



## Policy and Procedure Educational program

“Children develop understanding of themselves and their world through active, hands-on investigation. A supportive active learning environment encourages children’s engagement in learning which can be recognised as deep concentration and complete focus on what captures their interests. Children bring their *being* to their learning. They have many ways of seeing the world, different processes of learning and their own preferred learning styles.” (Belonging, Being and Becoming, The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia page 33)

Our program is influenced by a socio-cultural perspective, where children’s development processes are not only enhanced within individuals, but also within group and community processes. Where also a process of scaffolding and sustained shared thinking occurs through intentional teaching and projects in our everyday pedagogical practices. Through this practice respectful and reciprocal relationships are built between the educators, children and their families.

In our program we believe we need to listen to children’s and families’ voices, ideas and interests in order to empower each child and foster their sense of agency. We acknowledge that children learn in diverse ways, and therefore need to provide choices in materials, the learning we offer and how our program is implemented.

Acacia centres provide programs for children, centred around the notion that each individual child belongs to a diverse family and community.

As a whole centre we have implemented the National Early Years Learning Framework within the program for each room (ages 0 – 6 years).

Fundamental to the framework, is the view of children’s lives as characterised by Belonging, Being and Becoming.

Programs focus on five Outcome areas of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF);

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

We aim to provide opportunities to foster social development, and nurture children’s dispositions for learning. The program implicitly values early childhood and the philosophy that children learn through play.

Through play, children construct every aspect of their knowledge. Social and intellectual development occurs as children interact with their peers and adults, and as children actively manipulate and explore objects in their environment.

Educators believe that children first belong to their family and we acknowledge their immediate and extended families are their initial and important teachers.



We acknowledge the importance of working in partnership with families and building on the foundations of understanding each others' expectations, attitudes and knowledge in preparation for future transitions.

Educators understand that families play a vital role in their children's learning and development and actively wish to develop strong relationships and partnerships with each family. These partnerships reflect our positive approach to planning within a shared supportive decision making process that understands the family's prior knowledge and understanding of their child's education and well-being.

## Definitions

**Agency:** Being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world.

**Belonging:** Knowing where and with whom you belong

**Being:** *Being* recognises the significance of the here and now in children's lives. It is about the present and them knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging with life's joys and complexities, and meeting challenges in everyday life.

**Becoming:** Children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change during childhood. *Becoming* reflects this process of rapid and significant change that occurs in the early years as young children learn and grow. It emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society.

**Co-construct:** Learning takes place as children interact with educators and other children as they work together in partnership.

**Critical reflection:** Reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice.

**Curriculum:** In the early childhood setting curriculum means 'all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development'.

**Inclusion:** Involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference.

**Intentional teaching:** Educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have 'always' been done that way.

**Learning:** A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development.



**Learning framework:** A guide which provides general goals or outcomes for children's learning and how they might be attained. It also provides a scaffold to assist early childhood settings to develop their own, more detailed curriculum.

**Learning Outcome:** A skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families.

**Learning relationships:** Relationships that further children's learning and development. Both the adult and the child have intent to learn from each other.

**Literacy:** In the early years literacy includes a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading and writing.

**Numeracy:** Broadly includes understanding about numbers, patterns, measurement, spatial awareness and data as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting.

**Pedagogies:** Practices that are intended to promote children's learning.

**Pedagogy:** Early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning.

**Play-based learning:** A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

**Scaffold:** The educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning.

**Sustained shared Thinking:** Learning takes place as children interact with educators and other children as they work together in partnership. All involved are learning together, as the adult does not see themselves as the only expert.

**Technologies:** Includes much more than computers and digital technologies used for information, communication and entertainment. Technologies are the diverse range of products that make up the designed world. These products extend beyond artefacts designed and developed by people and include processes, systems, services and environments.

**Transitions:** The process of moving between home and childhood setting, between a range of different early childhood settings, or from childhood setting to full-time school.

**Wellbeing:** Sound wellbeing results from the satisfaction of basic needs - the need for tenderness and affection; security and clarity; social recognition; to feel competent; physical needs and for meaning in life (adapted from Laevers 1994). It includes happiness and satisfaction, effective social functioning and the dispositions of optimism, openness, curiosity and resilience



## Curriculum

Acacia curriculum is influenced by the Early Years Learning Frameworks.

Acacia implements various curriculums throughout our overall daily educational program. Each individual curriculum has an important place to teach children a holistic and dynamic play based program that caters for each individual child's needs.

