In 2014 the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is embarking on a restructure of local partnerships between Children’s Centres, Preschools, Schools and their local communities to strengthen the collective capability by sharing knowledge, skills and expertise and resources. The introduction of Local Partnerships is a great opportunity for dealing with the complexity of care and education across our diverse communities. Partnerships are clustered around communities to make local decisions that are in the community’s best interest.

‘Community Partnerships have multiple benefits for children, families, services and communities, including improved engagement of children, young people and families, improved connections between service and increased feelings of belonging.’

In 2013 we applied for a Building Redevelopment to enable KFCC to better implement the philosophy of Local Partnerships.

On Wednesday 12 February 2014, Jennifer Rankine - Minister for Education and Child Development and Minister for Multicultural Affairs visited Keithcot Farm Children’s Centre –we discussed the need to have our building extended to enable a range of health and community programs to be offered on site as part of our Community Development programs.

You may be interested in a new website www.theparenthood.org.au

The Parenthood is a new, not for profit, advocacy group for Australian parents. It represents mums, dads, grandparents and primary carers and lobbies on their behalf to government and business to gain positive policy changes. It is supported by United Voice and Early Childhood Australia.

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**Curriculum**

We currently have 141 children accessing a range of Birth to School Entry integrated programs across our site. 88 of these children are accessing our Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) Preschool Program. 33 of these children participated in our Long Day Care program and have been wonderful role models for children who are new to our Centre.

To further assist children to settle into the centre’s routines and to develop positive relationships/ friendships all children are placed with a primary educator. This is one way for children to establish and maintain respectful, trusting relationships with other children and educators.

We believe that it takes a team of Educators to nurture the learning and development of each individual child in partnership with families.

We encourage children to learn the names of their peers and the Educators by playing group games using the children’s name cards and singing songs using our names.

Children have been introduced to the Centre’s routines and a visual timetable has been displayed. The children are now highly aware that when the bell rings, they come inside for group experiences.

Educators have also explained our ‘limits’ for example, walking inside, sitting when we eat and drink and washing hands before eating and after using the toilet.

Sand timers are used for turn taking –on the swing and when using other equipment such as the punching bag.
Children have also practised taking turns when playing board games and when using the Smartboard.

Our curriculum is based on the **Early Years Learning Framework** and is displayed on the large portable whiteboard on the verandah. More information about our curriculum can be found on the noticeboards on the verandah and in the children's portfolios. The portfolios are stored in bookcases in the Star and Rainbow Room. Children's portfolios are available for children, parents, and families to spend time together and look through. These capture daily events, achievements and interest, during their time at Keithcot Farm. They assist educators to plan effectively and also communicate with you about your child's current and future learning.

Educators across our Birth to School Transition site use a variety of strategies to collect, rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning which describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings to inform future planning.

We use “**Learning Stories**” which focus on children's strengths, interests, actions and dispositions and documents children's involvement in learning, including communication, interactions and collaboration.

“Learning Stories” also document how children approach challenging tasks, demonstrate persistence and resolve situations of conflict.

In the Learning Stories we refer to the **Learning Outcomes** from the **Early Years Learning Framework**. (EYLF) This is a national framework which has been endorsed by the Australian Government as the nationally accepted guide for early childhood educators working with children from birth to school entry. Another document we refer to is **Respect, Reflect and Relate 2011**.

As you read your child’s Portfolio you will see how the EYLF outcomes are meaningful and relevant to your child, your family and community.

We believe that the Learning Stories make the learning at Keithcot Farm “more visible” as demonstrated by the outstanding feedback received from families which also supports future planning for individuals and groups.

You are welcome to take your child’s portfolio home and show other family members.

We would love you to share some stories about what activities you enjoy with your family at home, by adding your own photos and stories to your child’s portfolio.

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**Our Social Confidence program** is called “You can do It!” and assists children to develop Confidence, Resilience, Persistence, Organisational skills and the ability to get along well with others. This month we will focus on the characters Gabby Getalong and Oscar Organisation.

The puppet Gabby will role model strategies to encourage children to play appropriately with one another and begin to manage their emotions in ways that reflect the feelings and needs of others. Educators use the terms “persistence”, “resilience “confidence” and “organisation” on a daily basis with the children and the “You can do It!” program reinforces these social skills.

