by high ceilings and glass doors, and bathed in soft natural light. There are a range of spaces for children to access, explore, play, interact, and test theories as well





as an abundance of loose parts to work with. However, the classroom did not always look like this. After much reflection and deep consideration for the needs of the children and the potential of the environment, what was once two classrooms has recently been transformed into one. By opening partitioning that previously separated the classrooms, both classes are now able to share the space. This has had a positive impact on children and their learning. Having all educators in one space ensures there is always an adult available to support children's inquiry and project work, creating an environment that is responsive to their needs.

Educators have observed a depth and richness to the learning that has evolved from the new affordances of the larger environment. Although the environment continues to be tweaked, with new provocations introduced into established areas, the educators no longer feel pressure to change the environment as regularly. Having more space means children have continuous access to a wide variety of learning spaces. It also means they can sit with projects for longer, with children authentically moving in and out of them in their own time, alongside other learning opportunities and 'must do' experiences.

Reflective question:

How does your pedagogy influence your physical environment and how does your physical environment influence your pedagogy?

While the educators have been influenced by the educational project of Reggio Emilia for many years, until the larger space had been created, they did not feel as able to move authentically in the direction of the aesthetic, spacious and agentic environments espoused by the Reggio Approach. Moving the walls made space for a different way of working.

Redesigning Year 1 and 2

Redesigning the indoor and outdoor learning spaces at **St Denis School** has been a major focus over the last few years, with the Year 1 and 2 classrooms being carefully designed and refitted to cater for different learning styles. To begin this process, educators brainstormed ideas, visited other schools, and consulted with designers before selecting contemporary furniture and flexible items, which would offer varied seating options for the children.

To complement the new furniture, the staff shifted their attention to the development of a consistent pedagogical approach in the early years. This involved ensuring the physical environment is accessible to all children and learning needs and that children have opportunities to learn through



investigations. Educators have made space for collaboration in small or large groups, independent and quiet areas. They have ensured resources are easily accessed by children and staff, and provided convenient access between indoor and outdoor spaces where children can be adequately supervised.

The educators have seen many benefits resulting from these changes, including the ability to create a variety of engaging learning spaces, greater agency in children's learning and improvement in cooperation and oral language from the opportunities to collaborate. They have noticed that the children are much more settled, secure and confident in their environment.

Collaborating to create an accessible outdoor learning space

After reflecting on a NQS verification, educators at **Kearnan College** recognised a need to create opportunities that afforded children access to an outdoor learning space. It was also recognised that creating this space would enable staff to implement inquiry along with a play-based and intentional teaching program.

With buildings that were nearly 100 years old and a second storey that prevented major structural development, planning discussions identified the option to redevelop a corner of a shared undercover learning space outside Year 1. There was scope to transform this space into an easily accessible and visible space with good visibility from classrooms where indoor /outdoor learning could flow between. Throughout the following years, the children assisted staff with the design and arrangement of the learning area. This included the selection of materials that could be used in this space and included generous

donations from the P&F to assist with the purchase of items requested by the children.

The transformation of this space has enabled early years classes to independently access the outdoor space adjacent to the classroom which supports their learning. By providing a variety of seating options, choices of play materials and independent access to learning materials and resources, the children can now access this area regularly.

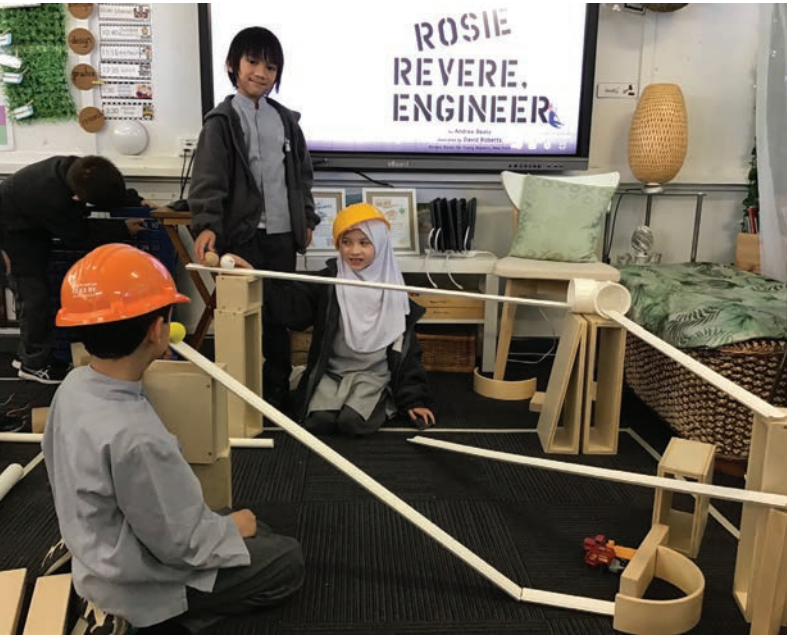
The area has facilitated the use of paints, water, sand, construction materials, blocks and mini-whiteboards. It has also become a space for regular use during literacy lessons, maths play, and inquiry learning. The outdoor space, which is near the classroom, affords children the opportunity to make choices that support their learning style to meet intentional learning goals.

Specific planning and modifications were completed within a limited budget and included:

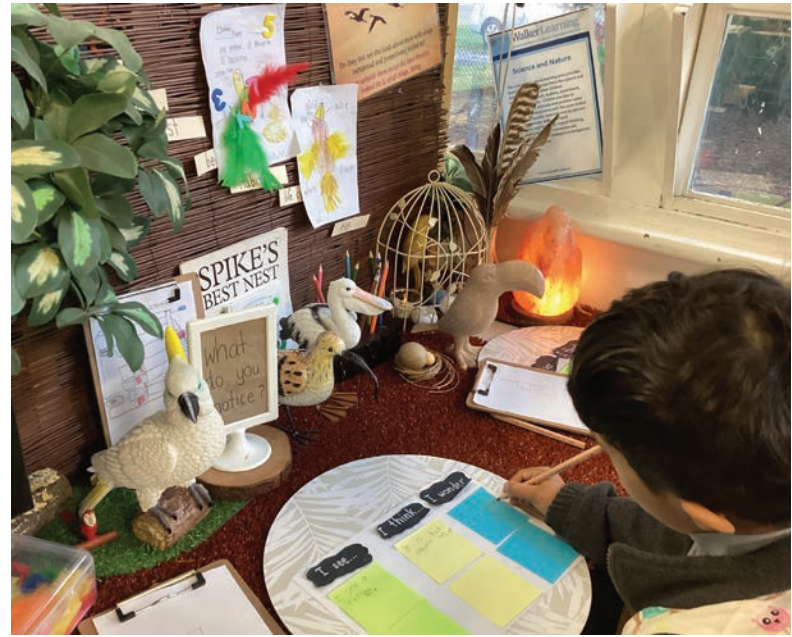
- Making the area more accessible to the children by adding a door hook so children could open a heavy door independently and secure it safely from the wind.
- Adding pallet tables and comfortable stools from wooden reels that were donated.
- Repurposing second-hand library shelving for storage.
- Relocating a floor rug.
- Using donated tyres to create soft seating.
- Using donated cuttings to add greenery and natural life to the space.
- Using donated wooden stands and hand knitted bunting to define the learning area.



Examples of Learning Centres



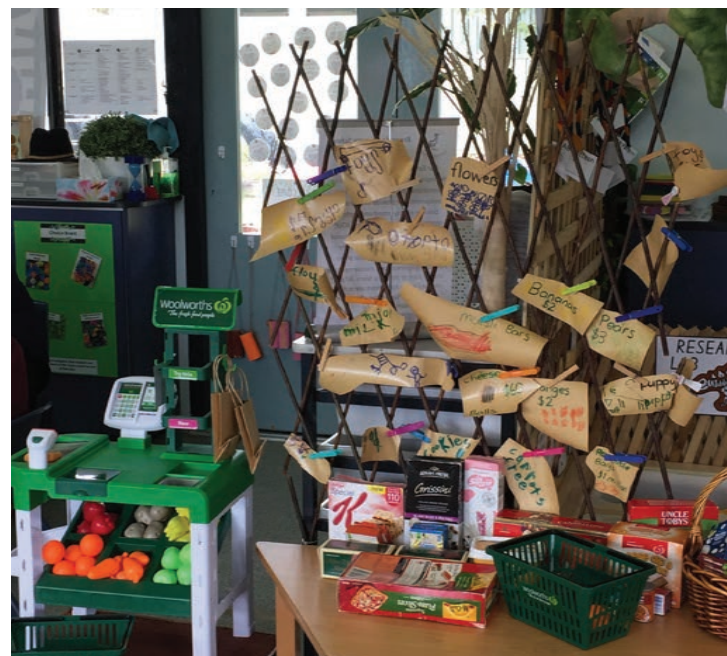
Al Hidayah Islamic School



Al Hidayah Islamic School



Al Hidayah Islamic School



Braeside Primary School



Carmel School



Carmel School

Examples of Learning Centres



Connolly Primary School



Connolly Primary School



Christ Church Grammar School



Frederick Irwin Anglican School



Frederick Irwin Anglican School



Jolimont Primary School

Examples of Learning Centres



Kearnan College



Kearnan College



Oakwood Primary School



Perth College



Rapids Landing Primary School



Southern Grove Primary School

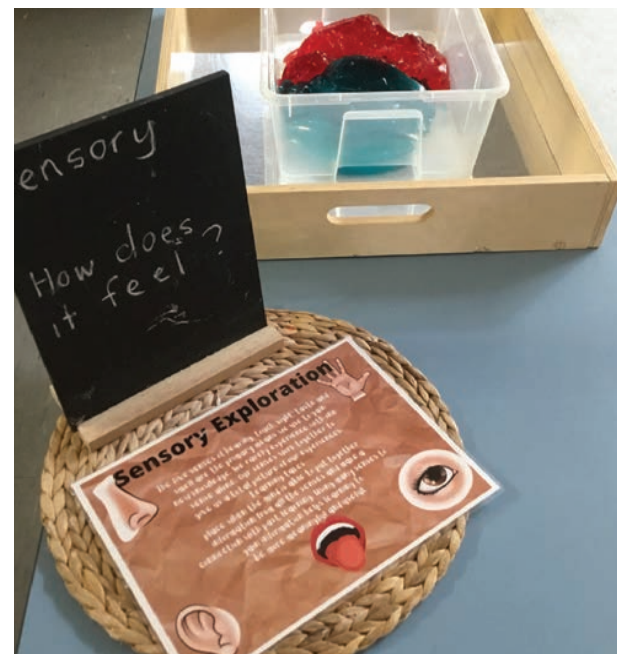
Examples of Learning Centres



Southern Grove Primary School



St Bernard's School



St Brigid's College



St Jerome's Primary School: Yarning circle



Vasse Primary School



Comet Bay Primary School

Environmental Responsibility

Element 3.1.2 Upkeep

Element 3.2.3 Environmentally responsible

Growing together

At **Comet Bay Primary School**, the kitchen garden plants 'seeds of hope' and 'a harvest of pride' for children, families and staff. This school community initiative is integral in supporting children to develop respect and understanding of the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. The space was designed with peace and tranquillity in mind; children can wander along winding paths, sit quietly and listen to the trickling water, touch and smell the array of herbs and vegetables or chat to the chickens.

Whilst the garden is managed by a gardener and student environmental ambassadors, children of all ages plant and harvest the produce throughout the year.

The school fosters a respect for food, supporting the notion that nothing should go to waste. The vegetables, herbs and eggs produced supplement the weekly Breakfast Club, where families sit and eat together, sharing food and stories. The produce is used in cooking classes run by an enthusiastic education assistant, where children create healthy recipes, snacks and meals with their classmates twice each term in a designated



Comet Bay Primary School



Comet Bay Primary School



Perth College



Perth College

classroom. Here, the children are responsible for safely preparing food, cooking and cleaning up, and sharing the final product with staff and families who volunteer and participate.

Families value the opportunities children have to engage with the kitchen garden. They advise that participating in cooking encourages their children to eat healthy produce and taste a variety of new foods in a warm, secure environment. The children share how much they love taking part in looking after the garden and cooking interesting recipes, from delicious beetroot pikelets to yummy vegetable soup. They are also proud of the skills they are developing, that can be used to help their family in their kitchen at home.

Recycle, reuse and repurpose

Since 2019, **Perth College's** Junior School has been an accredited Waste Wise School and, as such, many of the classes have collected varied forms of waste. Their aim is to recycle, reuse and repurpose to reduce landfill.

In addition to composting, collecting aluminium cans, and growing and cooking their own

vegetables, the school has established a Sustainability Club. This is a weekly co-curricular club with members from Pre-Primary to Year 6, supported by educators. The club participants get together to discuss ways of 'spreading the word' and encouraging other children in both the junior and senior schools to become responsible community members when disposing of their waste and rethinking their options for a better sustainable future.

Children and families also put forward their ideas for sustainable initiatives and these are always valued and supported wherever possible. Articles on sustainability feature regularly in school newsletters, emails and at assemblies to update families and the wider school community.

M&G's Patch

Marmion Primary School was provided with a new purpose-built Pre-Primary building that was surrounded by expansive patches of grass. The educators wanted to create areas where the children could better understand the role that they play in caring for the world. After considering ways to integrate the curriculum in the outdoors,



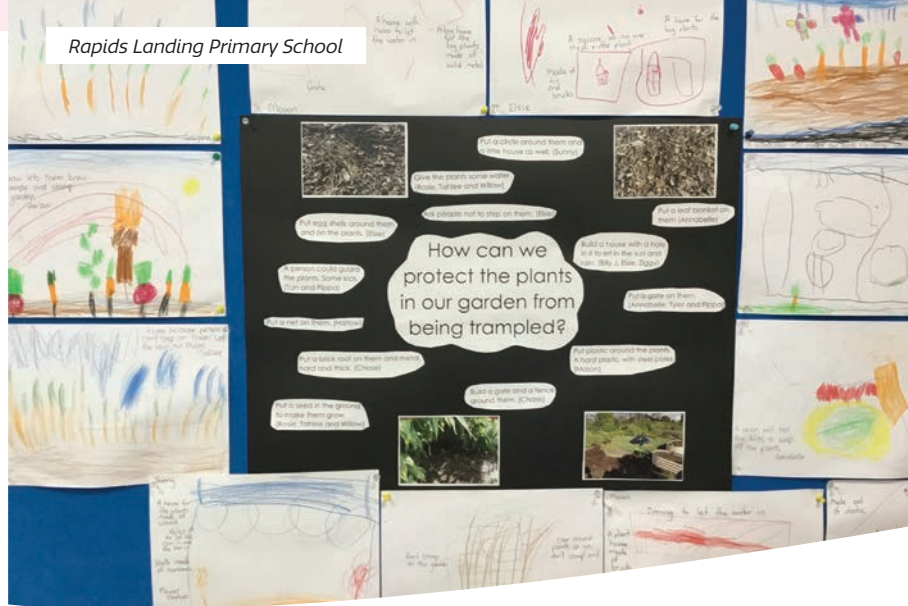
Marmion Primary School



Marmion Primary School



Rapids Landing Primary School



Rapids Landing Primary School

and discussions with the children, Marmion's Edible Garden, or 'MEG's Patch' was established.

Family volunteers helped plan the space and organised donations from local garden nurseries and the community. Staff and families came together to set up garden beds and plant vegetables and trees. The purpose and use of MEG's Patch have evolved since its creation, incorporating the children's interests over time to include a frog pond, worm farm and fruit tree orchard.

With supervision and support from educators, the children smell the wonderful aromas and taste-test the herbs and flowers. They enjoy collecting herbs to add to indoor activities, such as playdough and cooking experiences. MEG's patch also offers a space for a sensory break, to support teaching and learning programs and for children to enjoy interacting with nature.

Protecting the plants

At **Rapids Landing Primary School**, the Kindergarten and Pre-Primary children love playing in the garden. However, the educators were finding that a lot of the plants were getting trampled by the children running through them, sitting on them and playing with them. The Kindergarten educators shared their concern with the children which led to an authentic opportunity for learning, with educators and children working

through a STEM/inquiry process to try to solve the problem and protect the plants. This included examining the areas where the damage was the greatest. The children then shared and drew pictures of their ideas to protect the plants from being trampled. Currently, the children are trialling possible solutions, such as having guards to protect the plants.

Banana magic

At **All Saints' College**, children help make decisions about how they might act upon their learning, such as in Kindergarten's Banana Magic enterprise. This project evolved from the children's realisation that the volume of banana skins they were collecting at morning tea outnumbered the capacity of their worm farm. Research undertaken online with their educators unearthed a recipe to create a 'banana magic' garden tonic using the peelings. Testing the recipe on their Kindergarten garden proved successful, and so began an extended and authentic project which saw the children collecting banana skins, preparing used milk containers, creating the tonic, voting on a name, designing labels, advertising, and selling their product at various events. Mathematics was authentically incorporated as the children tallied the number of bananas used and containers sold, as well as helping count the proceeds, which were donated to a wildlife charity.



Rapids Landing Primary School



All Saints' College



All Saints' College

Staffing Arrangements

QUALITY
AREA

4



'Teachers working together makes you strong and keeps us feeling safe. They talk to us and each other a lot.'

Grace, Kindergarten

QA4	Staffing Arrangements	
Standard 4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.
4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the school supports children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the school.
Standard 4.2	Professionalism	School administrators, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	School administrators, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strength and skills.
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships..

Quality Area 4 – Staffing Arrangements

Introduction

Dr Dee O'Connor

Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University.

Previously, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.



'The teachers have meetings about what they are doing and that help children learn.'

Jude, Year 1

Quality Area 4 focuses on how staffing arrangements can contribute to better practice and enhance children's learning and development³. It asks schools to consider how they organise the team of educators to facilitate maximum benefit for practice outcomes, for continuity and professional wellbeing²¹, for collaboration and professional development^{22,23}. It also requires staff teams to ensure that they use professional standards to guide them in their pedagogy, interactions and relationships, as advocated by the EYLF³.

Amari's Story

Amari was preparing for a meeting with his Principal, Cam. Cam had asked to see him to discuss his thoughts on the staffing arrangements for the Early Childhood team. It was Amari's first meeting with Cam since his promotion to the position of Early Childhood Coordinator. He really wanted to be prepared. He also hoped to use the time with Cam wisely and make the most of the opportunity to discuss his ideas for staffing. He hoped that he could share his views and be heard.

Amari thought about what he wanted from the meeting. It would be wonderful if Cam supported him to roll out some of the ideas he had around improving practice through staffing measures. He decided to write down his main thoughts and bring them to the meeting with him. That way, he'd feel prepared and if there was an opportunity to share his ideas, he wouldn't hesitate. Cam was a strong leader. She quickly put Amari at ease by telling him that he had been selected for the position because he had displayed thoughtfulness, initiative, and innovation. Cam then asked if he had any thoughts on how staffing currently ran and whether there were aspects that could be improved upon.

Amari talked at length about his desire to create a community of practice among the Early Childhood team. He outlined how he wished to develop practices for sharing resources and ideas across classrooms and year groups, reflecting together, reading and discussing research together, and collaborating and supporting each other through a peer mentoring project. Amari and Cam discussed how these could contribute to improved practice by bringing the team closer to research, closer to

reflective practice and closer together as a team. They could see benefits within pedagogy, cohesion, transitions and staff wellbeing. Cam asked Amari to come back to her in a month with a written staffing action plan. Amari left the meeting feeling empowered and motivated. He called a meeting of the Early Childhood team to discuss his ideas with them. He encouraged them to contribute their ideas and suggested that they create the action plan as a team. This allowed them to bring forward issues and discuss how they could be included in the staffing action plan.

Practical issues such as shared DOTT, training, timetabling, LOTE, and team-building were included. So too were philosophical issues such as pedagogical beliefs, bridging differences, catering for diversity, linking with research, shared projects, creating pedagogical documentation, reflecting collaboratively, focusing on strong relationships, and facilitating smoother transitions. Amari suggested that they also include reflection lenses across the EYLF, the NQS and the curriculum. The team agreed and a series of goals were set with timeframes attached.

Working on the plan collaboratively contributed to a sense of shared responsibility and ownership among the team. Amari could feel the motivation levels of everyone rising. He complimented the team on their commitment. In response, they shared that it was energising to have a leader who included them, empowered them and was willing to invest time in supporting them to evolve their practice in such a deep way. Amari felt very optimistic about the possibilities for this team and their practice. Eight weeks later, Cam officially launched the Community of Practice. The plan was in place and the team was ready to begin a new approach to working together.

Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: If Amari was your Early Childhood Coordinator and he approached you with the idea of creating an action plan for staffing together, what issues would you like to see included?

Exercise 2: How do you see the issues you have listed in exercise 1 contributing to better practice?

Exercise 3: What impact would this approach have on you as an individual professional? What impact could you see it having on your team?

Exercise 4: Look at the list that Amari team collated (in paragraph 4). Are any of these issues which you would like to see arranged differently? If so, how could you raise this as a discussion within your team?



'My teachers meet in the holidays and talk about how they care for us. They are smiling because they like each other.'

Heidi, Pre-Primary

Arrangement of Staff

Element 4.1.1 Organisation of Educators

Element 4.1.2 Continuity of Staff

Effectively organising educators enables the school to deliver high-quality teaching and learning programs. The presence of experienced educators leads to responsive interactions, while continuity of staff enables positive relationships to develop, assisting children to feel safe and secure in the school environment.

Considerations for staffing include:

- 1 Meeting the educator-to-child ratios and providing sufficient numbers of staff for quality interactions and supervision*
- 2 Employing early childhood qualified staff (including first aid and anaphylaxis training if required)*
- 3 Deploying familiar educators who know the children and whom the children feel comfortable to interact with
- 4 Using a regular pool of relief staff
- 5 Inducting relief staff
- 6 Implementing processes for staff handover

* Mandated for Pre-Kindergarten (3-Year-Old Program) and Kindergarten

Reflective questions:

How do staffing arrangements support each child's learning and development?

What processes are in place to identify staff skill sets and knowledge and organise them accordingly?

What processes and procedures are in place to support relief staff to learn about and understand school policies and the children's needs?

How are families informed of relief arrangements when staff are away?

Are there effective induction processes to ensure continuity?

Staffing continuity through looping

To support positive experiences for each child's learning and development, some schools make intentional staffing arrangements that ensure educators spend more than one year teaching a class. These decisions promote continuity of staff and are supportive of transitions, recognising the benefits of longer-term relationships and secure attachment between educators and children, and extended partnerships with families.

At **All Saints' College**, children remain together as a cohort with their educators for both the

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten years. This way, the children have time to form strong connections and become familiar with the environment and routines. In Kindergarten, the children are introduced to specialist teachers. The specialist teachers' lessons are held immediately before breaks, with the specialists rostered for these breaks to enable education assistants and class teachers to have time away from the 'floor'. This enables children to also build connections with specialists and experience continuity of care during educators' break times. This initiative took some planning to set up; however, the educators have found it to be very worthwhile.





A Three-Year-Old Program is in operation at many **Catholic Education Western Australia** schools to provide an opportunity for children to smoothly transition into the school environment, build upon their existing skills and continue learning in a friendly and supportive play-based learning environment. Once children turn three years old, they are eligible to participate in the sessional program which operates on either one or two days and assists children to build upon their social and emotional skills, further develop their independence and participate in a range of rich experiences that cater for their holistic learning needs. Wherever possible, Kindergarten educators teach the Pre-Kindergarten class to enhance continuity. The program highly values families as the first educators and works in partnership with families to ensure the program provides a successful transition that sets the foundation for future learning success within the school environment.

At **Perth College**, in considering optimum continuity of care, attachment theory and human neuroscience, the Director of Junior School made the decision to introduce the concept of 'looping'. The Pre-Kindergarten educators move with the children into Kindergarten, allowing for the strong relationships developed with families and children to continue while supporting a positive transition to a new year group. The success of this initiative has led to the extension of the loop into Pre-Primary.

At **Treetops Montessori School**, continuity of care is provided by teachers, education assistants, and, where possible, relief teachers, for up to three years. Educators gain a deep understanding of each child and the nuances of each family's dynamics. When children enter the classroom

aged three, the educators ensure they develop a strong sense of belonging. Younger siblings often start with an elder sibling already in the class. Children experience continuity and change of friendships over time as the older children graduate and younger children arrive. Montessori education encourages children to be self-directed learners, with younger children observing how their older peers approach their learning, which motivates them to practise until they achieve mastery of tasks.

At **Moerlina School**, classes are small and multi-age by design. This organisational structure facilitates family-style configurations that mirror society, support natural ways of learning, allow for mixed-age friendships, and afford greater pedagogical flexibility. The team at Moerlina has experienced the benefits of this approach for both children and educators. Multi-age groupings create a diversity that fosters the development of interpersonal skills, communication, shared understanding, tolerance, and adaptability in the children and educators. There is a commitment to forging deep, respectful relationships between every child and educator in the school, underpinned by a culture of open discussion and collaborative decision-making. While children typically remain with the same key educator for more than one year, they also regularly connect with different educators and children from other year levels, particularly in groups for literacy and mathematics, cultivating a deep sense for children that they are part of a supportive, caring and cohesive school community. This approach has nurtured openness in the school to innovative ways of teaching, and a dedication to communication, troubleshooting and working together to meet every child's needs.

