A strengths based approach to early learning

Our early years learning brochure which is given to families on enrolment talks of a strengths based approach to learning. What does this mean?

“Strengths are natural, they come from within and we are urged to use them, develop them, and play to them by an inner, engaging desire... when we use our strengths we feel good about ourselves, we are better able to achieve things and we are working towards fulfilling our potential.”

(Linley and Harrington, 2006)

Strengths can be defined as a child’s intellectual, physical and interpersonal skills, capacities, dispositions, interests and motivations.

A strength-based approach supports educators to:

- understand that children’s learning is dynamic, complex and holistic
- understand that children demonstrate their learning in different ways
- start with what’s present—not what’s absent—and write about what works for the child.

Focusing on what the child can do, and not what they cannot do does not ignore areas requiring development, rather it acknowledges that all children may experience difficulties and challenges that need attention and support. However, this support will come from focusing on the inner strengths that will enable the child to progress.

A program or curriculum that has a strengths based approach focuses on individual developmental and the learning needs of each child. Programs are structured to encourage children's learning through hands-on manipulation of materials, toys, group play, and individual exploration.

Children will most often:

- Lead...rather than follow the educator.
- Create...rather than duplicate.
- Move...rather than wait.
- Make the lines...rather than colour in the lines.
- Speak...rather than listen passively.
- Initiate...rather than imitate.
- Raise questions...rather than answer the educator's questions.
- Solve their own problems...rather than the educator's problems.
- Make art...rather than do crafts.
- Emphasize the process...rather than the product.
- Use authentic skills...rather than drill and practice.
- Make books...rather than fill in workbooks.
- Decide...rather than submit.
- Choose wisely...rather than being told.
- Make a plan...rather than follow the educator’s plan.

“Life is a dance. Mindfulness is witnessing that dance.” – Amit Ray
This is advance notice that WCCC will be closed for professional development on Friday 25th May.

Our EB includes one closure day for professional development.

This year our focus is collaborative learning, professional collaboration, and collaborative learning for children. There will be no fees charged for the closure day.

Review of Key Outcomes 2018:
As we move through 2018 we will feature two of our key outcomes for 2018 with educator analysis of what practices and programs are contributing to achievement of these outcomes.

The following two outcomes relate to children:

**Outcome 1. Each child’s agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.**

*What are educators doing?*

- Providing a learning environment that cultivates learning dispositions such as curiosity and imagination and provides opportunities for children to inquire, experiment and investigate.
- Providing resources and equipment on open shelving to support self-directed play and children’s choice.
- Providing predictable and consistent routines; time-lining the day so children can predict and plan.
- Trusting children to have a go before assisting them; asking if they would like help before doing.
- Engaging children in conversation about what experiences they are interested in and what equipment they would like.
- Listening to children’s ideas and choices and enabling them to make decisions about what they engage with.
- Providing choices of where to play, inside or outside and whether to join group experiences.
- Allowing children to manage their own routines like dressing and toileting with assistance when requested.
- Planning with children, providing opportunities for children to plan—what will we plant in the garden? What will we cook on the fire in Pilyabilyangga?

**Outcome 3. Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate to each child.**

- Open kitchen; cooking is part of the day; shared meals; encouraging children to talk to Grace about their preferences; thanking Grace for the food she cooks with love.
- Offering food choices at meal and snack times, responding to child preferences.
- Role modelling enjoyment of healthy eating at meal and snack times.
- Modelling and discussing mindful eating.
- Encouraging children to explore new foods by trying and tasting and acknowledging attempts.
- Initiating discussions of healthy food and food preferences and why these are good for us.
- Redirecting pretend play through conversation from ‘sometimes foods’ to healthy food ideas.
- Routines and environments allow for physical activity both inside and out everyday.
- Encouraging the use of all senses, using different play spaces in Pilyabilyangga, Adventure play space, providing play spaces the allow children to use all seven senses.
- Encouraging and asking children to walk not be carried; being mindful of educator’s health.
- Educators joining child lead physical activity like dancing and yoga.
- Loose parts play, providing play experiences that use the whole body, lifting, carrying, balancing and cooperative team manipulation.
- Setting up the environment with different levels of physical challenge to support diverse ability and confidence.
- Campus walks for older children, visits to the Waite Community Garden.
- Mindfulness and yoga; mindfully listening, feeling, touching, tasting and experiencing.

How do you see us working towards these outcomes?
Email your observations to childcare.waite@adelaide.edu.au to let the WCCC team know your thoughts.
Change is coming—are your ready for CCS?
It is also bringing a few problems such as our recent delay in emailing invoices. As the Federal Government finalises the new requirements for the changeover to the new Child Care Management System our booking and billings program SPIKE also needs to be updated and revised.
As we move closer to the changeover date there may be further delays or issues that will need to be resolved. We will aim to keep you informed whenever we are aware of issues that impact on families.
From **2 July 2018**, one new Child Care Subsidy will replace the two current child care payments. **This transition cannot happen automatically.** To transition, you will need to complete an online Child Care Subsidy assessment using your Centrelink online account through myGov. You will be asked to provide some new information and confirm your current details, including:
- Combined family income
- Activity level of parents
- Type of child care service

Centrelink has been writing to all families currently receiving Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate with instructions on completing their online assessment through myGov.

