

Florey Preschool Inclusion Procedure

Purpose and Scope

Celebrating and respecting the similarities and diversity of each other's culture, knowledge, and experience enriches our own life experience. Addressing biases and actively seeking opportunities to challenge and criticise normative discourse and explore diversity with children is important if we are to have a positive impact on social justice issues that exist within our preschool and wider community. The exploration of diversity not only encourages individuality and increases our sense of self-worth, self-esteem and belonging, it also prepares us to stand up to injustice. Children learn from observing and imitating the behaviours, attitudes and values that are role modelled to them as well as those portrayed in children's stories, play equipment and media. As educators we are striving to provide positive role models for appropriate and acceptable social interactions, which celebrate diversity and contribute to harmony within our preschool and wider community.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- address biases that exist in society in order to help empower children to make decisions based on individual choice without relying on stereotypes and prejudicial conceptions
- raise awareness within the preschool of basic human rights and acceptance of each other by respecting and valuing not only our differences, but also our similarities
- value children as active and capable citizens in their own right
- promote positive attitudes towards diversity and to value people:
 - o of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage
 - o from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
 - o who may be socially isolated or socially constructed as vulnerable
 - o of all abilities, including children with additional needs and rights
 - o from diverse family structures, including gay or lesbian families
 - o from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Definitions

Culture - Culture is a person's or group of people's way of life. It includes surface level aspects, such as the clothes, activities such as child rearing practices and traditions, as well as values and attitudes, which are the deepest level of culture (Arthur, Beecher, Dockett, Farmer and Death, 2007). Culture can include race, religion, ethnicity, language, beliefs and traditions.

Anti-bias approach - An anti-bias approach consists of policies and practices which deal with all aspects of diversity and addresses issues of bias, such as culture, language, physical appearance, gender, lifestyle, beliefs, sexual preference, family structure, ability and age to prevent the development of prejudices and stereotypes resulting in discrimination.

Family - Those adults and children who have significant relationships with children attending the preschool, incorporating diverse family composition, extended family and kinship ties.

Inclusive Curriculum - Inclusive curriculum involves minimising the barriers to access and successful participation in education programs so that no group of learners are excluded from achieving the outcomes.

Additional needs and rights - note that the preschool prefers to use the term “additional needs and rights” rather than the terminology, “disability”. This also refers to children who may be talented or gifted, have identified delays or require additional support for developmental, cultural or social reasons.

Procedure

Children

Educators will develop and implement a program for children which addresses bias, recognises the diversity and injustices within society and encourages each child to develop to their full potential.

“Those who are helped to identify and to think critically about what they see in books, on TV, in movies and on signs and posters are more likely to develop healthy identities and understandings of others” (Dau p23).

This will be achieved by:

- viewing all children as competent with many strengths and abilities and as active social constructors of their own learning, particularly children with additional needs and rights.
- providing children with opportunities to explore diversity and celebrate culture. This can be done at an obvious level through use of languages, books, music, craft, clothing, resources and equipment, community access, community events and through less obvious means such as modelling co-operation, social responsibility, awareness of others, empathy and acceptance as appropriate ways of being part of a group.
- actively encouraging all children to show empathy and assertiveness whilst respecting the rights of others.
- providing equal opportunities for boys and girls to enter experiences based on their interests, educational and developmental needs and strengths rather than gender stereotyping and reflecting on the use of space by gender groups.
- providing experiences for children with additional needs and rights and varying abilities as part of the daily program, and providing an inclusive curriculum for all children. All children will be actively encouraged to accept and support each other.
- ensuring that an appreciation of indigenous culture, heritage and languages is reflected in all the preschool’s experiences and work activities.
- ensuring that interactions with children are supportive, unbiased and thoughtful.
- planning for opportunities for children to critically analyse popular culture, media and stories, to use role-play to solve problems relating to unfairness, provide children with opportunities to make connections with the local community.

Families

The preschool will include and work with families in the following ways:

- ensuring that prior to children attending our preschool, all families are made aware of, and have the opportunity to, read and discuss this policy with the educators. The discussion should include sharing with families some activities and resources that the preschool will provide and use with children in order to work within the purpose of this policy.
- acknowledging that families best know their child and use this information for the care of the child.
- show sensitivity and respect for the range of family structures including same sex parents.
- understanding that child rearing practices and family values will have a profound impact on early development. Educators and families will communicate about preferred child rearing

practices within the family such as home routines, religious practices, communication style (verbal and non-verbal), health and safety, and cultural values.

