



QA6 Collaborative relationships with Families & Community

Relationships are at the heart of our profession and our work everyday. Quality Area 6 of the National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating System is one of 7 quality areas that all approved early childhood education and care services need to address to meet the quality standard sent down by the regulatory body. Quality area 6 has 8 indicators that focus on supportive relationships with families, collaborative partnerships and community engagement. It is our role as leaders and educators to ensure that we are incorporating this thinking into every part of our program delivery. A new addition to the assessment and rating system that was introduced in February this year are 3 themes that also need to be evident across all of the 7 quality areas. These themes are:

Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection.

Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

There are lots of different ways that different services address each of the quality areas, but the quality area that really is the most contextual to each service is Quality Area 6. How we work with families and the community is dependant on the families and community that we live in and work with. Our first port of call when addressing the relationships we develop with families is during enrolment. During this process of enrolment and orientation we aim to get to know each family and their needs individually. The demographic of a service is also a major contributor to what the service program should look like. Our aim is to reflect the families social and cultural influences within the learning program as this connects directly to our philosophy and theoretical underpinnings of recognising the diversity of people's beliefs, culture, values and abilities within our community.

Statistically our service's family demographic is one of young working families living mainly in the Newcastle area. Considering this demographic is important in

our planning in supporting families to access care and education and combining work and family life at the same time. Involvement of families and the community in the service's operations and decision making should also be reflective of the context of our service. As we are a privately operated service we do not have a traditional parent run committee or board but do however want to have input from and conversations with families on topics of interest.

In considering this quality area and our pursuit of ongoing quality improvement we would like to research with families the following questions:

What topics or issues are you most interested in having input on with the service?

In what ways would you like to be more involved in the service?

It is important to note that early childhood education and child services are not primary schools. We do not wish to simply follow a yearly schedule of calendar inspired events to tokenistically engage families in. We follow the inter-

ests and learning of the children and believe strongly that 13 years of formal and structured syllabus based education is more than enough for any human.

However we do have several events that already exist throughout our year for you to reflect on when answering these questions. These are our:

Annual Family Day in May

Family End of Year Celebration at the centre (usually end of November)

Preschool Graduation Ceremony and Afternoon Tea.

We also have unplanned events and excursions throughout the year that we ask for families to attend if available as they emerge from the children's learning projects.

But what else could we do that is meaningful for our families, children and team?

If you could take the time to please respond by email to our two research questions on this quality area it would be most appreciated.

Thanks in collaboration!

2019 Enrolments Information...

Believe it or not the process of organising places for the new year begins now! We emailed out forms to families to amplify what days they would like for 2019 on Monday 20 August. Families that have been on our internal waiting list for days will be offered any vacancies first and then we will do our best to meet all families needs as we become aware of them. As has been the case for the last 13.5 years the centre is full and has

many siblings waiting for positions and even more families on our very long waiting list. As always our system of priority is for families that already attend, their siblings and then our waiting list. We also need to be conscious of the government's priority of access rules which are firstly for children at risk then children of working or studying families.

We work on a first in, first served basis for those wanting to change days

for next year. After 31 October, the days are set for the coming year and can only be changed after 2 weeks notice is given when we re-open. Cancellation of care and our usual 2 weeks notice also does not apply after 31 October 2017. This means all families are responsible for their position until we return in January, when our notice period begins again.



Farewell to Mykala...last day Friday 17 August, 2018

A sad day for our team in August. We farewelled Mykala after almost a year with us at Elder St. We wish her well on her travels and relocation to northern NSW.

NEW TEAM ARRANGEMENTS...

We are in a very lucky position to have many qualified and skilled teachers in our team. This allows us to make adjustments to staffing arrangements with as little impact on continuity of care as possible. As you will now be aware from our communication Lauren is the Team Leader in the Joeys Room now with the support of Bec as the other teacher in the room. They have implemented a wonderful, solid and consistent routine and program of learning opportunities for the children and are thankful for the support of the rest of our team and the families of the service during this transition.

DATES & DETAILS FOR YOUR CALENDAR!!!

