

# SINGLETON HEIGHTS PRE-SCHOOL INC.



## PLAY POLICY

**GOAL:** Singleton Heights Pre-School Inc. aims to provide an environment, indoors and outdoors which fosters and inspires every child's desire to play.

### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION / LINKS:**

**ACT: Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) 2010 Act,**

**REGULATIONS: Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 4.1, 107, 108, 113, 118, 168, 254**

**NQS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1, 7.2**

### **POLICY:**

#### **Definition of Play**

At Singleton Heights Pre-School Inc. we define play as "engagement in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose." The key characteristics of play are fun, uncertainty, flexibility and not needing to create a product. Together these factors contribute to the enjoyment it produces and the consequent incentive to continue to play.

#### **What is Play?**

- Play is communication and expression, combining thought and action, it gives satisfaction and a feeling of achievement
- Play is instinctive, voluntary and spontaneous
- Play helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially, as they explore practice and learn
- Play is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time

#### **Why Children Should Play:**

- Children are the foundation of the world's future
- Children have played at all times throughout history and in all cultures
- Play, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children

#### **Children need Opportunities to Play at Leisure**

The Pre-school's Educators, program and environment:

- Provide time, space, materials, a natural setting and programs, with leaders supporting children to develop a sense of belonging, self-esteem and enjoyment through play
- Enable interaction between children of various backgrounds and ages in a leisure setting
- Encourage the conservation and use of traditional indigenous games
- Promote the use of co-operative games and fair play for children in physical activity
- Provide all children, particularly those with special needs, with access to a diversity of play environments, toys and play materials
- Provide an opportunity for children to explore and take calculated risks in safe, supervised surrounds
- Model and support all children to develop the abilities to engage in social and physical play opportunities

#### **A Declaration of the Importance of Play**

Singleton Heights Pre-School Inc. commits to promote the position that playing is a vital, universal behaviour, essential for children to be children and thrive in the modern world.

Play is a fundamental part of life; it is a biological, social, cognitive necessity for individual children, but also has benefits for society and the human species, even in adult life.

We acknowledge the drive to play as innate; it is a process that has evolved because it advances the development of bodies, relationships and minds. Playing is a process, not an activity.

Play takes many forms, replicating the evolution of play through bodily actions, social interactions and the development of symbolic thinking.

Play is self-chosen, for without active choice and engagement the activity is empty and reduced in meaning and significance. Performing an activity fully immersed in a feeling of energised focus, interest, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity is good for children. Satisfaction through play is definite by the player, with no extrinsic goals or external influence.

Play is pleasurable for each child; it gives enjoyment, satisfaction and 'fun' in the moment of playing – it is a valued part of childhood. Play aids emotional regulation, by helping children understand and moderate primary emotions (anger, fear, disgust, shock, sadness, and joy) into more nuanced and subtle forms (grief, pleasure, displeasure, affection, contentment, exasperation, disappointment). This can lead to tolerance, patience, understanding and empathy.

Play is the way humans develop efficient brains; enhance cortical connections and neural organisations. When humans play, the nerve signals the body generates create neural pathways that help with brain development and brain plasticity (flexibility). Playing contributes to developing 'effective systems for learning' rather than a particular learning outcome, benefitting later formal learning.

Play is vital to the understanding, development and maintenance of valued relationships with others. Playful interactions with others help in understanding relationships and attachment, language, roles and social structures.

By playing children learn what works and what does not; it is creative, flexible and adaptable, it helps with the development of flexible adaptive strategies to the problems that life offers children. Understanding their life is not always 'fair' or 'good' helps children to adapt to problems in life and develop resilience and optimism to deal with stressful or traumatic events in the future.

### **Providing the Environment for Play**

Children can and will play in most places with what is available to them. We offer a rich environment for play including:

- natural elements
- opportunities for risk and challenge
- places to express emotions
- stimulation for the senses
- areas to stimulate imagination
- chances for social interactions
- interesting and varied physical and human environments
- sufficient space to do what is wanted

We understand children will play more when our environment affords opportunities for various types of play:

- Physical structures, foster creativity and are multifunctional
- Being appealing and inviting
- Being flexible and adaptive
- Opportunities to develop skills
- Opportunities to follow or develop new interests
- Plentiful resources and equipment
- Safety through the environmental design and supervision
- Trained, experienced Educators to model, mentor and engage in play when appropriate
- Accessible for all children including those with disabilities

### **Mentoring Risk in the Outdoor Environment**

"The National Law does not require services to eliminate all risk and challenge from children's play or environments" (ACECQA, 2011, Guide to the National Law and National Regulations, pg 67).

We define hazards, benefit and risk as:

Benefit = play affordance / value

Hazard= the potential for harm / identifiable sources of harm

Risk = the chance or likelihood that harm will occur

Educators at Singleton Heights Pre-School will consistently employ a "risk benefit assessment" comprising of three parts:

1. Technical inspection: routine checking of equipment and the environment prior to outdoor play to:
  - to identify and eliminate hazards
  - assess wear and tear, damage and cleanliness to identify potential sources of harm
  - provide an indication of the relative risk
  - identify required repairs and maintenance
2. Dynamic risk benefit assessment
  - minute-by-minute observations and potential interventions by adults supervising children based on a sound knowledge of development of how children learn and grow through play
  - in-depth knowledge of individual children, play and its role for learning and development
  - understanding of the different types of risk

3. The completion of formal risk assessments of the environment, equipment or activity will be conducted, documented and shared with all educators to ensure the risk is known and practices are modified. These are reviewed to ensure currency and awareness.

### **Positive Outcomes to Risk Taking During Supervised Outdoor Play**

- Health and developmental benefits
  - Try new physical activities
  - Test the limits of their physical, intellectual and emotional development
  - Develop a wide range of manipulative and motor skills
  - Gain mastery over their bodies
  - Develop muscle strength, endurance, skeletal strength
  - Enhances perceptual development, eg: depth, form, shape, size, movement perception
  - General spatial orientation abilities
- Satisfies children's innate need for risk with reasonable risks in order to prevent them finding greater unmanaged risk themselves.
- Helps children learn how to manage risk (understanding safety)
- Children gain a sense of accomplishment
- Fosters greater confidence and competence
- Encourages children to seek new challenges and learn new skills
- Promotes lifelong participation in physical activities
- Fosters the need to problem solves
- Encourages self regulation