Professional Relationships and Collaboration

Element 4.2.1 Professional collaboration

Element 4.2.2 Professional Standards

Fostering a culture of collaboration is essential to ongoing improvement. When the skills, knowledge and strengths of each staff member are valued and shared, educators learn from one another. Cultivating respectful and collegial relationships between staff promotes a calm and positive climate, which contributes to positive and respectful relationships between educators and children.

A collaborative team:

- 1 Engages in professional inquiry to contribute to continuous improvement
- 2 Values diverse viewpoints
- 3 Respectfully and professionally solves problems through discussion
- 4 Demonstrates openness and engages in critical reflection
- 5 Supports each team member
- 6 Affirms and challenges existing practice

Professional standards are found in national, state, sector and school policies, procedures and frameworks. These guide educators and school leaders in professional conduct and ethical decision-making. When educators are aware of how their values and attitudes impact their work, they can minimise biases that may influence their practice and relationships with colleagues, children, and families.

Reflective Questions

How are the individual strengths of educators acknowledged in your team?

How do educators engage in reflective practice to support and encourage each other?

What opportunities do teachers have to meet and discuss practice and improvement? How are education assistants included in this?

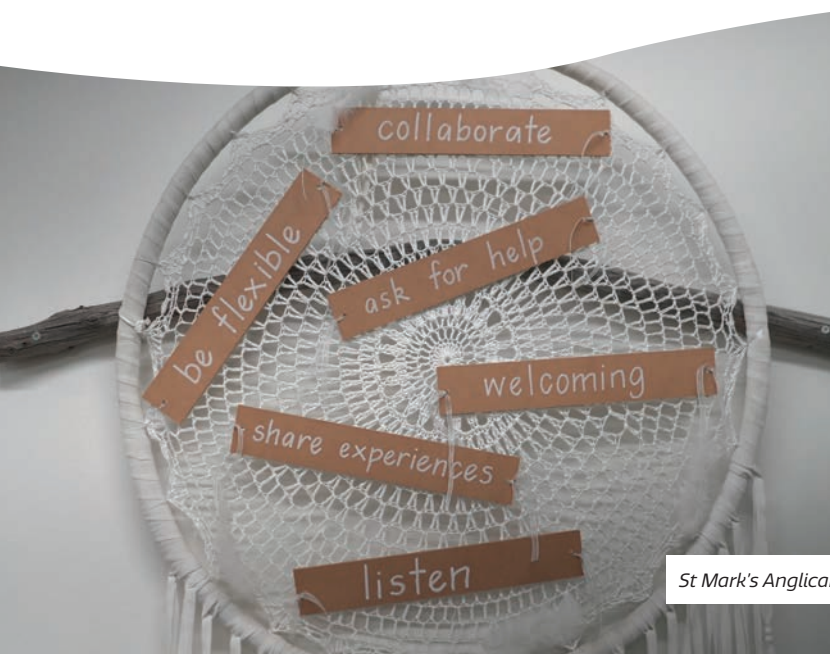
How are the professional standards used in meetings and implemented in practice?

Professional collaboration: From recruitment to relationships

The recruitment and retention of passionate, pedagogically aligned educators is something **St Mark's Anglican Community School** does not leave to chance. There is a focus on seeking professionals who are collaborative, motivated, flexible, and reflective lifelong learners. Beyond recruitment and induction processes, teamwork and a team culture continue to be prioritised. As a part of the approach to wellbeing within the school community, the Early Learning Centre (ELC) staff develop Charters together, defining how the team agrees they want to feel when they come to school and what they need to do to achieve this. The Staff Charter is proudly displayed in the ELC entry. Emotional goals to feel 'Calm' and 'Balanced'

are helpful reminders of mindfulness when working in an enthusiastic, busy ELC and the team believe that affirmations and consciousness really help in the achievement of such goals.

ELC educators choose to meet weekly because they value these opportunities to share experiences, ask questions, resolve issues, plan, share and discuss research, reflect, learn, and improve practice. Education assistants are equally welcomed into this experience and members of the administration team often choose to stay after school to hear and understand evolving issues and decisions. St Mark's have developed a culture amongst early years staff where healthy and supportive discussions around latest research and professional learning opportunities are encouraged, sought after, and planned.



Improving staff collaboration

At **Burrendah Primary School**, 3 key directions, 'Connect, Collaborate and Commit', underpin the way staff, children, families and community engage. Attention for improvement in NQS has been on Quality Area 4, with a focus on collaboration within teams. Improvement began with an updated whole school timetable that would enable staff to meet weekly at a common time. Protocols were developed to guide active participation and professionalism of all members of the team; utilising an agenda, taking minutes and time keeping facilitates efficient and productive meetings. Following each meeting, discussions are shared within the team and across the school, including with EAL/D education assistants and specialist teachers, for transparency. The development of these practices to strengthen collaboration has also positively impacted growth and development across other quality standards.

Regular collaboration time

Ongoing improvement is embedded in the culture of **Frankland River Primary School**. Staff are committed to the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes and have made the choice to use weekly early-close meetings expressly for sharing teaching and learning outcomes, with a focus on building success for all children.

The agenda for these meetings includes time for new learning, such as sharing evidence-



based research, watching a video or listening to someone describing what they have learned from recent professional learning. The group discuss how this information might impact classroom practice, how it relates to curriculum intentions and how it could be actioned. The following fortnight is then used to implement new ideas and collect information to share at the following meeting.

This process has been extremely helpful to ensure whole school practices are embedded across the classrooms with integrity and a common understanding of what is expected. Staff report it has brought them closer together and enabled them to collaboratively support each other through challenges, and collectively celebrate successes. It has also allowed staff to have a clear picture of curriculum expectations across year levels, which has helped embed connected practice and cohesion.



Expectations for Collaborative Meetings

- Be prepared – completed the action learning, bring file, bring work samples etc.
- Be willing to share your learning.
- Doing each task...wholeheartedly!
- Time – 2.45pm – 3.45pm each week.
- Bron to put out a reminder in the Cossack about the focus for each week – tasks etc.
- Seek support if you need help implementing something – ask questions, explain what worked what didn't, be honest. This an action learning cycle and we are all learning through this process.
- Improving teacher capacity and building our skills is our focus through these sessions.
- Other information will be distributed during email.
- We will use before school on Wednesdays to share any information if necessary – such as COVID-19 updates, information about particular children etc. Bron will advise staff if these meetings need to occur.

Frankland River Primary School

Developing shared understandings and cohesive practice

Discussions at staff meetings were the genesis of **Hensman Street Elementary's** development of a children's rights lens towards staff relationships with children. Their approach has evolved through a collaborative, systematic process of engaging with research into rights-based education, agency, child-led curriculum and relational pedagogies. The team sourced readings for distribution and set aside time throughout planning days and staff meetings to discuss the concepts and reflect on them together. Through this process they determined the following key focus areas for a rights-based approach to building relationships with children:

1. Centralising play-based learning as children's chosen learning method.
2. Supporting children's emotional and social capacities through a guidance approach of developing self-regulation in all ages.
3. Empowering children through intentional teaching of *Keeping Safe* curriculum and *Protective Behaviours* content.
4. Authentic partnerships with children and families through open communication and respect.
5. Building children's collaborative learning skills to enhance their individual discovery of their rights.

Each topic was explored deeply to ensure consistent implementation, with an agreement that educators would firstly read sourced

academic papers on each concept and carry out individual reflections. These reflections were brought to the staff meeting by the team who then unpacked the concept together. Next, the team set goals for implementation. Finally, at the next staff meeting, educators reported back on progress and engaged in collaborative discussions about achievements, challenges and the impact on children's learning, development and connection.

This collaborative approach has fostered team cooperation, including support for one another in the face of challenges and celebration when they experienced success. A culture of deep learning and engagement with research has been developed, along with an ethos of open dialogue and pedagogical bravery. Importantly, it has led to an understanding that relationships with children are supremely influenced by the experiences they have while in the care of educators. When these experiences respect children's choices and centralise their rights, relationships are enhanced in deeply meaningful ways.



Hensman Street Elementary

A collaborative approach to improving assessment practices

Wishing to unify their approaches to planning and assessment, the Early Years cluster group at **St Lawrence Primary School**, Balcatta, explored a Christ Centred goal of *Unity* to build consistent pedagogical practices. They started by ascertaining what assessment should look like in the Early Years. Together they initially developed and promoted a collaborative environment where each other's contributions and viewpoints were respected.

Through professional readings and discussions, they articulated that assessment was a process of gathering information about a child, reviewing the information, and then using this information to plan educational activities. These collaborative professional discussions provided educators with an opportunity to revise their practice, plan and then implement strategies for improvement

through robust team discussions. They each did this by observing and documenting every child's learning, assisting other educators to plan effective individualised instruction, while providing a record of growth and development over time.

The educators also followed a more intentional scope and sequence for Literacy, ensuring educators differentiated built consistency of practice, and were deliberate and purposeful in their approach. During the cluster group meetings and through discussions to debate what program quality looks like, educators analysed data and reflected on learning and assessment.

Over a short period of time, successful implementation of these processes was achieved. The pedagogical practices within the Early Years that have been developed and supported have resulted in a collaborative approach to viewing assessment as a cluster and has led to improved learning outcomes for children.



Working together in Kindergarten

Staff at **Margaret River Primary School** prioritise collaboration and working together as a team; witnessing this through a strong sense of respect for each other, the children, the children's first educators (families), administrators and all others who are part of the school community.

In Kindergarten, educators:

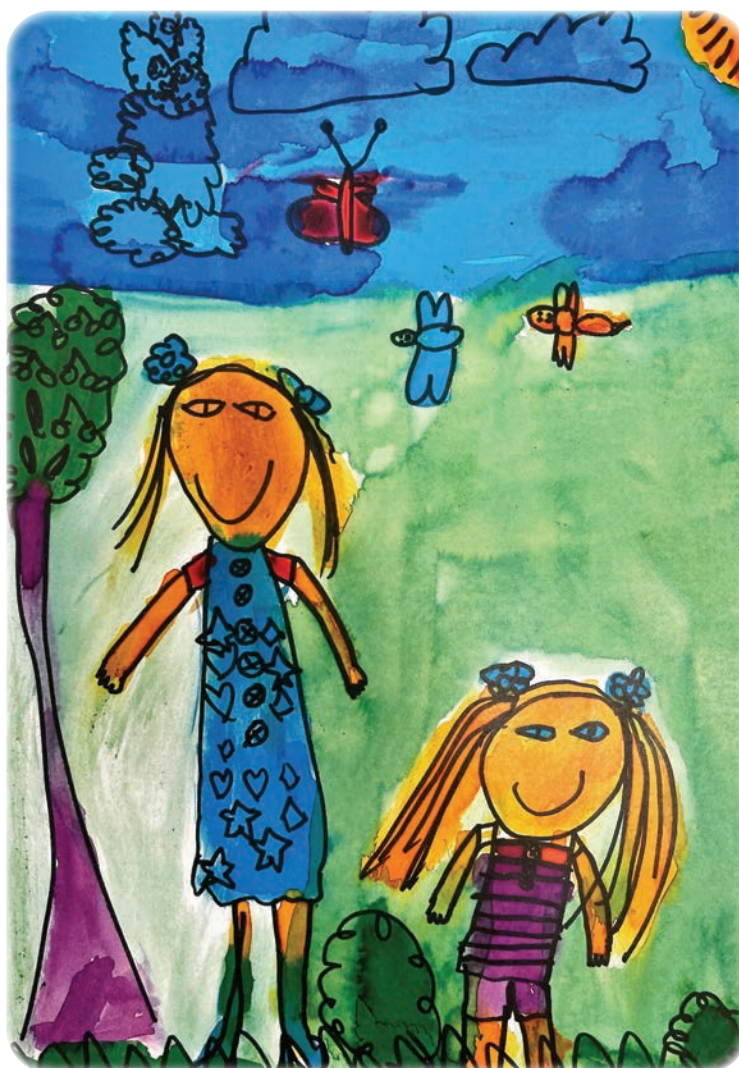
- Have an open-door policy
- Share duties
- Share resources
- Share planning
- Celebrate together

Staff plan collaboratively so there is consistency across classes, however there is also an understanding that each class is unique, so programs should differ in some ways. The children's interests are prioritised, and plans evolve around these. Each class follows the same learning intentions and outcomes; however, the experiences and contexts in which this is learnt is driven by the children. Collaborative planning by educators ensures that final outcomes are taught across all classrooms. Collaboration occurs both formally and informally, with staff regularly inspired by one another.

Relationships with Children

QUALITY
AREA

5



'I like being with my teachers. It makes me feel safe and happy because I like them.'

Samansha, Pre-Primary

QA5	Relationships with children	
Standard 5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
Standard 5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

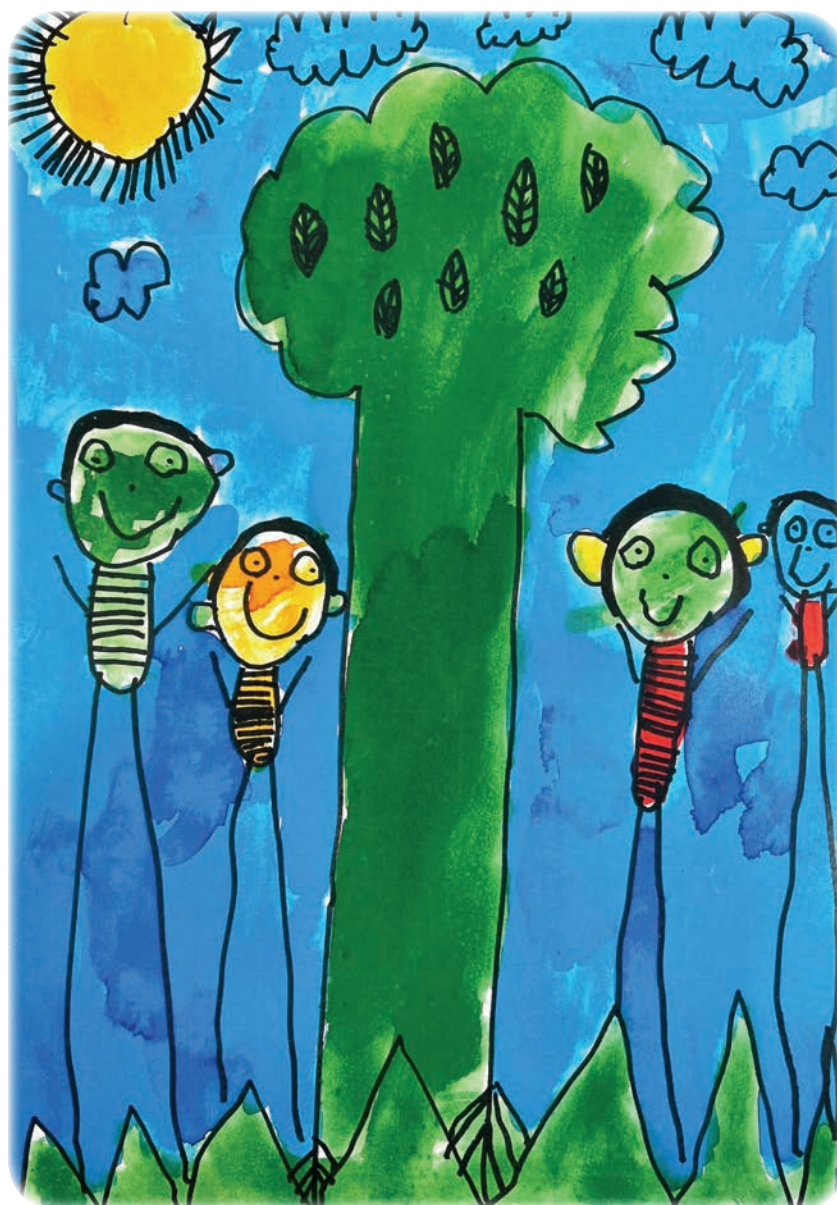
Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children

Introduction

Dr Dee O'Connor

Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University.

Previously, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.



'Playing with my friends makes me feel happy because I like to be with my friends.'

Jack, Pre-Primary

Relationships are the foundation of all learning. How many times have you heard that? Whenever I discuss relationships and relational pedagogy with educators, they are fully on board with how important relationships are. Educators thoroughly understand the critical difference that positive relationships make to children's engagement, wellbeing and learning. I have come to see that the importance of relationships as a truth unifies educators. The importance of our relationships with children also has a very strong theoretical underpinning with clear evidence from neuroscientific research as well as educational research^{11,24}.

Relational Pedagogy is the educator's prioritisation of their students' emotional wellbeing in the social context of their relationship with them as their teacher, and also their relationships with their peers²⁵. The evidence around the importance of relational pedagogy is very clear: When children feel connected and accepted, their motivation for learning increases²⁶. They also experience significantly less behavioural challenges²⁷, are much more engaged with their academic learning²⁸ and subsequently perform better academically^{29,30}.

There is further evidence to show that when a child has a positive relationship with their educator, their social skills develop further^{27,29}, their confidence grows, and they experience a greater sense of positive learner identity³¹. Over time, if a trajectory of positive relationships with educators is maintained, children have pointedly higher levels of school attendance³², as well as engagement, performance, outcomes and lifelong wellbeing^{33,34}.

Having worked with teachers and pre-service teachers for many years, I am a firm believer in teaching as a vocational career. Educators are drawn to teaching because they care about children and their futures. In my experience, educators try hard to be relational and mostly succeed. They are, however, only human, and occasionally they find themselves interacting in a way that could be more positive. When this happens, they reflect and repair. To be human is to err, to be an educator is to repair. On a day-to-day basis, it is our interactions with each child that shape their sense of our shared relationship. When something happens that is not ideal, the child really feels it. The reflective educator sees the issues and takes steps to reconnect in positive ways.

Katie's Story

Katie's story is one I tell to illustrate the principles of reflection, attentiveness, and mindfulness in relational work with children. It is a story of a little girl who was late to school one morning. Perhaps it was a regular pattern and perhaps the educator was frustrated by this. This little girl was aged six and from a large busy household. She was not yet personally responsible for what time she got to school. She walked across the classroom in an atmosphere where it was clear that her lateness was not appreciated. Her teacher, a good teacher, but one who was capable of mistakes, as we all are, raised her eyebrows and said rather pointedly, "It's nice of you to join us Katie".

A look of confusion passed over this little girl's face as she found her seat and sat down. She was quiet but distracted and when you looked at her

face you could see that she was trying to work out what this interaction meant. "Nice of you to join us" ...was her teacher happy that she was there or was her teacher cross because she was late? The classroom activity continued around her, but Katie remained unengaged as her mind tried to work out the relational consequences of her morning's context.

What is happening for Katie during this experience? The limbic centre of her brain, which harvests her relational experiences for emotional processing is activated and a relational hazard has been detected³⁵. Katie's brain is sending warning signals that Katie has received disapproval and may not be safe³⁶. The impact on Katie is that the portion of her brain which is needed for thinking and her ability to focus on the learning her teacher has intended for her is compromised³⁷. Katie is, instead, preoccupied with a sense of lost connection and feeling adrift, possibly even feeling unsafe. This emotional reaction is a natural response to perceived disapproval^{38,39}. If you arrived late for something and someone said 'nice

Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: Can you think of a time when you tried hard to connect with a child? What strategies did you try?

Exercise 2: Map your story to Quality Area 5. What alignments or tensions can you see?

Exercise 3: Have you ever apologised to a child? Or felt that you possibly should have?

What can a child learn from you if you acknowledge your mistakes, apologise and seek to repair?

Exercise 4: Sometimes there can be a tension between what a child needs from you and what is a rule-based procedure. Katie's educator felt this tension when she spoke. After all, being on time is a rule.

Do you agree that Katie needed her educator's compassion and understanding rather than her judgement in this instance? Within a relational approach, how best can we navigate these tensions as educators?

of you to join us', you may well have a similar reaction. Because of this one comment, Katie misses much more than just the five minutes that she was late.

Within a relational perspective, a reflective educator is one who recognises when they have made such a mistake and seeks to repair the damage that they have done. As such, what this educator needed to do was to go and sit beside Katie and explain that she was very happy to see her, that she was sorry if her voice was a little cross when Katie arrived, and she hoped Katie could forgive her. She could say that she understands that everyone is late now and then, and that the main thing is that Katie is here and that she is glad that she is. She could help Katie to engage in the experiences available in the classroom by modelling them or scaffolding a starting point.

The problem with that one comment, made

out of annoyance on the part of the educator, is that it stopped Katie from learning because it caused a natural emotional response that dominated Katie's brain³⁷. However, it was also not respectful of Katie's right to security and trust (Element 5.1.1). It did not recognise Katie's powerlessness within family time-keeping or respect her family by offering some empathy for the reasons why a child from a large family may be late (Standard 5.1).

However, if Katie's teacher recognised her error and repaired it by apologising and reconnecting, it would be a response that acknowledged Katie's right to dignity (Element 5.1.2). Such a response on the part of the educator would also be a good example of Element 5.2.2, which includes communicating effectively to resolve conflicts. The teacher-led repair of this conflict would be excellent modelling of how to acknowledge our mistakes and fix them.



'This is me happy. My teacher knows me. I'm happy and crazy.'

Amelie, Kindergarten

Responsive Interactions with Children

Element 5.1.1 Positive educator to child interactions

Warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children are developed when educators take an interest in children's lives, interests, play and learning. Nurturing and responsive interactions with individual children shape their thinking about who the children are, their capabilities and their competence. Educators who are actively engaged in children's learning and play use interactions to stimulate thinking and enrich learning, while also assisting children to develop a positive self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Educators prioritise time to spend with children, asking questions and learning more about who they are as individuals.

At **Oakwood Primary School**, each day begins with 15 minutes of Family Time, which allows children and their families to settle into the classroom and prepare for the day. This time allows the educators to connect with children, whilst they are comfortable beside their family, and continue building relationships with them.

At **West Busselton Primary School** educators select focus children, who they spend time talking to throughout the day, finding out more about their interests, culture and family.

Providence Christian College takes relationships seriously. A commitment to relationship building is at the heart of practice and is a key component of the everyday culture of the school. When recruiting, leaders seek out educators who demonstrate a commitment to relational pedagogy and who really put children first. The educators speak about seizing every small

moment, no matter how busy the day is, to truly listen and genuinely connect with each child. Their intentions are to know and understand every child, to know each sibling, to be invited into every family's story. The educators recognise that strong partnerships with families enhance children's sense of belonging at school, their learning and wellbeing, and their relationships with children. On a daily basis, this begins with educators taking time to greet each child and every family as they arrive. The arrival of COVID-19 presented a challenge for these exchanges, which used to occur within classrooms. However, the educators were determined to find a way to maintain these important interactions, adapting their routine so that children now engage in outdoor play every morning while families and educators chat and interact together with the children. The school community has noticed how this has helped the children to start the school day feeling calm, settled, safe and connected. Because of these benefits, these opportunities for outdoor connections each morning have been maintained following the easing of COVID restrictions.



Oakwood Primary School



West Busselton Primary School

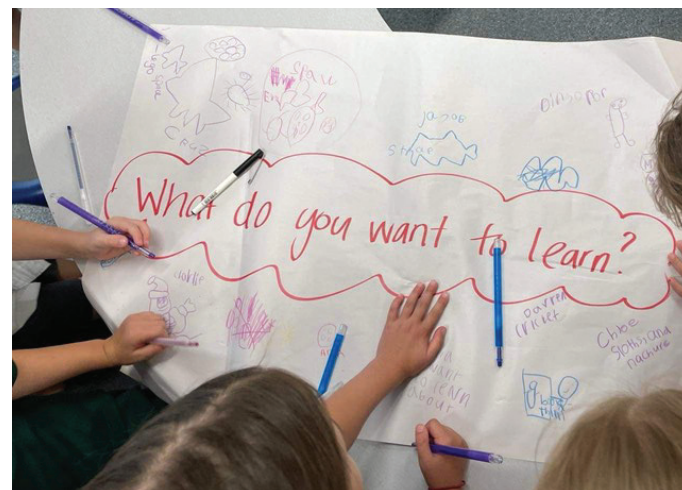
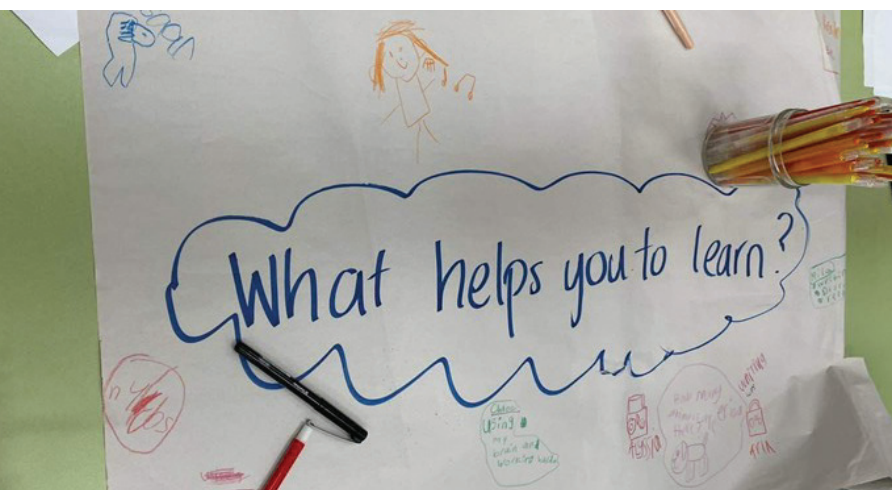


At **Walliston Primary School**, educators prioritise time to interact with children during play to build positive relationships while supporting and enriching their learning. In the Kindergarten classroom, children are provided with choice and engage in intentional, open-ended play throughout the day. Educators move around the room and connect with every child as often as possible, sitting in learning centres to observe, listen, join in and show that they value children's play. During these interactions, educators:

- connect with children in a relaxed way, learning about their interests, ideas and thinking.
- take a role within the play.
- ask open-ended questions,
- scaffold learning at the point of need,
- capitalise on teachable moments, and engage children in sustained, shared thinking.