October....

w/s 1 October—w/s 5 December—School Preparation Program—details will be emailed.

Tuesday 31..... Final day to advise of changes to requested enrolled days for 2019.

November....

School Photos DATE TBA (8am till 11.30am)— we have not secured a booking for photos yet this year but are waiting to hear back from a company.

Friday 30th— 4pm—6pm at the Centre - Family End of Year Celebration—a wonderful, crazy and busy afternoon with a sausage sizzle, face painting, JD's magic show, Santa drops in to share a special treat with the children, chatting and hopefully not being rained on! An email reminder about this event will be sent out a little closer to the date.

December.....

Thursday 6th—4pm Preschool Graduation Ceremony & Afternoon Tea—this is a special event for the children and families of the preschool room who are heading off to school in 2018. Families of graduates will receive invitations. We ask that children who do not attend on a Thursday, arrive at the centre by 3.45pm to prepare for their presentation.

Friday 21st at 6pm—Centre closes for 2 weeks—reopens on Tuesday, 8th January 2019

NURSERY POSSUMS....

We have almost made it through the sniffles and rashes season!! Hooray for building up our immune system! (silver linings everyone!!) News to report on learning is that the children's language development has become very evident since our last news. We are hearing children using words in sentences and also responding to questions posed with strong verbal interaction. This is also evident in the children's play as we hear friends using conversation in play and games and expressive and receptive language being used effectively with one another. Our new language skills have enhanced our relationship and friendship building too. The children have developed such beautiful friendships over the last two months and they are clearly enjoying each other's company and learning about each other in a social context. This month we have been working on building knowledge on social skills as many parents have asked for support in this area. We support the children to see another person's perspective, to begin to understand empathy and regulate our ability to wait and take turns. Play spaces such as the jungle area outside and the construction area inside have helped support this learning. Our cultural focus has been on learning a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander songs. The children are able to remember the words and actions which include our morning Acknowledgement to Country, Taba Naba, Inanay Gupuwana and Heads and Shoulders in Awabakal language. To balance out all the action and focus on holistic wellbeing we have some wonderful relaxation experiences such as story reading to calm our bodies and slow down before bed, the children have really enjoyed this intentional teaching time to together. Thanks for reading...Paula, Roxi, Bec, Keely and Bree



JOEYS.... We warmly welcome Matthew and Rae to the Elder St Community and the Joeys room! Since our last news the Joeys have been learning new circle games that foster pro-social skills and provide opportunities for the children to follow instructions, take turns, work together and generally hone those skills of self regulation that help us to control our bodies. We understand that social and emotional skills need to be explicitly taught and in the process we need to also ensure our self esteem and sense of who we are is also nurtured. It's tricky learning to be me in a bigger world of other me's! The games have been really popular with the group and whilst playing and learning the children have also been building and strengthening friendships and social relationships. We may not all be best friends and that's ok, but we are learning that everyone deserves a place and a space in the world as we play! Our All About Me project has been slowing down and becoming more "up close" as the children have been working in the Atelier space examining their eyes. This came about as the educators discussed how the children have looked outward to what influences their identity ie, family, friends etc and how we would become more introspective and detailed about what makes up our intricate selves. We have been talking with the children about what they see and reflecting on these discussions and their drawings of their eyes. We have some beautifully documented eye portraits in the atelier that the children would love to share with you. We are also planning to use other art mediums to build a picture of who we are; next month starting with clay work and moving from our eyes to our faces. We are sure the children will share with us more beautiful insights about their understanding of themselves with this work. A reminder to please make sure you label all the children's belongings and also please when you are in next to check out the basket of socks that have accumulated on the Joeys shelf. We are working with the children to put socks inside shoes, but they sometimes go a wandering. Thanks for reading and sharing in our learning Lauren, Bec, Lucy and Keely.



