

# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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## Best Practice – Quality Area 1

### PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines to ensure that the educational program (curriculum) and practice at Bentleigh West Kindergarten Inc. is:

- based on an approved learning framework
- underpinned by critical reflection and careful planning
- stimulating, engaging and enhances children’s learning and development.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### 1. VALUES

Bentleigh West Kindergarten Inc. is committed to:

- providing an educational program that is based on reflective practice, critical analysis and planning
- supporting each child to achieve learning outcomes consistent with the national *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*)
- providing an educational program where children can learn through play and are supported to make decisions, problem-solve and build relationships with others
- creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
- involving families in the development and review of educational program and practice.

#### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Bentleigh West Kindergarten Inc.

#### 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

##### Background

The *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law) requires services to deliver an educational program (curriculum) that is based on an approved learning framework. In Victoria, approved learning frameworks for the early childhood sector are the *Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being & Becoming)* (refer to *Sources*) and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*). These documents are underpinned by practices and principles that encourage reflection and provide educators with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy of early childhood curriculum in a contemporary context.

Part 4.1 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (National Regulations) outlines the operational requirements for educational program and practice within services, including the requirements for documentation of assessments in relation to the educational program. There is no prescribed method in the National Law or National Regulations for documenting assessment of children’s learning. Each service must determine a method that suits their individual circumstances. To meet the documentation requirements of the National Regulations, the assessment must include an analysis of children’s learning. Collecting this information enables educators to plan effectively for each child’s learning and development. It can also be used by educators to stimulate reflection on their own values, beliefs and teaching practices, and to communicate about children’s learning with children and their families.

The National Regulations require the appointment of an Educational Leader to lead the development and implementation of the educational program (or curriculum) at the service (Regulation 118). This person will have suitable qualifications and experience, as well as a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, enabling them to guide other educators in planning and reflection, and to mentor colleagues in implementation practices (*Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations*, p85 – refer to *Sources*).

The *National Quality Standard* is linked to the approved learning frameworks. Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice focuses on “enhancing children’s learning and development through the:

- pedagogical practices of educators and co-ordinators
- development of programs that promote children’s learning across five learning outcomes” (*Guide to the National Quality Standard*, p20 – refer to *Sources*).

The educational program must also be underpinned by the service’s philosophy.

### **Legislation and standards**

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Sections 168, 301(3)(d), 323
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 73–76, 118, 148
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice
  - Standard 1.1: The educational program enhances each child’s learning and development
  - Standard 1.2: Educators facilitate and extend each child’s learning and development

## **4. DEFINITIONS**

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

**Approved learning framework:** A document that outlines practices that educators and co-ordinators must use to support and promote children’s learning. The *Early Years Learning Framework (Belonging, Being & Becoming)* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* are approved learning frameworks for use in Victoria (refer to *Sources*).

**Critical reflection:** Reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p45 – refer to *Sources*).

**Curriculum:** All interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p45 – refer to *Sources*; adapted from Te Whariki).

**Each child:** A phrase used in the *National Quality Standard* when an individualised approach is warranted and educators are required to modify their response to meet the needs of an individual child. An example is ‘each child’s current knowledge, ideas, culture and interests provide the foundation for the program’.

**Educational Leader:** The Approved Provider of an education and care service must designate, in writing, a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual to lead the development and implementation of educational programs at the service (Regulation 118). This person must have a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (or other approved learning framework), be able to guide other educators in their planning and reflection, and mentor colleagues in the implementation of their practice.

**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:** Refer to **approved learning framework** above.

**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 adult and child have intent to learn from one another.

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

## 5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### Sources

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:*  
<http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:*  
<http://education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework>
- *Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, ACECQA:* [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA:* [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- *National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program:*  
[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp)
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:*  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/default.htm)
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework – Resources for Professionals:*  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/eyldf/profresources.htm)

### Service policies

- *Code of Conduct Policy*
- *Environmental Sustainability Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Interactions with Children Policy*
- *Nutrition and Active Play Policy*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students Policy*
- *Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*
- *Water Safety Policy*

## PROCEDURES

**The Approved Provider and persons with management or control are responsible for:**

- ensuring that the educational program is stimulating and engaging, enhances children's learning and development, and is based on an approved learning framework (refer to *Definitions*) (Section 168)
- ensuring the developmental needs, interests and experiences, and the individual differences of each child are accommodated in the educational program (Section 168) (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)