Meet the teacher day

On meet the teacher day at **St Jerome's Primary School**, educators encourage children to reflect on themselves as learners and share those things that help them learn best. In groups, children are invited to share their ideas with their classmates and record some of these ideas on butcher's paper. This becomes valuable information for educators to assist them to better understand their class before children commence the following year. This information enables a more responsive approach when designing the learning program. The day is organised as a jigsaw activity, where children move around the room drawing and writing about themselves. During the day, the children are supported to understand the importance of being honest about themselves and recording ideas on each sheet that will assist their educator to know them better, promoting greater confidence, trust and a strong sense of security.





Reviewing timetables to optimise learning

At **Aquinas College**, staff were investigating ways that children might be more settled and ready to learn when returning to class after playtime and to have extended time to finish their lunch. Discussions about the adjustments which could optimise the learning environment and better reflect the needs of the children prompted leadership to initiate a trial to flip the eating and play times. This trial enabled the boys to engage in play first and then sit to eat for the remaining 10 minutes of recess and lunch.

Over the course of the term, educators monitored the children as they were returning to class after each break and observed the children's lunchboxes during eating. Anecdotal observations

were shared with leadership during staff and cluster meetings. Families were encouraged to provide their child with a grazing box of fruit or vegetables, which were available throughout the course of the day to prevent them being hungry during their learning time. Children were asked to provide feedback during the trial, which revealed overwhelming support in Pre-Primary to Year 3. This success led to a permanent change to the timetable.

Child centred journey towards positive relationships

At **Santa Clara School**, staff understand the impact of positive relationships on future success and achievement. Educators are committed to creating authentic opportunities and establishing relationships with children which foster a sense of security. To support children in developing a sense of social and emotional wellbeing, the school implements the use of core values.

In Pre-Primary, a strong emphasis on getting to know children, their strengths, ideas, cultures, and interests are a vehicle to building authentic and respectful relationships. While intentionally engaging in sustained conversations around children's interests, documentations and observations are also undertaken accordingly. These conversations



Aquinas College

assist in the development of positive relationships and foster opportunities to build social competencies further.

A focus on the school values of courage and resilience was undertaken by scaffolding social interactions and conversations based around children's interests. The aim of this focus was to assist children to develop their positive sense of self and confidently and independently initiate conversations in social situations. Early in the term a child was demonstrating difficulty initiating conversations and was engaging in parallel play only. Building on the classroom focus to develop children's skills of being courageous and resilient, the classroom educator intentionally prioritised time to undertake close observations of this child, to better understand their interests. Soon, it was noticed that the child was motioning an action, like that of strumming a guitar. When asked 'What are you doing?', 'Rock and roll', was the child's response. By further questioning, 'Do you like guitars? Would you like to play a guitar?' He nodded. This child's interest of guitars was then adopted to inform a design and technology project where children designed and created their own musical instrument.



Reflective Questions

How do you build a connection with every child?

How do you make and prioritise time to engage in meaningful interactions with individual children? What impacts this, and how might you overcome these challenges?

How often do you reflect on the way you respond to children's comments, questions, requests for assistance and their challenges?



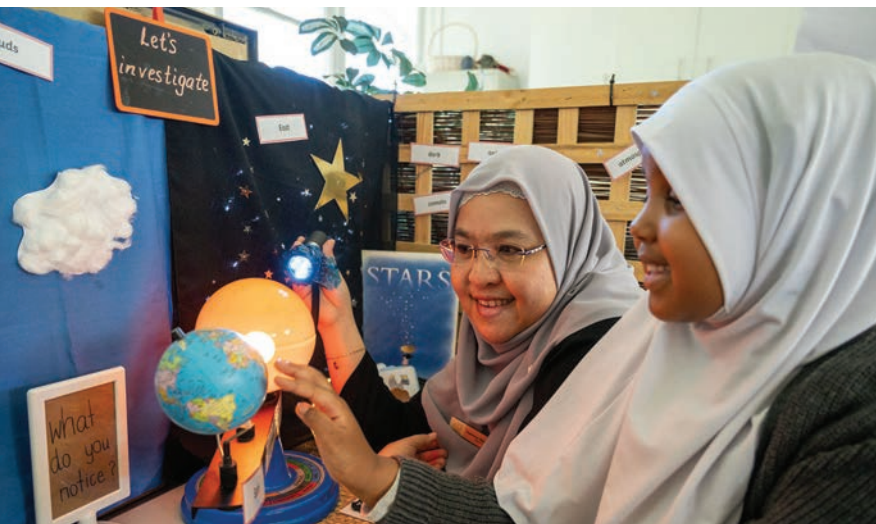
Carey Baptist College



Rangeway Primary School



St Jerome's Primary School



Al-Hidayah Islamic School



Providence Christian College



Durham Road School



Frederick Irwin Anglican School



Hensman Street Elementary



West Northam Primary School



West Northam Primary School



Tom Price Primary School



Tom Price Primary School

Maintaining the Dignity and Rights of Children

Element 5.1.2 Dignity and rights of the child

Reflective Questions

How do you encourage children to understand their rights and the rights of others?

What strategies do you use to encourage children to challenge discrimination in a productive way?

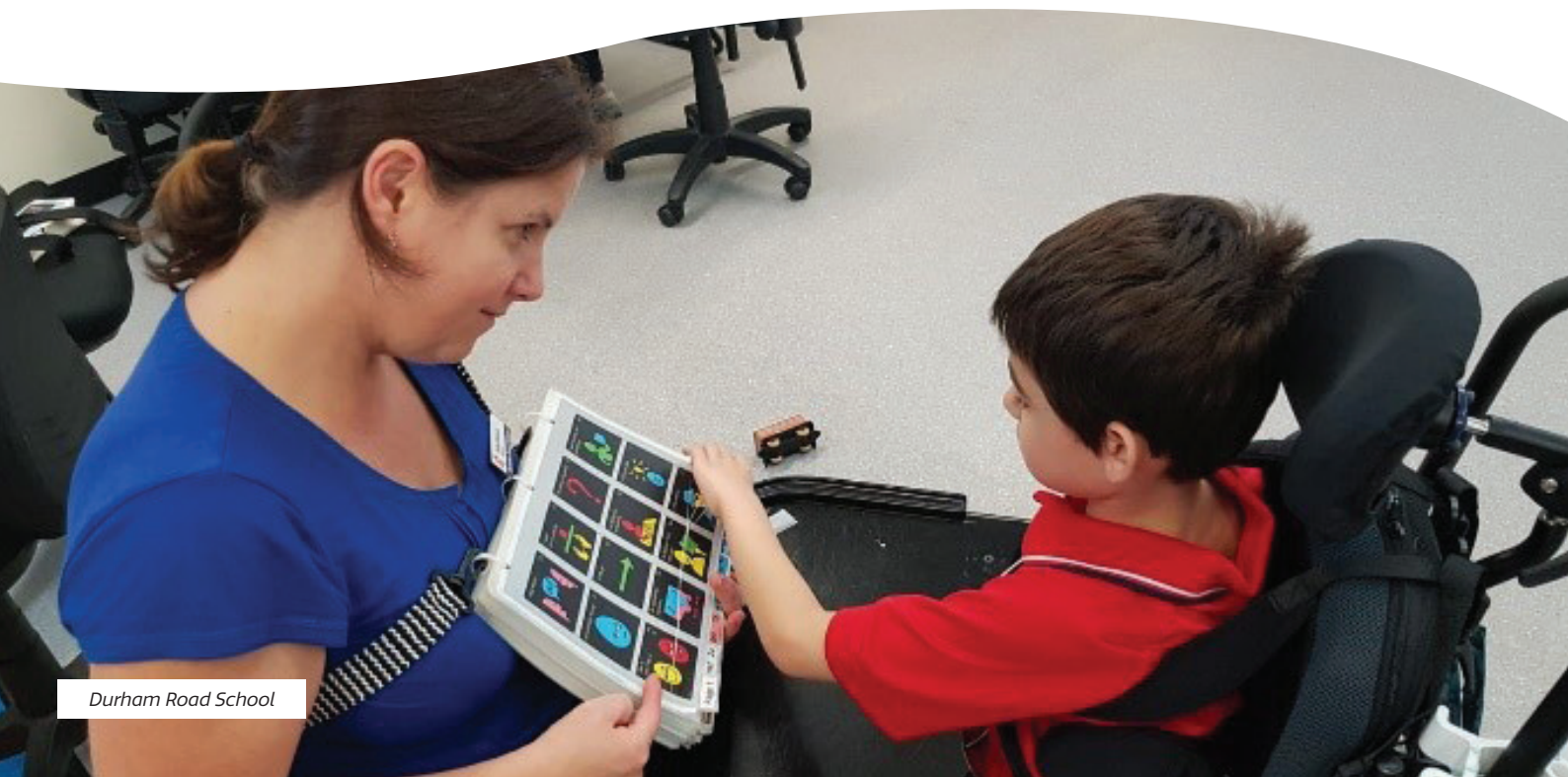
How do we honour children's rights and their dignity during times when we might be challenged by their behaviour? How are children's rights reflected in our behaviour policies and procedures?

The rights and dignity of children with additional needs

At **Durham Road School**, children learn to have choice and control, and to communicate. Each

child's dignity is paramount, and many protocols and procedures are put in place to ensure the rights of every child are upheld. Building trust through routine and predictability is key to ensuring children know what is happening and can learn to predict their day-to-day activities with confidence.

Many children are early learners who use behaviours, gestures, body language, and facial expressions to communicate. Each child has communication skill priorities and access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication systems to assist them to have a voice. Educators work closely with families to interpret these modes of communication and tirelessly teach the children how to communicate using words, signs, and symbols so that they can be understood by a wider range of people. Learning is scaffolded and differentiated to individual children's strengths and abilities so that everyone can participate in activities, regardless of their goals. All children are given adequate processing time, when needed, and are prepared for the day through the use of real objects, visual or written timetables and visual reminders. Supported decision making is highly





Rapids Landing Primary School

valued and resources, such as choice boards and Talking Mats, are used to enable children of all ages and abilities to learn about, and give, informed consent. All children with multiple disabilities have an educational goal that they will clearly be able to communicate 'no', 'stop', 'I don't like it', and 'something is wrong' so they can effectively reject people, places, and activities in order to remain safe.

The right to respect

Rapids Landing Primary School follows the Tribes agreement, which serves as a framework for maintaining children's dignity and the right to be respected by others. There are five agreements. The first four are part of the Tribes Learning Communities⁴⁰, whilst the last agreement was added by the school to ensure children understand their responsibility to show respect to others.

- Attentive listening – We will listen with our eyes, ears, bodies, hearts and minds.
- Mutual respect – We will treat people the way we want to be treated.
- Appreciations/No put downs – We speak kindly to others and think of other people's feelings.
- The right to pass/The right to participate – We have the right to pass in certain activities, and know that the more we participate, the more we gain.
- Personal best/Personal responsibility – We are responsible for our own learning and our own behaviour.

This framework supports children's social-emotional development by teaching them about

the importance of empathy, fairness, equality and celebrating each other. Children are supported to make choices and take responsibility for their actions.

Listening to children

At **Lance Holt School**, educators believe that children not only have the right to be heard but importantly, opportunities to be heard are intentionally cultivated by educators. Whole school and class meetings, collaborative group work, class discussions and presentations create space for the children to be able to speak confidently to people of all age groups, including other children, staff and visitors to the school. A strong ethos of rights, democracy and participation across the school places respectful relationships at the forefront.

Children know they have rights

From Kindergarten, children learn about rights, including the UN Declaration that all human beings have rights. Rights within the school environment concern 'freedoms' to 'be yourself', to have agency, to be self-determining, and to participate in matters that concern them. In every classroom, children and educators work together to create a process or a guide that is relevant to them. In Pre-Primary, this guide is developed through stories, play and a lot of conversation and discussion about rights (the right to play, to learn, to have friends, to feel safe...). Together, the educators and children work through scenarios and solutions for the questions: What do I do if I have a problem? Who can I go to for help? Processes are established and posters created for children to refer to throughout the year. Through this work, children are supported to identify the size of the problem and how they might respond appropriately.



*Video of Lance
Holt School's
Child-Friendly
Complaints
process*

Children help create the rules

Class Codes of Conduct are created with children at the beginning of each school year in order to develop a classroom culture where everyone belongs and feels safe and where children have a voice in decisions that affect them.

Children have the right to make a complaint

Children and educators have recently collaborated to create age-appropriate, child-friendly complaints processes across the school that support children to raise any concerns they have and to speak up if they have worries or feel unsafe. The QR code above links to a video that shares children's and educators' perspectives on their co-created Child-Friendly Complaints process.

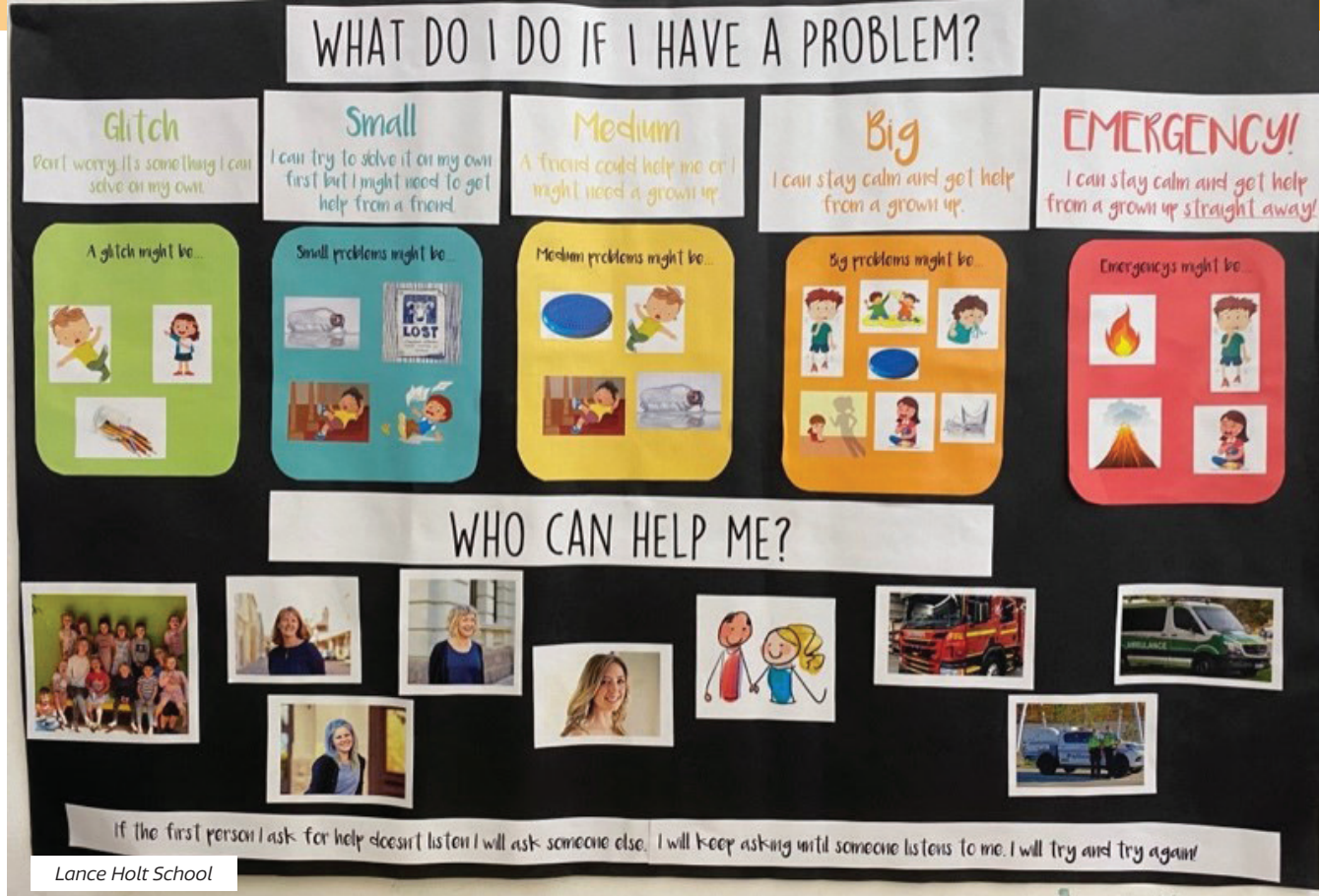
Children have the right to a second chance

Throughout the school community it is acknowledged that respecting mutual rights, building positive relationships and ownership of behaviour is necessary for the successful implementation of a whole-school approach to supporting the decisions children make. Children not only have the right to be safe but have the right to a second chance. It is recognised that children, like adults, make mistakes. The staff at Lance Holt School understand that language used to commonly represent children's behaviour can lead to labelling and judgement on both behaviour and the child.

A journey into children's rights

According to Malaguzzi's Charter of Rights,⁴¹ adults, educators and parents need to act in alliance to recognise the rights of children and help them access and exercise these rights through opportunity, cooperation and interaction. At **Cornerstone Christian College**, Busselton, the Pre-Primary educators' exploration of children's rights began with developing an overarching teacher research question: *How might building a culture of rights transform our classroom community?* Initial class discussions on children's rights revealed that most were unfamiliar with the concept of 'rights', leading the educators to wonder how they might explain this complicated concept. An opportune moment arose when a child shared images from his former home in the Philippines, which fascinated the class. When the educators posed a wondering of whether children's rights in Australia were the same as in the Philippines, one child said, "No, because they have dark skin". On hearing this, one child became very animated, stating quite emotionally: "Yes they are, they have the same rights; it's just sometimes they don't get them." These early discussions provoked an inquiry into the rights of children in the class community as well as global human rights for all children.

This inquiry led the educators to co-construct a Charter of Rights with children, families and educators through processes of dialogue and multimodal representations that honoured Loris Malaguzzi's theory of the 'hundred languages'⁴².



The resultant Charter of Rights is extensive, bringing together the voices of the children and the whole community to consider the rights of children, which they decided include:

- To play and have friends
- To have food and water
- To have a home
- To feel loved by people who care for them and to love and care for others
- To learn
- To have time
- To have independent choices
- To create
- To read and to be read to
- To have help when they need it

Children, along with the entire community, also researched and documented the rights of parents, of educators, and of the space. The Charter of Rights inquiry saw two significant themes emerge as resonating with all participants: time and choice. These insights became the catalyst for further investigation, leading to a transformation of practice in which educators made

a conscious decision to be more flexible with time, guided by the rhythms of the children rather than the clock, and to foster choice by following authentic learning opportunities, rather than rigidly following plans. The research of rights reinforced the educators' views of children as capable and competent, and benefited the classroom climate. Children felt heard and responded to, and families became increasingly willing to be involved and to offer feedback.



Cornerstone Christian College (Busselton)

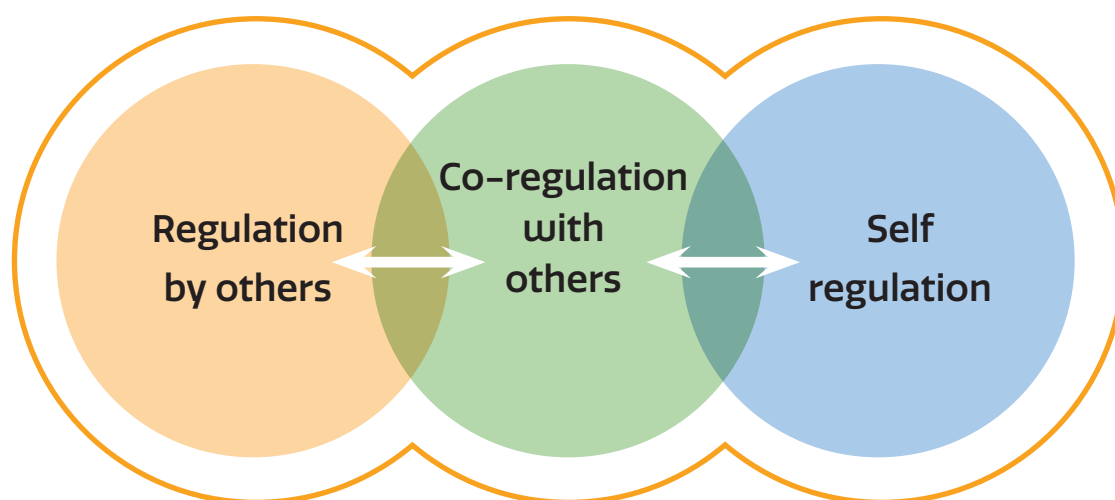
Self-Regulation

Element 5.2.2 Self-regulation

Self-regulation is important for the development of children as learners, along with their academic achievement and their lifelong wellbeing⁴³.

For self-regulation to occur, a child needs to be able to identify and label their emotions. This includes being able to understand and articulate how they physically feel. Supporting a child to recognise their emotions and make associations with how it impacts their body and mind are the foundation skills for self-regulation.

It is important to remember that self-regulation is not automatic, and children may need support at different times, and in different ways. The continuum for regulation is as follows, although people of any age may move forwards and backwards along the continuum, depending on the situation and circumstances.



















Educators can support children to learn to self-regulate by:

- having realistic expectations about how children may react and control their response
- modelling their own state of regulation
- modelling the tools that they themselves use to regulate their emotions and relieve stress
- teaching children about emotions and ways to identify their physical and emotional feelings
- implementing a variety of tools and strategies, such as those described in the following

stories, for children to use to support the regulation of their emotions and behaviour

- incorporating self-regulation activities throughout every day. In order for children to be able to understand how they feel and how to control their feelings, this skill should be practised continually
- considering stress management strategies – children may need time to de-stress before they can be expected to self-regulate and monitor their emotions.

Ailsa Earley, Consultant School Psychologist

<p>Break Card 😞</p> <p>I feel sad, tired, hurt or bored, and I need a break.</p> <p>Choices:</p> <p>Stretch  Drink Water </p> <p>Deep breaths.  Oval walk with a peer (2 mins) </p>	<p>Break Card 😊</p> <p>I feel good, calm or ready to learn, and I just need a break.</p> <p>Choices:</p> <p> Drink water.  Deep breaths</p> <p> Hand presses  Finger pulls</p>
<p>Break Card 😞</p> <p>I feel frustrated, overwhelmed or hungry and I need a break.</p> <p>Choices:</p> <p> Drink water.  Eat a snack</p> <p>Deep breaths.  Oval walk with a peer (2 mins) </p>	<p>Break Card 😡</p> <p>I feel angry, aggressive, or like I want to yell, and I need a break.</p> <p>Choices:</p> <p> Deep breaths.  Let my teacher know.</p> <p> Ask to see Mrs Reeve / have a break at the office for 15 mins.  Drink water</p>

Fremantle Christian College: A child's personalised break card

Collaboratively refining practice to support self-regulation

As part of their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) review, **Fremantle Christian College's** early childhood team and school leaders reflected on their policies and practices, with a particular focus on behaviour guidance. They identified a disconnect between their existing behaviour

policy and their philosophy. A review of the policy was undertaken in collaboration with the team, commencing with consideration of the school values of Faith, Character and Courage, alongside the EYLF and NQS. They considered the NQS' advocacy for maintaining the rights and dignity of the child and educators' responsibility to support children's self-regulation. As part of this focus on student wellbeing and the rights of the child,

time was spent talking with children and families to support understandings. Information was collated into a revised behaviour guidance policy, with the use of the word 'guidance' being intentional, as staff believe their role is to guide, rather than manage children's behaviour. This guidance policy includes a number of actionable steps, which enable the reteaching of expectations and allow for age-appropriate measures to be taken to support each child's development and skill level. A key part of the process involves reflecting with children on what went wrong and guiding choices for the future. Ross Greene's 'Kids Do Well If They Can' video has continued to spur the staff on. Educators work collaboratively to remind one another that all behaviour is



Ross Greene's 'Kids Do Well if They Can' video, used by the educators at Fremantle Christian College



communication, and that usually, children have a skill - rather than motivation - deficit when it comes to their behaviour. Their goal is to continue striving to guide and build the children's abilities in this area and ensure that every child feels safe at school.

The team have implemented a range of proactive procedures and processes to support children, including regular sensory and breathing breaks for all learners and the introduction of 'break cards'. Break cards are a tool to help when a child becomes overwhelmed with a situation, event or feeling. They provide children with guidance to implement a strategy to assist them in remaining calm, or to reduce sensory overload. Strategies linked to the Zones of Regulation are illustrated clearly on the cards using simple images from sources such as Boardmaker™⁴⁴, prompting the child to consider the emotions they are feeling and to choose a relevant strategy that may help. The educators state that a key to the success of this initiative has been collaboratively creating break cards with each child, with the child selecting suitable fonts, images and/or photos, and then valuing children's autonomy to use them. Educators may also use the card to support a child in a specific moment of the day. The cards are continually revised based on the individual child's needs and development. The educators report that they generally notice excitement in children to use the break card for the first few days of its implementation, but once this novelty settles, it becomes a tool which is only utilised in the moments it is genuinely required, with valuable results for all involved.

