



Early Childhood Philosophy

Rationale

Early Childhood Education at Our Lady of Lourdes Dardanup strives to promote the development and education of the whole child. This is underpinned by our beliefs in developmental learning, inclusivity and the Catholic Ethos.

Early Years Framework

Our approach is based around the three B's: *Belonging, Being and Becoming*.

Belonging: knowing where and with whom you belong

Being: is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world

Becoming: reflects the process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow.

Curriculum

Our early childhood curriculum and pedagogy is based on children learning through play based experiences that are meaningful and will build each child's skills and understandings. Through our curriculum planning, we provide opportunities for children to achieve their potential by having realistic expectations and quality feedback and support.

All OLOL early years teachers (Kindy- year 2) are guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). Our philosophy assists us to meet the National Quality Standards for early years education. Our Kindergarten teachers have an understanding of the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities, the WA Kindergarten Curriculum and the EYLF Outcomes which inform their planning and creation of quality classroom learning program and experiences

Our Pre-primary-Year 2 teachers plan and create quality classroom learning programs and experiences, using the Australian Curriculum, also being guided by their understanding of the EYLF. There are five principles that underpin the EYLF and this is reflected in our practice in the early childhood setting.

Principle 1: Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships

We endeavour to promote *secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships* through open communication with children, families and other educators. Class rules are jointly constructed with the children for the provision of a safe, secure and fair environment. Through secure relationships, we aim to support the child to develop confidence. All children are made to feel respected and valued.

Principle 2: Partnerships

We aim to create a welcoming environment, where open communication and collaboration with children and families is valued and encouraged. Parents are actively involved in our early learning program through: parent help rosters, excursions, parent representative to the P&F. Partnerships are based upon effective communication, through newsletters, parent/teacher interviews, learning journeys, class news, class assemblies.

Principle 3: High expectations and equity

We hold high expectations of children and believe in their capabilities to succeed and aim to provide them with the knowledge and skills to reach their potential, regardless of their diverse needs, irrespective of circumstances and abilities. We are continually in communication with outside support agencies (school psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, health nurse and special needs consultant) to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to learn.

Principle 4: Respect for diversity

We believe in *respecting the diversity* within our community. Our practice is guided by children's prior experiences, values and beliefs. As educators we honour the history, culture and language of our children's home lives and use this to enrich our programs. We celebrate through NAIDOC Week, Multicultural Day and cultural incursions.

Principle 5: Ongoing learning and reflective practice

As educators we continually seek ways to build our professional knowledge and develop learning communities. We have a culture of staff collaboration which involves regular staff meetings, PLCM's (Professional Learning Community Meetings), networking, peer enhancement/mentoring. We seek to build on our professional knowledge through consultants from CEO, professional readings, targeted professional learning and reflective practice.

Religious Education

Catholic schools play a vital part in the life of the Church in Western Australia by contributing to the holistic development of our young through education. Early Childhood Education and Care are integral in laying the foundational blocks on which children 'develop a Gospel vision of themselves and society' (Mandate paragraph 6).

We seek to assist the initial spiritual and religious development of the children. We provide numerous opportunities for daily prayer and incorporate "God talk" informally during children's natural conversations. Pre-primary, Year 1 and Year 2 attend whole school liturgies and Year 1 and Year 2 conduct paraliturgies each term based on current religious units of work. Pre-primary, Year 1 and Year 2 follow the Archdiocese Religious Education Units of Work.

Importance of play

In line with the pedagogical practices outlined in the EYLF, planning and teaching for learning through play is a key feature of our Early Childhood Program. Play based learning is a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they actively engage with people, objects and representations (EYLF, 2009, p.46).

Through purposeful planning for the physical environment and learning activities, play is used as a tool to promote learning and development. Through play, children are able to explore, identify, negotiate, take risks and create meaning. Physically active play allows children to test and develop their motor skills. It also promotes health and well being benefits. Through a play based learning program, we incorporate a daily schedule that includes active indoor and outdoor physical play. We integrate music, movement and creative expression within our classrooms. Through adult-child interactions we model play and assist with the development of social competences, conflict resolution and the forming of friendships.

The Environment

We believe that learning environments are welcoming spaces, which reflect and enrich the lives and identities of children and families. Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. Outdoor spaces offer possibilities not available indoors. Play spaces invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection and appreciation of nature. Selected materials enhance learning and encourage abstract thinking. Gross Motor skills are further enhanced with the provision of playground equipment, climbing frames, sand play toys, bikes and sporting equipment. Indoor spaces cater for all the learning needs through our play centres/areas. These areas include: social/emotional (dress-ups, home corner), cognitive (blocks, puzzles, construction materials), creative (drawing, collage, painting, craft activities), physical (play-dough, blocks), language (through conversations in all areas and reading books, print rich environment and writing stations.)

Assessment and Documentation

To record the children's growth and development, we use observations, photographs, checklists and anecdotal notes to then produce portfolios in Kindergarten and Pre-primary, parent interviews in Kindy-Year 2 and reports in Pre-primary, Year 1 and Year 2. These documents show children's progress in achieving curriculum outcomes.

Assessment is part of an ongoing cycle, which informs our current and future planning. This allows communication about our children's learning and progress and determines the extent to which students are meeting learning outcomes. This allows us to identify which students require further support and provide the data to access professional support via school programs (MiniLit) or outside support agencies.