

West Morley Primary School

Early Years Education Philosophy

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The Child

At West Morley Primary School we view children as enthusiastic and curious beings. They are strong, competent and unique, and need to be valued as individuals who bring with them their heritage, interests and early life experiences.

We believe young children are successful, capable and resourceful learners who are active contributors to their own learning. They demonstrate independence and responsibility when provided with opportunities to explore, investigate, engage in conversations and use a wide range of tools and materials.

We acknowledge that children are social beings who learn from each other and are capable of respecting other's ways of learning. They listen to others, share knowledge, include other people's ideas and express their knowledge, understandings and skills in different ways when educators are active participants in their learning.

Children are creative and independent thinkers, great problem solvers and communicators who learn and grow through play. We believe when children play they use imagination and imitation which requires complex cognitive or intellectual processes. The development of cognitive skills, including dispositions for learning such as curiosity and persistence, memory and thinking skills increase and therefore students are able to flourish.

“Play fosters creativity of thought, imagination, strategies for problem solving and the development of divergent thinking ability.” (Lester and Russell, 2008, P.34)

We endeavour to be respectful of each child's right to experience the wonder and joy of being a young child and strive to ensure this vision remains visible in all we do and communicate.

Pedagogy

Educators at West Morley Primary School recognise that research, reflections, documentation and learning must shape our pedagogy. We draw on Area 1 of the National Quality Framework to guide us in upholding high-quality early childhood pedagogy.

Collectively, we believe that high-quality pedagogy is based on respect for children's agency and acknowledgement of their potential. It involves observing, sharing, listening, connecting and learning together through the provision of a holistic approach for the purpose of educating the whole child. It should aim to provoke a desire of knowledge and a life-long love of learning for children by establishing an inclusive approach to support a sense of belonging, positive self-esteem and success. Our pedagogy should inspire creativity, foster resilience and self-regulation, support the achievement of educational outcomes, as well as nurture a child's identity and well-being.

It is essential that our programs are collaborative: being social and co-constructed. Children and educators work together to identify ways of learning and understanding through sustained, shared thinking and action. Flexible learning programs are also necessary so that they are responsive to the evolving nature of the early childhood environment and provide for different learning styles, yet include thoughtful planning and resources.

At West Morley Primary we recognise play that is carefully considered helps children to think, to raise their understanding and to improve their language competence. Together, we understand through play that is both structured and unstructured, children develop a strong sense of identity. They become confident and involved learners,

are connected with and contribute to their world. They develop a strong sense of well-being and are effective communicators as identified in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

“Play needs to be interest based, engaging, hands on and creative.”

“It should be meaningful, motivating, collaborative as well as independent, fun and purposeful.”

“Play is essential to the development of the whole child.”

Adult involvement must also be purposeful and deliberate, ensuring that play is supported with a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. Learning tasks should be scaffolded according to student abilities including such actions as modelling, encouraging, questioning, extending, providing feedback and support. Learning should also reflect student needs and target key areas for personal and academic development.

A quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is in place and regularly reviewed to ensure our educators continue to meet the needs of our students. Professional development is also available for all staff members to ensure we remain knowledgeable and highly skilled in current Early Childhood initiatives and best practice.

The Environment

At West Morley Primary School, our Early Childhood Educators aim to create a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to contribute to our program. Our indoor and outdoor environments encourage and provide children with open-ended opportunities to observe, explore, make choices and problem solve through an integrated approach.

We pride ourselves on providing a safe, caring and positive environment that is developmentally appropriate for children to learn and make sense of their world. We aim to provide flexible routines and opportunities, both outdoor and indoor which supports play, spontaneity, a connection to nature and a love of learning.

It is important that our environments are inclusive, safe and dynamic. This includes the provision of positive behaviour management strategies where conflict resolution and social problem solving skills are actively taught from an early age and in-situ. This enables our students to develop risk taking skills, self-confidence, resiliency and a positive self-esteem.

Collaboration and Partnerships with Staff

We believe in the importance of creating an environment of collegiality where personal and professional contributions are valued, communication is positive and constructive, and confidentiality is upheld.

As an Early Childhood team, we work together in meaningful and relevant ways, using communication that is open and honest. Through our collaboration we commit to regular Early Childhood meetings to share resources, offer support to each other and share professional knowledge. Through regular collaboration we:

- Bring together an extensive knowledge of how children learn.
- Are able to work together to motivate children.