Promoting self-regulation strategies

Many Western Australian schools have implemented sensory rooms, with the intent

of supporting children to self-manage and successfully regulate their emotions.

At **Orana Catholic Primary School**, the sensory room supports wellbeing and self-regulation by providing a safe de-escalation space. The school's social worker is regularly based in the sensory room and is available to sensitively support children using this space. The room consists of a range of carefully placed sensory, therapeutic, calming, vestibular balance and proprioception equipment. The room and its various resources support every child to access what they need to be a successful learner. By accessing this space, the dignity and rights of every child are respected and maintained.

At **Our Lady of Mercy Primary School**, there is a rich mix of cultures represented within the school community. The staff are committed to ensuring a positive emphasis is placed on fostering cultural responsiveness and the expression of genuine sensitivity to build healthy relationships and positive partnerships between educators and children.

The Pre-Primary educator is committed to building her own understandings and undertaking the important task of developing trusting relationships to support each child in feeling safe, secure, confident, and included within her care. Commencing at the school in the middle of the year, she quickly identified that this change in the children's routine and educator could result in some children feeling apprehensive to come to school. She carefully reflected on ways she could ensure this transition was a positive experience for each child.

The educator began with the physical environment. She wanted to retain much of the current layout to maintain familiarity and limit disturbance for the children. Collaboratively

working alongside her co-educator, who already held valuable knowledge and understanding about the children, she decided to create a calm down space within the classroom, which included a variety of carefully selected sensory toys and visual aids. This space provided a safe and calm area for children to use if they felt overwhelmed or were in need of quiet time to process their thoughts.

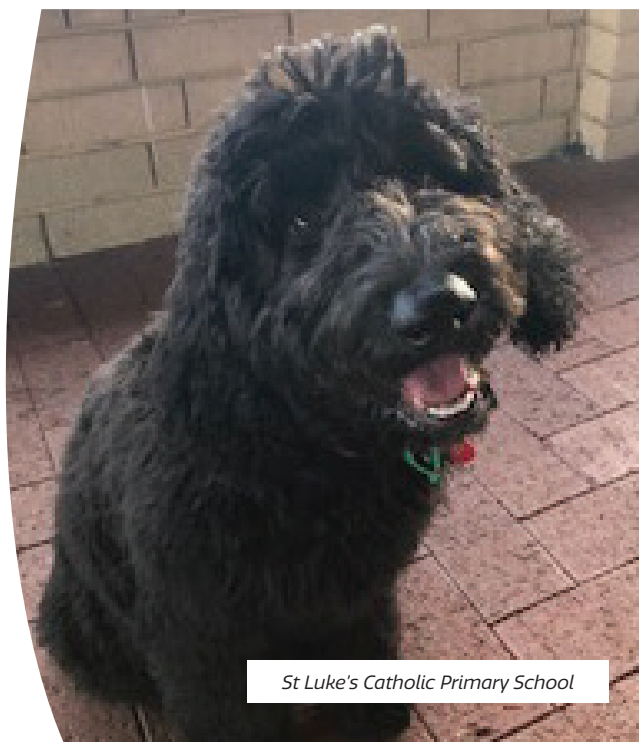
She shared information with the children about herself, which included where she had come from. Working hard to learn the children's names quickly and greeting every child individually each morning, she built respectful relationships and ensured each child felt valued. She was mindful of attending promptly to children's needs, to help build a strong trusting relationship, intentionally taking time to praise children's efforts and taking time to attentively observe and listen to children.

Alongside her co-educator, because of their shared commitment to building strong and healthy relationships, their sensitivity to connect with each child, and the specific strategies she had put into place, the educator noticed minimal disruption during her transition into the classroom. Together they witnessed a sense of the children's genuine happiness to be at school, children's attendance being maintained, and their classroom engagement remaining positive. A strong sense of community developed over the following months and the classroom was a rich place of learning where children's participation demonstrated they felt safe and secure.

Similarly, at **St Luke's Catholic Primary School**, the Rainbow Room provides a space where children can express their emotions and communicate successfully with others. Children are guided by staff using resources that may be beneficial for regulating their emotions, particularly when they are feeling distressed. To access the Rainbow Room on a regular basis, a ticket system is in place and a room booking timetable has been developed to schedule and promote the space for general use. Children who are experiencing dysregulation can also access the room as required, with an educator for support.

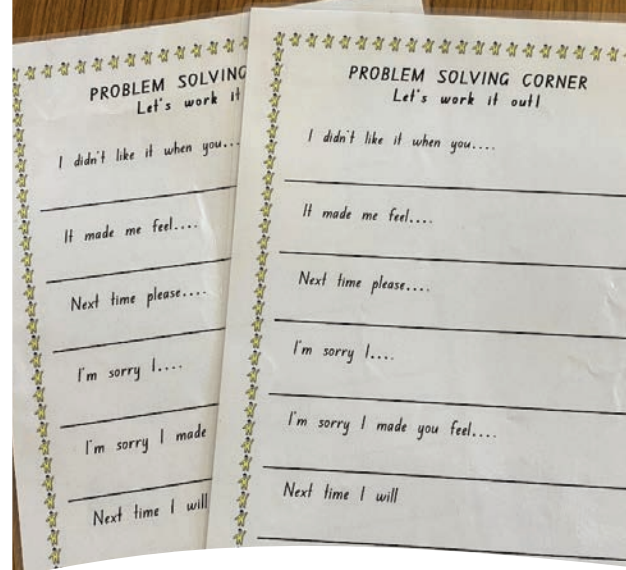
St Luke's has also strategically introduced a ten-minute mindfulness session, after lunch each day, to assist all children to self-regulate after a busy lunch break. Staff intentionally plan and model mindful experiences such as breathing exercises, meditations, stories and prayer.

Lulu, the school's wellness dog, supports children to self-manage their individual social and emotional needs. This initiative was launched by the Year 6 Service Ministry, after an initial proposal that was supported by staff and families. Lulu visits classrooms and spends time with the children in the playground. She is especially utilised by children identified as needing companionship or time to self-regulate. While acting as a mediator to help children with their social and emotional wellbeing, Lulu has helped many children express their emotions and feelings, through a pat or by simply spending time with her.





Victoria Park Christian School



Yarning circles

At **St Jerome's Primary School**, the use of Yarning Circles has helped promote the development of self-regulation as educators and children actively model respectful behaviours and engage in positively toned, supportive oral language. During Yarning Circle sessions, children are invited to vocalise their concerns and respectfully and attentively listen to each other's ideas. The group collaboratively consider alternate actions and behaviours to situations that are presented during the yarning time, and they solve problems together collectively and successfully.

The children initially watched video clips created by Noongar Elders who were discussing the importance and value of Yarning Circles. By undertaking an open discussion, which invited ideas from all participants, the groups' protocols and agreements were established.

The Yarning Circle begins with the group coming together either within the classroom or outside among nature under a shady tree. The session commences with an Acknowledgement of Country, led by two children. These children



St Jerome's Primary School

also set up a focus area in the middle of the circle, using a variety of natural and man-made materials including flowers or other suitable loose parts. After beginning with a prayer, a focus question is presented. The group then discuss events that may have happened in the playground or share stories about the places where they live, learn and play. The discussions and conversations taking place during this time and the attentive listening to others demonstrate authentic respect for and inclusivity of all.

Restorative practices

After attending a professional learning event on restorative practices, the Year 2 educator at **Victoria Park Christian School** reflected on social issues that were occurring during recess and lunch for her class, which were often brought back into the classroom and dysregulating the children. A list of restorative questions was created as a way of supporting children's problem-solving during moments of conflict. The educator introduced these restorative questions to the children and discussed how conversations can begin the journey towards understanding each other's points of view, developing empathy for others and supporting the restoration of friendships. With a desire to nurture children's agency and autonomy, a space named the 'Problem Solving Corner' was created outside underneath a shady tree. When the children experience conflict or friendship struggles, they are guided towards the tree where they can use laminated questions to support their conversations and problem-solving. The educator has found this strategy empowers children to listen to each other and understand other's perspectives. It has supported their use of language to begin solving problems in an increasingly independent manner.

Supporting Children to Collaborate

Element 5.2.1 Collaborative learning

“Learning in the real world is as much a social process as a solitary one, so children need to practise and develop all the component aspects of collaboration⁴⁵.”

When children have opportunities to learn collaboratively, they develop independence and interdependence, utilise social skills and improve their speaking and listening skills. Collaborative learning helps to foster a supportive classroom that is founded on mutual respect for others. During opportunities for collaborative learning, children develop self-confidence, empathy, flexibility, adaptability and cooperation skills. They learn to negotiate, navigate problems and see that there are often several solutions to a problem. As you build a culture of collaborative learning, children naturally support each other⁴⁵.

Reflective Questions

How do you encourage children to listen to other children's ideas and negotiate?

Are your learning environments conducive to collaborative learning?

How do you help children develop the skills required to communicate, solve problems and collaborate effectively with others?



Margaret River Primary School

An environment that supports collaboration

A positive classroom culture is vital for children to successfully work together. In the early years at **Margaret River Primary School**, educators begin by focusing on school values, which helps establish expectations for children before they will later engage in collaborative learning. Educators teach the values explicitly, modelling and fostering a calm, emotionally safe space. Learning experiences about emotional intelligence

encourage children to listen to one another and role play how behaviours impact others.

Setting up the physical environment with flexible furniture arrangements that provide spaces for children to come together and make choices about who they will share learning with is key. Through open-ended resources, children are encouraged to share, take turns and solve problems, developing cooperative skills through authentic play experiences. Educators model negotiation skills, and ways to effectively listen and accept the opinion of others.



Cornerstone Christian College



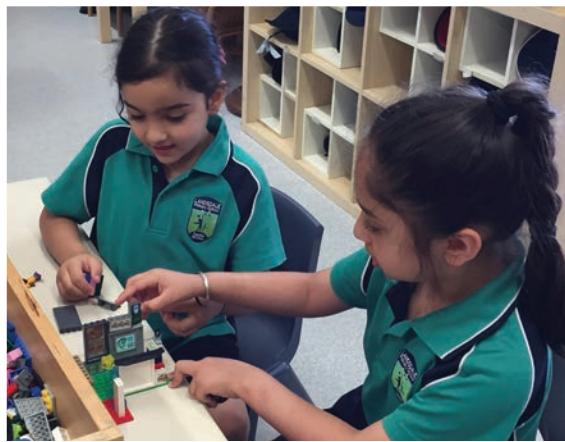
Child Side School



St Bernard's School



Landsdale Primary School



Landsdale Primary School



West Northam Primary School



Lance Holt School



John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School



South Coast Baptist College



Oakwood Primary School



St Bernard's School



Collaboration through unhurried play

At **Mary's Mount Primary School**, a group of Kindergarten children decided to make a campfire within their natural outdoor environment. The educators guided them through this investigation and provided a supportive environment where the children were encouraged to build positive relationships, develop confidence, and exercise agency while exploring their world and solving problems.

The group carefully selected where the campfire would be located and then, in both pairs and small groups, set about finding what they needed. Some children collected small branches, while others looked for logs. One child found a log and tried to carry it back by herself; however soon realised this was going to be tricky and needed to ask her friends to assist her. The children problem solved the many ways they could lift, carry and move the log together, finally deciding it would be more successful by placing one person at each end of the log and a third in the middle. Soon they were on their way back to the campfire, smiling and laughing about how it didn't seem as heavy with them all carrying it and working together.

The group then had an additional problem to solve, as they wondered where the log might be best placed. After much discussion, the location was decided and children negotiated how to place the logs, sticks and branches together to set up the fire. The ongoing campfire building tasks promoted positive relationships and collaboration. With the campfire complete, the children explored the area for sticks to toast marshmallows on. "I think mine is too short," suggested one child to their friend. "Can you please help me find a longer one?" Off they went in search of the perfect sized stick together. The children then came back together and toasted their 'marshmallows' on their campfire.

Whilst observing and documenting the children's investigation, the educators noticed shared decision-making and children moving in and out of several group roles. They particularly noted that the children were very sensitive to their peers' feelings, supporting them and patiently listening to each other's suggestions.

An ongoing collaborative project

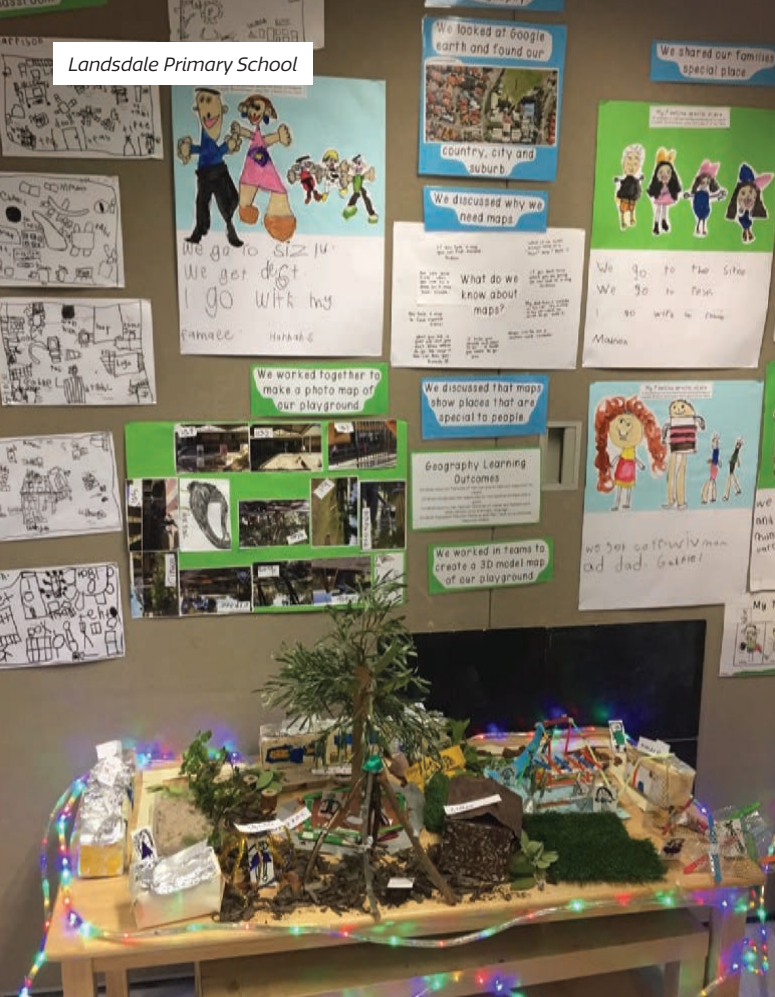
In Pre-Primary at **Landsdale Primary School**, educators encourage children to work together on ongoing, collaborative projects where they



Landsdale Primary School



Landsdale Primary School



can direct their learning together. One term, many children were interested in pirates and pirate ships. As an introduction to the geography learning outcomes, the educator created a provocation with pirate treasure and a sensory tray for the children to bury "special" loose parts. The children began to direct their peers to find the treasure using verbal instructions; educators added paper and pencils, which encouraged them to draw and write the instructions instead. This led to discussions about maps. The class brainstormed what they already knew about maps, what they are used for and where they are found. After looking at their own country, city and then suburb on Google Earth, the class talked about how maps show special places. The children began to draw maps of their homes and the classroom and explored loose parts, including blocks, trees, signs and roads, creating 3D maps. The class then suggested they create a big map of their playground area. In pairs or small groups, they used iPads to take photographs of significant landmarks and spaces. They then printed the photos and worked as a whole group to put together and label a visual 2D map.

Some of the children tried to emulate this using loose parts and two children suggested the class create a 3D model, which excited the others. The children decided upon roles required and used the 2D map to identify areas that needed to

be represented. They each chose a task or area to work on, which created groups. Each group built a section, from the classrooms to the large tree and stage in the middle, to the playground climbing equipment and the natural garden settings. Another group created the labels and were responsible for painting the construction. The educators worked with a group at a time, supporting them to source materials and use tools safely, including a glue gun and box cutters, whilst allowing the children to drive the project.

Learning to collaborate through dramatic play

At **Connolly Primary School**, dramatic play environments are purposefully set up to encourage children to share, take turns, negotiate and solve problems with others. When a new dramatic centre is first introduced, educators model scenarios with rich language, including Tier 3 vocabulary. For example, educators introduced vocabulary such as moats, drawbridge, knights and catapult for a fairy tale castle play tray, modelling the structure of the fairy tale genre. Children were guided to work together to retell and innovate stories, using related props, puppets and dress ups. They negotiated which character they wanted to be and were supported to take turns in creating dialogue and to share the castle props with others. Educators noticed that the dramatic play spaces are a wonderful way to cultivate positive, warm and supportive relationships between the children.

Self-directed learning that promotes collaboration

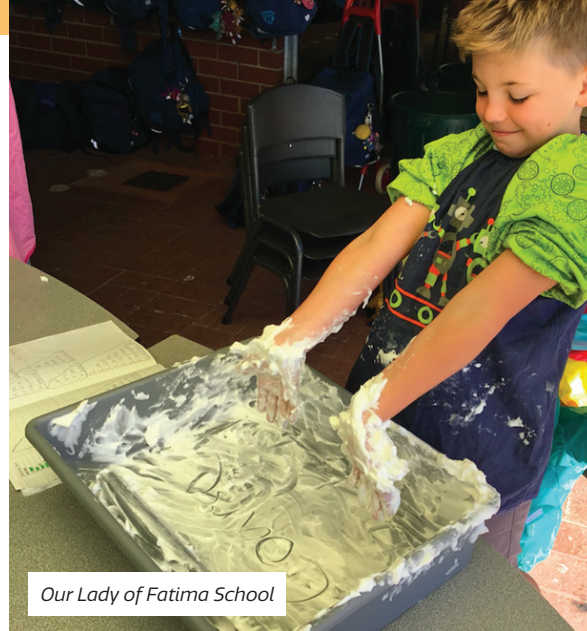
At **Our Lady of Fatima School**, Year 2 children participate throughout the week in collaborative self-directed learning experiences during time dedicated to literacy and numeracy. Playful and engaging learning experiences are intentionally selected to align with the curriculum, and can be completed both independently and within small groups. Children are viewed as capable and are encouraged to independently gather photographic and video evidence of their learning using iPads, which they post on Seesaw with small blurbs to share with their families.

Building upon collaborative skills

At **Oakwood Primary School**, educators engage children in collaborative learning experiences from Kindergarten. They introduce various



Connolly Primary School



Our Lady of Fatima School



Our Lady of Fatima School

strategies that are key in teaching children to encourage each other and respond positively to peer questions, offering constructive suggestions and support through guidance and modelling. An intentional play-based approach provides opportunities for children to work and play cooperatively, solve problems and build skills and dispositions they need to be 21st century learners.

After a focus on the foundation skills in Kindergarten and Pre-Primary of sharing, acting responsibly, taking turns and being willing to listen to others, the Year 1 and 2 educators build upon these capabilities by providing opportunities for children to work cooperatively during investigations, inquiries and projects. Educators support the children to plan, research, negotiate and share decision-making, providing rich, open-ended provocations that support their interests and the rigour of the curriculum.

The Year 1 children were learning weather patterns and geographical locations as part of the HASS and Science curriculum. As a provocation, the educator provided a 'News Station' for the children's dramatic play space. Whilst a peer was presenting a weather forecast, another child took on the role of interpreter, inventing their own sign language. The children researched Auslan in

small groups, watching educational videos that demonstrated the different letters and greetings. They worked together to imitate the actions and provided feedback to each other, talking about how they might improve. Using iPads, the children recorded each other, taking turns to capture the videos and present. During whole class reflections, the collaborative groups led the rest of the class in Auslan alphabet instruction, using their videos and modelling examples for their peers to copy. The Year 1 educator then provided provocations to deepen and extend the children's interest in the project further, with the children choosing to create instructional posters and welcome signs for the school. This project enabled the children to identify each other's strengths and be reflective about how they worked with their peers.

After learning about the concepts of 'push and pull' and exploration of open-ended provocations, the Year 2 children developed a car ramp that would allow a small toy car to travel along, determining which car would travel the furthest distance. These children worked collaboratively to design, construct and evaluate their ramp over a number of sessions, negotiating roles and process to achieve a common goal.



Oakwood Primary School



Oakwood Primary School



Alesha, Pre-Primary

Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities



'This is me and my Mum at our Open Night. We did patterns with blocks and then counting. I felt great because my Mum was in my classroom.'

Ariana, Year 1

QA6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
Standard 6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with School	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the school and contribute to school decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the school and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
Standard 6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
6.2.3	Community engagement	The school builds relationships and engages with its community.

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

Introduction

Dr Dee O'Connor

Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University.

Previously, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.



'I have my Grandma, Grandpa, brother and me. We are playing some games and reading some books. We looked around the different classrooms. My Grandma and Grandpa liked it. We then went to my brother's classroom and the art room, before going home.'

Adriana, Year 1

Quality Area 6 highlights for us how important it is to work in collaborative partnership with families and communities. When we are respectful of their family's expertise, cultures and values, children experience a greater sense of belonging and wellbeing at school⁴⁶. Positive transitioning to school increases attendance and participation, which naturally has an impact on how a child engages with their learning^{47,48}. The research shows that being supported to transition to school in a way that allows the child and their family to feel free to ask for what they need is the most effective way of ensuring a positive transition⁴⁹. To achieve this, schools and teachers need to be open-minded and welcoming, as well as actively inviting parental views and input.

It is also very important that families know about their child's experiences at school. Many schools use apps to share children's experiences with families. However, sometimes a richer partnership can be achieved by using images or stories of children's experiences to stimulate conversations between families and their children. For example, a picture of a child named Jarana pushing a box against a tree could be accompanied by a provocation encouraging the family to ask Jarana about the risk assessment he did when deciding to use the box to achieve his goal of being able to climb the tree. Such a provocation stimulates many elements of partnership: It shares the child's experience with the family and demonstrates that the child is engaged deeply in making conscious decisions. It also shows the family that the educator respects the child and is striking a gentle balance between empowering his decision-making and keeping his focus grounded in healthy decision-making through scaffolded considerations. Such a provocation may stimulate a child/parent conversation that deepens their connection, and may stimulate a teacher/parent conversation that will foster the further development of a collaborative partnership between the educator and Jarana's family.

It is ideal for the partnership with families to start a year before the child begins at the school⁵⁰. To support this, strong partnership practices in the community with Early Childhood Education and Care Services are an integral part of collaborative partnerships with families and communities³. Such partnerships can require effort and energy, but they can also be very rewarding for schools as well as children, and can lead to shared resources and collaborative events⁵¹.

The research is clear that children do better at school when the school has a positive and collaborative partnership with their family^{1,3} and when they feel physically, emotionally and culturally safe⁵². There is also significant evidence to show that this positive impact is more dramatic when the child is from a disadvantaged background⁵¹. The reverse is also the case: when a child's teacher is out of alignment with their family, experiences and culture, the impact is negative. The more disadvantaged the child is, the greater the negative impact is likely to be⁵³.

Raj's Story

This story explores the moment of Raj's arrival in the morning and showcases a very mindful, reflective and collaborative educator whose commitment to children is evident in how she works with Raj and his mother. At the time that the story is set, Raj had recently started Kindy and was really struggling to transition. Every morning he clung to his mother's skirts and stared at the floor or buried his face to avoid eye contact. His educator tried hard to make a connection; she was patient and kind, lowering herself to his level and trying to have a conversation. Every morning was the same: his mother answered the questions after a long pause from Raj. One morning the educator asked Raj how he travelled to school, and his mum answered that they came in the car. The educator asked if they played any games in the car or listened to music or chatted. Mum explained that they played Spotto and counted how many red cars they saw during the drive. The next morning, when the educator went down on one knee to talk to Raj, she smiled and said, "Raj, when I was driving to school this morning, I saw three red cars and I thought of

you." Raj's face slowly uncurled from his mother's skirt, and the educator was rewarded with her first eye contact and a little smile.

This story holds a major significance for me as it illustrates the reflective relational educator as one who tries and keeps trying to find points of connection that help every child to feel that their educator sees them, thinks about them, is interested in them, and cares about them and their experiences outside of school. It also demonstrates a very respectful partnership with the family, because it is clear that the mother is welcome to stay for transitioning and that the educator is involving her and listening to her input.

If we were to map Raj's story to Quality Area 6, we could say that this educator developed a respectful relationship with Raj's mother by engaging in this way (Standard 6.1). It is also clear that the family are welcome into the school (Element 6.1.1). The story shows us how this educator supports Raj's transition by seeking information and applying it relationally to support Raj to settle in (Element 6.2.1). Such an approach is what is needed if we are to build effective partnerships with families which will thereby support children's participation (Element 6.2.2).

Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: How do you work with families during transition? Is there a school policy that you follow, or do you have your own practices? Why do you support transition in the way you do?

Exercise 2: How welcome are families in your classroom generally? What are the practices in your classroom around families' active involvement from day to day? How did these practices develop? Is there anything about them that could be better?

Exercise 3: Reflect on the child who is named last on your register. What do you know about their family? How would you rate your relationship with them? What expertise does the family have in relation to understanding their child's needs? Can you describe their family values? Do their values align with yours, and is this important or not? What influence does this alignment have on your relationship with them? What is their culture and how do you integrate it into your program?



'Dad picks me up at the end of the day.'

