Children’s Centre for Early Childhood Development and Parenting

**May 2014 Newsletter**
**Staff at our Centre include:**
- Anne Whittleston (Director / Educator)
- Jenny Reid (Assistant Director / Educator)
- Laura Francis (Community Development Coordinator)
- Kate Hallam (Educator)
- Janet Hazel (Educator)
- Roshni Amroliwala (Educator)
- Sonya Osborne (Educator)
- Magdaline Saredakis (Educator)
- Angela Underdown (Educator)
- Carolyn Howson (Educator)
- Adrienne Hicks (Educator)
- Margaret Kiprono (Educator)
- Michaela Harrison (Educator)
- Lisa Mildrum (Educator)
- Jodie Murray (Educator)
- Andrea Randell (Educator)
- Julie-Anne Duffy (Educator)
- Robbi Meinel (Educator)
- Cathy Mazzarolo (Educator)
- Carolyn Potter (Admin Officer)
- Jo Oliver (Cook)
- Nobuko Nakajima (Cook / Educator)
- Simon Costello (Groundsperson)

**Curriculum**

One of the practices most commonly used in the early childhood sector is ‘learning through play’. Play-based learning is described in the Early Years Learning Framework EYLF as ‘a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they actively engage with people, objects and representations’.

Play shapes the structural design of the brain. Play provides active exploration that assists in building and strengthening brain pathways. Play creates a brain that has increased ‘flexibility and improved potential for ongoing learning later in life’ It allows them to explore, strengthen brain pathways. Play creates a brain that has increased ‘flexibility and improved potential for ongoing learning later in life’ It allows them to explore, strengthen brain pathways.

A large pile of Lego sits on the table, and you watch as young children are actively engaged in creating vehicles. Moments of quick chatter are followed by a quick run around the table to test their latest vehicle, then intense concentration as they try to find the next perfect piece.

Educators **across our Centre** are very aware of these mathematically rich experiences, and are able to support opportunities to explore these concepts and scaffold mathematical language, helping to build the strong mathematical foundation all children are **entitled to**. 'This one is big enough for two.' (**classification, spatial awareness**). This car has 4 wheels (number) this truck has a longer ladder (measurement) 'This one is faster than the police car.' (**measurement**). 'Which one can go up, down the fastest?' (**spatial awareness, measurement**).

During Lunchcare children are chatting with each other and with Educators about their food. The discussion on for example sandwich shapes ……

‘My sandwich is in two rectangles.’ (**geometry, fractions**). ‘I’ve got one, two, three, four squares.’ (**counting, geometry**). ‘I got the last seat, no room for anyone else now.’ (**fractions**).

‘I’ve got small triangles.’ (**measurement, geometry**). ‘I’m nearly finished; I’ve just got half a bowl to go.’ (**fractions**)

Outside children and Educators are working and learning together in the sandpit. The containers are filled to various levels as the children decide on the “ingredients”. ‘First you add all the ingredients, then you stir, then it can go in the oven.’ (**sequencing**). ‘My favourite is the chocolate one.’ (**classification**). ‘I need more strawberries to fill this cup.’ (**measurement, fractions**). ‘I’ve got one, two, three, four squares.’ (**counting, geometry**).

As demonstrated in these scenarios, children are constantly engaged in mathematically rich experiences.

Play-based mathematics covers these aspects as children are having fun and gaining confidence as they build a strong mathematical foundation.

The Early Years Learning Framework states that “Numeracy is the capacity, confidence and disposition to use mathematics in daily life. Children are exposed to many numeracy experiences throughout their day - counting, looking at time, measurement and the seasons

Counting -how many children in the group? How many bowls and cups are required? Games such as **The Kindy Train** where children count how many children are aboard “the train”.

Classification is the matching or sorting of objects or ideas by chosen characteristics, these objects can then be **counted, compared, or sequenced, spatial awareness and geometry** include an understanding of shapes and boundaries that can be rotated or compared, transformed; and **measurement**, including the use of **fractions**, is where children are exploring the size, weight or volume of objects.

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 at Keithcot Farm across the different age groups are encouraged through open ended probing questions to problem solve, predict, hypothesize, and order. Professor Martin Westwell from Flinders University emphasised that there is very clear data indicating that older Australian children struggle with problem solving, predicting and hypothesising when it comes to challenging mathematical problems. We hope that in years to come there will be fresh data indicating that these skills are now strengths in school age children – based on the strong foundations where mathematical language is embedded in all that we do!