- Create a culture of reflective practice aimed at continual improvement.
- Offer opportunities for staff to share in decision making and to obtain feedback.
- Constructively challenge each other's thinking and practice to uphold the rights of our children.
- Mentor one another; and
- Provide ongoing professional development for staff.

In order to actively develop the collegiality of the early childhood professional learning community, all Educators participate in meetings and discussions, engage in reflective practice, visit other classrooms and communicate with each other about relevant issues.

Relationships

At West Morley Primary School we recognise the importance of employing educators who are committed to working in the best interests of children and families and that each member brings fundamental personal qualities to the school environment such as empathy, respect, warmth and a passion for working with children.

As educators, we believe in the capacity of children to succeed and hold high expectations for their achievement in learning. We encourage children to reach their potential in accordance with their individual ability and teach them to strive for their best by being responsive to each child's needs, strengths and their interests.

All staff from Kindergarten to Year 2 play the valuable role of coach, mentor and role model. We are to guide children's learning on a daily basis. We expect that Educators, inclusive of Education Assistants, are actively involved in interacting with individuals and groups of children – at times entering their play, intentionally teaching, observing and planning for future learning.

As children are social beings and learn through developing positive relationships. Sustained playful opportunities are in place as we acknowledge that children's emotional competence and empathy are developed through social interactions. Through children collaborating and cooperating in play experiences, children learn how to negotiate and problem-solve their personal dilemmas and we aim to support behaviour development sensitively and in a caring manner with a focus on well-being and learning.

We believe in working closely with parents in a reciprocal relationship. Trust, respect and collaboration form the basis of strong partnerships between families and educators and all staff are expected to uphold professional, welcoming and respectful relationships with families and children. Additionally, staff need to be sensitive in providing empathy and being responsive to family needs when required.

We require Educators to be culturally competent. Families are supported to understand the pedagogy of early childhood and student development through:

- Regular communication
- Parent meetings
- Conversations with teachers
- Participation in classrooms
- Participation in excursions and special events.

Assessment

Through careful observations and assessment of children’s skills and abilities, dispositions, background knowledge and culture, children are supported in becoming confident and involved life-long learners. At West Morley Primary School, we endeavour to use assessment to inform our practice for the purpose of developing student knowledge, curiosity and creativity.

We recognise the importance for educators to make learning visible for students and parents through regular, on-going, reflective pedagogical documentation that supports and improves learning. By engaging in a reflective cycle of planning, teaching, observing, monitoring, assessing and differentiating, educators are able to meet the needs of students.

Regular assessment should be evident in our planning documents which detail planning for child initiated, child directed and adult scaffold play in a variety of indoor and outdoor learning centres and should also demonstrate the inclusion of student interests, needs and abilities.

Curriculum

Age	Birth	1	2	3	4 Kindergarten	Pre-Primary	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3 and Beyond
Mandated Curriculum Documents	Early Years Learning Framework (2009) Early childhood pedagogy and five broad outcomes.					Australian Curriculum general capabilities, cross-curriculum priorities, learning area content and standards.			
						Western Australian Curriculum for Kindergarten to Year 12			
	National Quality Framework								

Table 1: Mandated Curriculum Documents (2018)

West Morley utilises the mandated curriculum documents to implement an effective and balanced daily teaching program for all our students. Working with the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), The Kindergarten Guidelines, The Australian Curriculum, The Western Australian Curriculum and the National Quality Standard, and responding to evidenced-based research and practice, educators continue to review this philosophy and their practice to ensure that our School Philosophy remains a viable document guiding our practice and supporting the Early Learning Team.

The EYLF has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and at West Morley we acknowledge that children have a right to play under the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF 1989). We also understand that there is a need for careful and considered use of explicit teaching to complement our play-based approach. Intentional teaching, guided play and child initiated play are not mutually exclusive, but complementary teaching approaches and all three offer significant teaching and learning opportunities. All approaches are thoughtfully implemented by teachers to ensure we maximise the outcome of every child-initiated and teacher guided learning opportunity. As children move through the years, the length of time allocated to teacher directed playful learning increases while still offering each child the opportunity for child initiated and child directed play for extended periods throughout the day.

Literacy and numeracy concepts are embedded into meaningful (to the child) tasks. Teachers recognise the importance of the active promotion of learning through the provision of worthwhile and challenging experiences with clear lesson objectives in line with the whole school iSTAR approach. We all hold high expectations for our students, encouraging, supporting and challenging children's learning at a developmentally appropriate level.