

Environmental Policy.

We believe that what children experience and learn, inevitably shapes their future, values and attitudes. It is therefore crucial that we as educators support children's awareness and understanding of environmental issues. Caring for our environment and being environmentally friendly in our practices in children's service's, will ensure our children can live in a safe and clean world and will be properly educated on how to be responsible and thoughtful in our natural environment.

We will provide activities and discussion times where children can learn both 'hands on' and visually about ways to care for our environment. It is important to provide children with opportunities to see, hear, touch, taste and smell the elements of their natural environment to help them become more aware of it.

Children are very self-oriented. They will find great interest in their immediate environment. Therefore, parks, ponds, and home back yards can be the focus of their study for frogs, reptiles and whole ecosystems. The learning environment will provide for the manipulation of objects to help the children acquire knowledge about living and non-living things in their environment. The provision of magnifying glasses, simple cameras/photos and tape recorders will expand environmental observations.

Staff will provide opportunities to handle objects from their environment so as to help children build simple relationships with their environment and provide a basis for discriminating between objects. Simple classification activities can help children see order in their immediate environment.

Children also learn from concrete experiences. Therefore the staff will organise nature walks and bus trips to nature reserves ie Thirlmere Lakes, Tharawal Aboriginal education centre (in Thirlmere) Wirrimbirra wildlife sanctuary (in Bargo) Mount Annan Botanical Gardens.

Visits to our centre by organizations such as wires, and rangers, are valuable also as they have trained educators to talk to children about the environment.

Staff will hang up posters, illustrations, photographs etc this will help develop children's curiosity about environmental issues. Environmental learning experiences should be brief and the strategies used should be interesting, varied and age appropriate.

When planning the outdoor area, staff will create a stimulating natural environment to enhance children's love and respect of nature and the

environment. Staff will read stories to children that arouse and extend interest in environmental issues.

Staff and children will collect their food scraps for composting for our vegetable/herb garden. The children will be involved in a 'helper's roster', where they will tend to the vegetable garden - watering and weeding it. The children also have a worm farm that they share responsibilities in. The parent's receipts are printed on recycled paper. Our centre always tries to purchase products, which have the recycle symbol on the packaging, or products, which indicate they do not harm our waterways. The children are involved in discussions on these practices and also involved in the decision making process. Children consider ways that we can save water. Our plan is to have a rainwater tank installed to use for the vegetable garden.

We believe that Early Childhood is a critical time for developing attitudes and values. It is important, therefore to provide positive and challenging experiences. The ability to become critical thinkers, when combined with a love of nature and concern for the environment will help children develop a sense of responsibility to care for the world around them.

References

What is environmental education?

Marilyn Fleer (University of Canberra)

Why teach environment issues in early childhood?

Lyn Bower (University of Southern Qld)

Environmental Policies Paper written by Louise Tigchelour in the 'every child magazine' Vol 4, Summer.