To support the development of strong literacy skills, children and babies are exposed to a range of developmentally appropriate Phonological Awareness activities including rhyme, sound and later, letter recognition. Current local and international research shows that if children have a good concept of Phonological Awareness it supports success later at school with reading and writing. All children are assessed in Phonological Awareness during their first and fourth term in the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) preschool program. This assessment includes listening skills, clapping syllables in words and identifying the initial sound in words and is summarised in the child’s “Statement of Learning”, which they receive in their first and final term at Keithcot Farm Children’s Centre. Throughout each session the children are introduced to a variety of rhymes, fingerplays and listening games which help develop their phonological awareness and literacy skills. Older children are also encouraged to sign the initial letter of their name and are exposed to a number of Australasian signs (sign language) at group times.

We have a range of literacy packs that you might like to borrow and take home for a few nights with your child. These are a great opportunity for children to share something from the children’s centre to home and to make further links if your child is feeling apprehensive. Children are very excited about taking home “Suzanne” and “David” (dolls) or “Ralph” a dog. These come in their own backpack with adjucnts, for “Ralph” a collar, a lead, and a blanket.

Older children visit the Keithcot Farm Primary School Resource Centre in their small groups, throughout the term. They have the opportunity to listen to a story and learn how picture books are placed on the shelf, according to the authors initial.

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. They have made the learning “more visible” as demonstrated by the outstanding feedback received from families which also supports future planning for individuals and groups.

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 (RRR) 2011.

As you read the Portfolio you will see how the EYLF outcomes and RRR are meaningful and relevant to your child, your family and community. We would love you to share some stories and photos about what activities you enjoy engaging in with your family at home and add them to your child’s portfolio. Each Term a comment sheet will be available for families to add their comments regarding your child’s learning.

Our weekly Program showing the learning experiences and EYLF outcomes is on display on a large whiteboard under the main verandah. A smaller white board in the Rainbow Room provides a brief snap shot of the many learning opportunities children have experienced during the day and we have an electronic photo frame with photos of the children engaging in learning experiences earlier in the day! Please take the time to read these and look at the photos – this will give you the opportunity to discuss with your child the learning experiences they participated which in turn further supports children’s learning as they recall and recount to you these experiences!

You are also welcome to write any suggestions or comments and place these in the suggestion box on the notice board on the verandah. Please see an Educator if you have any queries about your child or our program. Rather than having formal interviews at set times in the year Educators are available to speak to parents and caregivers at any time, either throughout the session or by phone. You are welcome to make an appointment with your child’s Primary Educator if you wish to have a longer discussion.
Our Centre acknowledges the cultural background and diversity of children, families and Educators. Educators at our Centre including Roshni, Nobuko, Magdaline, and Margaret, introduce the children to a number of words, phrases and songs from their diverse cultural backgrounds including Hindi, Japanese, Greek, and Swahili. The Early Years Learning Framework discusses how Children can connect and contribute to their world, and how they respond to diversity with respect.

Early Years Learning Framework. Outcome 2: Children can explore the diversity of culture, heritage, background and tradition and that diversity presents opportunities for choices and new understandings and become aware of connections, similarities and differences between people.

At our site we are encouraging children to learn how to become more energy efficient, as outlined in the National Quality Standards. Educators aim to embed sustainable practices in our curriculum and to foster children’s capacity to understand and respect the natural environment. We have recently set up a worm farm, allowing the children to see the benefits of waste reduction, turning organic waste into nutrient fertilizer for our plants in the garden. Brenton delivered the worms to the centre and discussed with the children how they can look after the worms.

Every term we practice an Emergency Evacuation. We discuss what is an emergency and what do we do in an evacuation? The children are reminded that they leave their play based learning experience and head straight for the gate, and move with an Educator to the school quadrangle. All children and staff are counted, to ensure we are all present before moving back inside. Have you ever wondered what you need to do at home if you were in a situation where you needed an emergency evacuation? Perhaps you could ask your child what they would need to do at home.

As Educators we are legally responsible to protect children, under the Children’s Protection, Act 1993 and to report all suspected causes of abuse and neglect. Each week in our program planning we plan for our Child Protection Curriculum. Each week children follow a topic for example children discuss safe and unsafe situations.

