

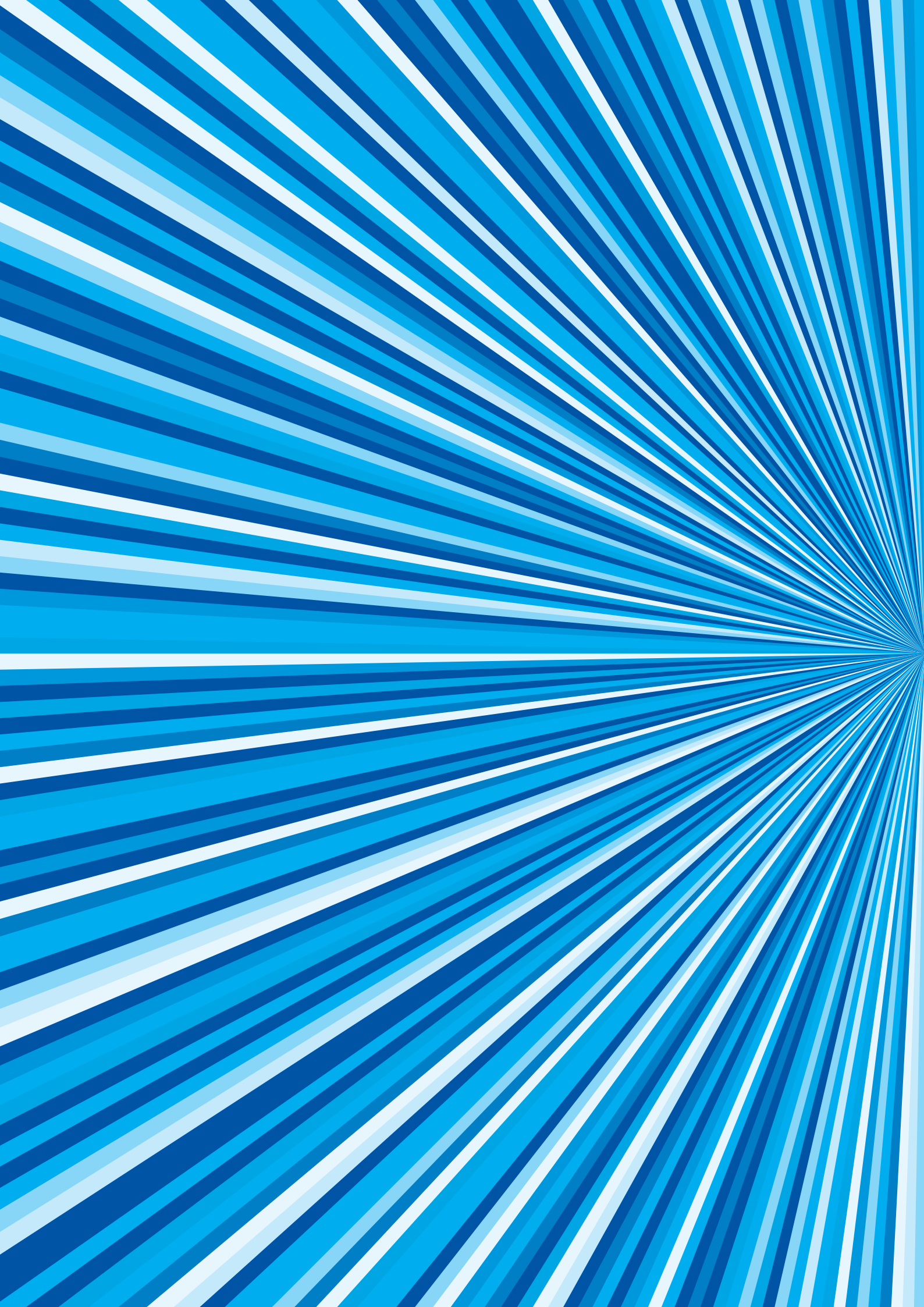


Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn  
**CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE**



# Catholic Early Learning Curriculum

Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn



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## INTRODUCTION

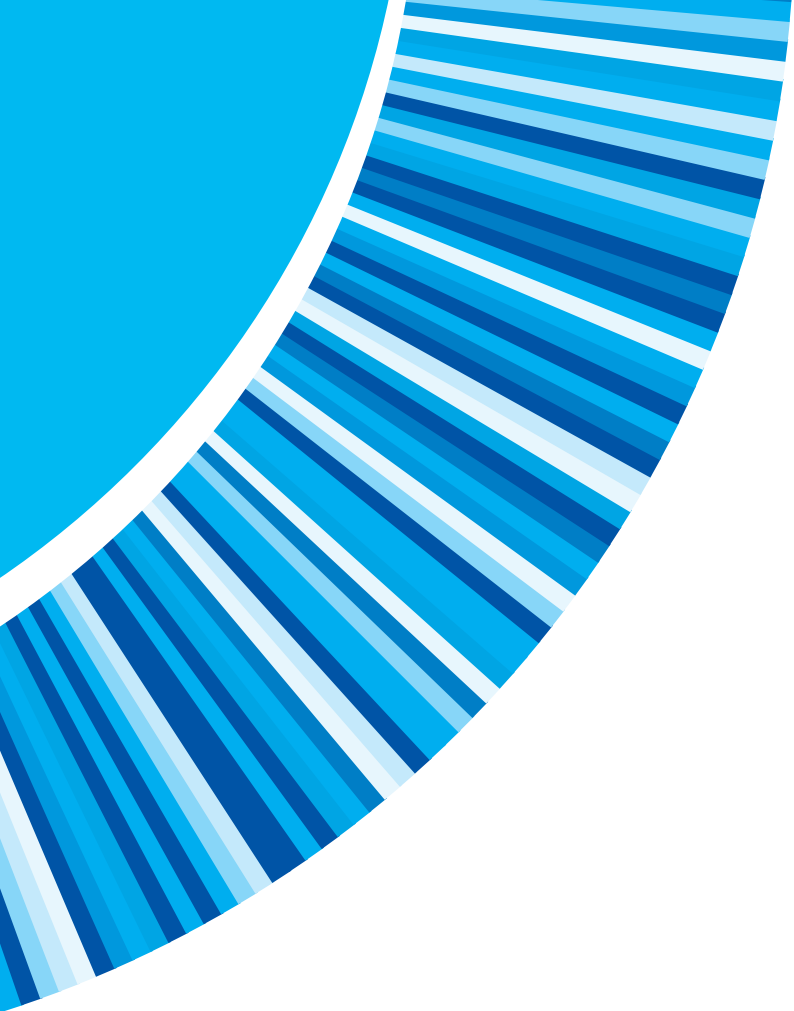
I am pleased to present the Early Learning Centre Curriculum for ACT Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Catholic Early Learning Centres are regionally based and strengthen the continuity of learning for young children participating in Catholic schools.

