



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW PROGRAM TO SUPPORT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN PRE-SCHOOLERS IN CANBERRA

CATHOLIC EARLY LEARNING CENTRES FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Children in Canberra's nine Catholic early learning centres will benefit from a new program to develop oral language and early literacy skills to give them the best start in formal schooling.

Catholic Education Canberra Goulburn will use the School ReadY program developed by Y WA in a collaboration to help children flourish in school.

CECG Executive Director Pam Betts said some children who came into pre-school centres needed support to develop the knowledge of vocabulary and phonological awareness to help set them up for success when they transition to school.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognise and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words. This includes being able to identify words that rhyme, recognising alliteration, segmenting a sentence into words, identifying the syllables in a word, and being aware of the smallest units of sounds that make up words.

"Phonological awareness is the foundation for reading and writing English," Ms Betts said. "It's a set of skills developed in sequence that is central to learning to decode and spell printed words. It's critical for all students' literacy development and a predictor of later reading and spelling success.

"However, research suggests that many children do not first enter school skilled in phonological awareness. Research also suggests that if there is no instruction in phonological awareness, many will fail to acquire it.

"School ReadY has already produced positive results in Y WA early learning centres and it complements what we are already achieving with our play-based intentional learning.

"We hope to build on the strong results from Western Australia and set our children up for greater success when they enter school."

General Manager of the CECG early learning centres, Leah Taylor, said she was drawn to the program because it was comprehensive but still had a focus on play-based curriculum.

"We saw the value of the program as an evidence-based approach to laying the strong foundations for early literacy and language needed to support children in their pre-school years," Mrs Taylor said.

"Through intentional teaching combined with play-based experiences, the program provides learning opportunities for the development of key skills that children need when formal instruction of reading begins.

"This is an important collaboration because we hope that it will generate data that we can share throughout Australia about what works best for pre-school children."

Mrs Taylor said early learning centre teachers had been trained in the instruction of phonological awareness as a part of their professional development.



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La Trobe University will monitor the program and evaluate its impact on children's learning.

CECG has 688 children enrolled in early learning centres in Calwell, Curtin, Gowrie, Harrison, Holder, Nicholls, O'Connor, Wanniasa and West Belconnen.

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