

SINGLETON HEIGHTS PRE-SCHOOL INC.



SCHOOL READINESS POLICY

GOAL: The program offered by the service will be inclusive of school readiness for all children.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION / LINKS:

ACT: Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) 2010 Act: Sections 168, 323

REGULATIONS: Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 73, 74, 75, 76, 118, 148,

NQS: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 7.1

EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

POLICY:

Daily Program

School readiness is one component of a comprehensive Pre-School experience, which caters to the needs of all children. As outlined in the Centre's Philosophy, the child's social, emotional, intellectual, physical and language development are observed and catered for in the daily program. At each developmental stage, there are tasks to be mastered and appropriate curriculum provides opportunities for children to choose activities providing spontaneous skill practice.

All the areas of development are seen as equally important and interlinked and activities will draw aspects from more than one area of development.

In preparation for later learning, the program caters to interests expressed or shown by the children with a variety learning centres being incorporated into the environment and program, which can be revisited at a later time. A child's own interests and excitement will motivate them to learn. Based on children's responses and actions, staff will introduce materials, questions and opportunities that encourage the children to explore a topic and while some directions are anticipated, projects often move in unexpected directions. This curriculum planning and implementation can revolve around open-ended and long term projects.

Our centre has a philosophy which encourages children to learn while developing:

- A strong sense of self and identity
- Effective communication
- Skills to think, investigate, explore and problem-solve, enabling them to become confident and involved learners
- Health and physicality
- Socialisation, relationships and wellbeing
- Feelings
- Creativity
- Spirituality and morality
- A connection to their world

Readiness for School

Singleton Heights Pre-School maintains a close relationship and good liaison with all primary schools, public and private, in the Singleton Shire. It has close proximity to Singleton Heights Public School where a number of families attend, however children move from this environment to many educational facilities including interstate.

Children may enter kindergarten at the beginning of a school year if they turn five before the 31st of July in that year however, the law dictates that children must start school on or before their sixth birthday. Individual schools will offer a variety of information and recommendations regarding desired skills and development for children starting kindergarten and how to assist them.

School entry involves a key transition for all children. This transition is not just to school, but also from home or pre-school. It is a transition not just from early care and learning environments, but often from small-scale to large-scale interactions, from highly personalised to less personalised relationships, and from environments with a limited range of ages to an institution with children of many ages. It is a transition to a different learning, education and care. How well children are prepared for this transition is important as it impacts on their long term outcomes.

In Australia, children enter school with marked differences in the cognitive, non-cognitive and social skills needed for success in the school environment (Centre for Community Child Health and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2007). These initial differences are predictive of later academic and occupational success (Boethel, 2004; Dockett & Perry, 2001, 2007; Le et al, 2006). This is partly because skills develop cumulatively, so that those acquired early form a sound basis for later skill development (Cunha et al, 2006). Children learn from birth (Bennett, 2007; Meisels 2006).

It has been written that what and how they learn depends upon the nature and quality of the relationships they have with their parents and caregivers, and the richness and variety of the experiences they are provided during the early years.

The kind of pre-school curriculum that benefits all children (but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds), is *an effective intentional curriculum* (Klein & Knitzer, 2006, 2007) that involves active engagement with children (Kagan & Kauerz, 2006), provides nurturing and emotionally supportive relationships with early childhood staff (Melhuish, 2003; NSW Curriculum Framework for Children's Services), integrates child care and education (CCCH, Policy Brief 8, 2007; Elliot, 2006), is responsive to cultural diversity (Gonzalez-Mena, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000), fosters social, emotional and regulatory skills (Hyson, 2004; Klein and Knitzer, 2006, 2007), and promotes early literacy and math skills (Duncan et al, 2007).

Children will not enter school ready to continue learning unless families, schools and communities provide the environments and experiences that support the physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, and cognitive development of infants, toddlers and pre-school children. The best way of preparing a child for school is to ensure that they have optimal social, emotional and learning experiences and environments during the early years, both at home and in community settings and services. To ensure this, we need to create the conditions under which families and communities can meet the needs of children, as they (and we) would wish (Moore, 2006).

Parent Participation

Our centre encourages active participation by families and values the relationships which develop through families and staff working in partnership.

There are many activities that parents can undertake with young children that have a positive effect on their development and promote school readiness (Sylva et al, 2004). These include:

- Reading with children
- Teaching them songs and nursery rhymes
- Playing with letters and numbers
- Taking children on visits
- Creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends at home
- Exposure to paint
- Exposure to music
- Exploring the natural environment
- Encouraging curiosity
- Asking questions
- Giving directions to be followed
- Activities to develop physical strength (hand and finger strength)
- Developing concepts eg: up / down, over / under
- Looking for items same or different
- Independent toileting
- Knowing names and address
- Developing attention / concentration
- Sharing and playing with others
- Using implements such as pencils, brushes, scissors, etc.
- Access to stimulating play materials
- Packing away
- Finishing tasks
- Designing and creating using imagination
- Can take clothing off / on

and many more.

Parents can provide such experiences regardless of their educational or occupational levels: what parents do with their children is more important than who parents are (Sylva et al, 2004).

The Pre-School's Role

To create optimal conditions to ensure that the children and families receive all the help they need and that potential barriers to children's learning are removed.

Our centre will:

- Provide all children with high quality early educational experiences. This is particularly important for those children made vulnerable due to any disadvantaged family status or limited community resources and supports.
- Support parents by creating a family friendly early childhood environment and opportunities to communicate with them about their priorities and concerns in relation to the transition to school process.
- Help families to learn how to provide learning resources and experiences for their young children.
- Discuss each child's development and school readiness with families.
- Build opportunities for family involvement in the early childhood program.

- Build strong links and relationships between schools and early childhood services to ensure continuity of care. These links are important for transfer of knowledge about the circumstances, needs and interests of individual children and their families.
- Help build strong links between families and schools before, during and after transition and provide a variety of supports to help ease children's transition to school based on the individual needs of the child / family.
- Establish integrated service networks, linking early childhood programs with other general and specialist child and family services.
- Encourage children to talk about school and explore the school experience through stories, excursions and dramatic play.
- Support all areas of development with particular interest focussing on:
 - encouraging curiosity and problem solving
 - concentration and on-task attention
 - perseverance
 - socialisation and cooperative play
 - responding well to unfamiliar situations
 - responsibility, independence and confidence
 - communication skills including making needs known
 - developing self esteem
 - accepting responsibility for actions
 - following directions
 - cognitive skills
 - self-help skills including toileting, managing meal times and being responsible for belongings
- Support families by providing them with a school readiness information package which includes information about schools, school readiness activities and how to support their child through the transition to the school environment.