The purpose of the curriculum document is to guide all educators working with children in Regional Catholic Early Learning Centres in Catholic schools. It provides core early childhood curriculum principles and perspectives, based on the National Early Years Learning Framework *Belonging, Being & Becoming*. Play is fundamental to the implementation of planning, practices, assessment and reporting of children's learning. Religious Education principles support the Catholic Early Learning Centre Curriculum, providing a perspective that is based on the development of Gospel values and Catholic ethos.

I look forward to Regional Catholic Early Learning Centres providing high quality early childhood education care, and a supportive environment to children and their families in the Centres.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Moira Najdecki'.

Moira Najdecki  
Director





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A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, sitting at a table and working on a project. The girl on the left is wearing a blue school uniform with a white collar and a logo that says "St. Teresa School". The boy on the right is wearing a blue school uniform with a grey vest. They are both smiling and looking at the camera. The girl is holding a pink marker. The background shows a white wall with a radiator and a window. The entire image is framed by a circular border with a blue and white striped pattern.

# OVERVIEW



# OVERVIEW

Mission Statement

Early Learning Centre Aims

Early Learning Centre Description

Purpose of The Early Learning Centre Document

Principles Underpinning Curriculum Decisions



## MISSION STATEMENT

In a nurturing environment where a sense of belonging to God's loving family is both implicit and explicit, the mission of Regional Catholic Early Learning Centres is to foster the spirit, mind and body of each child. Grounded in an understanding of children's natural sense of wonder, the Centres aim to equip children to make sense of their world by wondering, questioning, interacting, reflecting and praying.

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Regional Catholic Early Learning Centres:

*Model the Catholic traditions and faith*

*Celebrate the joy of discovery and the excitement of learning*

*Value the uniqueness of each person*

*Work in partnerships with parents/carers, parishes and the wider community*

## THE CURRICULUM

Catholic Early Learning Centres aim to:

- provide quality education for all preschool students in a Catholic Early Learning Centre context;
- build upon common language and shared understandings about what is significant in children's learning in the early years;
- start with the children and their progression of learning, (*ACT DET p2*) with a curriculum based on sound understandings and knowledge about this particular early learning phase of children's development (4 year olds);
- ensure that Catholic Early Learning Centre structures and settings promote the integrated nature of children's learning across all areas of development as well as within each child's individual progression of learning;
- provide documentation of progress that maps each child's learning journey;
- build quality learning environments that best support and extend each child ; and
- build positive relationships with parents and caregivers based on mutual trust and open communication.



## CATHOLIC EARLY LEARNING CENTRE DESCRIPTION

Catholic Early Learning Centres enable children to take the first steps into Catholic education. Families can access a range of options ranging from the preschool only program (15 hours per week during school terms) to a fulltime preschool and childcare program.

All Catholic Early Learning Centres are approved childcare providers. The Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate are available to assist families with fee payments. Fees compare favourably with those of local long day care centres.

Children who will be four years of age by 30 April of the year of enrolment are eligible to be enrolled at one of the regional centres. Enrolment at a Regional Catholic Early Learning Centre is stage one of a Catholic education pathway from Preschool to year 12.

The minimum ratio of adults to children is 1:11 – this is the ACT standard. The Centre's Director is tertiary qualified, with a minimum of a Degree in Early Childhood Education. Each preschool teacher must have a degree in Early Childhood Education. The preschool assistants and the childcare staff must be qualified at either Diploma or Certificate 111 level depending on their appointed position.

## PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC EARLY LEARNING CENTRE CURRICULUM DOCUMENT

The purpose of the document is to guide all educators working with children in Early Learning Centres in Catholic schools. The document is based on *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (2009)

*'The Framework forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning. It has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development. The Framework has been designed for use by the early childhood educators working in partnership with families.'*

(DEEWR 2009:p5)

The Catholic Early Learning Centre Curriculum document provides core curriculum principles and perspectives for all Catholic Early Learning Centres in the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese. The format of the document enables each Centre to complement the core document with information specific to their school community.



## **The Purpose Of Curriculum In The Catholic Context**

*Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (2009) provides the early childhood pedagogical link for educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres to plan, document, analyse, assess and report children's learning in context, with a focus on play.



## **The Purpose Of Curriculum In The Catholic Context**

The purpose of the curriculum in a school is to develop each student as a:

### **... learner**

The core business that distinguishes school as a social institution is the development of children and young people as learners. Curriculum develops the understandings, skills and attitudes for lifelong learning that are vital to the success of students in school, in further education and training in the workplace.