John, Pre-Kindergarten

Suggested exercises *(continued)*

Exercise 4: Reflect on a time when you spoke with a family member to establish a partnership. What impelled you to have the conversation? Is it something that you do regularly, or was there something in particular that prompted it in that case?

Map the story of your partnership with that family to Quality Area 6. What alignments or tensions can you see?

Exercise 5: Positive transition to school for children is supported by the child and family feeling culturally safe, and the learning process and materials being culturally respectful and responsive. What do you do to ensure cultural safety, in particular for Aboriginal children and their families?

Exercise 6: What do you do to engage with the wider community? Choose some stories of community engagement from the examples in this book and reflect on them as a team. Can you gain some inspiration from them and come up with some good ideas for community engagement at your school?

Authentic Family Engagement and Participation

Element 6.1.1 Engagement with the school

Element 6.1.2 Parent views are respected

Element 6.2.2 Access and participation

“Given that parent and family engagement is one of the most powerful predictors of children's development and educational attainment, it makes sense for schools and parents to work in tandem to improve educational achievement and reduce equity gaps. Equal partnerships between educators, students and parents provide the greatest opportunities to scaffold learning, especially among those most at risk of underachievement⁵⁴.”

Kindergarten Expo

The 'Kindergarten Expo' was developed to strengthen the engagement of families following enrolment. Stalls and interactive displays provide information about **Harrisdale Primary School**, along with a range of support processes, programs and services that are available. Representatives from the Parents and Citizens Association, school nurse, uniform shop, and out of school hours care are in attendance, as well as staff from administration, educators and school officers who are on hand to talk with families and children, answer questions and share information. Translated documents, covering the major school

community language groups, and audio-visual displays support access to information for families for whom English is not a first language. A take home digital showbag, including translated documents, school information and local community services is also provided to engage families who are unable to attend.

Home-school partnerships in Pre-Kindergarten

At **St Stephen's School (Duncraig)**, the emphasis of the Pre-Kindergarten program is on building relationships with children and their families and making sure children feel safe and happy



Harrisdale Primary School



Harrisdale Primary School



in the school. The program is play-based, rich with child-led inquiry, and centred around the children's curiosities. The Pre-Kindergarten program uses the same room and playground as the Kindergarten and is conducted on Wednesdays when Kindergarten children do not attend. Sharing the space facilitates smoother transitions into Kindergarten as the children feel familiar with the environment.

In Semester 1, families stay with their child for the entire session, which enables any children who are not yet three to attend, whilst allowing educators to get to know families and strengthen this vital partnership. Educators invite families to have input into the program and share their interests, which helps build a sense of belonging and learning from each other. Families also gain an understanding of the program philosophy. A welcoming atmosphere engenders trust and builds relationships. Families feel encouraged to discuss their children's development, sharing insights in a reciprocal partnership with educators. Every week, educators and paraprofessionals introduce different topics to support families

with common queries and aspects of child development. The Pre-Kindergarten program has been highly successful in cultivating a sense of community, forging stronger partnerships between the school and families, and nurturing children's sense of belonging before they commence Kindergarten.

Developing a connected school community

At **Southern Grove Primary School's** inception, the staff carefully considered ways to engage with families and foster collaborative partnerships for their diverse school community. A 'Morning Mingle' was introduced, where families are invited to come along twice weekly for a coffee and chat outside Grovie Café, the school's canteen, discussing school happenings with each other and available educators and administrative staff. Younger siblings play together, and families form friendships and connections. Families have shared how this initiative helps them to feel welcome within the school and keeps them in touch within the school community.





Family involvement

Ensuring families are informed and involved is a school priority at **Jolimont Primary School**. Families are regularly invited into the classrooms to share their own expertise and are encouraged to stay with their child for the first fifteen minutes of each day. They might listen to reading or help their child respond to a question in their writing book. Sometimes educators set up shared writing on large sheets of paper, where all the children and families respond to a question together, for example, 'Do you celebrate Easter? If so, show us how'. This time is very popular with both children and family members, establishing positive relationships and enabling families to be involved and regularly see the learning that occurs within the classroom.

Respecting culture

Notre Dame Catholic Primary School is a multicultural community with several children for whom English is an additional language. Upon recognising that some families felt isolated within the wider community, the Kindergarten staff introduced a 'Cultural Sharing' unit to learn about and celebrate the multiple cultures within the school community. After initially receiving few responses from families, the education assistants shared their own Indian culture, including the traditional clothing, cooking and artwork. Once this was uploaded on Seesaw, more children and families grew interested in also sharing their cultures with the class.

Two students who spoke fluent Mandarin taught the other children how to count and say



Notre Dame Catholic Primary School



Notre Dame Catholic Primary School



Our Lady of Fatima School



Our Lady of Fatima School

hello. Families began joining the class to teach traditional dance and songs, share music and clothing, tell stories about their country, cook, contribute food and bring along traditional crafts and artefacts.

Many families commented on how valued and important they felt and how proud their child was when they were able to teach their peers something about their own culture. As a result of the initiative, it was noticed that families were more comfortable being involved in the classroom and engaging with the wider school community. Wonderful relationships began to build amongst families.

The staff at **Our Lady of Fatima School** recognise that relationships with families are crucial to a child's sense of belonging and families are respected as the child's first educator.

Pre-Primary families are encouraged to share their interests, talents, and cultural backgrounds with the class, which have included expertise of worm farms, musical skills such as drum playing, and French heritage and language. These opportunities have enhanced child and family engagement and participation in the Pre-Primary program. The sessions were documented in a Floorbook™, which the children enjoy reading each day.

At **Southern Grove Primary School**, there is a cultural focus each month for the various cultures within the school community. Families read with children in their home language, cook with classes and share stories about their childhood and experiences about their culture and living here in Australia.



Notre Dame Catholic Primary School

Responding to Family Voices

Element 6.1.2 Parent views are respected

"Parents and families are a critical source of knowledge about their child's strengths, abilities and needs, and through strong family engagement practices, this knowledge can be harnessed and leveraged by the school for student success..."

Adopting a strong culture of relationship-based engagement means seeking to engage with every family and their child. No two families are the same, which means ensuring that any opportunity for meaningful engagement both sensitively and respectfully values all aspects of diversity – cultural background, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, disability status, and socio-economic background, among many⁵⁴."

Reflective Questions

How are families' voices and children's experiences at home appreciated and utilised in developing accessible programs for all children?

What strategies are currently employed to engage in meaningful discussions with families about their beliefs, values, culture and goals? How successful are those strategies, even for those who may be reluctant to engage with the school?

What opportunities do families have to contribute to decisions about the school, programs and their child's learning and development?

What do you hope and imagine for our class this year?

Euan
- Share inquiry Qs to go through at home - let us know what their topic/theme is
- Celebrating child's achievements w/ communication w/ home

Alice
insights into lessons plans
parent helpers in the classroom
sharing knowledge → building a class community.
Everyone knows & understands expectations

Pearl
Reading Progress updates.
Relation of Different books

Jack B
• Good flow of information back + forth.
• Ideas to work + share on at home with the school

Charlotte
• updates on current class learning.
• updates on child's progress or areas that need attention, prior to interview.

Elliana
we set up 'dock time' during the holidays so any on-topic learning topics or fun homework we can talk about and do would be good.
Apart from that Elliana's classes have always been good to be honest what's happening and what she's learning.

Reciprocal sharing

At **Springfield Primary School**, transition into Kindergarten is supported by an orientation session in Term 4, for families and children to meet one another and the educators, and become familiar with the Kindergarten room, prior to the first day of school. The sharing of information during this session is reciprocal: Educators share valuable information with families and demonstrate how families can engage in their child's learning at home and at school. Families share what they hope and imagine for their child during the Kindergarten year. These wishes are recorded and displayed in the classroom and support planning for the following year.

Families as decision-makers

At **Cable Beach Primary School** KindiLink, building relationships with families is the most important part of running a successful program. The fundamental message behind KindiLink is that families are a child's most important teacher.

In order to promote this message and empower the families to feel that this is indeed true, educators must establish relationships that are built on trust and mutual respect. They begin by making sure the classroom is warm, welcoming and reflects the local community and experiences of the families who attend. Throughout the year, the space adapts according to the children and in response to family feedback and opinions, promoting a sense of empowerment and value.

Educators invite family suggestions about learning experiences, or what they might cook with the children each week. They sit down with each new family to ascertain their hopes for their child, what they wish to gain from the sessions, and what their child specifically needs. This might be revised throughout the year through continued conversations.

Educators feel it is important that each family feels valued and included. They celebrate the people who attend, including birthdays and special events and also check in via text message with any families who do not attend. If families are absent for an extended period, educators drop off a 'we miss you' care pack, filled with books and activities to do with their child at home.

Authentic reading and writing with families

The staff at **Aquinas College** actively promote opportunities for families to engage with and contribute to learning experiences, recognising the important role this plays in supporting children's learning outcomes and in ensuring families feel their views are valued and respected.

Regular family coffee mornings with the Head of the Junior School are an informal forum to connect with leadership, ask questions and discuss topics of interest. A Mum's writing morning invites mothers or extended family members to visit classrooms and





Lance Holt School



Lance Holt School

share their own real-life examples of writing, such as a journal, recipe, poem, to-do list, or card. A Dad's reading morning sees fathers or other family members sharing a special book with their child. Both events encourage families to model personal experience as writers, readers and learners and contribute to the children's learning experiences within the community.

In addition to these initiatives, regular meetings and interactions enable families to provide feedback and offer suggestions to improve learning outcomes for children and enhance the school community. Collectively, these opportunities foster a sense of openness, trust, and working together towards common goals.

Genuine partnerships: A parent's perspective

"There are hundreds of little ways I feel a strong partnership at **Lance Holt School**. The school creates a sense that you really belong, and that people want the best for your family in a way that is not lip service; it's really true. One of the most special things as a family is that the children are really seen and understood, which is aided by the educator's connection with each child. Children know every adult in that space cares about them and that this is their place. That comes from educators taking time to get to know them. The educators respect that, as a parent, you know your child best and the educators have a genuine desire to tap into your knowledge. Before your child starts, you complete a lengthy form of questions such as:

Tell us about your child; What makes them happy?; What makes them comfortable?; What makes them uncomfortable?; What is

the best way to approach them if they feel sad?; How do you feel they are travelling socially?; Are you worried about anything?; What are your hopes for the year?; What are your child's hopes for the year? and Do they have any worries?

I've always felt this information has been attended to and considered as a way of educators coming to know my child more deeply... It's just the starting point of many conversations to come. Whenever you have something that needs to be talked about, even if it's a trickier conversation, I've always felt these conversations are welcomed.

Lance Holt School has a genuine open-door policy which means you can visit the school whenever you like. Especially when my children were younger and I worked nearby, I would just go and have morning tea with them, and it was so nice. All the children, not just your own, would have chats with you and you had that chance to get to know all of them. It's a very open and welcoming atmosphere...

There are many ways in which the school comes together as a whole, with opportunities for parents and extended family to attend as much as they like: morning meeting is a whole school gathering, run by the children, which helps every child across the school to get to know one another; each year group has a nature pedagogy program, and lots of families choose to participate in these days as well. An annual whole school camp sees everyone - families and educators included - stay in Rottnest together. The whole community set up tables down the middle of the street and everyone shares dinner together. In COVID times, as a way the school could respond to the fact they couldn't hold camps, they instigated Community Week. While

this can't replace camps, it's still a beautiful thing and mirrors some of the same rituals. Families might all go to the zoo on the Monday, the Museum together on Tuesday. In Perth, everyone goes home each evening but would gather again at a new location the next day. So, it's like a camp day, but within a Perth-based location. On Wednesday, whether it's at camp, or during Community Week, members of the community create inquiry stations. A parent who's a potter might create a station that engages children in throwing pots; a South American family taught the children a dance. The children rotate in groups through each of these experiences along with their family and educators. There are also stations for families to play, connect and eat together. An Aboriginal community member conducts a Welcome to Country through song, which is really beautiful. All these ways the school comes together contributes to a community in which everyone is known to each other and cares for one another.

Educators ensure that families are very engaged in their child's learning, particularly in the Early Years. When my children were in Kindy, for example, I was regularly sent an image of the children learning, along with a story about what was happening, and the educator would include a prompt or a suggested question to ask my child. As a parent, you're then invested in finding out more. These communications become a bridge between school and home; it's a window into their experiences during the day and their growth in learning and development. And because there was a visual, a story, and a parental prompt, it generates a conversation with your child. I thought this was a very powerful way of engaging us in a way that fostered partnership.

These two-way partnerships with families are representative of the types of relationships that embody Lance Holt School's philosophy. This is not a school where the educator does all the talking and children are expected to be quiet and listen. Children are always involved in communication with their educators and the other children. It is a two-way relationship for children, as I have always felt my own partnership with the educators to be. The greatest gift Lance Holt School gave us is that our children have always loved school and never doubted themselves as a learner or a member of a learning community, all the way through. The school has worked together in partnership with us as a family to ensure our children remain 100 percent engaged, positive and curious; to maintain their true love of learning in a way that does not diminish."

Valuing families and parent voice

At **Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay** the voice of each parent is valued, and opportunities are regularly organised across the year which enable families to engage in conversations with the school and the teaching staff.

At the beginning of every term, educators and Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATAs) collaboratively carry out home visits. On these visits, children's strengths are discussed and specific areas to focus on are identified and shared. Families are invited to share any concerns or goals they have for their child and how the school might best support them. From this initial interaction, the educators are given a valuable insight into each child's background, interests, and abilities. By working closely with parents and families these visits inform the school about specific ways to work with families to assist students to achieve personal and learning goals.

Each term the school hosts a concert night. On this night, families are invited to visit their child's classroom to look at children's learning, speak with the educator and get a sense of the classroom environment for themselves. This is a great time to chat with family members whom staff may not have yet engaged with during the school term. The evening is a valuable opportunity to discuss children's progress and for families to check in with the educators.

Families are also invited into the classroom for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. During this time the Early Years team provide materials and activities for families to participate in with their children. The families are asked prior to the day if they have specific activities they would like to share so they can take ownership of the experience. This sharing session is viewed by both staff and families as a very special way to celebrate the day with the children.

The Early Years class host a Mother's Day and Father's Day Liturgy each year. All mother or father figures of the children are invited to these liturgies. Afterwards, a delicious morning tea is hosted where the children take on the role to serve the visitors who have come to support them. There has been positive feedback shared about this day, particularly in response to how confident their children have become at reading or performing in front of a crowd. The families have also expressed how much they love being spoilt by their children and enjoy a cuppa in their child's classroom.



Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay

Seeing the children's faces light up when they see someone special come to support them at the various school events is a heart-warming part of the partnerships.

The children at Beagle Bay enjoy sharing success stories and positives in their learning via the Seesaw application. Parents utilise the App regularly and as a school, we value the involvement of our parents who show their interest by liking and commenting with their thoughts and offering praise for their children's achievements.

Authentically valuing parent voice

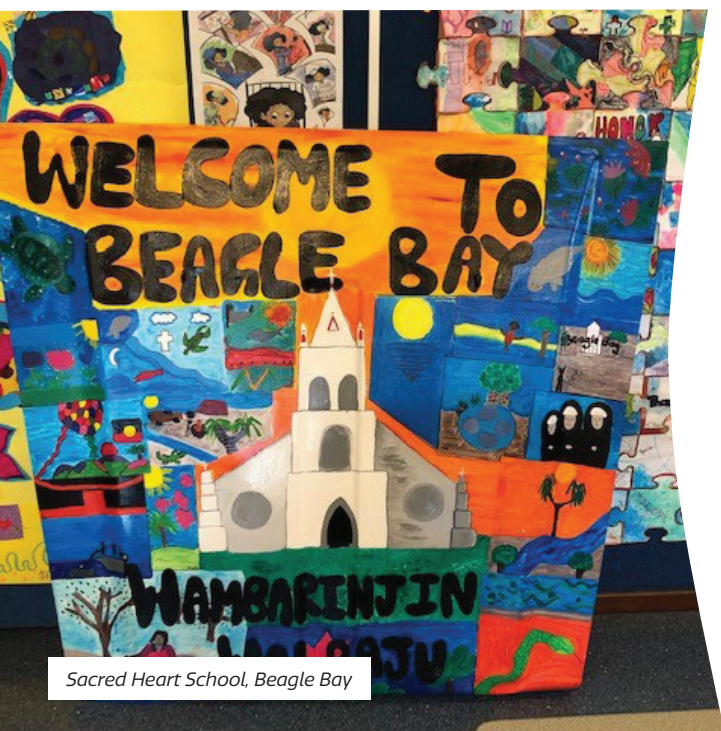
Staff at **Padbury Catholic Primary School** believe parent-school partnerships are one of the best ways to support children's learning, development, and wellbeing. A variety of intentional programs and activities which have been implemented in response to valued parent input and suggestions about the learning program and environment.

At the commencement of each year, a survey is distributed inviting parents to share their child's strengths and interests and to suggest learning opportunities that might build upon these. These surveys are then used to directly influence educator planning. Each term a discussion also takes place with children to discover what their interests are for the term ahead. These are displayed and photos are added as each area is addressed.

It is evident that parents feel valued and as a result, they regularly contribute their skills, knowledge and resources. When a parent noticed children's interest in vet clinics, she organised a local vet nurse to come and speak with the children about the service a vet provides and to provide answers to children's questions.

One parent also played an integral role in helping implement the appropriate environment where nature pedagogy could drive learning during the playground upgrade. Lawn was donated from their turf farm to upgrade the play spaces, building a stronger connection to nature. This parent also donated coal and ash for a fire pit so that children could experience an authentic play experience in the mud kitchen.

Another parent who also owned a fitness business was a regular classroom volunteer and noticed the inclusion of calming/grounding techniques in the classroom which were being used to assist with concentration skills. This



Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay



Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay

parent offered her time and equipment to provide children with an opportunity to learn more about grounding their bodies, building a positive mindset and learning resilience. This parent's contribution also empowered staff to consider how they might also include this within their own classroom spaces. Areas in classrooms were subsequently set up to enable children to use the space and practise the grounding techniques they had learnt as they felt the need.

During the year, parents requested sick family members in our class were included in prayers each day. To follow up with this request, an area in the classroom was set up for children and families to write prayers and add these to a prayer tree. This space is a safe area where children and families pray together before school. Children have brought in rosary beads, crosses and prayers which are special to them to place in this area. Children have ready access to this space as needed.

Parents are informed about their child's learning with weekly class newsletters and Seesaw posts. Photos are displayed of activities the children want to share with people who visit the classroom. This has led to parents taking photos while out and about. Children have asked if these photos can be emailed to school, where they are displayed and talked about. Children bring family and friends in to show them their learning.



Thank you
Mr and Mrs
Morton for
teaching us how
to calm and
ground our
bodies.



Padbury Catholic Primary School



Padbury Catholic Primary School



Padbury Catholic Primary School

Responsively Supporting Families

Element 6.1.3 Families are supported

Element 6.2.2 Access and participation

Collaborative partnerships with families contribute to building strong, inclusive school communities. Respectful, honest and open two-way communication assists families to feel connected with their child's school experience and helps them develop trust and confidence in the school.

Reflective Questions

How are families sensitively assisted to access community resources and services?

Supporting social competence

At **Great Southern Grammar School**, Albany, upon analysis of Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data in 2021, social competence was identified as an area of vulnerability in their community. Committed to using the data to support their community's children and families, the Early Childhood Co-ordinator/Pre-Kindergarten teacher prioritised the development and strengthening of their school-based, community-run playgroup, Kalgan Playgroup. Using a grant from AISWA, they were able to put into place several initiatives to support children and families and encourage community engagement.

The educator began to collaborate with the playgroup convenor and visited the playgroup, facilitating activities and engaging with families. Visits by specialist teachers were initiated and 'rhyme time' and 'music time' were incorporated into the playgroup program. Families were offered seminars presented by staff and associated professionals to provide current resources and information, supporting parenting and family wellbeing.

As a result, Great Southern Grammar School have had an increased number of families accessing the playgroup. A number of these families have taken the option to continue on and enrol in Pre-Kindergarten. Families report that they feel supported by the playgroup structure and often seek the school's advice regarding their child's social and emotional development. The focus of the Kalgan Playgroup has also transformed. Previously a social gathering for mothers, it now has a focus on children and how the school can support children and families to build social and emotional competence in a safe place.



Great Southern Grammar



Rehoboth Christian College



Cultural empowerment

Rehoboth Christian College is a very intercultural community school. Among their children, there are 38 different birth countries and their families speak 36 different languages. The school has a Christ-centred faith philosophy at the core of all that it does and it places understanding at the heart of all its work. The school works hard to maintain an all embracing, all engaging interdisciplinary approach to its partnership with families. This involves collaboration with support services such as refugee liaison specialists, child development services, health services, interpreters and translation services. The needs of the child and the family always come first. This approach has allowed the school to develop systems that leverage funding for support strategies and assessments that have resulted in both family and child empowerment outcomes. These have included assessments in the family's language, as well as English. Such achievements have led to cultural empowerment for families, enabling both children and families to flourish as well as enriching community spirit and the school's sense of unity and purpose.

Access to intervention services

Data evidence gathered by **Ursula Frayne Catholic College** indicated an increased number of families were accessing outside agency intervention support programs. Due to the lengthy 'wait' times experienced within the public health system, families were choosing to source health service providers privately. Recognising their responsibility to enable every child to reach their cognitive, social, and physical potential, the school contracted an on-site service provider to assist children and families to access intervention services easily and more conveniently.

The school has engaged the services of a speech pathologist and an occupational therapist who are now located on-site four days per week, facilitating both individual and small group therapy sessions in a room especially designated for this service. These competitively priced onsite services enable children to be withdrawn from their classes to access the service. The school has developed a rotating timetable which ensures participating children attend at varying times each week, so they do not continually miss the same lessons.

With the therapy service conveniently located onsite, educators benefit from direct communication with health care professionals and can observe therapy sessions when appropriate. The initiative has also provided opportunities for job-embedded learning for staff to build their expertise in responding to children's needs and create and implement classroom-based interventions and strategies.

Community collaboration

St Anthony's School has been developing partnerships with several community agencies to provide the best possible outcomes for children, from prebirth and throughout the Early Years. These initiatives provide families with valuable opportunities to engage with the school and understand their child's development prior to starting school.

The recent opening of the school's Community Centre has resulted in a collaboration with Pregnancy to Parenthood, targeting families from Pregnancy to 2-Year-Olds, with a focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing.

In collaboration with Wanneroo Library, families are engaged through the "Little Learners" program



*Scroll down
the link to
select the video
showcasing
St Anthony's
School's
Community
Centre.*

which aims to promote early literacy skills and children's sense of belonging within the school.

As children commence Kindergarten, they are assessed by professional occupational and speech-language therapists. Data collected during these assessments identifies children who require extra assistance and enables

educators to develop targeted support programs, under the guidance of, and aligned to, therapist interventions. This partnership with Edith Cowan University provides essential follow-up onsite speech and occupational therapy services within the classroom or designated specialist support areas.

Connecting the community

Riverton Primary School values family partnerships and aims to support families through two initiatives. The 'Fathering Project' assists male role models to build connections with the school community. This group has grown from strength to strength and is now coordinated by a group of fathers. Regular events provide a valuable forum for fathers to get together to support each other and their children. The Riverton Women's Business Group was also instigated to support mothers from within the school community to further develop a sense of connectedness within the school. This group meets at the school and is a hub for all cultures and backgrounds. The initiative supports a sense of belonging within the school community.

Continuity and Transitions

Element 6.2.1 Transitions

"The process of transition occurs over time, beginning well before children start school and extending to the point where children and families feel a sense of belonging at school and when educators recognise this sense of belonging⁴⁷."

Children experience multiple transitions each day and across the week as they move between home, school, outside school hours care and early childhood education and care services. While transitions are marked by change, fostering elements of continuity assists children to manage transitions and their accompanying changes. This can include maintaining elements of routine and utilising children's interests, prior experiences and funds of knowledge in the program. Meaningful collaboration between ECEC and school educators and families is integral to understanding how continuity can be experienced⁵⁵.



Geraldton Grammar School



Geraldton Grammar School

'Come & Play'

Geraldton Grammar School has hosted a playgroup on its campus since 2017 when a local community playgroup was looking for new premises from which to operate. By 2019, the playgroup transitioned to being operated solely by Geraldton Grammar School Early Learning staff and became known as 'Come & Play', with the school's Kindergarten educators implementing a story and music time at the conclusion of each session. In 2021, Geraldton Grammar participated in an AISWA Transitions Project, with a key outcome being to move the playgroup to the Junior Kindergarten classroom and employ a qualified early childhood teacher to run the sessions.

Having a playgroup operating on campus and facilitated by an early learning educator enables strong connections and partnerships to be

constructed between home and school. Families and children build relationships with educators and become familiar with the Kindergarten environment, which helps to support their transition to school and can provide a foundation for positive school experiences. Come & Play also allows the educators to understand, appreciate and respond to each child's funds of knowledge and funds of identity, the skills and knowledge that children acquire in their families and communities^{3,56}. Come & Play is a free playgroup that is open to school families and the wider Geraldton community.

