

# Sensory Learning with Nature Policy

Sensory learning is a part of a quality active learning environment for young children. Golden Grove Kindergarten is a place where learning through sensory play experiences is valued. Through sensory learning, children are provided with rich and authentic opportunities to engage with nature and the natural world. We will provide opportunities for children to develop their skills in new learning, through experiencing graduated risks.

Why is the natural world important for children?

- Learning to notice the details of texture, colour, smell and sound
- Experiencing “calm”, slowing racing bodies down, positive wellbeing, balance in a busy life and tech heavy world
- Find one’s place in the cycle of life. Values relationships and interdependence
- Becoming a steward of plants and creatures
- Finding the joys in water, dirt and sand
- Building muscles (fine and gross), confidence, imagination
- Learning to keep safe when taking risks
- Sharpening concentration

Adapted from the “No Child Left Behind” CD

Our Sensory Learning Policy reflects the

- Early Years Learning Framework (Government of Australia)
- National Quality Standard (Government of Australia)
- Reflect, Respect, Relate : Assessing for Learning and Development in the Early Years using observation scales (Department of Education and Child Development, SA)

Children will:

- Be provided with a range of opportunities to experience sensory play (ie. Playdough, gloop, slime, paint, bubbles etc), with a focus on sensory experiences through nature (ie. Play with sand, water, mud, clay, rocks etc).
- Experience high quality active learning environments which reflect contemporary pedagogies as in the Early Years Learning Framework. An active learning environment “in which children are encourage to explore and interact with the environment to make (or contrast) meaning and knowledge through their experiences, social interactions and negotiations with others. In an active learning environment, educators play a crucial role of encouraging children to discover deeper meanings and make connections among ideas and between concepts, processes and representations. This requires educators to be engaged with children’s emotions and thinking” Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45.
- Play with purpose and deep involvement
- Get messy
- Children play respectfully towards other children and Educators (ie. Throwing sand and mud at others, splashing others is not appropriate)

Families will :

- Support children's engagement in sensory learning with nature through providing clothing and footwear which enables active participation (ie. Rubber boots in winter, changes of spare clothes, waterproof clothing). Avoid clothing which restricts involvement for learning (ie. Special occasion or party dresses, fancy outfits, party shoes, new clothing which is not to get dirty)
- Find the joy in your child's sensory learning and exploration of nature
- Use language which values the learning in sensory play with nature, avoiding being overly concerned with mess

Educators will:

- Create high quality active learning environments which reflect contemporary pedagogies as in the Early Years Learning Framework. These include the practices of responsiveness to children, learning through play and learning environments. Educators push back on expectations of over formalised learning and pedagogies which are professionally and educationally inappropriate for young children.
- Implement the National Quality Standard by "plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge, where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning" (element 1.2.2, p.43).
- The educators role in providing active learning environments for sensory learning is clearly detailed in the Active Learning Environment Scale -

### **Domain 2 : Sensory and physical play (p. 50 – 51)**

Educators create an environment that enables children to experience and explore a range of sensory and physical play. The aesthetics of the environment and educators' encouragement entices children's involvement with sensory stimuli, inviting them to explore different textures, smells and sights. They encourage children to participate, to practice and to develop physical skills.

Signals and indicators :

- Encourages children to attend to sensory stimuli (wind, moving objects, sounds etc)
- Invite children to explore different textures, smells and sights
- Plays sensory games with children
- Extends children's playing with a repertoire of sounds (vocalisations, music, singing games)
- Encourages children to engage in tactile or "messy play" (eg. Sand, water, mud)
- Effort is made to attend to the aesthetics of the environment
- Encourages children to try new/practice developing physical skills
- Support families to involve children in sensory learning in all weather, through encouraging them to provide appropriate clothing for the weather conditions, ie rain coats for wet weather.
- Support children's developing independence in changing dirty or wet clothing, through providing assistance as the child needs. Changing clothing is more important in the cooler months, as clothing will quickly dry in the heat of summer. Educators will notify families of a change of clothing through a note in your child's note pocket.
- Develop visual schedules to assist children in managing their own self organisation and packing away of their belongings, throughout the day, as well as a focus as a part of the packing up routine.
- Provide "spare clothing" if needed for children to change into if a child is without spare clothes
- We will utilise local and natural environments in and nearby the Golden Grove area.