*Learning is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth.*

*The Catholic School n 39*

### **... person**

Curriculum provides the foundation for each student's intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development, enabling them to discover and develop their capabilities and talents through a balanced education of the whole person.

*The person of each individual human being ... is at the heart of Christ's teaching:*

*Pope John Paul II Coming of 3rd Millennium*

### **... community member**

Curriculum prepares students with the knowledge, understandings, skills and values to be active, informed citizens to participate in the social and economic life of the wider community.

*... the Catholic school can be of such service in developing the mission of the People of God and in promoting dialogue between the Church and the community at large to the advantage of both*

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium p 25*

### **... and as a contributor to society**

Curriculum develops students as critical thinkers, problem-solvers, innovators. It supports students to apply their knowledge and skills to their experience beyond school and to contribute to the local, national and global society.

*Catholic schools seek to contribute to the creation of an Australian Community that is highly educated, skilled and cultured with an ability to promote and embrace a critical analysis of social issues, the expansion of knowledge and the pursuit of truth. ... Education ... is also very much a public good whose benefits enhance the whole community. Catholic schools emphasise the contribution of education to the common good of Australian community*

*National Catholic Education Commission Australian Catholic Schools 1999*

*(ACT DET 2007:8, with Catholic Education references)*



## PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING CURRICULUM DECISIONS

The following five Principles from *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (2009) reflect contemporary theories and research evidence concerning children's learning and early childhood pedagogy.

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
2. Partnerships
3. High expectations and equity
4. Respect for diversity
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice


(adapted from DEEWR 2009:12-13)

### General Capabilities

The Early Years Learning Framework has been considered in the development of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum builds on the framework and is designed to accommodate the varied learning experiences and diverse backgrounds that children bring to school. Not all learning is contained in the learning areas into which the school curriculum has traditionally been divided. The Australian Curriculum recognises this, by including General Capabilities that will be cross referenced across all curriculum areas.

**Literacy** knowledge, skills and understanding need to be used and developed in all learning areas. Initial and major continuing development will be in English but the national curriculum will ensure that the competency is used and developed in all learning areas.

**Numeracy** knowledge, skills and understanding need to be used and developed in all learning areas. Initial and major continuing development of numeracy will be in mathematics but the national curriculum will ensure that this competency is used and developed in all learning areas.



**Information and communications technology** skills and understandings are required for all learning areas.

**Critical and Creative Thinking** is developed by students as they learn to generate and evaluate knowledge, ideas and possibilities, and use them when seeking new pathways or solutions. In learning to think broadly and deeply students learn to use reason and imagination to direct their thinking for different purposes.

**Personal and social competence** is developed as students learn to understand and manage themselves, their relationships, lives, work and learning more effectively. This involves students recognising and regulating their emotions, developing concern for and understanding of others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams and handling challenging situations constructively.

**Intercultural understanding** enables students to respect and appreciate their own and others' cultures, and to work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds. It includes appreciation of the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; respect for Australia's multicultural composition; communicating and working in harmony with others within and across cultures, especially in relation to cultures and countries in the Asia-Pacific; and appreciation of difference and diversity.

**Ethical behaviour** involves students understanding and acting in accordance with moral and ethical principles. Ethical behaviour includes the willingness, determination and capacity to think, make judgements and behave independently. It includes identifying right and wrong, and having the willingness, determination and capacity to argue the case for change; understanding the place of ethics and values in human life; acting with moral and ethical integrity; acting with regard for others; and having a desire and capacity to work for the common good.

(ACARA 2011)



Mother Teresa  
School

# THE CURRICULUM



# THE CURRICULUM

Religious Education

Learning Outcomes

Play Based Learning



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Philosophy of Religious Education in Catholic Early Learning Centres

The development of the Treasures New and Old Pre School units are underpinned by two key principles; Fowler's second stage of faith development Intuitive-Projective Faith and play based learning.


Fowler's second stage of faith development indicates that preschoolers are powerfully and permanently influenced by faith examples and stories shared by significant adults in their lives. At this stage children are constantly making sense of the world around them and are repeatedly faced with the unknown. Their imagination, natural sense of awe and wonder are unreserved by logical thought patterns. As children make sense of themselves they are making sense of their own spirituality. As educators of preschoolers it is important to be aware that the images and stories give shape to a child's understanding and feelings towards the self, others, God and the environment.

The challenge to remain authentic to play based learning in Religious Education lead to the adaption of Thomas Groom's Shared Christian Praxis. The adaption of Shared Christian praxis, to play and pray experiences and developing reflection of these experiences offered a pathway for Religious Education in preschools that remained authentic to play based learning and to Religious Education. While the units suggest play and pray experiences for the outcomes of Religious Education, it is understood that these experiences are suggestions or springboards. It is the responsibility of the educators to plan further experiences that are guided by the outcomes and the children's interest as guided by their play.

### Religious Education in Catholic Early Learning Centres

Religious Education principles underpin the curriculum in Catholic Early Learning Centres. Treasures New and Old Religious Education Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CEO 2000) is embedded in the curriculum. In 2009 The Treasures New and Old Supplement established the content and key values for Religious Education across the Archdiocese into four strands which incorporate Sacramental and liturgical content where appropriate. The strands are as follows:

**God and God's Creation** is concerned with how understandings of God and the created world shape Christian beliefs, Church teachings and Church practice. In this strand students have opportunities to explore and clarify personal and social values of respect, cooperation, responsibility and fairness.