- facilitating educator awareness of possible conflicts between the values and practices of children's families and those values within the preschool. Educators will be open and sensitive about how they discuss the value of various learning experiences with the families and accommodate as much as possible, but not contravene practices within the legal requirements placed on the preschool.
- encouraging and supporting families to participate in their child's program through open communication, both verbal and written. Where possible and necessary, translations will be provided. Families will be encouraged to share their culture, values and interests e.g. sharing languages, meal preparation, skills and strengths, and practices within the home environment.
- acknowledging that equal participation does not mean everyone participates in the same way and that it may be in different forms.
- valuing multiple perspectives (other than those values which lead to the discrimination of others) and empower families as decision-makers about their children's wellbeing.
- providing for family social events that support families from different cultures to socialise and develop a sense of belonging at the preschool.

The program and environment

The program and environment will incorporate resources and experiences, which challenge stereotypes and value diversity. Children will be encouraged to critically analyse dominant discourses through their play and conversations. "Children who are provided with accurate images and props, and who are encouraged to think and talk about differences, will be more prepared to deal with biases" (Dau, p23).

This will be achieved through:

- using inclusive and non-discriminatory language and language that avoids objectification in regards to people with additional rights.
- providing an environment that respects diversity through its use of resources.
- encouraging children to explore their own hidden values, and misconceptions in society through simple discussion about issues.
- encouraging children to verbalise their feelings towards each other and to work through their own emotions and conflicts.
- providing opportunities for children to participate in experiences, which help them recognise bias and stereotypes, provide them with strategies to take action against bias and which encourage critical thinking and problem solving. These experiences may be planned or take opportunities that arise spontaneously within the daily program and in children's play.
- incorporating the use of external specialists in order to ensure all children, including children with different abilities, have access to all areas of the preschool's program.
- providing equipment and resources that reflect positive images of difference, additional needs and inclusion.
- ensuring resources and equipment respectfully, and realistically, reflect Australia's indigenous heritage and multicultural society.
- supporting the second language (English) to be learnt in addition to, rather than as a replacement of, the home language.
- working with families to learn and use key words and statements as well as written forms of the child's home language to use in all aspects of the program.

- supporting educators who share a child's home language or any other language to use it throughout the day and to assist children to make connections with English.
- providing books, music, and game activities in a variety of languages for use by children.
- including various languages including sign language and local Aboriginal language in the program in a variety of contexts.
- respecting all family types and challenging discriminatory and homophobic attitudes
- identifying and combating stereotypes and any discriminatory behaviours including racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia and classism.
- valuing the system of extended family kinship and welcoming them in the preschool.
- respecting local elders and seeking ways to involve them in the children's programs
- supporting community activities aimed at reconciliation.
- ensuring resources and experiences do not reflect gender stereotypes or sexist images or behaviours. Deconstructing gender stereotypes within the community and media and discussing the power relations within. These narratives can then be reconstructed to reflect multiple possibilities.
- ensuring all family structures, including gay and lesbian families, have a positive and visible presence within the preschool.
- using non-sexist language and acknowledging children's attempts and achievements rather than their appearance.

Educators

Educators will develop knowledge, understanding, appreciation and sensitivity of diversity issues through:

- being encouraged to seek awareness of her/his own feelings, beliefs and background, evaluating the effect these may have on attitudes and interactions with families.
- providing ongoing evaluation, in conjunction with families, of anti-bias aspects within the program.
- developing relationships with families and seeking information from families as much as they can about the types of experiences children have outside the preschool and incorporating them as much as possible as a basis for learning.
- providing professional learning for educators to extend their knowledge of social justice, inclusive and anti-bias practices through learning opportunities, resources and publications and discussions at meetings to combat discrimination that may exist.
- establishing and maintaining links with organisations, which promote social justice and inclusion and/or provide specialised support or resources.
- ensuring compliance with relevant Territory and Commonwealth legislation to provide an inclusive and discrimination free environment.
- actively seeking information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures and Indigenous issues within the local and wider community.
- recognising and utilising the Indigenous community as a significant resource.
- utilising the resources available within ACTETD.
- seeking specialised assistance/additional support to successfully include children with additional needs and rights.
- working as a whole team, including any additional support educators, in meeting the interests and strengths of all children.
- maintaining updated information about children with additional needs and rights.
- planning an Individualised Learning Plan in collaboration with families and other professionals/agencies, including NDIA providers.

- providing or seeking support/funding to provide any building or environment modifications that may be required.
- providing or borrowing equipment that may be required and seeking training to appropriately use such equipment.
- working collaboratively with other groups, children's services or schools to support the child in the transition to the next learning environment.

Acknowledgements

Arthur, L. Beecher, B. Dockett, S. Farmer, S. and Death, E. (2007). *Programming and planning in early childhood settings*. Sydney, Harcourt Brace.

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Dau, E (2001). *The anti-bias approach in Early Childhood*. NSW, Australia

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Robinson, K and Diaz Jones, C (2007) *Diversity and Difference in Early Education*. Open University Press, Berkshire England.