Personalised transition practices

As part of transition practices, educators at **Esperance Primary School** have developed a detailed enrolment package that enables families to share information about their child, including attendance in early childhood education and



Esperance Primary School

care settings, medical details and each family's aspirations for their child's first year at school. The deputy principals also make individual phone calls to each family, collecting further information on the involvement of external agencies, academic, social, medical or separation anxiety concerns and individualised needs of children. Through phone calls and meetings with families, educators can effectively create safe, supportive learning environments and tailor practices to assist individual children's transition to school.

To support children to feel comfortable as they transition into Kindergarten, each child receives a small bear and personalised letter from their Kindergarten teacher, one week before commencing the school year. This is funded by the school's Parents & Citizens group. Many children form a strong connection with their bears and the bears are welcomed into Kindergarten, Pre-Primary and Year 1 if children choose to bring them to school. The school is proud to have developed a personalised process to ensure all children and families develop a sense of belonging and have a positive start to school.

Children at the centre of transition decisions

The Pre-Kindergarten program at **Perth College** has a focus on children's belonging and being, reflected in an emphasis on uninterrupted play and opportunities to develop positive relationships with their peers and educators. Prior to the commencement of the year, families receive a letter of introduction, including educators' personal information and interests, with encouragement to share these with children to assist connections. Families are encouraged to respond with similar stories and a photo of their family, which is placed on display in the classroom. The educators are influenced by funds of

knowledge/identity theory, which emphasises the importance of educators building on the skills and knowledge that children acquire in their families, communities and peer groups^{3,56}. With a desire to be responsive to children's funds of knowledge and funds of identity from the outset, educators read families' replies and intentionally design responsive indoor and outdoor environments that reflect the curiosities, experiences, capabilities, and passions of each child. Children then feel this is a place in which their identities are respected, and their ideas heard. Subsequent observations by the educators ensure ongoing tailoring of the environment and learning experiences to continually align these with children's individual and collective curiosities and requests. The children are agentic and independent in decision-making processes, including when they want to eat, where to play and what resources will support their inquiries as they wonder about their world.

Supporting prospective families

To engage new families, **Kinross Primary School** created videos that showcase the play-based Kindergarten program. The videos include photos of the wide-ranging learning activities, as well as interviews with children sharing what they most enjoy about Kindergarten. The videos have been placed on the school website's enrolment page for viewing by prospective families who are considering enrolment at the school. They are also screened at the information session in Term 4. Feedback about the videos has indicated they have assisted families and children to feel more positive about starting school.

Starting school

Transition practices at **West Busselton Primary School** involve a series of sessions for families and educators to engage and share information



Perth College



West Busselton Primary School



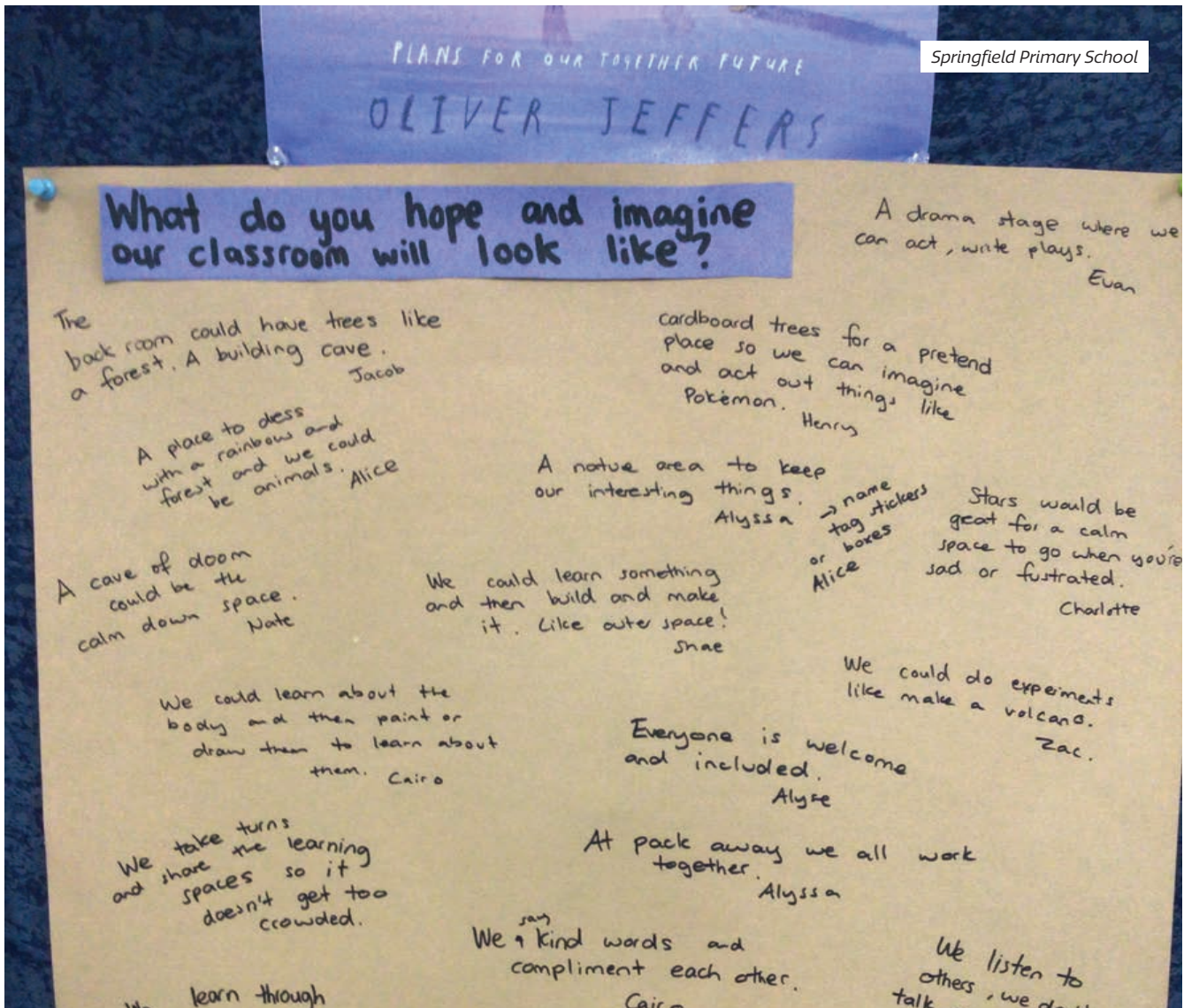
with one another. An orientation pack is given to families that includes information on what to expect, school programs, other important information regarding the daily routine. Children are also supported in their transition to school through a social story called "I am Starting School," which is personalised to the school. This social story aims to familiarise children with images of the school, indoor and outdoor classroom environments, and educators. Children and families have opportunities to visit and explore the classrooms and outdoor environment, meet staff and engage in learning experiences that they will encounter in Kindergarten. During these sessions, families are encouraged to share important information about their child's development.

Transitioning between year levels

At **All Saints' College**, there is a recognition of the significant impact transitions have on young learners and a commitment to encouraging agency and independence within a nurturing, child-centred environment. As the children progress from home to Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten to Pre-primary, Year 1 to Year 2 and Year 3, educators build on what came before by providing them with familiar environments, resources and experiences. A sense of belonging has been an important part of their learning journey, generated through the intentional creation of meaningful, homelike spaces. This has eased transitions and had a positive impact on learning and relationships.



West Busselton Primary School



At **Springfield Primary School**, a morning session is organised for children to spend time in next year's classroom, with the teacher they will have the following year. New children are also invited to come along to get to know the school, educators and other children.

In a Year 1/2 class, educators used this time to find out what the children would like to learn the

following year and how they would like to engage in their learning. The children recorded their ideas, which the educator used within her initial planning for the year. When the children arrived on the first day of school, they were excited to see their brainstorm sheet on the wall and that some of their ideas were already reflected in the environment.

Community Engagement

Element 6.2.3 Community Engagement

Collaboration with community

At **Narrogin Primary School**, several projects have been influential in bringing cultures together and fostering a sense of community. Focused on building positive relationships with families and the local community, the school endeavours to provide a safe, fun, culturally aware school environment, where everyone can connect and work together. Children are at the centre of everything they do.

The school community developed a Reconciliation Wall, designed by families and painted along the length of the basketball court. The artwork depicts Aboriginal cultural heritage alongside European heritage, with each child's handprint added. The wall became a meeting place for families and is a centrepiece of many cultural activities. The process played a significant role for many Aboriginal families, assisting them to develop trust with the school.

An unused area within the school was utilised to develop a cultural classroom. Built around a yarning circle, it includes a fire pit, places to sit and places to move around. This area is used by all educators, families, and children. It has become a favourite place for children, particularly when they identify they require time to regulate or feel safe.

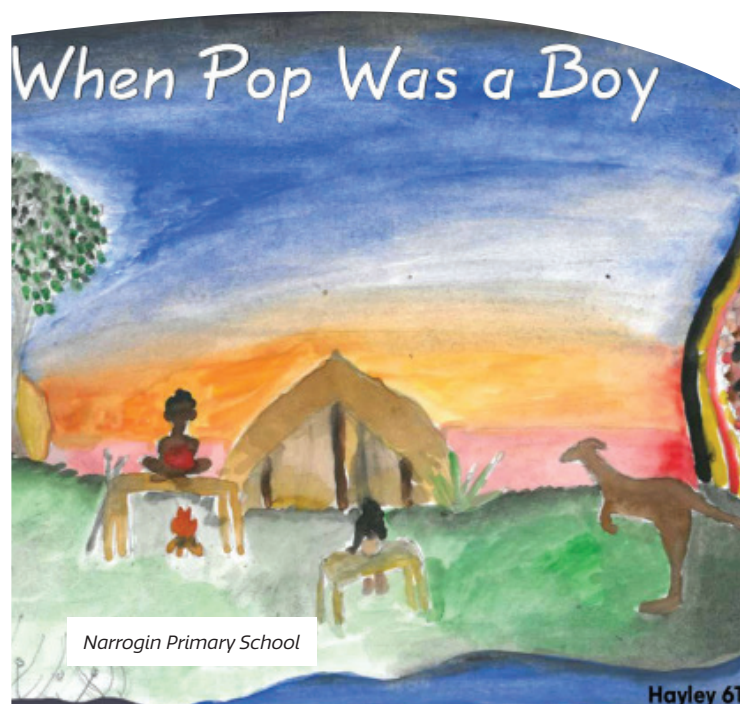
'Pop', a highly respected and valued Aboriginal Elder within the community, joined conversations about how to make NAIDOC week celebrations more meaningful. Pop shared stories about his life with children across the school and the children developed illustrations to match. This experience provided the impetus to create a book about Pop's life. The book, "*When Pop Was a Boy*" has been officially published and reprinted several times due to the interest it has generated. The book contains the pictures drawn by the children, along with Pop's story in both Noongar and English languages. The book has been shared with families and distributed across the Wheatbelt region. A recording has also been compiled with Pop and an educator telling the story, along with a local artist playing didgeridoo. Both formats have generated interest in both Pop's story and the stories of many other Aboriginal people.

Our River Ritual

Christ Church Grammar School is fortunate to have the beautiful Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) right on their doorstep, which they regularly access through their nature-based learning program. The river offers many opportunities for the children to explore and develop their natural curiosity about the world. The Pre-Primary educator invited Aboriginal elder, Roni Forrest,



Narrogin Primary School's Reconciliation Wall



Narrogin Primary School



Christ Church Grammar School

to share the river's significance to the children. Whilst exploring the river together, Roni shared the story of how the Derbarl Yerrigan was created and taught the boys how they can show respect to the river whenever they visit. The class calls this their 'River Ritual', which they practise each time they go to the river. Roni's visits have helped the children develop a deeper understanding of their connection to the river. Having an ongoing relationship with Roni has also increased the educator's confidence when teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. She has recently joined the School's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee and plans to work with Roni to create an Acknowledgement of Country with the children in the Early Learning Centre.

"We throw the sand in the river and say, 'hello good spirits' to the river and to the Aboriginal people, because they are the first ones who came here." – Hugo (5yo).



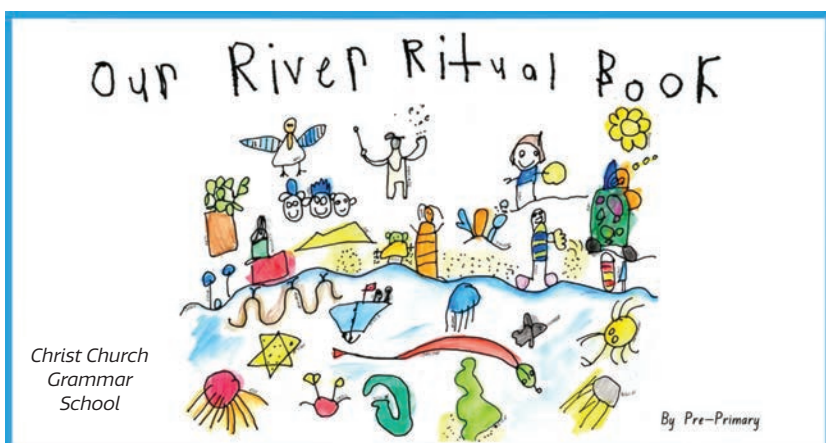
Christ Church
Grammar
School
children's video
of their River
Ritual.

Bush Kindy

Stemming from a desire for connection with the local community and the natural bushland environment close to the school, **John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School** reached out to their local Council and were put in touch with John Williams, the president of a local support group, Friends of Lightning Swamp Bushland (FLSB). After meeting with John, the educators organised excursions for the children, including opportunities for planting. John was keen for the Bushland to include an area dedicated to facilitating the children's engagement with nature. The educators realised this would offer children an opportunity to explore the environment through multisensory activities, and form connections with their community and nature. Submissions were therefore written for the school and local Council, a benefit-risk analysis



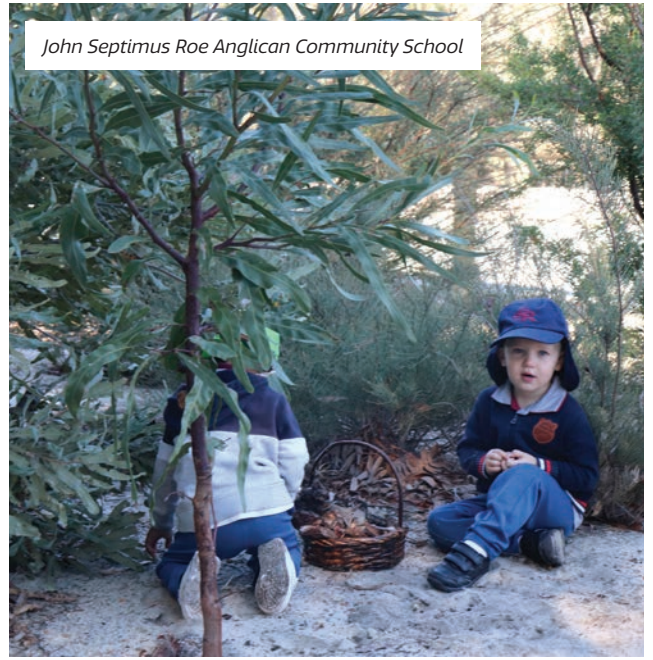
Christ Church Grammar School



John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School



John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School



was undertaken, and an area was approved to be fenced off and dedicated to outdoor education. In partnership with John and the FLSB, the initiative secured funding from the WA Minister for Environment, Climate Change, Commerce to purchase materials, a water tank and shelter for the area. Connections have also been made with a local First Nations family, who expressed an interest in the program and a desire to conduct a smoking ceremony in the near future. Looking ahead, the staff have identified further opportunities to extend the program and to invite special guests and families to Bush Kindy to celebrate the area and the community.

Community assistance with play materials

Hensman Street Elementary reflected on their outdoor learning space and identified a need to look deeper into the creative and physical play

opportunities at their school. Whilst the school was well equipped for sustainability, nature play, imaginative play and risk taking, they wanted to go beyond compliance and look at addressing the needs of the children on a deeper level. Having identified that they were in short supply of loose and moveable materials, they set out collecting long sticks, which the children dragged, lifted and stacked to create planes, trains, mia-mias and the Gruffalo's cave. The children helped replace and replenish existing loose parts in collaboration with their families, ensuring these materials were representative of children's identities and cultures. Realising a need for loose part storage spaces that would ensure the materials were accessible to children, the educators engaged the local community Men's Shed and a carpenter to collaborate with the school.



Hensman Street Elementary



Hensman Street Elementary

Community supporting children's research

Longer nights in the Noongar season of Makuru presented a wonderful opportunity at **Kwoorabup Nature School**, Denmark, to explore local nocturnal birds. The Kindergarten/Pre-Primary children had shown a curiosity for owls, so the educator leveraged this interest to create opportunities to connect with the HASS Curriculum and Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines. The children's questions included, "What do the owls of Denmark look like?", "How many babies does an owl have?" "Do owls all eat the same things?" and, "Are owls the only birds who live at night?" Conveniently, as these questions were being raised by the children, within the community the Denmark Environment Centre (DEC) was also looking for ways to raise awareness about nocturnal birds and their conservation.

In the classroom, the inquiry began with brainstorming, yarning circles, and small group interviews as children documented their thinking and wonderings. In the next phase, their research through nature observation (owl's pellets and feathers), creative and scientific experiments, and texts, was supplemented with the opportunity to connect with experts in the Denmark Bird Group (DBG). The children expressed their co-constructed understandings and sorted out their research findings through role-play, art, dialogue and written language.

As they reflected on their inquiry, the children and educators decided to take action in the form of a collaborative project with DEC, DBG and the Denmark Men's Shed. Four nesting boxes were built and painted before being placed in trees surrounding the school. Children created pamphlets, which were coupled with flyers from DEC to inform families about the dangers of rodenticides for nocturnal birds. The Shire of Denmark exhibited the children's artworks alongside information raising awareness for the protection of local owls. Beyond their own learning, the legacies of this inquiry included local community partnerships, class collaborations and wildlife conservation for generations of children to come.



Kwoorabup Nature School



Kwoorabup Nature School



Kwoorabup Nature School



Cultural understandings and community engagement

Several initiatives have been introduced at **Our Lady of Fatima School** to build children's cultural understandings and promote community engagement. One opportunity took place during NAIDOC Week when the school implemented several activities to promote cultural understanding. Pre-Primary children participated in an incursion offered by 'Educated by Nature'. The children experimented with ochres and were guided by the visitors from this community group as they engaged in the messy and fun task of face and body painting.

A large Aboriginal seasons mural has also been created and is intentionally situated outside the early years classrooms so that it can be regularly referred to and used as a focal point during group discussions about the seasons and weather. In addition, a selection of carefully chosen and readily available materials which reflect cultural diversity are available for children to use during playful learning experiences.



Kent, Year 2

Governance and Leadership

QUALITY
AREA

7



'I like my school and my teachers. The teachers help us learn things and keep us safe. They talk to each other a lot.'

Nellie, Year 1

QA7		Governance and Leadership
Standard 7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality school.
7.1.1	School philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the school's operations.
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality school.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the school.
Standard 7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
7.2.2	Educational leadership	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

Quality Area 7 – Governance and Leadership

Introduction

Dr Dee O'Connor

Professor of Child and Community Development; and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Murdoch University.

Previously, Professor of Early Childhood Education and Care; and Deputy Executive Dean of Education, Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia.



'My teachers have to go to school and learn very hard – everything!
They do different things. When they talk to each other they talk
about what they have to do for school and for us.'

Ariana, Year 1

Quality Area 7 is underpinned by the requirements to operate a school and establishing conditions required for high quality teaching and learning. A school leadership team guides the school community in bringing its mission and values to practice. Leaders establish the norms within the school for governance practices, empowerment, communication processes and culture. Central to Quality Area 7 is an acknowledgement that a school is shaped by its leadership.

Educational leaders who focus on the professional growth of their educators build capacity within their teams. Capacity building can focus on a wide range of quality enhancing arenas. These include supporting a better understanding of educational frameworks and policies such as the NQS or the EYLF, teaching, learning and assessment strategies. They provide resources and opportunities for professional development, reflection and teamwork that will facilitate positive change^{57,58}.

Capacity building is an effective way of increasing the motivation of the team to work together for better outcomes⁵⁹. Leadership that sees professional development as central to capacity building for stewardship and governance empower their teams to set and achieve goals, build their personal, professional and team skills, be enriched by intellectual stimulation, build a cohesive sense of professional identity, create strong school resilience and team cohesiveness, and foster a collective commitment to the moral purpose of education⁶⁰.

Fullan, in discussing the moral purpose of education, gives recognition to the work of educators as encompassing student outcomes to integrate a holistic definition of outcomes and ensure that all children are empowered to succeed in the broadest sense⁶¹. An educational leader, therefore, is concerned not only with curriculum development, change and capacity building but also deeply engaged with the holistic impact of schooling on every individual child. A strong and effective leader empowers educators so that they can empower children.

To achieve this, a leader needs to reflect and focus on their pedagogical leadership. It is a central task of the educational leader to facilitate their community towards a shared vision for the organisation which acknowledges the higher purpose of holistic child development^{21,61,62}. The establishment of a shared vision is necessary for a school to succeed in supporting children to access the maximum benefit from their education²¹. In addition to being able to facilitate a school community towards a truly shared vision, an educational leader needs to have a personal philosophy of education and learning that is underpinned by their belief in the value within their educators and their children. This personal philosophy unlocks potential and underpins an ability to lead others; this is especially pertinent when leading pedagogical change⁶³. Pedagogical leadership is central to achieving true quality. Research on Early Childhood Leadership emphasises that a focus on pedagogical leadership is a central tenet of ECE leadership^{64,65,66,67}. To successfully lead pedagogical development with an ECE team, the leader requires expert level knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practices⁶³.

Mei's Story

Mei thought back over her first year as Educational Leader (Early Years). 'What a rollercoaster', she thought to herself as she remembered the complex feelings she had experienced when she was first offered the job. Joy as she walked across the carpark to drive home after having been told the good news. A sense of dignity, when she told her family. Trepidation as she set out her plans and presented them to her principal for discussion. And frustration of course, with the mismatch between her vision and how much time she had been allocated to achieve it. But lots of excitement, motivation and determination too.

The first few weeks were marvellous. They were full of passionate conversations with the leadership team, vision setting, goal setting, reading and having high level discussions about quality, policy, curriculum, pedagogy and outcomes. It was an exciting time.

The next phase was interesting. It was focused on communicating the vision and the goals to the whole team and putting measures in place for

them to succeed with the goals that had been set. The teachers had been receptive, respectful and supportive. Mei had thought that the plan was going to roll out just as she had envisaged it. But despite everyone's good will, it just hadn't happened like that. There had been very little real change that term. The following term, Mei tried integrating more check-ins and check-ups. She brought in a checklist that she asked people to comment on at team meetings. Things got no better. They got slightly worse if anything. Term 1, thought Mei, was marked by no real change but Term 2 was marked by no change and a tension in her team. Mei sighed as she thought about her Term 2 holidays. She had spent half of it thinking about work and reflecting on where she was going wrong and trying to determine what she needed to do to turn things around.

When Term 3 started, Mei brought her thoughts to her principal. 'It isn't working' she said. 'Nothing is really happening except a lot of lip service and increasing awkwardness. I need to regroup and ask them what is going on for them'. That was the turning point. Once Mei opened the floor to her team and stopped driving the agenda, they opened up and in-depth discussions took place. There were so many diverse opinions and understandings that at first, it felt like confusion.



Suggested exercises for individual reflection or facilitated team discussions

Exercise 1: Is Mei a reflective leader? Discuss this question with your colleagues.

Exercise 2: Does your team have a truly shared vision? If so, what was the process of getting to that shared understanding? If not, what can you do about it as a team?

Exercise 3: How clear are you about the roles and lines of responsibility in your school? Do you fully understand how decisions are made and why certain systems are in place? Reflect on this individually, take notes and then bring the notes to a team meeting so you can discuss this together.

Exercise 4: How do you currently assess your work and improve your practice? Reflect on this from both an individual perspective and a team one.

Exercise 5: Element 7.2.3 states that your performance should be regularly evaluated and there should be a plan in place to support you to develop professionally. What would you like this process to look and feel like?

However, as time progressed and Mei prioritised time for more discussion, richness came into the process. Mei began to understand her team members had different understandings of concepts such as play, inquiry, loose-parts, outcomes, nature pedagogy, relational pedagogy, developmentally aligned pedagogy, pedagogy generally. It felt never-ending at first. Even curriculum issues stimulated robust debate that highlighted how diverse the interpretations were. Mei's epiphany was when she realized that she couldn't write the page and just expect everyone to be on it, she needed to write it with them in order for it to be effective.

The process of developing a truly shared vision took all of Term 3. It brought the team closer and it certainly brought them to a place where their vision was a collaborative and living document that everyone understood and owned equally. Mei had scaffolded the process by distributing readings on tricky concepts and scheduling time for the team to discuss them. She had arranged for experts to come in and deliver talks on issues the team needed extra input on and she had made time to listen and integrate everyone's point of view. By the end of Term 3, they had a more meaningful

vision. Ironically, it wasn't too different from Mei's original vision but the key difference was that now everyone understood it, owned it, supported it and wanted it to be achieved.

