Yarram Early Learning

Curriculum Development Policy

**Best Practice – Quality Area 1**

**PURPOSE**

This policy provides guidelines to ensure that the educational program (curriculum) and practice at Yarram Early Learning is:

* based on an approved learning framework
* underpinned by critical reflection and careful planning
* stimulating, engaging and enhances children’s learning and development.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

1. **VALUES**

Yarram Early Learning is committed to:

* providing an educational program that is based on reflective practice, critical analysis and planning
* supporting each child to achieve learning outcomes consistent with the national *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*)
* providing an educational program where children can learn through play and are supported to make decisions, problem-solve and build relationships with others
* creating an environment that supports, reflects and promotes equitable and inclusive behaviours and practices
* involving families in the development and review of educational program and practice.

**2. SCOPE**

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Yarram Early Learning.

1. **BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION**

**Background**

Yarram Early Learning delivers a curriculum that is underpinned by the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (National Law) that is based on an approved learning framework. In Victoria, approved learning frameworks for the early childhood sector are the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) *(Belonging, Being & Becoming)* (refer to *Sources*) and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (VEYLDF) (refer to *Sources*). These documents contain practices and principles that encourage reflection and provide staff with a thorough understanding of the pedagogy of early childhood curriculum in a contemporary context.

The aim of the EYLF and the VEYLDF is to provide a guide for teachers in their work with young children. The aim is for all Young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens (Belonging, Being and Becoming, 2009).

Both frameworks are divided into five outcomes for learning:

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of Identity

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world.

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Outcome 5: Children are effective Communicators.

Under National Regulations, Yarram Early Learning has Director to lead the development and implementation of the curriculum at Yarram Early Learning (Regulation 118). The Director has advanced qualifications and experience, as well as a thorough understanding of the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, enabling them to guide other staff in planning and reflection, and to mentor colleagues in implementation practices (*Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations*, p85 – refer to *Sources*).

**Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)**

ACECQA guides the implementation of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care nationally and ensures consistency in delivery. The *National Quality Standard (NQS)* is a key aspect of the *National Quality Framework (NQF)* sets a national benchmark for early childhood education. The National Quality Standard is linked to national learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth. It outlines practices that support and promote children’s learning. The NQS consists of seven quality areas, each containing standards and elements, that children's education and care services are assessed and rated against. Quality Area 1 - Educational Program and Practice focuses on “enhancing children’s learning and development through the:

* pedagogical practices of teachers and co-ordinators
* development of programs that promote children’s learning across five learning outcomes” (*Guide to the National Quality Standard*, p20 – refer to *Sources*).

Yarram Early Learning teachers employ the ELF and the VEYLDF to guide the development of the teaching and the learning programs. Program planning integrates the five Learning Outcomes that are designed to respond to the complex and integrated learning of young children with ‘Project –Based Learning’ underpinning the learning process. Children work collaboratively to gather and investigate information on a chosen topic with the emphasis placed on real life issues or problems that are worthy of investigation. Children are involved in design, problem solving, decision-making and wide ranging investigative activities along with action based learning within the Centre and wider community.

**Philosophy**

The philosophy of the Yarram Early Learning is based on an image of the child as creative, capable and inquisitive. To realize the potential of all children, Yarram Early Learning provides a nurturing, secure and stimulating learning environment, one that promotes happiness and a desire to learn. The primary aim is for children to increase their understandings of the world in which they live through development of broadly based knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable them to take the prerequisite steps in preparation for lifelong learning. Highly qualified teachers design, implement and evaluate innovative and challenging programs that reflect the most contemporary early childhood theory and research and Australian Government curriculum guidelines including the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Victorian Early Years learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

Within the philosophy the arts play a central role in helping children to be involved in independent decision-making, expressive and aesthetic communication and collaborative learning. Sensory rich learning environments are established to stimulate curiosity and a sense of wonder. Also the principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are linked to arts-based learning, with teachers prioritizing learning ‘in, about and for the environment’; the aim being to connect children to the natural world and to their responsibility for maintaining the health and beauty of their kindergarten, local community and in turn the planet.

One of the central philosophical beliefs that underpin the program is that the child is intrinsically motivated to explore and discover the world by actively employing a complex network of abilities, interests and symbolic languages. Through involvement in the visual arts, dance, dramatization, modeling, singing and making music, children are given the opportunity to experience learning from multiple perspectives. Teachers employ project based learning to support creative thinking and problem solving with many opportunities provided for in-depth inquiry into areas of study that are initiated either by the children, the families, by the teachers or through involvement with the wider community.

Teachers value the learning spaces for their capacity to organize, to promote choices and deep involvement and to support the development of respectful relationships between individuals and materials. Learning experiences, routines and resources are presented in such a way so as to stimulate sensory perception, encourage creative thinking and enhance opportunities for collaborative learning. Materials from the built and natural world are carefully selected for their capacity to excite open-ended play; mirrors, stones, colored glass, precious objects are provided to stimulate sensory perception and imaginative thinking.

Yarram Early Learning’s philosophy recognizes that children mature at different rates and have preferred styles of learning. It also emphasizes the importance of holistic learning with special attention paid to the establishment of an emotionally secure foundation to support each child’s developing sense of self and empathy for others. Relationships between children and children, children and teachers and teachers and families are nurtured, with the aim being to establish a community of learners who embark on a mutually beneficial learning journey. Teachers employ a range of assessment tools to ensure that each child’s growth and development is systematically monitored over the course of a year.

Yarram Early Learning provides a dynamic teaching and learning environment, one that gives each child a chance to play, discover and to grow in an atmosphere of care and mutual respect; children, regardless of race, gender, age, ability, social status or family structure are able to participate in all aspects of a challenging and unique educational program.

Please Note: Yarram Early Learning Philosophy is a shared statement that evolves according to the beliefs and values that are collectively held by Yarram Early Learning staff and families. On an annual basis ELC staff and parents are given the opportunity to review the statement and changes made if deemed appropriate.

**The Learning Environment**

Learning takes place in environments that are designed to stimulate sensory exploration and thinking and problem solving. Staff devote time to the design and presentation of aesthetically pleasing and intellectually challenging environments that link both the indoor and outdoor spaces and curriculum content. Special objects, collections and materials form a basis to enhance environmental sensibilities of each child and excite and inspire children’s imaginative explorations.

The outdoor learning environment is especially designed to support the development of gross motor skills and knowledge about the environment. Opportunities to climb, swing, run, jump, dig and balance are provided through climbing and perceptual motor equipment and the sandpit and stone area are provided for sensory play. Staff ensure that the health and safety of children is not compromised when using the equipment and individual skill abilities are catered for. Sustainable practices such as composting, maintaining the garden and recycling of water are outdoor activities that support education for sustainable development. The learning environment is extended outside of Yarram Early Learning grounds, when children are taken on regular outings into the local community.

Yarram Early Learning is committed to inclusive practice that acknowledges the diversity of cultural needs. Parents are requested to register with teaching staff each year their interest in any particular celebratory/special events they would like included in the program. Parents are also encouraged to share their cultural heritage and family stories in the kindergarten.

**Program Dates**

The Centre is open for 48 weeks each year. Of these weeks, a long day kindergarten program will operate for 42 weeks in conjunction with standard Victorian school term dates and a Holiday Program operates for the remaining weeks.

**Authorisation**

This policy was adopted by the Yarram Early Learning Incorporated in June 2015

**Review date:** October 2016