

## **Play Based Learning, Educational Program and Learning Portfolios**

EMCC believes in play based learning as children learn most effectively when they are actively engaged in their surrounding environment and are having fun. Therefore, we value and support a program which facilitates meaningful and stimulating experiences where children can thrive, make their own decisions, use their imagination and enhance their interests.

The National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) support educators in enhancing young children's learning and development through the early years by building their interests and knowledge as well as that of the wider community. The Framework contains principles, practices and learning outcomes which assist in fostering the development of the whole child.

### **Play based learning**

One of the most commonly used practices in the early childhood sector is 'learning through play'. Play based learning is described in the EYLF as 'a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they actively engage with people, objects and presentations' (EYLF, 2009, p.46).

What are the benefits of play?

- Play provides opportunities to improve fine motor and gross motor skills and maintain physical health
- Play helps to develop imagination and creativity
- Play provides an environment in which to practise social skills
- Long periods of uninterrupted play build children's concentration and the inner motivation to take responsibility for their own learning
- A positive sense of self is important in facilitating ongoing learning

What is play based learning?

A play based program will look different throughout the day. At times children may play alone or with their friends. At other times children will come together as a group, listen when others are talking, follow the rules of the group and begin to take responsibility for their own actions and their environment.

What is the educator's role within a play based program?

Within a play based program, the educator's role is to guide and extend the play activities. Educators continually evaluate children's play to discover what it is the children are learning and to then help shape and extend this learning. Materials are added to play by children or educators. Educators will ask questions to extend the play. They will interact and participate with children and their play.

### **Educational Program**

EMCC provides an educational program that is based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child and group of children. We take into account the individuality of each child as well as understand the holistic way that children learn and value responsive and reciprocal relationships. We value partnerships with families and view children as capable and competent learners and communicators. We provide open ended experiences that allow for children to explore at their own level and time. The group program planning is displayed in each of the Rooms and the children's individual learning is displayed in their portfolios.

The Educational Program also contributes to the following outcomes:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to his or her world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

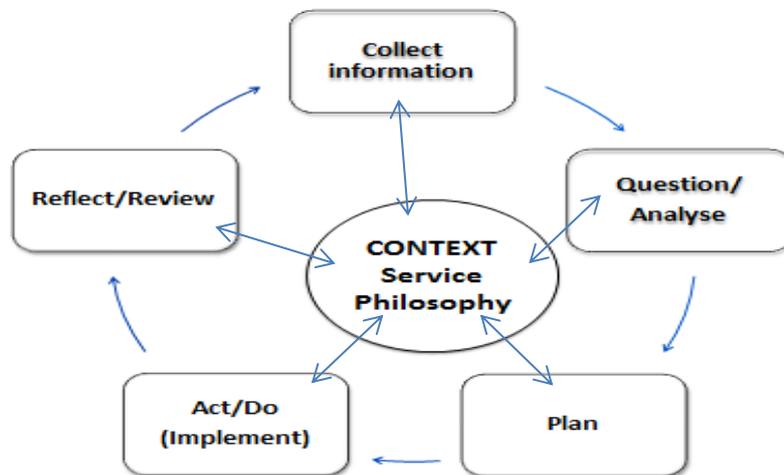
At various stages throughout the year we do the following:

- Individual Learning Objectives – these are specific to your child's interests, needs and areas to improve and we value your input when setting these. They are evaluated and reassessed if need be.
- Analysis of Learning – a detailed overview of the child's learning and development as assessed against the EYLF and VEYLDF. These will now be put in your family pockets at the end of the Term as well as in your child's learning portfolio.

## The Planning Cycle

Our curriculum decision making involves

- Using educators in-depth knowledge of each child's strengths and interests (gained from families as well as through observations and interactions with each child)
- Tracking what children already know, can do and understand using the Learning Outcomes as points of reference
- Planning strategies and facilitating the learning environment (indoors and outdoors) to support further learning
- Reflecting on the learning to support and enhance further learning



## Portfolios

At EMCC we believe a portfolio should be a celebration of the child's unique abilities, achievements and progress, displayed through authentic samples and available to both children and families. Portfolios are a journey/distanced travelled of a child's learning and development during their time at Yarra Park.

Portfolios are for individual children and contain a collection of various documentation that reflects a child's progress of development and learning. It provides evidence and samples of a child's achievement throughout the year. For educators, portfolios offer an opportunity to reflect on an individual child's efforts and achievements over time. For children and families, portfolios enable them to be a part of a collaborative approach where all contributions are welcomed and gain and insight and understanding of their child's learning and development. We give each child the opportunity to be involved in their own portfolios, through reflecting on past experiences, adding own voices. Portfolios offer parents an opportunity to see their child's development progress in action and gain an understanding of what their child is experiencing away from home.

We strongly encourage families and children to look through their portfolios during the year – take it home, read through it together, add photos, art work. At the end of the year the portfolio goes own to keep and new one starts the following year.

## Collecting Information for Portfolios

We have methods of documentation in which children and families have opportunities to contribute to the planning. The current methods of documentation are as follows:

- Family contributions (About Me, parent voice, photo stories of recent family experiences)
- Child contributions (conversations, child voice/questionnaires)
- Anecdotes – short records about something we have noticed about the child's interest, skills, interactions or ideas
- Learning stories – is a record of what an educator has seen a child (or group of children) doing at the Centre. The learning story may be as short as one paragraph or one page long. It is usually focused on a specific experience. It may focus on a group activity, where the learning story is about an activity that the children did together. Educators add his/her interpretation of the child's competencies and dispositions towards learning (generally called 'what learning occurred?') as well as the educators will do 'what next?' where they will follow on with different experiences to support and enhance the child's interest.
- Examples of their work – children's drawings, paintings, artwork, and constructions (collage, blocks, Lego). It can include comments, narratives, explanations made by the children about their work