**Jesus and Discipleship** is concerned with making meaning of Scriptural texts in order to understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. In this strand students have opportunities to explore and clarify personal and social values of compassion, service, and forgiveness.

**Church in the World** is concerned with how the mystery of God in the world has been understood and expressed by the Church and the implications it has for contemporary living. In this strand students have opportunities to explore and clarify personal and social values of truth, integrity and justice.

**Prayer and Celebration** is concerned with Sacraments of the Church, prayer, ritual and spirituality and how these are expressed in Church and other contexts. In this strand students have opportunities to develop wellbeing and to explore and clarify personal and social values of peace, freedom and tolerance. Each of these strands makes an equivalent contribution to the key learning area of Religious Education.

It is within this context that the Preschool units have been conceptualised. In order to remain authentic to the developmental age of preschoolers this syllabus identifies what the students will experience. The outcomes for the units are for children to experience;

- a sense of personal and communal relationship with God,
- a sense of love and belonging in family and Church,
- a sense of God's presence in Creation,
- a sense of celebration; in relation to the birth of Jesus.

Coles' research attests to the power of the formal religious dimension in developing children's spirituality but in a way that begins with the questions of the children, not the answers of the Tradition (1990). In order for this to occur a deep sense of listening and presence is essential from educators of preschool children. The units cannot therefore be prescriptive. The outcomes and indicators are designed for educators to provide opportunities for children to develop their *being*, encounter and make meaning of their world, to develop their sense of *belonging* and to *become* who they are, made in the image and likeness of God. The units are intended to foster within children their natural sense of awe and wonder by allowing them to experience their world and in turn make meaning.



Careful consideration has been given to the development of the units both individually and collectively. The sequence of the units across the years is as follows:

- Term One **Prayer and Celebration**- Gathering in Prayer
- Term Two **Church in the World**- Welcoming Church
- Term Three **God and God's Creation** - Sensing God
- Term Four **Jesus and Discipleship** - Celebrating Jesus' birth

The Welcoming Church unit builds on the Gathering in Prayer unit in order for the concept of Godly Play to be successfully implemented. The Celebrating Jesus' birth unit focuses on the birth of Jesus and is liturgically more appropriate in Term Four, leaving Sensing God to be taught in Term Three.

### **Godly Play in Catholic Early Learning Centres**

Godly Play is based upon the recognition that children have an innate sense of the presence of God. The inclusion of Godly Play in the preschool units relies on the understanding that this methodology of teaching scripture, coined by Jerome Berryman, describes an approach to children's spiritual formation based on;

- creating a sacred space,
- wondering and
- children engaging in the story on their own terms.

Each of these three components is essential for the authenticity of Godly Play.

Godly Play is distinctly about children discovering who God is, not what God did. It invites the children to connect faith stories with personal experience through play, wondering questions and open-ended response. The term one unit Gathering in Prayer and its understandings are essential for children to engage in Godly Play in terms two, three and four.

Further information about Godly Play can be found at  
<http://www.godlyplayfoundation.org/newsite/Main.php>





## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Teachers in Catholic Early Learning Centres are required to implement *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009)* which will inform the development of a program for each child that enhances their learning and development.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) presents five Learning Outcomes that are designed to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children in early childhood. The Framework provides broad direction for teachers in Catholic Early Learning Centres to facilitate children's learning. It also provides the link for educators to focus on play to provide a context in which children's knowledge and abilities can be meaningfully assessed. Play also provides a powerful analysis tool for reporting on children and their learning.

The Early Years Learning Framework guides curriculum decision making and enables each child's learning in the five outcomes:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of well-being
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

The outcomes are broad and observable. They acknowledge that children learn in a variety of ways and vary in their capabilities and pace of learning (DEEWR 2009:19).

Curriculum decision making is informed by the context, setting and cultural diversity of the families and the community. The program for each child takes into account their strengths, capabilities, culture, interests and experiences.

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care (2009)



## PLAY BASED LEARNING

Play is central to planning learning opportunities for young children.

Play is a context for learning that:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness;
- enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity;
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning;
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts; and
- stimulates a feeling of wellbeing.

(DEEWR 2009:9)

Play is the young child's tool for learning and the way curriculum is expressed in early learning settings. It is the means by which young children make sense of their world. Play involves diversity and choice, enhances motivation, autonomy, self-esteem, social competence and emotional wellbeing.

Play with peers enables children to build on their social understandings and relationships and allows them to practise and extend what they already know about sharing, taking turns, exercising self-control, working in a group, and cooperating. ...Play provides.....*"a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people and representations."*

(DEEWR 2009:6)

*"Play is child initiated and pleasurable, so in play children are motivated to learn and develop a positive disposition towards learning."* (Arthur, L. et al 2008:235)

*"...when children are engaged in play, they are usually self-motivated, their activities sustained over contexts and time, and they have a sense of purpose for accomplishing tasks. It is more likely that an assessment of their actual abilities can be obtained in such contexts."* (Fleer, M (ed) 1996:2)

## Recommended Reading

- Arthur, L., Beecher, B., Death, E., Dockett, S. & Farmer, S. (2008) *Programming and Planning in Early Childhood Settings* Thomson, Nelson, Australia
- Curtis, D. & Carter, M (2008) *Learning Together with Young Children: a curriculum framework for reflective teachers*. ST Paul MN Redleaf Press
- Dockett, S, & Fleer, M (1999) *Play and Pedagogy in Early Childhood: Bending the Rules* Harcourt Brace, Australia
- Milne, R (2000) *Marketing Play – using marketing strategies to explain the benefits of a play approach in early childhood education*. FKA Vic. Melbourne
- Pramling-Samuelsson, I & Fleer, M. (2009) *Play and learning in early childhood settings*.

