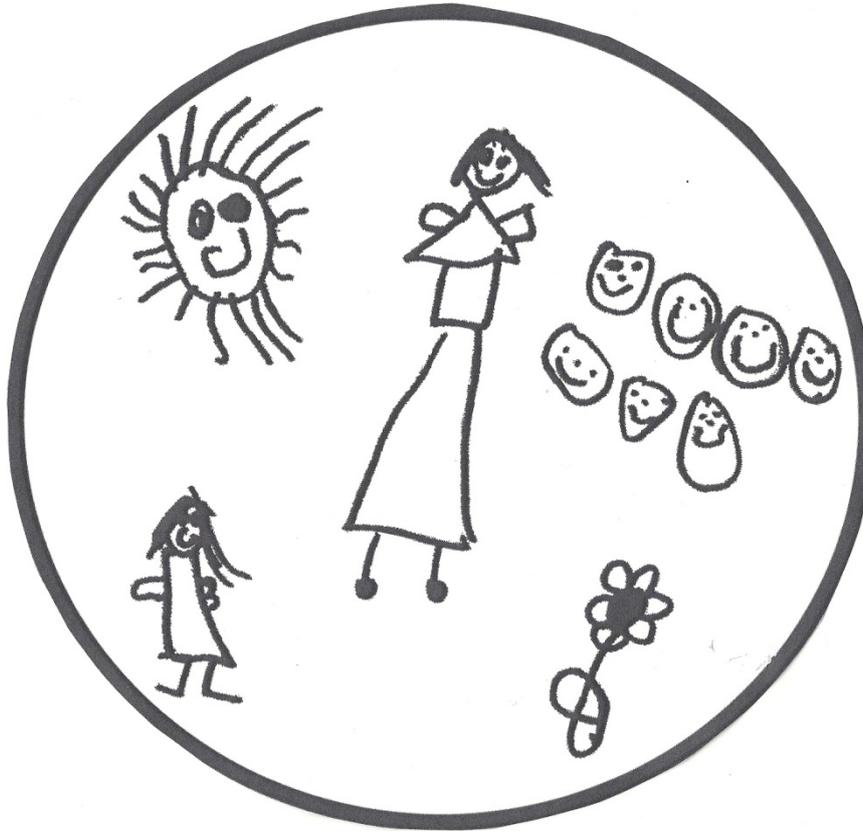


# BALLARA PARK KINDERGARTEN



## ABOUT OUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

*"Children's early learning influences their life chances. Wellbeing and a strong sense of connection, optimism and engagement enable children to develop a positive attitude to learning."*

EYLF p.9

## What are the elements of our educational program?

The educational program at Ballara Park Kindergarten embraces the principles and practices of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, “*Belonging, Being and Becoming*”.

The principles that guide our work are that

- The rights of the child are paramount
- We believe that all children are successful, competent and capable learners
- We develop secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships with all children
- We work in partnership with parents and families
- We have high expectations for children and staff
- We uphold principles of equity, inclusion and diversity and value all cultures
- We demonstrate ongoing learning and reflective practice

These principles of early childhood pedagogy underpin our practice. We draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to promote children’s learning by:

- adopting holistic approaches
- being responsive to children
- planning and implementing learning through play
- intentional teaching
- 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
- assessing and monitoring children’s learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes.

The learning outcomes we aim for are :

- 1) Children have a strong sense of identity
- 2) Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- 3) Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- 4) Children are confident learners
- 5) Children are effective communicators

Children’s learning is ongoing and each child will progress toward the outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways. Learning is not always predictable and linear, so we plan our program with each child and the outcomes in mind.

For more information about the EYLF please see [www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood) or ask staff.

As well as the EYLF, we endeavour to include in our planning a number of relevant principles and practices gleaned from other effective early childhood education frameworks. The pedagogies that we employ at Ballara Park aim to ensure that we provide high quality learning environments and educational programs that are closely aligned with the constructivist theories of learning. We aim to integrate aspects of the theories and practices principally developed by Dewey, Bruner, Piaget and Vygotsky. Our practices are also influenced by a range of international early childhood approaches and we incorporate what we consider to be the most relevant aspects of them. Some of the approaches that have influenced our practices are Montessori methodology, the Reggio Emilia approach, the High Scope program and the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP).