We discuss that we need to hold an adult's hand when crossing the road and that we need to cross the road at the lights or a zebra crossing. We talked about Early Warning Signs: how we feel when in an unsafe situation. The children's response was “you get a wobbly tummy or feel sick in the tummy” (two good signs to look out for). “Who do we trust if mum or dad are not around? Who could they go to for help - a friend, a teacher, a neighbour or a relative? We talk about our “body parts”. In these discussions all body parts are called by the correct terminology so there is no misunderstanding if they are informing an Educator about any unsafe inappropriate touching etc. These discussions assist children to recognize their feelings and to be assertive and confident to say “Stop”!

This topic relates to the Early Years Learning Framework with the following Outcomes.

Outcome 1: Initiate interactions and conversations with trusted educators. Feel recognized and respected for who they are.

Outcome 2: Broaden their understanding of the world in which they live. Empowered to make choices and problem solve to meet their needs.

Outcome 3: Shows increasing independence, care & safety for themselves and others.

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 Pete Persistence and Connie Confidence.

The puppets Pete and Connie will role model appropriate strategies to encourage children to focus on and complete a task and to keep trying even though things seem hard and not to give up and enhance their confidence as they are involved in new situations or experiences at our Centre.
Community Development

We have a new Community Development Coordinator (CDC) - Laura Francis. Kate Hallam has accepted the role as an Educator at our Centre until the end of 2014. Together Laura and Kate have planned a range of Community Development programs for the remainder of this year.

Infant Massage sessions is one of these programs, for parents and their babies (pre-crawlers) with a qualified instructor, Bonita Stockley: 5 weekly sessions
- Bonita has worked with hundreds of families in South Australia, teaching infant massage to parents with well babies and to parents who have babies with special or additional needs. Bonita provides warm and welcoming, relaxed and nurturing environment for learning the massage routine at the right pace for you and your baby. Your baby is always the priority in a baby massage class!

Presenter: Bonita Stockley
When: Tuesday 10th, 17th, 24th June, 1st, 8th July 2014
Time: 10am-11.30am
Cost: $8 per session, total $40

Health Checks

As part of a range of services to children and families in SA, the Government provides funding to Child and Youth Health to offer free health assessments for children from 4 years 3 months to 5 years of age. The assessment includes vision; hearing; height and weight; dental health; general discussions with parents on health issues.

A CYH Nurse will visit KFCC on Thursday 8 May

Consent forms are available from the Office. A parent or caregiver must accompany children.

Immunisation

Immunisation is generally thought to be the best way of reducing the likelihood of children being infected by serious diseases such as whooping cough, hepatitis and polio. It is important to remember that children are more likely to come into contact with infectious diseases when they are in early childhood settings due to the close contact they have with many other children and adults and their lack of exposure.

If there is an outbreak of an immunisable disease, children without up to date immunisation may be excluded, even if they appear to be well – this is a legal requirement. If you have not provided an up to date immunisation history statement recently you please provide this information as soon as possible by using the following instructions.

You can get a copy of your child's immunisation history statement:

- Australian Childhood Immunisation Register
- at your local Medicare office
- by calling 1800 653 809
- www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

It's important to keep your child's most recent immunisation history statement so you can use it when proof of immunisation is needed. For example you can use your child's statement to:

- Help meet immunisation requirements for school
- Document that your child has received all vaccinations required by five years of age.
- Help with eligibility for the Child Care Benefit.
- Show an up-to-date immunisation status for the Family Assistance Office.

Dates to Remember

Monday 28 April: DECD preschool closure – normal
Long Day Care

Monday 12 May: Governing Council Meeting @ 6.45pm

Monday 9 June: Queens Birthday Public Holiday

Tuesday 10 June: Baby Massage 10-11.30am

Tuesday 17 June: Baby Massage 10-11.30am

Tuesday 24 June: Baby Massage 10-11.30am

Tuesday 1 July: Baby Massage 10-11.30am

Tuesday 8 July: Baby Massage 10-11.30am

Daily Communication with Families

Please ensure that while your child is at the Children’s Centre that you are contactable via your phone.

Please make every effort to respond to messages left on your phone as soon as possible.

Please inform us as soon as possible of any phone number changes.