# CATHOLIC EARLY LEARNING CENTRE CURRICULUM

Theory Into Practice



## ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to promote children's learning by:

- adopting holistic approaches;
- being responsive to children;
- planning and implementing learning through play;
- intentional teaching;
- creating physical and social learning;
- planning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning;
- valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and their families;
- providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transitions; and
- assessing and monitoring children's learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes.

(DEEWR 2009:14)

The indicators for the five Learning Outcomes in the framework (DEEWR 2009:21-24) provide a wealth of practical examples of children's learning and the role of educators in promoting this learning. The learning environment encompasses people, resources, attitudes, values and physical arrangements.

Early Childhood educators view children as competent rather than deficient and engage them in learning as active participants and effective decision makers.

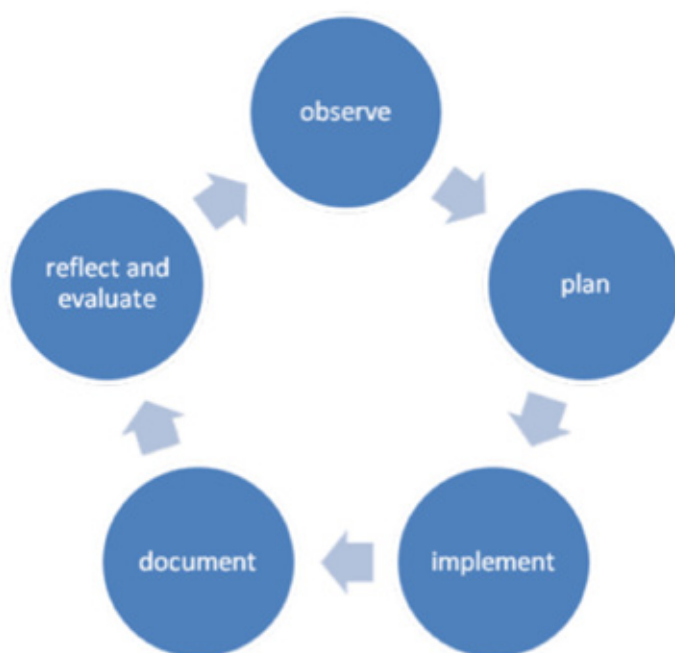
Educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres support cooperative learning, provide for individual differences, and provide ample time for children to engage in projects and other cooperative activities. Inclusivity is embedded in their practice.

Educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres plan learning environments indoors and outdoors that are welcoming spaces, are flexible and vibrant, and are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. These planned learning environments cater for different learning capacities and learning styles and invite children and families to contribute ideas, interest, and questions (DEEWR 2009:15).

Intentional teaching (DEEWR 2009:15) is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful, however if educators are clear about their vision for children and their learning, they can also take advantage of unscripted opportunities to promote children's learning.

## PROGRAMS AND PLANNING

In Catholic Early Learning Centres planning is cyclic, starting from observations of children's interests and their developing skills. As they play, children reveal their levels of experience and information, as well as misunderstandings and confusions, providing the clues from which educators can develop a meaningful curriculum. The most effective curriculum grows out of the children's interests and experiences.







### Elements of the program include:

- the goals and aims of the service based on the Centre's philosophy;
- planned experiences that reflect an understanding and knowledge of child development;
- an on-going observation system that records individual children's unique strengths, interests and areas for further development;
- planned learning experiences that foster the development of individual children in a group setting;
- a system of evaluation that informs future programs and staff practices; and
- a timetable/schedule of the planned routine for the day displayed in each playroom.

Written plans help educators focus on the children's interests, needs, capabilities and potential. They help educators clarify thoughts and articulate a rationale for what they do. Written plans also allow all members of staff to know what is happening, provide opportunities for educators to plan together, share ideas and resources. Written plans are displayed for parent/carer information.

Written plans provide:

- a concrete format from which evaluation and assessment can be made;
- opportunities for reflection and future planning; and
- a meaningful tool for educators to communicate with staff, parents/carers and management.

Aspects considered when educators develop written plans are:

- goals for children's learning to develop;
- experiences through which they will achieve these goals;
- role of staff and parents/carers in helping the child achieve these goals; and
- materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum.

(adapted from Gordon, A & Browne, K 2008:410)

A range of examples of program formats is in the Appendix. These are examples only, providing possibilities for planning.

## DOCUMENTATION, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

Educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres see play as the articulation of the curriculum. Evaluation is in an interpretative process that documents what children can do in authentic, every day activities.

### DOCUMENTATION

*"When a teacher carefully collects, analyses, interprets, and displays evidence of learning, it is called 'documentation'."*

Harris Helm, J & Katz, L (2001:55)

Educators interpret and organize the information in ways that explain children's learning.

Types of documentation may include:

- individual portfolios containing a selection of children's annotated everyday work as well as unique items that show learning style and interests;
- work samples such as written language, transcribed spoken language;
- constructions such as lego or block structures (could be photographs);
- musical expressions such as made-up songs or dances;
- observations;
- child self-reflections; and
- narratives of learning experiences such as learning journals, displays on projects, books or explanations for parents, or books or stories for children.

Annotation is a written reflection, comment or explanation that makes the significance of the item clear and adds relevant information not otherwise available.

Annotation:

- provides commentary on what has occurred;
- highlights activities children were involved in and how learning has developed through these activities;
- interprets what children have been learning; and
- provides a basis for further inquiry, discussion, analysis, planning and reporting.