In addition, we strive to keep abreast of current best practice by critically examining current trends in education and contemporary research. Examples of recent influences that have informed our practice are the rapidly emerging field of brain research and the evidence provided by extensive longitudinal studies that have examined effectiveness of various early childhood programs.

All of these influences have led us to develop and adopt some firm principles on which we base all of our programs, pedagogies and practices. These beliefs are:

- Children learn best when they are actively involved and interested. Through their play, children learn about themselves, other people and the world around them. Play experiences must be purposeful and relevant and must enable children to expand and build on what they already know and can do.
- The indoor and the outdoor learning environments must be challenging and stimulating, but at the same time they must allow children to feel safe and secure. This requires meticulous planning and sound knowledge of individual children. The learning environment must also facilitate access to a range of resources that allow children to follow their interests and expand their learning through hands-on experiences.
- Children develop in different rates and in different ways – emotionally, intellectually, socially, physically, and spiritually. All aspects are important and each is interwoven with the others. Each child is an individual. Therefore the curriculum must be fitted to the child, rather than the child to the curriculum. Individual learning styles and multiple intelligences must be recognised and taken into account.
- The importance we place on literacy, numeracy and information technology is evident throughout all the key learning areas of English, mathematics, science and technology, health and physical education, studies of society (including history and geography) and the environment and the creative arts. Of similar importance is the emphasis we place on the development of learning dispositions and the essential skills of problem solving and critical thinking.
- Young children learn from everything that happens to them and around them. The relationships that children make with other children and with adults are of central importance to their development.
- The role of the educators at our kindergarten is that of facilitator and guide as well as instructor. We aim to be ongoing learners and keen observers of children. We use our knowledge of individuals to scaffold our students' learning by connecting new information with their prior knowledge.
- Our educational program must support children to become responsible and respectful global citizens.

## What does our educational program look like?

Each fortnight we plan a program that is based on the children's current needs and interests. This planning consists of:

- 1) providing a stimulating and challenging learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, that reflects children's interests and the topics of the current learning
- 2) providing a wide range of activities that allow children to develop skills and knowledge over all the domains of learning
- 3) identifying a range of assessment tasks that will inform us of children's progress and enable us to plan further activities to extend and practise new knowledge and skills

A copy of our program plan is displayed on the pin-up board in the library room, hard copies are available from the parent information area and a summary of the learning outcomes we are focussing on is written on the whiteboard on the verandah each week.

At the end of each fortnight we evaluate and review our program.

All children attending Ballara Park Kindergarten have an individual learning record. This is available to parents at any time. We have an assessment cycle that begins with the information provided to us by parents in the child profile and with observations of children in their first weeks at kindergarten. When children have settled into our centre, we conduct more comprehensive assessments to ascertain children's current knowledge and skills in the cognitive, social and physical areas. Please be assured that all 'assessments' are done in a relaxed, fun manner during games and activities and are not at all uncomfortable or threatening for children. The results of these observations and assessments in children's first term of kindergarten are reported to and discussed with parents. We then plan activities for individual and small groups of children using this information.

Children are assessed informally and through observation in an ongoing manner during their year at kindergarten. Samples of each child's work, photographs and examples of group projects are collected throughout the year and placed in a portfolio that children take with them at the end of their year. Contents of the portfolio are determined by staff and by the children's requests. In their last term of kindergarten a "Statement of Learning" is developed for each child. This is again verbally discussed with parents. With parental permission, this statement is passed on to the child's primary school.

## What does literacy and numeracy look like in our program?

Learning opportunities in literacy and numeracy are integral to all activities and experiences we offer. Literacy and numeracy development in young children is best fostered through purposeful play activities rather than paper exercises and worksheets. While we do provide some explicit instruction in both literacy and numeracy, we focus on providing activities that develop children's skills and knowledge in the areas of oral language, phonemic awareness, visual acuity, pattern awareness, physical development and mathematical thinking. Please see our booklets that explain what literacy and numeracy looks like at preschool and ask staff if you require more information.

## What can parents do to help?

Our learning program usually follows a project or topic in which the children are interested. We encourage families to become involved in our program and all contributions to the children's learning are welcomed. If you have any queries or concerns about your child's development or behaviour during the year, please speak to staff at any time. We are happy to discuss any aspects of our program at any time.