



Our philosophy

Acacia Kindergarten educators have been influenced through the site's participation in the Early Childhood of South Australia Organisation (EChO) 'Reimagining Childhood' professional learning project. This has been a direct response to Carla Rinaldi's time as 'Thinker in Residence' for South Australia. As a group of committed and reflective educators, we have been inspired to think deeply about our culture and practice. This has brought about the development of our current philosophy. Our philosophy is guided by principles which we believe are integral to Acacia Kindergarten.

Values: Relationships, Respect, Responsibility

Vision: An inclusive community of powerful, resilient and connected learners.

Our Image of the Child

All children are uniquely capable, competent and social, demonstrating curiosity and resourcefulness about their world. As educators we respect the knowledge, experiences, culture and language each child brings, and learning environments are developed to reflect this image. We have a commitment to, advocate for and support each individual child's special rights.

Educators view children as active citizens, recognising their roles and responsibilities as participants in our kindergarten community. We will provide opportunities for children to explore their playful learning environment as we observe and listen with intent to support their theories and understandings of the world.

Relationships

Responsive relationships support children's development, wellbeing and learning. Educators aim to develop secure, trusting and reciprocal relationships with children. We believe relationships between educators and children are crucial for their development of identity, sense of self and belonging at kindergarten. Educators will actively listen to and engage with children, while respecting times where children choose to discover on their own. Educators support children to interact with others with care and respect.

We aim to work in partnership with families by having a welcoming, respectful environment which supports open, honest communication with families. We recognise that families are a child's first educator and seek to work collaboratively and encourage families to actively participate and engage in the kindergarten.

Relationships between educators and other service professionals will be built upon respect, integrity and trust as we collaborate to support children's learning and wellbeing. We recognise that the diversity of our educator team supports the diversity of the children at our site, and will always be supportive of each other.

Environment

A welcoming, calm, aesthetically pleasing, natural space is created where a sense of belonging can be developed for all children, families and community members.

Educators believe environment is the 'third teacher' and intentionally plan for learning spaces in response to children's ideas. Playful experiences allow children to develop learning dispositions, encouraging choice, enabling risks, play, wonder and discoveries in the process of learning. Learning environments support independence and interdependence as children can be alone, work with others, in groups and with educators.

We have embraced a culture of nature play, encouraging children to develop a love and respect for the natural environment. Routines allow children long uninterrupted periods of time to explore the indoor and outdoor environment in all seasons. Acacia Kindergarten's location allows views across the city and crater landscape. Educators support children's connection with community spaces as a place for learning. Our sustainability strategy supports educators, children and their families to embed sustainable practices as an integral part of our daily program and lifestyle.

Play

Children have a natural desire to engage in experiences based on their interests and curiosities. Play gives children freedom to explore, practice and master skills, dispositions and knowledge, giving them a strong foundation in a changing world. Research shows that play is fundamental to supporting children's sense of identity, connectedness, wellbeing, engagement and literacy and numeracy learning.

Playful learning environments are created to inspire children to engage in meaningful learning experiences. A balanced and intentional curriculum is planned which incorporates uninterrupted time for child-directed play, where educators scaffold children's learning.

Dispositions for Learning and Learning Processes

The purpose of education is to nurture dispositions so that children can reach their fullest potential and be successful in an ever-changing world. Educators believe that having a growth mindset is essential for children's learning and wellbeing. To support this, we plan for and provide opportunities to develop and strengthen dispositions for learning and learning processes.

Dispositions are 'habits of mind' and we focus on developing dispositions which we believe support children to become successful and effective lifelong learners. The dispositions we nurture are cooperation, confidence, communication, curiosity, purposefulness and persistence and resourcefulness. Learning processes such as exploration, collaboration, problem solving, experimentation, investigation, hypothesising, inquiry and research are scaffolded and supported in a flexible learning environment and through intentional teaching practices.

Listening

Educators honour and respect all children's voices, ideas, and theories, recognising children communicate in many ways. Authentic listening enables trusting relationships to form between educators, children and families. It gives educators an insight into individual children's worlds.

Educators support and model respectful interactions and dialogue between educator and child and between children. Scaffolding supports children to deepen their thinking, build on their theories and expand their vocabulary. This is the foundation of our project work. Educators use documentation to make children's learning and voices visible. This is a tool for reflection and is used to then plan and resource future learning possibilities.

100 Languages

The 100 Languages poem by Loris Malaguzzi provides a provocation for educators at Acacia Kindergarten to plan for and enable children to explore, discover, invent and dream. Educators acknowledge, value and encourage children to express their ideas, recognising that children are unique individuals who learn and represent their thinking in different ways. Educators create an environment where children can construct their own understandings with educators supporting and facilitating the process. Educators capture and celebrate children's many languages by making learning visible through documentation.

Community

Acacia Kindergarten embraces Mount Gambier's Charter for Children by supporting children to be active and visible in the community. We aim to work collaboratively with community members by learning together, connecting with community experts and actively use community spaces as places to support children's sense of belonging and learning.

The kindergarten builds relationships with future kindergarten families by offering playgroup and educators aim to work in partnership with schools to support children's transition and continuity of learning.

Documentation

Documentation is an integral part of our work, giving value to learning and making it visible for children, families and educators. It offers provocations, dialogue and a tool for continual reflection.

The Early Years Learning Framework, along with children's voices, interests and experiences inform our planning. Processes used to document, plan and assess learning are reviewed regularly to ensure our practices are effective in informing teaching and learning. A context for learning is developed each term by educators which informs our planning cycle. Documentation is intentional as educators ensure it is purposeful, thoughtful and deliberate.

Observation, interpretation and analysis of children's learning is embedded in daily practice. Through formative assessment processes, using group and individual learning stories, educators gain insights into children's learning dispositions, learning processes and knowledge. Strength based assessment in the form of Learning Stories are used to inform future curriculum making decisions and extend learning. Summative assessment processes, through Term Learning Summaries and the end of year Statement of Learning celebrates and acknowledges the learning and distance travelled by children.

Teacher as Researcher

Educators at Acacia Kindergarten view ourselves as lifelong learners and researchers of childhood. We dedicate time to engage in professional dialogue, respecting and listening to each other's contributions. By engaging in ongoing professional development and professional reading, we challenge our thinking, and participate in critical reflective processes as part of our culture of continuous improvement. Acacia Kindergarten is a member of the Early Childhood Organisation of South Australia, Early Childhood Australia and the Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange and we are committed to sharing with and learning from others in the field of early childhood.