Documentation enables:

- educators, children and parents/carers to reflect on the process and issues associated with children's learning around a particular activity;
- educators to pursue what is important to the child in constructing meaning;
- educators to assess individual learning; and
- educators to plan curriculum and assess their own teaching.

### ASSESSMENT

The purpose of assessment is to help children learn. It is a continuous process of gathering and interpreting evidence to make judgements about student learning.

Assessment is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning. It is important because it enables educators, in partnership with families, children and other professionals to:

- plan effectively for children's current and future learning;
- communicate about children's learning and progress;
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing toward realising learning outcomes and if not, what might be impeding their progress;
- identify children who may need additional support in order to achieve particular learning outcomes, providing that support, or assisting families to access specialist help;
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities offered and the approaches taken to enable children's learning; and
- reflect on pedagogy that will suit this context and these children.

(DEEWR 2009:17)

Teachers gather evidence for learning and exercise sound interpretation and judgement whether the purpose is to make:

- formative assessments of student learning (assessment for learning); or
- summative assessments of student learning (assessment of learning).

Assessment for learning informs ongoing decisions about teaching and learning.

Assessment of learning is used for reporting a child's achievement and to evaluate the teaching and learning programs to inform future planning.

(adapted from ACT DET 2007:22)

Best practice in assessment

*"Educators use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information that they gather to assess children's learning. They search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings."*

(DEEWR 2009:17)

In Catholic Early Learning Centres assessment is:

- for the benefit of the child;
- focused on the child in as natural a context as possible;
- for a specific purpose;
- a description of a child's progress to inform teachers, parents/carers in order to guide future learning;
- ongoing, a process involving repeated observations over time, including a variety of methods from different sources.

Observing and documenting children's play is a powerful assessment tool. It is the most important form of assessment in Catholic Early Learning Centres as it takes into account the whole child and provides integrated insights into children's learning.

## REPORTING

In Catholic Early Learning Centres reporting is consistent with the philosophy of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office Early Learning Centre Curriculum. It is the first step in the child's record of developmental progress.

Reporting processes are developed in partnership with the school with an emphasis on the priorities of early childhood education.

In Catholic Early Learning Centres documentation and reporting to share with family and colleagues can be carried out in a variety of ways:

- formal and informal discussion;
- photographs and collections of children's work;
- written information about the child's learning and development;
- individual portfolios containing a selection of children's annotated, everyday work as a resource for planning and communicating with family and colleagues; and/or
- visual evidence of the learning through quality displays.

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

*"Inclusive Education involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision making. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference."* (DEEWR 2009:24)

### Acknowledging Diversity

*"When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for their children, they are able to foster children's motivation to learn and reinforce their sense of themselves as competent learners.....They provide opportunities to learn about similarities and difference and about interdependence and how we can learn to live together".*

(DEEWR 2009:13)

*Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (2009) provides a wide range of examples of children's learning in the area of diversity, with examples of ways to promote this learning

(DEEWR 2009:27).

Diversity is part of educators' professional responsibility to make the centre responsive to the diverse needs of all children. How educators relate to children really matters and affects how well they achieve – educators therefore need to provide a centre context that is supportive of, and responsive to, diversity, and make adaptations to fit the capacities of each individual child as needed.

An inclusive curriculum:

- embraces diversity and difference;
- acknowledges that all children are not the same;
- does not see diversity as a problem to overcome; and
- encourages acceptance so children's strengths and existing expertise are valued and used as a basis for further learning.

This translates in practice to a curriculum that is:

- welcoming;
- flexible;
- respectful;
- collaborative; and
- reflective.

An inclusive curriculum provides:

- a variety of learning experiences and opportunities for a wide range of skills and abilities all at one time; and
- an environment in which children can participate at their developmental level, but where challenges exist that can be met with peer or adult support.

### Family inclusion

It is vital that families and staff of Catholic Early Learning Centres build strong relationships to support children's development of learning. Learning outcomes are likely to be enhanced when educators work in partnership with families.

Parents/carers in each Catholic Early Learning Centre have access to the written, child-centered program that:

- describes the Centre's philosophy in relation to learning and child development; and
- is designed to stimulate each child's social, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development.

In Catholic Early Learning Centres families are:

- welcomed and encouraged to participate and share in a variety of ways;
- encouraged to share with teachers their invaluable knowledge of their child to make learning experiences more meaningful;
- encouraged to share in decision making about their child's growth and developmental needs;
- respected for their culture, customs, language and beliefs; and
- treated with respect based on mutual trust and open communication.



Staff of Catholic Early Learning Centres acknowledge that family involvement can take many forms, and are sensitive to family members' varying willingness and availability to become involved.

Before asking parents/carers for participation in specific activities Catholic Early Learning Centre educators provide information sessions about how parents/carers can help effectively, and how this participation enhances children's learning and the centre, enabling parents/carers to provide informed support.

Examples of links with families may include:

- establishing a parent/carer library;
- sending home annotated children's work;
- establishing communication books when required;
- electronic and telephone communications;
- offering opportunities for parent/carer contribution to the program and policies;
- informal discussions and newsletters;
- discussing with parents/carers how children engage in meaningful literacy and numeracy in the program and the ways parents/carers can support this learning in everyday experiences; and
- valuing diversity by encouraging families to talk about their cultural backgrounds and share some of the events of their lives.

## CULTURE

*"Educators who are culturally competent respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and have an ability to understand and honour differences".*

(DEEWR 2009:16)

Educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres:


- make every child genuinely welcome;
- support the home language and create a safe environment in which children feel safe to talk about their culture;
- acknowledge and respond to the importance of the child's language and culture;
- make every parent/carer welcome – working with parents/carers to bridge the gap between the ways schools operate and the norms of their homes and cultures;
- are non-judgemental communicators, and active listeners;
- integrate culturally diverse information and perspectives throughout the day; and;
- create connections, involve parents/carers, other families, the community.