PRESCHOOL WALLABIES.... The cycle of learning just keeps on turning and turning in the Preschool Wallaby room. Combining the children's individual learning with the group learning goals makes for a very busy and productive program for the children. We will start with catching you all up on our two units of learning that began in January this year; sustainability and art and embedding Indigenous culture in our learning. There have been small and individual learning that has come from these units and also group knowledge building too. This is the beauty of inquiry based learning with children, there is so much to be gained both individually and also within a community of learners. One of the most significant goals for our Indigenous culture goal was to create our own Acknowledgement to Country. Through many discussions, small and large focus groups, drawing, researching, stories, visits by Indigenous community teachers and general exposure and revisiting, the group of learners have embedded some distinct concepts that they were willing to acknowledge as coming from Indigenous culture. The words that came from our brainstorming session to form our Acknowledgment were very much a mix of the learning that was also coming from our sustainability project. We found this really quite wonderful as we know that Indigenous people are highly sustainable in their traditional practices and connection to the land. The children acknowledged their gratitude to the Awabakal people for helping them to connect to the skies, ocean and trees (through dreaming stories, songs and art) and also for helping them to understand the land of Newcastle in a different way. We discussed the meaning of an acknowledgment as a way of saying thank you which the children very much connected with and were able to share many aspects of gratitude. We had some very detailed responses like "thank you for the ochre" after we learnt all about making ochre from the earth; also "thank you for sharing the planet" and then some further knowledge shared "they were the first people", and a general discussion around the fact that acknowledging them was important because they shared the land and the planet with us. The future of reconciliation is in good hands with these kids! Our sustainability project has reached a critical point after a great deal of deliberation and finding ways to elicit from the children what they really wanted their sculpture to say. The resounding message and image was to include a garbage truck, garbage boat and a recycle station with the recycle symbol. For the month of August we have been working on removing the little white paper discs from the inside of the lids—what a job! Engaging with our families has also been fantastic as we have had visits from Will's mum and grandparents who taught us to make wonderful dumplings and also a visit from Alice's mum Renata who explained to us the meaning and use of some Portuguese words. This has supported our learning goal of experiencing and understanding other cultures of families in our community. We have also been exploring literacy in a variety of contexts; print, rhyming words, writing and expressive language. We have been learning about empathy and respect and in particular how words make others feel and to recognise, reflect and respect how others are feeling and that being distressed, scared or uncomfortable may take time to resolve and to support each other in the process of times of need. We are just about ready to begin printing some t-shirts from our lino printing block designs. This work began in NAIDOC week when the group learnt about Torres Strait Islander art works of block printing. We have a few varieties of designs that should be coming your way soon—it's very exciting!! Thanks for reading Kate, Carley, Donna, Jena & Bree.



Staff updates...annual /professional leave....

Donna—Aug 30-Sept 7

Kim—Oct 22-31

Jena—Sept 11-Sept 14

Carley—Nov 5-6

Mel—ECA Conference—17-21 Sept Lucy—Dec 17-21

Carley— Sept 27-28

Paula— Oct 1-9 Mel— Oct 8-12

Carley—Oct 9 -19



Happy Birthdays to....

For July ...Kenzie, Theo, Lawson, Zayman, Oxley, Sullivan, Ava,

For August.... Addison, Alex, Ellie, Isabella, Evelyn R and Ethan

We hope everyone has enjoyed some wonderful celebrations together !

TEAM DEVELOPMENT DAY - MONDAY 7 JANUARY 2019

We are planning a Team Development day on our usual first day of operation in the new year. The objective of this day is for the whole team to work together to workshop our Quality Improvement Plan and subsequent evidence documents for our next Assessment and Rating visit. As our service has not been assessed since 2013 we know that we will be being assessed next year. The last time we closed the service for a team development day was in 2012. We understand this may cause some inconvenience for families but we ask for your support in us being able to continue to provide quality service delivery and understand that this involves our team being able to collaborate together to prepare for these important events. Families will not be charged for this day when the service is closed. Thank you.

OUR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

*Thank you for connecting us to the skies, oceans and trees,
Thank you for sharing your knowledge about our land from
you to me,*

We thank and acknowledge the Awabakal people, Australia's first and traditional custodians of the land on which we play and learn,

We pay respects to their Elders past and present.

~ The Preschool Wallaby children and teachers