*If families do not complete their assessment before 2 July 2018, they may not receive any child care fee assistance.*

**Child Care Subsidy**
The new Child Care Subsidy, replaces the current Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate. The Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to services. There are also changes to the annual cap which will make child care more affordable for most families.

Three things will determine a family’s level of Child Care Subsidy:
1. A family’s income will determine the percentage of subsidy they are eligible for
2. An activity test will determine how many hours of subsidised care families can access, up to a maximum of 100 per fortnight, and
3. The type of child care service will determine the hourly rate cap.

More information about individual subsidy rates and annual cap changes is available in the New Child Care Package brochure. [https://docs.education.gov.au/node/50211](https://docs.education.gov.au/node/50211)

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**There is no such thing as inappropriate weather, only inappropriate clothing.**

Fresh air is absolutely vital for everyone’s health, adults and children. It provides us with the steady supply of oxygen that is required by our brain and all the cells of our body. We can go for days - even weeks - without food, but we are unable to survive for more than a few minutes without fresh air. When we are feeling ill or experiencing any kind of disease fresh air is even more important. Children of all ages enjoy and benefit from playing outdoors in all except the most extreme weather. Daily outdoor play is healthy and burns energy. Even children who are mildly ill but active should go outside if the weather is not severe. Everyone feels refreshed when fresh air is part of the daily routine. Taking children outdoors daily, even in winter, is a healthy part of our program and is safe when clothing is appropriate. Active outdoor play at all times of the year is also an important part of obesity prevention and helps to establish life-long patterns of healthy physical exercise.

With gum boots and rain jackets over their normal clothes children are warm and protected and able to enjoy uninhibited outdoor play. There are a range of websites where you can purchase great winter outdoor clothing for children. Some websites, both Australian and overseas recommended by Centre parents:

- [https://www.jako-o.com/](https://www.jako-o.com/)
- [http://www.emstings-family.de/kat/jungenmode-minis-regenkleidung-winterkleidung.html](http://www.emstings-family.de/kat/jungenmode-minis-regenkleidung-winterkleidung.html)

"Sunshine is delicious, rain is refreshing, wind braces us up, and snow is exhilarating; there is no such thing as bad weather, only different kinds of good weather."
- John Ruskin
Sustainable Living at home with Annelise, Ioane, Eroni and Ollie

Its Compost Awareness Week 6-12 May!

Our veggie garden has looked dry, weedy and dead for over a year, but I finally got inspired to start growing edible produce again. Step one was to ensure I had some compost to add to the tired old veggie garden. I looked in the compost bin, and it was slimy, smelly and didn’t look like the rich, soft, black soil you see Costa sniffing with delight in gardening books! This renewed gardening fad led me to reading up on how to improve our composting system! And what timing….this week (6-12 May) is International Compost Awareness Week! In the name of increasing awareness, I thought I would spread the word about how to compost!

Apparently HALF of the rubbish that Australians put in our mixed-waste ‘garbage bins’ can be com-posted! A third of our bin rubbish is food organics and another 10% is garden vegetation (http://www.ecsustainable.com/). When this organic material is buried without aeration, in landfill, it produces methane and causes 3% of Australia’s total greenhouse gas emissions each year.

There are so many household wastes that we can compost, including vegetable and fruit scraps, vegetable oil, prunings and lawn clippings, tea bags and coffee, grounds, vacuum dust, shredded paper and cardboard, used potting mix, egg shells and flowers. There are a range of compost systems you can use including Bokashi bins, plastic, wire, wooden or pallet bins, tumblers or trench composting (direct into a garden trench). I have heard that if you have the space, a 1x1m open bin is ideal to ensure composting temperatures reach the desired 60 degrees inside the pile.

So what did I learn about how to improve my slimy, smelly sad-looking pile of “want-to-be compost”? Well, composting does take a little effort.

You need a good deal of dry (brown) material such as straw or dead leaves to add to the fresh (green) material in the compost heap. Materials should be layered, with each layer being less than a few inches. To speed things up, you can mix or turn the pile every so often to let air in (each fortnight is preferable), and to distribute the good bugs. Finally you need to ensure the pile is moist but not soggy. A little extra straw, torn-up paper or leaves, and aeration, can help rectify a slimy compost heap, or just add a little water to a dry heap.

It takes about 3 months for a full compost bin to turn the waste into rich, soft, black soil that Costa would be proud to sniff!

If you printed this newsletter out...well now you can happily compost it!

. . . .Happy composting from Annelise

World Environment Fair Adelaide 2018

World Environment Fair is on the weekend of 2nd and 3rd of June. It leads into World Environment Day on 5th June 2018. This is a community event at Adelaide Showground bringing Adelaide together to celebrate the environment. There is opportunity to hear from environmental advocates and learn about brands and organisations that are passionate about engaging with and preserving our environment.

Lots of hands on fun, nature activities and entertainment for children.

Location: Goyder and Jubilee Pavilions
Entrance – Duncan Gallery (Southern End