## DISABILITY

*"All children at some time have special needs. Appropriate play experiences will vary. For children with identified disabilities it's important to focus on what the child can do rather than what they cannot, to use play to encourage all areas of development, not to focus on the area that causes the child problems."*

(ACT DET p13)

Inclusive Education is part of the mission of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. In considering the needs of children with disabilities Catholic Early Learning Centre Directors must follow the enrolment guidelines and procedures as set by the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office.



These guidelines are freely available to all parents/carers. All parents/carers are welcome at any time to discuss their children's needs with the Principal and appropriate CEO staff. Children with disabilities may have a wide range of needs and abilities.

Educators in Catholic Early Learning Centres:

- focus on what children with disabilities can do and then build on their strengths;
- assess and identify children's needs for assistive technology;
- organise the physical environment to promote learning;
- design and deliver Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that help children access the curriculum;
- ensure all children are actively engaged in learning; and
- refer parents/carers to appropriate agencies.

### Gender

Educators in Early Learning Centres provide opportunities for both boys and girls to be involved in all learning areas, and use gender inclusive language and resources, recognising the achievements of all.

*"Sometimes promoting equity will mean ensuring that children have equal access to materials.....and at other times it will involve a much more proactive stance – such as challenging children's beliefs that blocks are for boys and family corner materials for girls"*

(Dockett, S & Fleer, M (1999:182)



## GLOSSARY

The following are terms referenced from

*Belonging, Being, and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (2009).

**Educators:** early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings. (p5)

**Intentional teaching:** involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because they have 'always' been done that way. (p15)

**Learning outcomes:** a skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in early childhood settings, in collaboration with children and families. (p8)

**Pedagogy:** early childhood educators' professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision making, teaching and learning. (p9)

**Play based learning:** a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations (p3)



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# CATHOLIC EARLY LEARNING CENTRE CURRICULUM

Appendix





**The following are samples of planning formats.**

They are in no way prescriptive.

The samples are intended to offer possibilities to develop practical planning formats that enable staff to:

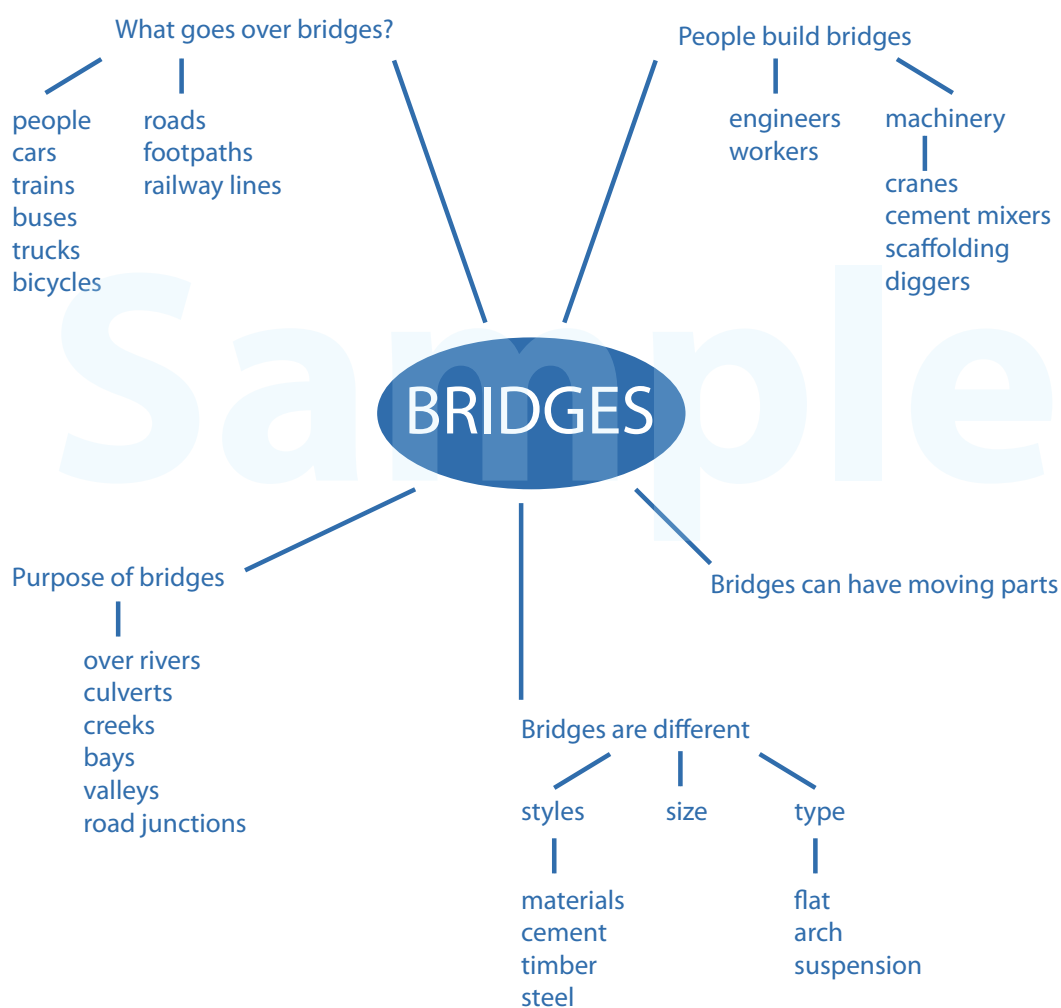
- focus on the children's interests, strengths, culture, needs, capabilities and potential;
- clarify thoughts and articulate a rationale for what they do;
- provide opportunities for staff to plan together, share ideas and resources;

and consider

- goals for children's learning to develop;
- experiences through which they will achieve these goals;
- role of staff and parents in helping the child achieve these goals; and
- materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum.