- ensuring the educational program contributes to each child:
  - developing a strong sense of identity
  - being connected with, and contributing to, his or her world
  - having a strong sense of wellbeing
  - being a confident and involved learner
  - being an effective communicator (Regulation 73)
- designating a suitably qualified and experienced Educational Leader to direct the development and implementation of educational programs at the service (Regulation 118)
- ensuring the staff record includes the name of the Educational Leader at the service (Regulation 148)
- ensuring that the service's philosophy guides educational program and practice
- ensuring that assessments of the child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the educational program are documented (Regulation 74(1)(a)(i))
- ensuring that assessments of the child's progress against the outcomes of the educational program are documented (Regulation 74(1)(a)(ii))
- ensuring documentation of assessments includes reflection on the period of time the child is at the service, and how documented information will be used by educators at the service (Regulation 74(2)(a)(i)&(ii))
- ensuring documentation is written in plain language and is easy to understand by both educators and parents/guardians (Regulation 74(2)(b))
- ensuring a copy of the educational program is provided at the service and accessible to parents/guardians (Regulation 75)
- ensuring that parents/guardians are provided with information about the content and implementation of the educational program, their child's participation in the program and documentation relating to assessments or evaluations of their child (Regulation 76)
- developing and evaluating the educational program in collaboration with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, children and families.

**The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day to Day Charge are responsible for:**

- ensuring that the educational program is stimulating and engaging, enhances children's learning and development, and is based on an approved learning framework (refer to *Definitions*) (Section 168)
- ensuring the developmental needs, interests and experiences, and the individual differences of each child are accommodated in the educational program (Section 168) (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- providing a copy of the educational program at the service in a location accessible to parents/guardians
- ensuring that each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documentation and evaluation
- ensuring that there is a record of learning and development for each child, and that it is updated and maintained on an ongoing basis
- developing and evaluating the educational program in collaboration with the Approved Provider, educators, children and families
- ensuring regular communication is established between the service and parents/guardians in relation to their child's learning and development.

**Educators and other staff are responsible for:**

- delivering an educational program that is stimulating and engaging, enhances children's learning and development, and is based on an approved learning framework (refer to *Definitions*)

- considering the developmental needs, interests and experiences, and the individual differences of each child in the educational program (refer to *Inclusion and Equity Policy*)
- assessing and documenting each child's needs, interests, experiences, participation and progress in relation to the educational program in a way that is easy to understand for parents/guardians
- making information available to parents/guardians about their child's participation in the educational program
- communicating regularly with parents/guardians in relation to their child's learning and development
- developing and evaluating the educational program in collaboration with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, children and families.

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- communicating regularly with the service in relation to their child's learning and development
- providing input to the development of the educational program in collaboration with the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, educators and children.

**Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.**

## **EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1: Our Curriculum Information Parents

## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Bentleigh West Kindergarten Inc. on APRIL 2020

**REVIEW DATE:** APRIL 2023

## ATTACHMENT 1



### OUR CURRICULUM INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The term 'curriculum' is used to describe the sum total of the experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.

At Bentleigh West Kindergarten we view children as competent learners. The Kindergarten's curriculum is based on a philosophy of teaching in a manner that is creative and stimulating, with a focus on learning from the child's perspective. Close observation of each child allows our staff to identify interests and strengths, which will then be incorporated into the curriculum.

The program is influenced by the emergent curriculum, and the 'Walker Learning Approach' which values children's ideas, makes learning more visible, celebrates children's competencies and challenges their thinking. Our curriculum is designed to allow children to make choices, scaffold their learning and developing, and it uses a range of different intentional teaching areas to conduct learning.

#### PLAY BASED LEARNING

Children today are immersed in technology and popular culture, and have increasing expectations placed on them regarding academic achievement. This places greater pressure on care and education environments to provide programs that focus on and maintain academic pursuits. However the importance of play as a vehicle for learning cannot be underestimated. Early childhood education has a long history of valuing play and this understanding is becoming more prevalent in primary education. It is also emphasised in the new national and Victorian frameworks for early years education and is being revitalised across many children's services. Promoting play based learning requires adults to rethink their notions of play and develop programs that integrate play and learning into the curriculum.

'Research shows that children are playing-learning individuals. In an open and tolerant atmosphere, where children are free to make their own choices, both play and learning dimensions will be present. Children do not separate play and learning unless they are influenced by adults.'

#### *What is play based learning?*

Play based learning draws from children's natural desire to engage in experiences based on their interests, strengths and developing skills. When children initiate play, they are more motivated to learn and develop positive dispositions towards learning. The educator's role in supporting play based learning is vital. Belonging Being and Becoming The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, outlines the many roles educators take in play and the range of strategies they use to support learning.