You may have noticed a wooden seat in the playground. This is the “friendship” seat and is placed either outside or inside on a daily basis. Children who are lonely or are unsure about asking a friend to play, are encouraged to sit on the seat. Their peers then invite them to play. All educators encourage the children to be responsible for their belongings, including their bag, hat, jacket and cup. Oscar Organisation assists the children to remember to hang their bags on a hook and to remember to place their hat in their bag when they come inside.

**Early years Learning Framework Outcomes**-Children have a strong sense of wellbeing. They accept new challenges, take risks and make choices. Children have a strong sense of identity. They persist when faced with challenges and when first attempts are not successful.

Each fortnight Annette borrows living and/or preserved specimens from The Nature Education Centre at Urrbrae. The children help to care for these and Educators use the Smartboard and books with the children to learn more about them.

Many of the creatures can be handled. We have had Bobby the blue tongue and Bullwinkle the sleepy lizard visit this term and plan to have Wanderer caterpillars and hopping mice visit soon. During our small group sessions and throughout the day, children observe, handle and draw the animals.

We are also looking forward to having the “Henny Penny Hatching Program” at the end of March. Children will observe chickens hatch from eggs in an incubator and will then assist to care for the chickens.

**Early Years Learning Framework Outcomes**-Children are connected with and contribute to their world. They explore relationships with other living things and observe, notice and respond to change.
Phonological Awareness is the understanding that our spoken language is made up of words and that our words are made of individual units of sound called phonemes. Phonological awareness refers to skills such as listening, recognising and producing rhyme, recognizing and producing the initial sound in words and segmenting and blending syllables in words. In our spontaneous interactions with babies and children and in our small and large group sessions, Educators introduce rhyming songs, nursery rhymes, words and stories as part of the literacy program at our centre. All children in the Pre School program are screened by an Educator in their first and final term. This experience is called the “Screen of Phonological Awareness” and allows Educators to observe the children who have an understanding of rhyme and those who may require assistance to learn this concept.

Research shows that if children have a good concept of Phonological Awareness, they have a good grounding for future literacy development including reading and writing.

Early Years Learning Framework Outcomes - Children are effective communicators, as they listen and respond to sounds and patterns in speech, stories and rhymes. Children engage in literacy experiences daily this may be by reading signs and labels on food packaging, writing their name on their work, reading stories, writing their own stories or copying different words. Through these literacy experiences children are developing many skills. Outcome 5 Children are effective communicators, they engage in enjoyable interactions using verbal and non-verbal with others for a range of purposes. Children display their literacy skills as they retell information or write signs for the garden.

When children borrow Literacy packs the following outcomes are evident. Outcome 2 children are connected with and contribute to their world, and they demonstrate a sense of belonging and comfort in their environment and outcome 5 Children are effective communicators.

Literacy packs are a great opportunity for children to share something from the children’s centre to home. Children can share their favourite story or game with their family. This is one way to make further links between home and the centre if your child may be feeling apprehensive. Children are very excited about taking home “Suzanne” and “David” (dolls) or “Ralph” a dog. These come in their own backpack with adjuncts, for “Ralph” a collar, a lead, and a blanket. There is a diary that children and parents may wish to write about what they did with Ralph over the weekend, or draw pictures or add photos.

Dental Visit

Later in the term we will be having a Dental Hygienist visit the centre to talk with the children about looking after their teeth. They will explain how to brush our teeth and gums and also our tongue. With the children’s gums and teeth, this is NOT a full examination but they lift the lip of the child’s mouth to check gums and teeth. We will also discuss our diet and look at “daily food” and “sometimes foods”.

Outcome 3 Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing. Show increasing independence and competence in personal hygiene, care and safety for themselves and others. Show an increasing awareness of healthy lifestyles and good nutrition.

Numeracy

Numeracy is a large part of children’s education and all educators throughout the centre will collect ‘Numeracy Moments’ and these will be documented in 2 folders demonstrating the numeracy learning experiences that we have in the centre. Children have engaged in various mathematical experiences including “sorting” & “patternning” Educators asked the children the question “What is sorting?” and what is a “pattern” this gives children the opportunity to share their prior knowledge.