Our curriculum experience includes the following:

1. Academic concepts/ areas such as:
  - STEAM
    - Science
    - Technology
    - Engineering
    - Creative Arts (drama, music, movement, visual)
    - Maths
  - Literacy
  - Environmental and Sustainability awareness
  - Community & cultural awareness
2. Cultural program,
  - Educators recognise bi- and multi-lingual as an asset and support these children to maintain their first language and learn English as a second language
  - Educators promote cultural awareness in all children, including greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being
3. Emotional Literacy
  - Acacia recognises the importance of teaching children to understand their feelings, so they can manage them in real life scenarios. P.A.T.H.S is one example on a curriculum that is taught in all rooms
4. Health and safety
  - Road safety; Acacia understands the importance of teaching children the foundations of using the roads and surrounding when walking, riding bike and being a passenger on a moving vehicle, please refer to our road safety policy.
  - Body awareness: Teaching children to be aware of their own safety.
  - Healthy eating: teaching children about nutrition.



- Smiles for miles: Acacia places importance on making children and families aware of their own dental hygiene and practices. Smiles for miles assists us to promote these in our daily program.

#### 5. Sustainability

- Acacia promotes the importance of teaching children about environmental awareness to sustain their future in the modern world.

#### 6. ELLA

- Acacia provides a lingual program where children to understand another language and culture

#### 7. Animal Fun

- Acacia provides a movement program promoting physical activity and mental health

### **Implementation**

The Director is responsible for ensuring that Educators develop a program which is based on the individual child and reflected their diverse cultural heritage and interests. Programs will also reflect the philosophy and goals of the centre. The educational leader is responsible to ensure critical reflection and consultations is carried out so that s/he can drive and inspire new developments in the program.

### **Principles**

The following are five Principles that reflect contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children's learning and early childhood pedagogy. The Principles underpin practice that is focused on assisting all children to make progress in relation to the Learning Outcomes.

- 1) Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
- 2) Partnerships
- 3) High expectations and equity
- 4) Respect for diversity
- 5) Ongoing learning and reflective practice

### **Practices**

Our educational curriculum will be delivered in various methods throughout the day. Through critical reflection our pedagogical practices are altered to suit the needs of the families, children, community and environment.

The principles of early childhood pedagogy underpin practice. Educators draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to promote children's learning by:

- adopting holistic approaches



- emergent curriculum
- being responsive to children. Will focus on balance and flexibility. Children will enjoy autonomy in their choices of learning experiences. Staff will ensure that there are real choices eg indoor or outdoor play, quiet or active play, individual or small group times, and large group experiences
- planning and implementing learning through play
- intentional teaching
- carrying out projects on subject that are child or adult focused
- creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning
- valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and their families
- providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transition
- through everyday flexible and unrushed routines children are guided by educators within an enriched learning environment that help all children to feel secure, confident and included
- assessing and monitoring children's learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes.

There is an emphasis on spending time with Educators and the importance of routines and transitions as learning opportunities that are an integral part of the program. At Acacia educators will work as a team to critically reflect on the best methods to use to teach for each area of our curriculum including in group work, individual work, adventuring outside of the centre on outings or inviting families' people to share their knowledge and skills with children.

Excursions and incursions are an important part of our curriculum. These support and extend on what the children are currently learning or are interested in.

Educators should ensure that planning is reflective of each child's interests, strengths and needs. Information on our educational program is available to all families and family involvement is encouraged. All families are welcome to be part of our program and are encouraged to further discuss with educators.

## **Documentation**

### **Why do we need to document?**

Gathering and analysing information about what children know, can do and understand is part of the ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning. It helps educators (in partnership with children, families and other professionals) to:

- Plan effectively for children's current and future learning
- Communicate about children's learning and progress



- Determine the extent to which all children are progressing in their learning outcomes and if not, what might be impeding their progress
- Identify children who may need additional support in order to achieve particular learning outcomes, providing that support or assisting families to access specialist help
- Evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments, and experiences offered, and the approaches taken to enable children's learning

Reflecting on pedagogy that will suit this context and children at Acacia. , While acknowledging the important role of documentation, we also believe that there is no prescription about how it is done.

There are no mandated recipes or templates for documentation and for very good reason. Recognising the uniqueness of each service, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and educators are empowered to explore a range of styles and methods to determine what works best for their children, families, services and community.

This approach recognises the professionalism of the sector and allows educators to focus their energies on documentation that supports quality outcomes for children.