### TERM 2 WEEK 3

A preliminary CONCEPT MAP or PLANNING WEB can begin from an area of interest and develop the possibilities of activities and experience, concept development, and Learning Outcomes from EYLF before commencing written plans.



## TERM 2 WEEK 3

| Starting point / continuing projects   | Discussions / conversation   | Parent and community contributions  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Introduce veggie patch idea.</p> <p>Continue with the packaging free lunchbox theme, put photos of the sorting activity on the board as you enter the classroom, to hopefully remind parents.</p> <p>Look at the reuse element of the reduce, reuse, recycle statement.</p> | <p>Discuss veggie patch, why might we do it, how would it help the environment and how does it fit in with our recycling theme.</p> <p>Discuss how we can reuse some of our recycling objects.</p>   | <p>Mention packaging free lunchbox in newsletter and on notice board highlight how it fits in with planning and how parents can support it with discussion at home and preparing packaging free lunch.</p> <p>Speak with..... (parent with Vinnies contact) to inquire if a St Vinnies rep could visit.</p> |
| <p>Look at money, notes and coins.</p> <p>Open/Closed sign</p> <p>Continue with working wall</p>   | <p>Discuss what does money look like, coins and notes. Look at the pictures on them who/what are they? Talk about the value. How do we use money, what is it for?</p> <p>Refer back to original list and see what we haven't done yet.</p> |   |
| <p>Draw up roster to water small world area and make sure that it is watered every day.</p>  | <p>Discuss progress of small world area (or lack of it!)Talk about how we can better care for the growing grass, what do we need to do for it?</p>   |   |
| <p>PE—develop throwing and catching skills</p>   |  | <p>Any parents able to give us a li time to participate in ball activities</p>  |
| <p>Introduce Godly play through text based on John Chp 1 Verse 49, Called 'The Light'</p>  | <p>In prayer time.</p>   |   |

|                     | Possibilities   | What actually occurred?  |
|---------------------|---|--|
| in d - ing this and | Look on internet at what we can grow, ensure we have the correct seeds. Prepare veggie patch to plant, perhaps some more compost. Then plant seeds, and make labels so we know what is planted where.   | Had to delay this activity as we were waiting for the veggie patch to be dug over, and the mulch to be laid.   |
| a St                | Have a day next week where we see who has managed to have a packaging free lunch box.   | The children have looked at who has a packaging free lunch box, but they weren't really that interested in it. I put a display in the entrance to the Pre-school in the hope that it may entice some parents into trying to prepare a packaging free lunch box.  |
|                     | Discuss what we could reuse, croissant tins, we can make into wind chimes, objects we can use for printing, recycled art work. Perhaps look at making musical instruments, look at the real thing, and see what we could use from recycling to make them. | Started to look at art using recycled items, we did some printing with recycled items and other everyday items which the children really enjoyed. We looked at books telling us about how and why we recycle different materials and the children became really interested in some of these ideas.   |
|                     | Discuss bringing in an object from home that we no longer use and perhaps some one else may want to use it. Talk to Vinnies, see if someone could come and collect the items that we have brought in and discuss the work that they do.                   | Spoke with Janet about getting someone from Vinnies to come in, She can organise this for week 6 so we will continue with this then.   |
|                     |   | Printed off copies of the different coins and notes with explanations of who the pictures are. We actually just looked at the coins and the children really enjoyed learning about the pictures and the information. They then made their own \$1 & \$2 coins trying to replicate the pictures and write the numbers. These I have laminated and we will introduce them into the café. |
| ttle s?             | Make our own money to use in the café, and see how the children use it.   | Looked at grass which was growing slowly, and discussed what we needed to do to help it grow. Great suggestions were made and noted. They weren't really keen in a roster, but the grass does get watered each day by someone. It is now growing well.   |
|                     | Children to make their own open/closed sign.  | A good start to throwing a catching, children practised in pairs using bean bags although this made it difficult for me to assess who could, and who couldn't throw/catch as I was unable to watch everyone.   |
|                     | Draw up list of what we need to do, and action points as appropriate, possible roster to water.   | Some of the children struggled with the team games and ball skills games.  |
|                     | Use bean bags in pairs, throwing games, team games, possibly use balloons weather permitting.   | Godly play was really well received, the children were quite into it asking lots of questions, and coming up with some really good answers.  |
|                     | Carry out Godly play at per staff meeting note children interactions, reception to the means of conveying message. Evaluate.  | They asked if we could do it again especially when they noticed that our prayer shawl was the same colour as darkness!   |

(Planning Sheet of staff at Mother Teresa Early Learning Centre, Harrison ACT)



*"...the documentation of children's work provides compelling public evidence of the intellectual powers of young children ..."*

Katz, L.G. in Harris Helm. J, Beneke. S, & Steinheimer. K, 1998: x

Documentation displayed at Mother Teresa Early Learning Centre,  
Harrison ACT



*"Through documentation the teacher can make it possible for others to 'see' the learning that takes place when developmentally appropriate teaching occurs. Documentation also provides the evidence needed for reliably assessing children's progress, for meeting accountability requirements, for monitoring individual students' growth and development, and for program evaluation."*

Harris Helm. J, Beneke. S , & Steinheimer. K , 1998: 15

Documentation displayed at Mother Teresa Early Learning Centre,  
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