(Respect, Reflect & Relate document) states that educator’s co-construct meaning with children by finding out what the children know before sharing knowledge and giving answers. Sorting assists children to organize their thinking, children do this daily when they sort their clothes eg socks or shoes; children sort with colours and shapes. Children learn there are patterns in literacy and language when they are reading and writing, learning there are patterns to words. Children are exposed to many numeracy experiences throughout their day including counting, looking at time, measurement and the seasons. Counting games - counting how many children are in the group and retaining this information to decide how many bowls and cups are required at group time.

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Early Years Learning Framework states that “Numeracy is the capacity, confidence and disposition to use mathematics in daily life”. These mathematical concepts assist with spatial sense, patterns, number, measurement and structures that also assist in literacy.

Recycling

We are in need of recycled materials such as

- Cardboard boxes – not egg cartons
- Cardboard rolls – not toilet rolls
- Small Yoghurt containers
- Greeting cards and wrapping paper
- Meat trays
- Ribbons and wool
- Dress material
- Soft pine for our Woodwork table
During the last week of February, 3 students who are studying Child Development from Kobe Shoin Women’s University (Japan) visited our Centre to observe our Educators and to participate in the program. They demonstrated to our children Japanese writing and talked and sang to the children in Japanese. They also gave us a beautiful gift of a small carp (fish) symbolising the small child who is growing and developing every day.

Educators at our Centre including Roshni, Nobuko, Magdaline, Margaret, and Cathy introduce the children to a number of words, phrases and songs from their diverse cultural backgrounds including Hindi, Japanese, Greek, Swahili and Italian. The Early Years Learning Framework discusses how children can connect and contribute to their world, and how they respond to diversity with respect.

We will be celebrating Harmony Day during the week of 17th March - March 21st 2014. Harmony Day is the 24th March, but as a centre we would like all the children to be able to celebrate this event. The theme is Many Stories – One Australia and the message of Harmony Day is that Everyone Belongs. Harmony Day is part of the Australian Government’s “Living in Harmony” initiative and is Australia’s largest national multicultural event. This year we will make a tree with our hand prints; provide orange play dough, and paints. Children have the opportunity to celebrate this day by wearing something orange for the week and it gives them the opportunity to reflect on how multicultural Australia is and the diversity of our centre. It is amazing how far we stretch around the globe when we look at the different countries our families come from. The children enjoy looking at these countries on the map and learning a little more about each one and their culture.

Thank you to those Dads and Pop’s that came along to our Dad’s N Kids Morning on the 22nd February. We had fun using construction; paint; playdough as well as digging in the sandpit; practicing our ball skills through kicking, throwing, and catching.

Kay from Centacare visited on Thursday 20th February and spoke to a small group of parents about Sibling Rivalry, and other topics around behaviour and sleep. Thank you to those parents who came along.

We have had a great response to our Community Audit survey, if you haven’t filled yours out please do so and return it soon.

Upcoming events - bookings essential 8251 2700

- Lunchbox Ideas - 19th March 10am - 12pm $5 per person (children welcome to attend)
- Importance of Play - 26th March 10am - 12pm $4 per person (children welcome to attend)
- First Aid course - 29th March - 9.30 - 12.30pm $20 per person or $35 for 2 people (sorry no children)
- PJ storytime - 1st April - 6.30pm - 7.15pm, children come dressed in their pj’s and bring their favourite teddy.

Fundraising

Many thanks for the donations for our Easter Raffle.

Thank you to Dionne Humphris’ and her family from “Choc –O-Nut” (Ingle Farm and Golden Grove), for gift wrapping the prizes.

Raffle tickets have been distributed and more are available on request. The raffle will be drawn on Monday 7 April.

We have Keithcot Farm Children’s Centre Recipe books for sale @ $5 each.

Dates to Remember

Monday 10 March : Public Holiday
Wednesday 12 March: My Baby My Toddler Workshops “Preparing you and your child for childcare”
Saturday 15 March: State Election Polling Booth
Monday 17 March : Governing Council Meeting
Wednesday 19 March: My Baby My Toddler Workshops “Lunchbox ideas”
Wednesday 26 March: My Baby My Toddler Workshops “The importance of play”
Saturday 29 March: Parents First Aid Course
Tuesday 1 April : PJ Story time
Monday 7 April : Easter Raffle drawn
Friday 11 April: Last DECD Preschool day for Term One.

Long day Care continues during the scheduled school holidays except for the Public Holidays. Look out for School Holiday Activities!

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