These include:

- Engaging in sustained shared conversations within play experience to extend children's thinking
- Providing a balance between child led, child initiated and educator supported learning
- Creating learning environments to support learning

- Interacting with babies and children within play to build attachment
- Supporting the inclusion of all children in play
- Recognising spontaneous teachable moments as they occur and using intentional teaching strategies such as demonstrating, and engaging in shared thinking and problem solving.

A play based program;

- Incorporates children's ideas and interests into planned experiences and routines
- Utilises children's ideas and interests to extend and create new experiences
- Utilises indoor and outdoor areas to facilitate play and learning
- Offers a variety of play spaces, e.g. art, dramatic play, sensory, construction
- Offers a range of open-ended experiences and materials
- Enables children to self select materials and play independently
- Enables children to transform play spaces
- Allows children to play for extended periods of time without interruption
- Allows children to extend their play and projects for extended periods
- Allows children to work alone or with others
- Caters for different abilities and learning styles
- Connects experiences to children's lives
- Links children's investigations to key learning areas or outcomes
- Offers flexible routines that have minimal disruption to children's play

### ***Benefits of play based learning***

'Play provides the most natural and meaningful process by which children can construct knowledge and understanding, practice skills, immerse themselves naturally in a broad range of literacy and numeracy and engage in productive, intrinsically motivating learning environments.' (Kathy Walker).

A play based program has many benefits for children as it facilitates the development of skills, dispositions and knowledge. An effective play based program can assist children to develop lifelong learning skills that will stay with them beyond the early learning environment.

Engaging in play based learning enables children to use and develop thinking skills such as problem solving, reasoning and lateral thinking. It offers opportunities to interact with others, develop communication strategies and work in collaboration with peers and adults. It can foster literacy, numeracy and the development of scientific concepts. As children are empowered to make decisions and initiate play, they become confident and motivated learners. This in turn fosters responsibility and self regulation. Play also provides children with many opportunities to resolve conflict, challenge unfair play and embrace diversity.

### ***What does play based learning look like in practice?***

The aim of the play based program is 'to promote a sense of wonder, exploration, investigation and interest in a rich range of materials, resources and opportunities in which the child can engage.' (Kathy Walker) The child is viewed as being instrumental to the way in which materials and equipment are selected and organised within the environment. Such environments are often described as child focused as children are constantly engaged in meaningful learning experiences. While children's interests form the basis of the program, the environment needs to be carefully planned and presented in ways that are inviting to young children.

All experiences are based on supporting a balance of child and adult initiated ideas and investigations, and utilise the indoor and outdoor areas equally. Specific play spaces or areas may be arranged within the environment to engage children in different areas of learning such as art, literacy and construction. Within each area children should be offered a range of open-ended and loose materials that can be used across different abilities and diverse interests. While this is particularly important for mixed age grouping within a single age group, it also enables children to explore their interests using their individual strengths and skills. As these aspects can differ greatly between children.

Play based program actively supports and includes all children. A key element of the play based program is the opportunity for children to pursue their interests for extended periods of time. Many programs for children rely heavily on themes, pre-planned activities and constant change. Regardless of how often children attend the program, it is vital for play spaces and experiences to be offered over extended periods. This enables children to fully explore materials and master new skills through repeated practice. When guided by children, the educator will soon become aware when experiences and materials need to be changed, extended or removed from the program.

It is also important to consider aspects such as storage and how children's play and learning will be displayed and shared with families. As children becoming increasingly competent, it is essential to offer more opportunities for self selection and independent play. Children should be free to move equipment and select materials from open shelving and storage areas. These opportunities empower children to construct their own learning and scaffold the learning of others. An effective program also supports self regulation and encourages children to become more responsible for their own play and learning.

### ***The role of the adult in play based learning***

A play based program does not limit or reduce the role of the adult in children's play. Although children are less likely to want adult intervention in their play as they become older, an interested adult can still play a critical role in enhancing children's play and learning. Effective play based learning requires adults to have a strong image of the child and view them as capable, competent co-constructors of the learning environment. The adult develops positive relationships with children and families and uses their observations of children, information from families and colleagues, and meaningful interactions with children to determine the curriculum. As this knowledge changes, the program is also adapted to mirror children's changing interests and skills.

The role of the adult in the play based program is to;

- Interact with and observe children to gain insights into their interests, skills and knowledge
- Be responsive to children's cues and the way they use the environment and materials
- Seek information from families and colleagues to better understand children and plan for their learning
- Create inviting play areas with open-ended materials
- Create an unhurried environment where children have time to explore and extend their investigations
- Seek out resources and information that will extend children's interests and learning
- Provide modelling and instruction when required
- Offer suggestions and encourage children to learn from each other
- Modify play areas as children's interest change
- Be an active learner