Mei started Term 4 with a lot more hope and she felt much better about what they had achieved for the children in that term. Now that the year was over, Mei could see the processes more clearly. The culture of dialogue had continued and they still needed to refine and tweak things as well as put more milestones in place so that they could see their achievements and celebrate them. It was a good start. Mei felt that that she had achieved enough to create a strong foundation for a fantastic second year in the role. 'Culture and habit', she thought to herself. A culture of respect, openness and empowerment and habit-setting as a team for research practices, discussion, collaborative goal setting, supporting each other systematically and celebrating when goals are achieved as well as recalibrating together when they aren't. Mei smiled as she thought about how much she would enjoy her summer break. She was so much more at peace with how things were progressing now, she might not think about work for weeks.



'My teachers help me and make me feel special.'

Raine, Year 2



Oakwood Primary School

Leading the early years with children in mind

As a new school, **Oakwood Primary School** felt it was important to develop a vision that was relevant for the school community. After research and many discussions, the school community, leaders and educators came to a consensus that relationships with children should be at the heart of everything; thus, the school motto "Learning with heart" was born. To articulate what this would mean in practice, a document was developed, declaring promises from educators to the children. This document is displayed in every classroom and reflects school and community interactions and priorities.

Staff at Oakwood Primary School value the provision of quality experiences for children. As the Kindergarten to Year 2 cohort was to take up more than half of the school population in the initial years, Early Childhood was a priority in the first school business plan and educators were keen to research best practice. The leadership team had an appreciation and strong understanding of the principles and practices

underpinning the Early Years Learning Framework and the NQS and wished to establish a strong foundation in the early years that could be continued throughout the school in years to come. They visited several schools for inspiration, who all highlighted the need to ensure a child-centred focus was maintained, and conducted evidence-based research. This inspired them to provide appropriate early childhood pedagogies, in consideration of their own school context, including intentional play.

In order to support consistent practice and promote a cohesive and professional school culture, staff developed a 'great teachers' document. This is a commitment to providing intentional, quality experiences for children and families, helps define roles, responsibilities and expectations and promotes a continuous improvement culture.

The leadership team at Oakwood Primary School fosters a professional workplace where all staff are encouraged to contribute and develop their skills and knowledge through regular collaborative meetings. A distributed leadership model encourages educators to take on various informal and formal roles, beyond teaching. This

may involve leading a curriculum area, developing and presenting professional learning to other staff, presenting to the school board or being a member of a committee that supports various learning opportunities and school operations.

Performance and development processes support educators to develop their leadership skills in these various roles, as they choose their own goals and are supported by their line manager to achieve these. Educators feel trusted to implement Oakwood's blended pedagogical approach in the way that feels right for them and their class. There is a consistency of approach across the school, rather than the expectation that every classroom and learning experience will be the same. Educators are supported through opportunities for peer observations, professional learning and collaborative planning within year level teams. Professional learning opportunities are targeted to school needs in areas of curriculum and whole school pedagogical

approaches. These may involve school-based expertise, or external providers, where appropriate.

Leadership coaching is offered to further support educators; with an increasing school population necessitating a growing staff, it is acknowledged that educators will be at different places in their journey of the Oakwood blended pedagogy. Regular coaching from the leadership team supports educators in whole school approaches towards pedagogy, lesson design and delivery, and classroom management strategies. Feedback and learning support are provided in a positive, constructive way that builds on existing knowledge and expertise, supporting a culture of continuous improvement in educator quality.

To My Students, I Promise...

- I promise to listen to the *feedback you give me* verbally, non-verbally and in your work, and use this feedback to do a better job of meeting your needs.
- I promise to keep trying until *together*, we figure out the best way to help you learn.
- I promise to do all that I can to *set you up to succeed*.
- I promise to *carefully choose* the work I give you so that it clearly increases your understanding and proficiency.
- I promise to provide you with a *place to learn* that is safe and supportive.
- I promise to help you *learn from your mistakes* and show you how to get better at learning.
- I promise to *learn alongside you*.
- I promise to provide you with *challenging and engaging instruction* that stretches you to take risks with your daily work. In this way, I will help you grow as a learner.
- I promise to provide *space and time* so you can take on the work of learning and enjoying the fruits of learning for yourself.
- I promise to pay attention to *who you are* and respect the uniqueness you bring with you to the classroom.

feedback

PROMISE

SUCCESS

LEARN

Oakwood PRIMARY SCHOOL
♥ Learning with heart

Based on the works Visible Learning for Mathematics (2017) Hattie, Fisher & Frey

Early Childhood Philosophy

Element 7.1.1 School philosophy and purpose

“Making the theoretical perspectives and philosophy of a setting explicit through discussion and documentation provides educators and families with a set of reference points or a framework for informed decision making”⁶⁸.

A written statement of philosophy should:



Developing a shared philosophy

1. Decide who should be involved, how they will be involved and when.
2. Identify and discuss values and beliefs, knowledge of current research, theory, policy and practice.
3. What aspects of ECE will you include? This could incorporate your views of children and learning, pedagogies and types of learning experiences, responsiveness to cultures and diversity, the role of educators, relationships with children and families, the learning environment, documentation and assessment.
4. Clarify and share personal views within the team. Find alignments and explore conflicting views. It takes time to discuss, debate and build cohesion and may require many meetings.
5. Collate shared beliefs into a document through a process of drafting, sharing, revising and refining the philosophy.
6. Once documented, implement, reflect on and regularly evaluate and refine the philosophy to ensure it remains shared and sets directions for pedagogy and practice.

Reflective questions:

Does your school have a philosophy that has a specific focus informing Early Childhood practice? If so, how does this philosophy align with a whole of school philosophy?

How well is your vision or philosophy communicated with, and understood by, your school community?

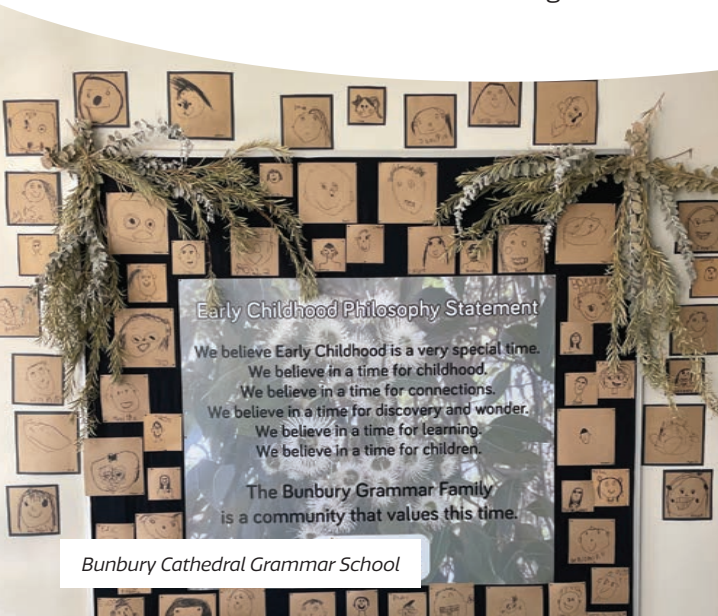
Developing an authentic, inspiring philosophy

With the support of the leadership team and the prioritisation of time during meetings, the early childhood educators at **Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School** took a collaborative approach to update their Quality Improvement Plan. Their exploration of Quality Area 7 promoted reflection on the ELC philosophy statement, which had been written many years prior and therefore needed review, particularly given staffing changes in that period. The decision was made to start afresh in the pursuit of a philosophy statement that reflected their practice; one they collectively believed in, was flexible, and inspired pedagogical change. This process began with educators initially sharing their unique personal philosophies and discussing theories that influence their practice. These discussions, paired with support from AISWA consultants, strengthened identification of mutual beliefs and practice, and supported reflection as a team. Printed statements from the previous philosophy were dissected, with new ideas based on shared conversations jotted on post-it notes. Sorting and classifying proved a way for the team to make sense of this vast collection of ideas, with the NQS quality areas providing guidance. The educators soon realised there was a recurring theme of time

that ran through their practice, beliefs and aspirations, and this became the core of the philosophy. When considering, for example, the thread of relationships, the team realised this was dependent on time for connections. An abbreviated version of the completed philosophy statement is proudly displayed in the entrance to the ELC, with the extended statement providing elaboration as to what each thread looks like in practice, such as in the small excerpt below:

We believe in a TIME for discovery and wonder; therefore, our classrooms seek to provide a warm, welcoming, safe environment that fosters creativity. We plan experiences which promote connections to nature and our outdoor environment. By listening and responding to children we also provide opportunities for their agency. By interweaving the inquiry and visible thinking processes, students are given the opportunity to develop deeper understandings throughout their learning.

It was important to the ELC team to share their vision with the school community as they wanted the whisper of what was happening in Early Childhood to be turned into a roar by igniting discussion, and forging relationships and connections. A communal meeting provided an opportunity to share the process and completed philosophy with children, families and colleagues. Materials were provided for the creation of a collaborative artwork that symbolised shared connections between the philosophy, one another, and this place of learning. To keep the philosophy alive year to year, this community event has become an annual ritual in which children, educators and families reconnect with the philosophy in diverse ways. The educators have also examined how the philosophy statement can support the induction of new staff.



Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School



Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School

Developing a charter for K-2

The early childhood charter at **Notre Dame Catholic Primary School** was developed to establish a collective understanding, passion and vision for the education of their early learners.

After undertaking research and engaging the support of CEWA Early Years team, the staff developed an initial charter which was subsequently refined during ongoing discussions at cluster meetings. Upon reflection, staff decided to break down the expectations for each year level to better facilitate a visible and consistent enactment of the charter across Pre-Kindergarten to Year 2. Representatives from each year level collaborated and discussed the charter to refine every element.

The charter is now visibly represented around the school in its physical form so that families and staff can refer to it. The charter has also been shared with the school community on the school's website.

Most importantly, the charter is a living document that is evident in the daily practices and interactions between educators and children. The charter guides educator planning and pedagogy and the daily delivery of their educational program.

Developing a philosophy - the process

In developing their Kindergarten to Year 2 philosophy for learning and development, **Beumaris Primary School** teachers were released for two half-day sessions to collaboratively share their knowledge with one



another and discuss research, theory and policy. They talked about both the EYLF and NQS, current research, their views of children and what they wanted their vision to be for the children in the early years. A teacher leader collated all the ideas into a draft statement that documented their thoughts. They came back together as a group to review the draft, discuss what had been documented, provide feedback and suggest changes.

The early years statement is now used as a foundation for all planning. When educators meet in year levels, they reflect on the statement to ensure classroom decision making aligns to these shared values. As an early years team, they also reflect on whether each educator is following the statement in their everyday actions, processes, learning experiences and communication with children, families and each other. This ensures the values are upheld; if they are not, it allows the group to bring the statement back into focus and reflect upon whether the statement reflects current thinking and practice or needs to be updated. The process of developing and continuing to update the early years statement has enabled educators to develop shared

understandings and more cohesive practice across the years as staff work towards common goals.

Reviewing and revising the philosophy

Prompted by NQS audit reflections, the early years' staff at **St. Michael's School** discussed their philosophy statement, along with their overall purpose. This discussion highlighted that their philosophy statement needed to be revised as it did not reflect the staff's

Notre Dame Catholic Primary School Early Childhood Charter

What it looks like in practise

Breakdown of the Charter	What this looks like in Pre-Kindy & Kindy	What this looks like in Pre-Primary	What this looks like in Year 1	What this looks like in Year 2
Notre Dame Catholic Primary School values the whole child, who is created in God's image. Our Catholic faith is central to all learning and, with Our Lady as our guide, we strive to live like Jesus.				
Our Mercy and Presentation values inspire us to live in service to others with compassion and justice modelled through building community.				
We strive to provide the best faith education for the children in our care.				
At Notre Dame Catholic Primary School we value and foster the happiness of each child by providing them with a sense of agency within their learning.				

current teaching practices.

The group dissected their statement, analysing its content and brainstorming how their current school vision might be better articulated. It was decided that clear, desired outcomes and goals for Kindergarten to Year 2 children should reflect holistic teaching, learning and development. It was also determined that the philosophy should be more visible throughout the school. Staff were delegated responsibilities to develop various aspects of the philosophy, including taking photos, writing draft statements, and determining the best way to communicate the philosophy to the school community.

After a deeply reflective process, staff now believe the updated philosophy statement accurately reflects their collective beliefs and best practice for early childhood. The revised statement is displayed in a dedicated and highly visible shared space and represent the school's commitment to how this philosophy is being



Roles are Understood

Element 7.1.2 Management systems

Element 7.1.3 Roles and responsibilities

Management systems are integral to the effective operation of the school. Within each sector, schools will be guided by the relevant sector policies and procedures. School leaders can refer to the NQS Guide for further information.

Clear roles and responsibilities for all staff members also contribute to the effective operation of the school. Prioritising time for collaborative discussions and collective decision-making assists all staff to understand their responsibilities in working towards shared goals. This includes the induction and involvement of new staff, part-time, casual and relief staff members.

Supporting new staff

At **Harrisdale Primary School**, new staff are inducted in order to support their transition into the school and to maintain the cohesive school culture. The educators are invited to attend a half-day induction before the school year begins, which includes a school tour. The school vision and expectations are discussed, and the new staff participate in ice-breaker activities, building relationships before the school

year begins. Educators who join throughout the year also participate in an induction and have the opportunity to clarify any questions they may have. They are provided access to a shared NQS website, where they see recent reflections, implemented changes and focuses for improvement for the upcoming year. This access is granted to all staff across the school as the school has adopted the NQS across Kindergarten to Year 6, rather than just the early years.

Enhancing collaboration with education assistants

As a large school with a number of children with a diagnosed learning disability, **Kinross Primary School** has a number of Special Needs Education Assistants (SNEAs) who are timetabled across the school, often working in a number of different classrooms each day. Following discussions between the SNEAs and the leadership team, the school recognised an opportunity to provide professional learning for all staff as the SNEAs often reported that they did not feel that they were as effective as they could be in the time provided. A deputy principal ran a comprehensive session during a school development day examining the role of education assistants (EAs) and SNEAs. Educators were encouraged to reflect on support structures that would improve collaboration between teachers, EAs and SNEAs in the future.

A number of improvements have since been implemented to enhance collaboration and utilise the expertise

of EAs. This has included designated meeting and collaboration times between teachers and EAs, more transparency in sharing teachers' learning programs and Individual Education Plans and the development of templates for written feedback between EAs/SNEAs and teachers to share assessment information and anecdotal notes on children's progress and engagement during sessions. EAs and SNEAs were appreciative of the session and greater opportunities for collaboration as they feel their skill set is subsequently more valued by teachers.

Reflective questions:

Have staff been allocated roles of responsibility to manage the operation of your school?

How can staff provide feedback on the effectiveness of systems within the school?

Do staff and families have any input into the development and review of school priorities and procedures? How can staff and families submit complaints and grievances? Are all staff aware of this process?

Kinross Primary School

How a teacher/EA taught me something new! 😊

EA's have saved my mental health by allowing me to address my student's needs.

Exp. EA 845 has provided wealth of knowledge about how school works.

Second opinion.

Support

Keeps me organised and sane!

Lorraine-giving me constant help in guidance which learning new programs. Emma M-trusting my knowledge and allowing me to

Supporting students with remedial needs in small group work. Assisting with IEP goals.

GREAT TO BOUNCE IDEAS BETWEEN TEACHER & EA.

encouragement

Creativity

Early Childhood Leadership

Element 7.2.2 Educational Leadership

Effectively leading pedagogical development within an early childhood team of educators requires the leader to have expert knowledge of research, child development and appropriate practice⁶³.

Early childhood advocacy

St Mark's Anglican Community School

recognised the importance of the NQS in 2015, creating the early years as a sub school within their K-12 setting. The Head of Early Learning / now Deputy Head of Primary, is given a significant voice to lead 25 dedicated staff in early years policy, curriculum, recruitment and development, budgeting, student management, student wellbeing, and pedagogy and practice, aligned with the school's Strategic Plan. Importantly, ensuring that educating and caring for the whole child is at the centre of what happens every day. Weekly staff meetings have been crucial in providing opportunity to communicate, share and support team members to problem solve, be inspired and remain committed to the values in the pedagogical philosophy.

Embracing opportunities to network with other early childhood leaders through various professional learning opportunities has proven highly beneficial for the early years leader. These moments, including Socratic Circles and projects focused on striving beyond NQS compliance, have afforded time to delve into latest research and engage with big ideas of educational philosophy and deeper pedagogical concepts. Dialogue with other leaders to share experiences and hear varied perspectives has been supportive and empowering. In these forums, ideas are developed for overcoming the challenges faced in schools, and conversations have inspired the leader's sharing of current research with the committed early learning team. She states that networking in these ways has grown her language and confidence to lead staff and advocate for appropriate facilities, funds for resources and quality professional learning. Importantly, this has led to early years leadership being an inspirational and powerful voice in the decision-making process for the educational opportunities offered at St Mark's.

Reflective questions:

How does your school support aspirant leaders?



Building leadership capacity

At **Braeside Primary School**, the leadership team support the development of teacher efficacy. The principal believes it is her role to encourage, advocate and value staff, providing support and resources for educators to build their own capacity, within a team environment. Educators work within a Professional Learning Community (PLC), according to their year level or phase of learning. Each member of the PLC is required to contribute and critically reflect upon the needs



of the team, along with their own professional development. Educators take turns to:

- lead a three-week block
- plan discussions
- organise resources
- analyse any data collected within that time
- share with other teams at the next session

This model provides staff with the opportunity to lead for a short time, developing their leadership skills, but also to be an accountable and effective member of the team. The PLCs organise and lead their own professional learning, often attending as a collaborative group, which impacts action planning for the following year. The PLCs also share their experiences and achievements at the end of each term with the rest of the staff, celebrating successes and reflecting upon changes that need to be made as a whole group. In encouraging staff to drive change from the bottom up, the principal is confident this provides opportunities for educators to lead, develop and contribute to the continuous improvement culture the school has created.

Developing leaders' professional knowledge

Early Years consultants at **Catholic Education Western Australia** have developed a *Leadership in the Early Years Program* for school leaders and early childhood coordinators. Developed in partnership with The University of Notre Dame,

school leaders are supported to build their understandings of early years development to enable them to promote quality pedagogical approaches based on the National Quality Standard and the principles of learning and development within their school communities. Those participating in the program undertake a commitment to attend four full-day face-to-face learning sessions and seven online TEAMS forums throughout the year. This program, which commenced in 2021, was established to support Catholic School leaders deepen their knowledge of early years learning and development.

The leadership programs learning goals include:

- Building understandings about how Christ-centred leadership supports the holistic development of children in their religious development
- Developing understandings of how to lead in the early years guided by key theories, practices and accountabilities.
- Exploring understandings within Early Years learning and development and analysing pedagogies that promote appropriate practice in the Early Years.
- Deepening knowledge of the National Quality Standard within a regional context to identify an early years improvement focus that promotes quality practices in schools.

Leading a nature pedagogy program

When the leadership team at **Carey Baptist College** looked over their 50-acre bush block in 2016, they saw wondrous potential for meaningful learning. They utilised a coordinated approach and provided the necessary support for the teachers to bring such learning to fruition.

The first undertaking was to facilitate staff discussions about a vision for nature pedagogy. Two staff members who showed a keen interest were funded and supported to engage in full Forest School Training in Queensland, offering an opportunity for distributed leadership.

As part of enriching the wider team's understanding of nature pedagogy and pedagogical documentation that complements nature-based learning, the leadership team arranged for the teaching team to engage in a series of aligned professional learning experiences. Strategically selecting and aligning professional learning to the school's goal has been vital. The commitment, leadership and investment from the school has enabled the educational program to evolve and provide rich opportunities for learning that captivate the children.

Leveraging strengths

Whilst reflecting on the school Strategic Plan and the NQS, the Deputy of Primary (Early Childhood) and educators at **St Stephen's School (Duncraig)**

identified that their outdoor spaces were under-utilised and needed further resources to support play and inquiry-based learning.

Distributed leadership opportunities saw educators collectively leading this improvement by researching and exploring current best practices. They visited other centres and engaged in professional reading and conversations. Staff meetings were used to share these ideas and reflect on what was happening in classrooms. One of the teaching staff led professional learning sessions exploring resources, open-ended learning opportunities and sharing research. Another educator mentored and shared her training in forest and bush school with colleagues, developing their understanding of the educational benefits of nature pedagogies and outdoor learning.

These opportunities for professional learning and discussion led to greater reflection on existing practice and an increase in opportunities for children to engage and embark on their own learning adventure. As a result, the spaces and play opportunities have improved. Children's agency has been enhanced with a wider range of open-ended resources. All classes are utilising the bush areas, verandas, and outside spaces in and around the school more frequently and more effectively. It is a process of continual reflection and improvement but already the changes that have been implemented have made positive gains for children, educators and the wider community.



St Stephen's School



St Stephen's School

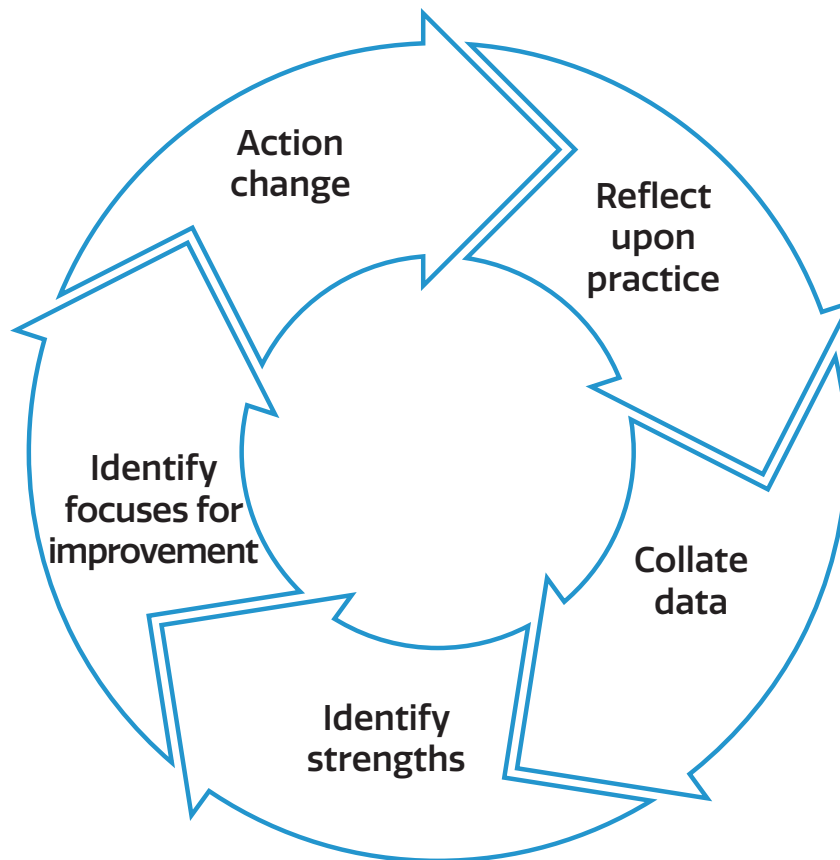
Ongoing Improvement in the Early Years

Element 7.2.1: Continuous Improvement

Element 7.2.3: Development of professionals

Through reflective practice, educators can provide better quality experiences for children and their families⁶⁹.

Reflecting upon the NQS is one way in which educators and administrators can jointly engage in analysis of school practices and performance. It is important that NQS reflections are used as a key part of the process of a school's self-assessment and planning for quality improvement.



Reflective questions:

How does your school create opportunities to involve all early childhood staff in the NQS reflection process?

How does your school plan for improvements, set goals and celebrate success?

How are knowledge and understandings of quality early childhood pedagogy and practice developed in your school?

What support and feedback is provided to leaders and educators?

Reflecting together

At **Landsdale Primary School**, the NQS reflection process involves all Kindergarten to Year 2 staff, including class teachers, specialist teachers, education assistants and administrators. The NQS lead teacher views the process as ongoing, collating data that is used to plan for continuous improvement across the school.

1. Staff reflect upon quality areas throughout the year within their classroom 'bubble'. This means all staff within the same classroom, including teachers and education assistants, reflect together, discussing each element and identifying strengths and areas for improvement within their own space. Education assistants describe this process as valuable as they feel they have a voice, can contribute directly to plans for improvement and develop a deeper understanding of the NQS.
2. The teaching staff come together as a year level group, including specialist teachers, and share their bubble's reflections. Through these discussions, they come to a year level consensus for different quality areas throughout the year.
3. The year level data is collated by the NQS lead teacher and used to make determinations for the yearly audit submission, but more importantly to identify a common focus for improving practice and enhancing the school's implementation of the NQS.
4. The data informs operational plans within the school, ensuring the early years is always prioritised.