Aspects relating to documentation include:

- Documentation is an important part of our work with children and families, not just because it is a requirement
- Children's voices and ideas should be captured in planning, documentation and evaluation
- Even experienced educators need to try different methods to find what is realistic, achievable and relevant for the children, families, educators, the setting and establish some benchmarks that are regularly reviewed
- We need to be selective in what we choose to document, because it is not possible to capture all of the rich experiences and learnings that occur every day
- We need to share our documentation efforts and experiences, and continue to learn, grow and develop
- We need to constantly review and remind ourselves why we are documenting and for whom
- We need to be clear about what the standards, learning frameworks and, if relevant, the funding agreements are asking us to do, as there are a number of myths emerging.

Acacia adopts clear guidelines in relation to programming for individuals which also reflects guidelines set by the regulatory authority. Educators must ensure the following:

- Educators will maintain individual files for each child, which include, set goals gathered data and assessments of children's learning and developmental progress.
- All documentations and assessments of children and the program must be available and accessible to all families and children
- All documentation and assessments of children and program must be kept for 3 years ( refer to record keeping policy)



- Educators will communicate with families in various ways such as: parent information sessions, informal teacher/parent interviews, daily verbal or written communication via tablets or children's learning portfolios, newsletters and displays.
- Educators will collaborate with families formally or informally to create and evaluate goals that support and extend children's current and future learning outcomes

All educators are expected to document children's learning using the cycle of planning. Educators at Acacia will document or gather children's learning using the following methods: (this are some samples but may alter through reflective practices)

- Collecting data by recording information shared by family or children
- Collecting art samples
- Recording written observations
- Recording information using Digital form; photos, videos, audio devices

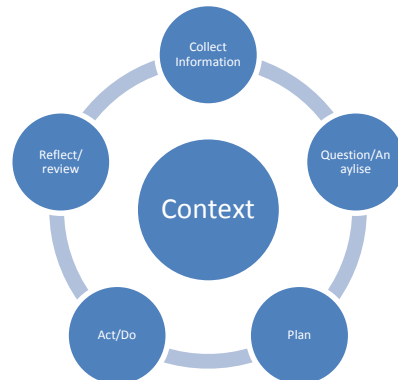
### **Cycle of Planning**

The Early Years Planning Cycle outlines the process early childhood professionals use to collect and interpret evidence that contributes to a detailed, up-to-date, strengths-based picture of children's learning and development to inform planning and practice decisions. This Planning Cycle is used to support assessment for learning 'which is designed to discover what children know and understand, based on what they make, write, draw, say and do.' (VEYLDF p. 13)

#### **The Early Years Planning Cycle supports:**

- purposeful observations over time
- collecting, analysing and assessing individual and group learning and development in different contexts
- making plans about each child and groups of children
- sharing information and collaborating with children, families, colleagues and other early childhood professionals
- reflecting on all aspects of events and experiences
- applying context to inform practice decisions





## Evaluation of Children's Program

According to VEYLDF and EYLF, assessment is designed to discover what children already know and understand, and then how their learning has grown through our program. It makes the educators aware of the best learning styles that promote learning and participation for each individual child, therefore, enabling educators to plan the program for the future to best suit the group and provide the best outcome for each individual child's learning and development. All children benefit when assessment reflects a whole-child approach, providing a holistic view of learning and development.

Educators use a range of assessment tools, processes, and approaches to build on prior learning, avoiding duplication and ensuring the program is meaningful and respectful to each individual.

Educators at Acacia will evaluate individual children's learning through the process of analysing observations and in summative assessments.

Educational theory and their theories underpin our analysis and assessment process. All assessments are linked to the 5 learning outcomes of the EYLF and the academic concepts that each child has learnt.

Acacia believes that being open, honest, and critically reflective in our self-assessment process and work helps to identify strengths in this area as well as identifying areas that need focus. This helps in identifying and informing families, other educators, and professionals and authorised officers, how your documentation meets requirements and promotes each child's learning and development.

All educators, in collaboration, will reflect their teaching styles and pedagogical beliefs, to ensure that the current program reflects the current cultural context of the centre, families, and community. We place a strong emphasis on team work and reflection as a whole body to provide the best inclusive and well-rounded experience and learning environment for all children.

A quality improvement plan will be reviewed regularly to ensure that a reflective culture amongst educators is fostered.

## References

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority



- *National Quality Framework Resource Kit*, October 2018

#### Clark P

- *Supporting children learning English as a second language in the early years (birth to six years)*, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2009
- *Learning English as an Additional Language in the Early Years (birth to six years)*, VCAA, 2011

#### Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming - The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* Commonwealth of Australia 2009
- *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia 2010

#### Early Childhood Strategy Division Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, November 2009

#### Legislation

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2018*

#### Rogoff B

- *The Cultural Nature of Human Development*, Oxford University Press, 2003

Version 5	Endorsed By: CoM	Approved Date: 2010	Reviewed: Aug 2018
-----------	------------------	---------------------	--------------------