Based on staff reflections and feedback the school's most recent focus has been on enhancing children's agency and supporting

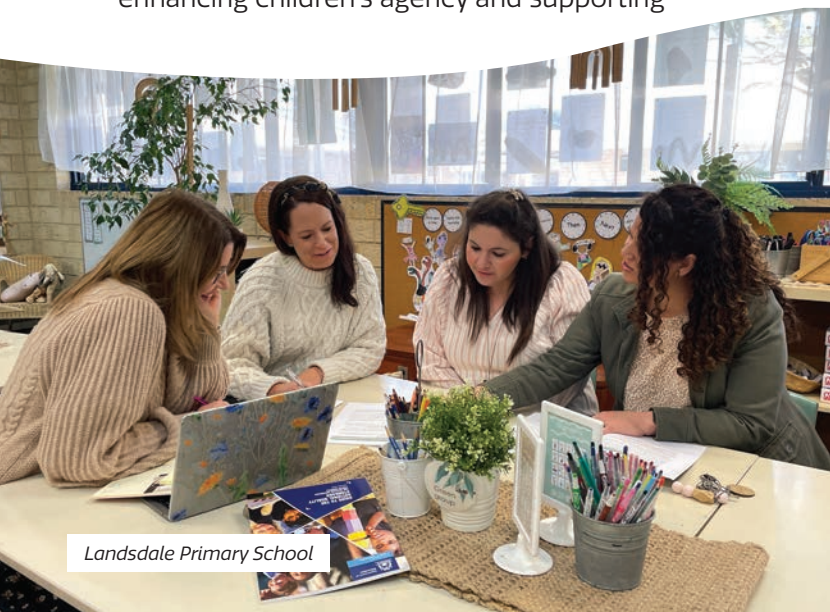
children to be more autonomous learners. This goal will be reflected in the new business plan and a focus for professional learning. Year level lead teachers will collect evidence and be responsible for sharing information with their collaborative groups.

Improvement as a shared responsibility

At **St Jerome's Primary School**, all early years staff are involved in the process of completing an individual self-assessment for each quality area of the NQS and providing evidence of how the standard is evident within their own classrooms and in other areas of the school. The information gathered is then collated, with areas of strength and focuses for improvement identified.

The early years team meet twice a term, focusing on ways to improve practice. Through this process, educators are continually reflecting upon their own, and their collective practice. Opportunities have been created to enable educators to observe their colleagues in action. The team create a shared document, which outlines their agreed strengths and poses questions for consideration in any areas flagged as requiring improvement. Recent questions included: 'Are the children's cultural backgrounds and families represented?' and 'Is the voice of the child visible in the interest areas around the room?'

This self-reflection process is further supported by the administrative team, who visit classrooms to support staff development by observing evidence in action and posing additional questions, prompting further reflection. The processes which have been implemented ensure that required change is actioned and educators remain accountable for contributing to their own ongoing improvement of practice and the broader improvement culture of the school.



Landsdale Primary School



St Jerome's Primary School

Using the AEDC to lead improvement

Following AEDC data collection, **Dun Craig Primary School** reviewed their school profile results, which identified three domains of higher developmental vulnerability compared to community and state results. These areas included physical health and wellbeing, social competence and emotional maturity. A review of the data from the previous three cycles also identified that developmental vulnerability in physical health and wellbeing and emotional maturity had increased.

In response to these findings, the school recognised the need for early childhood to be prioritised in the school's strategic planning. As part of the school's focus to improve early childhood outcomes, the school took the following actions:

- Assigning a deputy principal with early years knowledge and experience
- Appointing an early years teacher leader
- Strengthening student services to include a school psychologist, chaplain and education assistant leader

- Developing an operational plan to address areas identified within the AEDC
- Building educator knowledge and understanding of quality early years practice
- Designing outdoor play spaces
- Enhancing social development during break times
- Establishing a playgroup to support development and assist in transition to school
- Offering parent workshops on development and learning
- Offering diverse out of school hours programs for families to access and enhance development
- Developing an early year's philosophy to implement connected practice across the early years of the school
- Scheduling regular meetings between teachers and the leadership team to develop a cohesive approach
- Partnering with the community, including parents, school board, community health nurse and speech pathologists; working alongside neighbouring schools to develop shared understandings and address developmental needs of the broader community.



Dun Craig Primary School 2022 Early Years Operational Plan

2022 Operational Target

Determine ourselves as meeting all seven Quality Areas of NQS self-reflection audit 2022

<p>Purpose</p>	<p>Early Years (K-2) teaching team at DPS in relation to the elements of the seven Quality Areas of the National Quality Standard, the EYLF, the AEDC and relevant aspects of the Dun Craig Primary School Business Plan and DoE Focus 2021.</p>
<p>Student Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -students will develop greater responsibility for their own health, hygiene, personal care and safety as they progress through the early years. -students and families will benefit from a collaborative approach to planning, teaching and learning across the early years generally and within year groups. -staff at Dun Craig Primary School will provide continuity of quality programming in Early Years as a result of shared philosophy, collaborative planning/teaching and a distributed leadership model.
<p>Staff Priorities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All teachers from Kindergarten to Year 2 will plan, teach, assess and report using the Western Australian Curriculum framework, underpinned by the pedagogical philosophies of the NQS and EYLF. 2. Staff will work collaboratively to demonstrate a whole school approach to differentiation in, teaching, learning and assessment. 3. Staff will develop collaborative partnerships with families and the community valuing the cultural and social contexts existing. 4. All teachers from K-2 will work together to implement the Early Years Operational Plan.

Aim	Strategies	Resources	Monitoring
<p>1.2 Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.</p> <p>Implement inquiry based learning practices K-2</p> <p>Promote children's agency</p> <p>Foster critical thinking</p> <p>Further differentiate learning program to extend students learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visting guest speaker and school visits to answer the following questions regarding the implementation of a K-2 Inquiry approach; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Where to start (including the conversations that need to take place)? How to start? What does it look like across K-2 classes? How is it the same and how is it different across these cohorts? Implement a gradual growth model when introducing inquiry into the classrooms and programs. Decisions to be made: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How many times a week? How much of the day and what time of the day is inquiry based? Whole-school focus on questioning linked to inquiry and linking parents to the learning. Introduce a "Question of the Week/Month" via website or Connect. Display children's learning and thinking consistently in K-2 classrooms Integrate shared planning for inquiry into collaborative planning session., Teachers can share the responsibility (week about?) for setting up an inquiry themed learning station in central wet area. Connection between loose parts and inquiry to be supported by loose parts incursion. Inquiry texts to be purchased for library and displayed in an inquiry-themed section <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Picture books as mentor texts, to provoke inquiry and to contribute to students understanding of key concepts being explored (<i>Kath Murdoch</i>). ⇒ Texts to support teachers in developing their understanding and implementation of inquiry in their classrooms 	<p>Kath Murdoch DPS Statement of intent planning document</p> <p>WAC</p> <p>EYLF</p> <p>NQS Guide</p> <p>Inquiry texts</p> <p>Focus 2022</p> <p>P&C for funding</p> <p>TDS Inquiry</p> <p>SCSA Curriculum Support Documents</p>	<p>NQS self assessment</p>

Identifying a need for change and taking action

Previously at **Al-Hidayah Islamic School**, teaching and learning in the early years was very traditional, with a reliance on textbooks. The educators were increasingly uncomfortable with this approach and felt a need for improvement, particularly sparked by observations of the children's lack of enthusiasm for learning. After participating in professional learning on the NQS for school leaders, the principal was introduced to a fundamental and exciting shift towards play-based learning. With the educators enthusiastic and genuinely open to shifting ways of teaching and learning, they embarked on a journey of collegial research and shared pedagogical transformation, enabled and empowered by their supportive school leader.

The educators eagerly engaged in regular professional learning (PL),

including study tours, preferring to attend as a team to enable shared experiences and support for one another back at school. The principal provided additional time away from teaching for educators to learn and grow as they endeavoured to implement new initiatives from these PL experiences in their classrooms. Educators



Duncraig Primary School



opened their classrooms to mentoring support from AISWA, including receiving constructive feedback to guide their practice. This informed tailored professional learning workshops at the school, resulting in deep and profound learning amongst the entire staff.

The principal identified logistical considerations to ensure the team's vision could be realised, including securing support from the school board. He engaged in lengthy discussions with the Board Chairman about current research into how children best learn, and they attended a Walker Learning study tour, which provided examples of play-based learning in action. Fundamental timetable changes were made across the school. Intentional play-based learning now takes place across Pre-Primary to Year 2 four mornings per

week, providing children time to explore and investigate.

In pursuit of continuous improvement, the educators have been brave, dedicated and committed to high quality teaching and learning. They continually reflect on their practice, are motivated and excited by the idea of pedagogical change and are always willing to "give it a go". They respond to challenges positively and no matter the obstacles, such as large numbers of children in small classrooms, budgets and timetables, their focus remained on the things they could change rather than what they couldn't. Committed to ongoing learning and collective efficacy, the educators and Principal are emphatic that their journey is one of continual critical reflection and will not stop here.

Learning from others

Educator knowledge and experience is an integral resource in every school. When educators share their expertise with one another, the collective knowledge of the team is enhanced. It is also important to acknowledge that educators have different knowledge, skills and experiences. When educators feel comfortable to share these with others and engage in respectful and collaborative discussion and reflection, teams can build shared understandings, values and goals that will assist them to work together to pursue ongoing improvement.

At **Frankland River Primary School**, a small school in the Southwest region, educators critically reflected upon their practice, determining their need to make some changes in their practice in order to meet the NQS. The Kindergarten/Pre-Primary educators attended professional learning and visited other schools, looking for inspiration that would support them going forward. The educators shared their experiences at a staff meeting, where staff considered what this might mean for their context and what they might implement in the classrooms. So began a focus on incorporating purposeful play-based learning across Kindergarten to Year 6. Staff regularly share up-to-date, evidence-based research. There are also

opportunities for staff to observe their peers and share skills and expertise across the school. Educators can request a peer observation from a trusted colleague, asking them to provide focussed feedback around the implementation of play-based learning.

The focus at **Brabham Primary School** is for ongoing educator improvement and support, rather than appraisal. This is supported through professional coaching, as well as collaborative reflection, effective feedback and ongoing professional learning. Informal walk-throughs by the leadership team occur regularly, with school leaders spending time engaging with children and observing teaching practice. The focus of this is monitoring consistency across the school.

At **Harrisdale Primary School**, staff are committed to self-improvement. With a large staff group, the school ensures all staff have access to professional learning that aligns with school priorities, promotes student progress and caters for the individual needs of the staff. In response to varied professional learning needs, the school offers a Professional Learning Buffet three times per term, utilising both internal staff and external presenters. Descriptions of each session are sent out via Google document to staff approximately one week in advance and staff nominate for the session they wish to attend. Educators really enjoy the choice this model offers them and feel they have some autonomy over their own professional learning. In addition, they are provided with the opportunity to share their successes and lead peers in staying up to date with current practice and research around a variety of topics.

Kerry Street Community School started on a journey of change, prompted by the principal becoming inspired by inquiry pedagogies after attending a professional learning session. This led to school-based inquiry-focused professional learning, starting with reflections on current practice and defining what inquiry means to each educator. Educators explored the essential elements of inquiry and reflected on their individual teaching practices using a self-assessment tool. Next, they began to explore different inquiry approaches with an aim to select and/or develop an approach to utilise as a whole school. Wishing to see inquiry pedagogies in action, they visited five different inquiry-based schools, coming back together to share and reflect upon elements they might incorporate at Kerry Street. Based on this feedback, staff selected Kath Murdoch's inquiry approach to use across the school.



Frankland River Primary School



Brabham Primary School



Kerry Street Community School



Kerry Street Community School

This journey has led to the development and use of shared language. The school has developed an inquiry planning template and have secured opportunities for educators to share and support each other. Educators have also taken opportunities to upskill themselves through further professional learning, understanding that this journey is ongoing, with a need to continue to learn, reflect and adapt.

There are four **John Calvin Schools** in the Perth Metropolitan and Bunbury Areas. Each school has an Early Years Coordinator (EYC) for Kindergarten to Year Two. The EYC leadership team has led a coordinated pedagogical improvement process since 2018 to plan for and deliver collaborative, innovative pedagogical projects across the four sites. They facilitate collaborative, ongoing improvement by organising four network days each year in which teachers across the schools come together. Morning sessions often involve

presentations from experts or engagement in research to continue to build educator knowledge and stimulate high level discussions on practice. The afternoons focus on the practicalities of implementing change. In this time, the teams set goals together and discuss the role of each educator within these goals.

The EYC team has also developed a system of collaborative reflective practice. Each educator, including those with supportive roles, was given a journal and asked to reflect regularly on ways to strengthen their practice as they implemented their pedagogical innovations. The inclusion of education assistants and those with supportive roles has enabled all staff working across Kindergarten to Year 2 to feel valued and see themselves as able to contribute to improvement.

Developing cultural responsiveness

At **Wesley College**, educators believe embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions in curriculum planning is key. Documents are audited to identify the extent to which this is occurring and to identify opportunities for strengthening the representation of this content in the curriculum, within teaching materials, classroom environments, routines, and language. Given the college's proximity to the Derbal Yerrigan, this has become a rich focus of inquiry learning.

Early years staff have participated in various experiences to develop their cultural awareness, including participating in a cultural walk along the foreshore of the Derbal Yerrigan. Educators gained an insight into the history and use of the area adjacent to the College by Noongar people, which supported their work with children. Staff



John Calvin Schools



Kerry Street Community School



Carmel School

completed an online course through Curtin University, which introduced Noongar culture and language, assisting them to embed Noongar language in their classrooms and programs. Staff members have identified personal professional development goals linked to improving their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures, and how this can be incorporated into teaching and learning. A Reconciliation Action Plan has been developed and is a commitment staff are passionate to implement.

Teachers taking ownership of their own quality improvement

The focus on continuous improvement in NQS Element 7.2.1 asks schools to ensure there are effective self-assessment and quality improvement processes in place. At **Carmel School**, two early childhood educators have personified this element and demonstrated it can connect with practices that classroom educators can exemplify. The Year 1 and Pre-Primary teachers worked collaboratively to complete successful applications to be recognised as highly accomplished teachers within the AITSL Standards. This necessitated evidence of routinely working independently and collaboratively to

improve both their own practice and the practice of colleagues. Each developed a portfolio of reflection and evidence that unpacked their classroom practice and their work in the broader school community to create and stimulate best practice. Their great strength throughout the whole process was working together and supporting each other, acting as peer reviewers of each other's practice. The educators recognised this process had been incredibly enriching. The opportunity to reflect and discuss the finer details of the teaching craft supported their commitment to continuous improvement and propelled their professional reflection habits.

Final Thoughts to Guide Your Journey

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'My brother and me at school.'

Ailey, Year 1

What is the spirit of the National Quality Standard (NQS)? If we dived into its depths, what shallows and shadows and shapes would we glide through on our journey to its heart? Let us begin with its essence, with its ideological centre. The central point of the NQS is founded on a principle that quality is a philosophically bound concept^{70,71}. This means that quality has a values-based foundation^{72,73}. The central value within quality is motivation to enrich the visible outcomes of the children we teach⁷⁴. Within the NQS, this central point is surrounded by a rich and capacious respect for educators and their professional expertise. As such, the spirit of the NQS is a rich and limitless pool of possibility that supports educators to absorb, interpret and apply quality standards in unique ways, with unique children, in unique school communities.

As you read through the pages of this publication, a deeper understanding of what it means to apply quality standards to every element of your practice will emerge. If you can find authentic relevance and meaning in the images that rise to the surface of your mind as you read, then your professional duty and your vocational creativity will feel aligned. Such alignment is imperative for educators who feel strongly about meeting children's needs in ways that truly make a difference. The majority of educators enjoy their work most when they feel that their work is being effective^{75,76}, especially if it is effective in ways that align with their values^{77,78}.

One of the greatest gifts that the NQS gives us is that it allows for every educator's vocational creativity and every school's ideological position to be integrated into a shared national understanding of quality. It does this by being multi-dimensional in its offerings and adapting its guidelines between soft and hard focal points depending on whether a standard relates to pedagogical or structural quality. The more that you engage with the NQS the more you will see that it delivers rich, inspirational, and adaptable guidance within areas requiring significant pedagogical depth such as Quality Areas 1 (Educational program and practice), 5 (Relationships with children) and 6 (Collaborative partnerships with families and communities) while simultaneously providing guidance within areas that require well-defined and unobscured clarity such as Quality Areas 2 (Children's health and safety) and 4 (Staffing arrangements). Quality Areas 3 (Physical environment) and 7 (Governance and leadership) blend philosophical and pedagogical components with structural ones and this nuance is reflected well in the balance which delivers clear guidance within both.

The key benefit of the richness that the NQS provides to educators and leaders is that they can bring themselves to the process. In fact, they are required to. The NQS is not a series of tick boxes that take the thinking out of teaching. On the contrary, it is an aid to deepening quality, a guide for understanding quality and a system through which we can make the quality of Early Childhood Education visible⁷⁹. If we engage with the NQS in the spirit in which it is intended, it becomes a valuable reflective tool to guide our journey within the teaching craft.

While this richness means that the NQS is a powerful resource, it also means that it can appear complex and challenging. This publication takes the NQS and all its rich potential out into the light of practice so that we can all examine it openly. *National Quality Standard in Action Western Australian Schools* unpacks the complexity to reveal the rich potential. This is a publication written by educators for educators. It is a key to the treasure chest of inspiration to be found within the NQS. It is a publication that has been produced for you through an equal partnership of the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) and the Department of Education (DOE). As such, it stands as a celebration of the collaborative nature of education in Western Australia. It also means that, no matter what kind of school you work in, this is a definitive NQS tool for you and your school community.

As a passionate educator, committed to quality outcomes for every child, you will be filled up by these pages, nurtured by the inspiring stories showing policy in practice. There are three key things that you will find within this resource; these are, firstly, a philosophical grounding in meaningful and purposeful quality that will nurture your vocation and ground you in your motivation for your work. Secondly, through stories of real practice, it will provide you with abundant inspiration to ignite your own ideas around quality. The dynamic experience of being inspired and constructing ideas is designed to strengthen your transformative engagement with the exciting possibilities that lie within your own journey in quality. Thirdly, you will find helpful meta-resources that will support you to apply the fruits of your engagement to the benefit of your whole school community, especially the children you teach.

Any philosophical analysis of quality as a concept within education is synthesised into a unified focus on the child at the centre of all our efforts^{80,81}. However due to the dynamic nature

of education, we must, by necessity, prioritise the empowerment of both the children and their educators as the greatest measure of quality^{82, 83}. Such a goal is best supported by the conscious continuous improvement of the systems that support the empowerment of educators to better empower children. Within the philosophy of quality, culture is explicitly named as the medium through which all is achieved^{84, 85} and evidence-based, collaborative decision making as the steppingstones of an effective empowering culture^{86, 87}.

The NQS stands as a clear and resounding validation that Australian educational policy aligns perfectly with the philosophy of quality⁷⁰. The NQS, in its very essence and spirit, places the whole, welcome, and unique child at the very centre of all that we strive for within early childhood education and care¹¹. As such, at the centre of our national concept of quality lies a celebration of all that our children are and all that they may bring to the world. Every effort we make should be made with respect and in celebration of each unique child. Living up to this purpose requires us to engage deeply in being a thoughtful, constructive, and worthy guide on every child's journey through growth, development, and learning.

I have no doubt that this publication is one that you will return to time and time again for it is a truly helpful resource. It is full of fresh, exciting, practical, and inspiring stories, ideas, and examples of real practice that you can draw on as a muse to stimulate your own innovations. It showcases creative ways of interpreting and applying each of the quality areas within practice and pedagogy to produce substantial benefits for children's learning and educators' capacity. The examples of practice within each quality area can be put to good use as discussion centerpieces within staff meetings. This provides you with scaffolds for collegial discussions that will stimulate reflective and collaborative thinking about the potential for ever growing quality. This democratic and inclusive approach to professional development is multifacetedly beneficial^{88, 89}. It integrates your community's providential diversity and cultivates a path to respectful unity in your team's sentient philosophy and its cohesive implementation. Such reverence for the rights and perspectives of all involved also provides opportunities for truly honest, reflective, responsive, and meaningful evaluation.

In addition to transformative inspiration and highly stimulating and helpful provocations that are designed to ignite your own ideas and support you to springboard them into action in the context of your own distinctive school, this publication

also provides you reflective tools that pose critical questions and excite debate. These tools act as meta resources that will help by underpinning and evidencing a deepening culture of engagement within you and your team. Transformative learning journeys within educators lead to empowerment, flourishing capacity, and reignited motivation levels. Such outcomes within educators fuel a transformation of the learning and teaching experiences for children, of the educators' culture of engagement and ultimately with the wider community of practice.

Applying the resources within this book in ways that stimulate a culture of deeper learning through engagement will help you and your colleagues to plan collaboratively, engage authentically and reflect deeply. In turn, these processes will lead to rich documentation of the journey of growth, development and learning that your community of educators and learners have embarked upon together. All learning journeys have outcomes, and outcomes are stories that are worth telling and worth celebrating. Documenting them well allows for this to happen in a way that makes the learning visible for everyone. A benefit of learning-made-visible is that it can be observed, appreciated, and valued by the wider community. An additional benefit is that these documents can also be used to stimulate reflection, evaluation, and collaborative creativity on how the journey towards continuous improvement can be further enriched. In this way, the cycle of growth is continuous and the philosophy of quality inherent within the NQS is fulfilled.



Valerie, Kindergarten

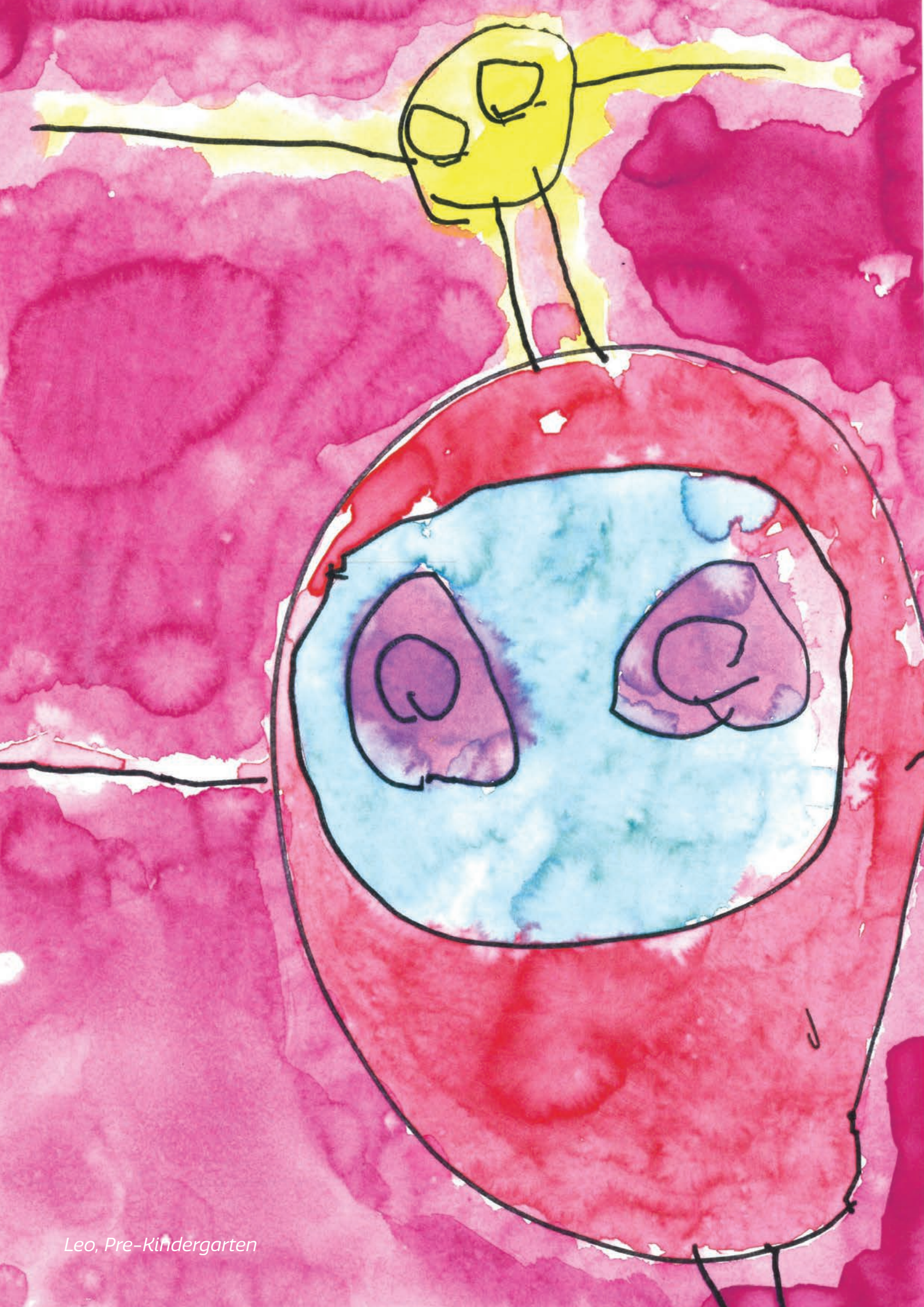
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Leo, Pre-Kindergarten

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For your thoughts

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National Quality Standard

In Action

Western Australian Schools

Within this book you will find contextualised representations of the National Quality Standard elements in action from diverse Western Australian schools, promoting quality practice to optimise the learning, development and wellbeing of children across Pre-Kindergarten to Year 2. This publication represents a cross-sectoral collaboration between the Department of Education Western Australia, Catholic Education Western Australia Ltd., and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. The National Quality Standard is a national initiative that applies to all 3 school sectors in Western Australia, establishing a consistent position about what 'quality' means in early childhood education, setting a benchmark to continually improve outcomes for Western Australian children across the early years of school.

As early childhood educators, we embrace the uniqueness of each child as they flourish and learn; exploring, creating, marvelling and building theories to make sense of their world. This resource has been developed to support Western Australian educators with their implementation of the National Quality Standard and in cultivating quality learning environments, rich learning experiences and positive interactions which build on children's funds of knowledge, throughout early childhood.

