

Program and Learning

'The preschool years, the kindergarten years, (the years before formal schooling) are the most important of all in the education of the child. It is absolutely essential that before we begin to think, before we so much as begin to set our thinking in motion, we experience the condition of wonder.' **Rudolf Steiner**

Finger Prints educators aim to nurture the innocence of the small child by valuing the importance of fantasy and imaginative free play and experiences within the program.

Learning outcomes are based upon the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) as developed and endorsed in July 2009. The Council of Australian Governments has developed this Framework to assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. Their vision is that: *'All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the Nation'*.

Finger Prints teachers will use this Framework in partnership with families, the child's *'first and most influential educators'*, to develop learning programs responsive to children's ideas, interests, strengths and abilities, and recognise that children learn through their play.

Fundamental to the Framework is a view of children's lives as characterised by *'Belonging, Being and Becoming'*

Belonging – *Knowing where and with whom you belong. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community - it shapes who children are and who they become...*

Being – *Childhood is a time to be, to seek and make meaning of the world - it is about knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others and engaging in the joys, complexities and challenges of life...*

Becoming – *Is a reflection of the rapid changes that occur within children's identities, knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships as they learn and grow and become active participants within society...*

The Framework puts children's learning at the core and comprises three inter-related elements: Principles, Practice and Learning Outcomes...

The following are 5 principles that reflect contemporary theories concerning children's learning and Early Childhood pedagogy:

1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships (positive, nurturing interaction and emotional support)
2. Partnerships with Families (working together to achieve learning outcomes)
3. High expectations and Equity (believing in all children's capacities to succeed, regardless of diverse circumstances and abilities)
4. Respect for Diversity (valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families)
5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice (becoming co-learners with children, families and community)

The principles of Early Childhood pedagogy underpin practice. Finger Prints Educators will draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to promote children's learning by:

- Adopting holistic approaches
- Being responsive to children
- Planning and implementing learning through play
- Intentional teaching
- Creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning
- Valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and families
- Providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transition
- Assessing and monitoring children's learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes

Learning Outcomes

A learning outcome is a skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in their childhood setting, in collaboration with children and families. They are designed to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children 0 - 5yrs. Children's learning is ongoing and each child will progress towards the outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways. Learning is not always predictable and linear.

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

'Education is the Lighting of a Fire....

Not the filling of a Pail'Dr Rudolf Steiner

The program at Finger Prints is designed to recognise the consciousness of a young child aged 3-5 years/school age, with regard to Rudolf Steiner's overview of human development.

It is a home-like situation, and significantly play based, where children are surrounded with beauty, truth and goodness in every activity of their day. The children are supported by a system of rhythms: daily, weekly, seasonal and celebratory; that help the children to move through their day and week in a safe and predictable environment that is so necessary for the healthy development of boundaries and physical skills.

Each season, the teacher provides a selection of activities that mirror the turning of the seasonal calendar and help children find meaning in the world. Each week, there is a rotation of morning activities, supported by a teacher or assistant, that provide the children with opportunities for cooking, eating, craft, language development and social skills. These experiences are planned to engage the 'will' of the child and to provide a platform for academic learning.

The day is also filled with shared mealtimes, creative imaginative indoor and outdoor free play time, book selection, transition activities, traditional games, morning circle, verses, household tasks and rest time. All these activities offer opportunities for social development, personal empowerment, language development, pre-literacy and pre-mathematical skills, building independence, as well as a broad range of basic living skills and self management.

Morning Circle, a lengthy movement and language experience, offers a meaningful context for the full gamut of language awareness. Rhythmical verse, song and repetitive poetry stances are combined with thoughtful movement opportunities to build skills in gross and fine motor development as well as oral language capabilities and learning experiences.

A designated story time later in the day encourages ethical and moral awareness through puppetry, and feature as part of the 'whole language approach'. Children will take these impressions and retell them in play. Many stories are built around a set of traditional narratives, such as Grimm's fairytales, as well as nature, contemporary stories and cultural tomes.

Morning Circles and Story times provide many opportunities for learning experiences and learning outcomes.

The diversity in family life means that children experience '*Belonging, Being and Becoming*' in a variety of ways. They bring their diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills to their learning. Children's learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated.

Within our philosophy, and Steiner beliefs, it is recognised in our Centre that the Early Years are a time of '*doing*'. To learn about life and the environment around them, the child must be involved in physical and sensual activity, through *seeing* and *doing*. At Finger Prints the children are given many opportunities for domestic and artistic activity as well as an emphasis on creative play. Creative play is seen as one of the most important ways a child explores and learns to understand the world.

A child's world; 'Where creative play is the real work'

At Finger Prints, the educators work with the knowledge that they are to be role models worthy of imitation. The philosophy works from the understanding that the child under seven, so strongly in the *will*, does what he/she sees and not what he/she is told. Finger Prints recognises the individuality of each child and family and respects that families may come from a range of cultural, linguistic, economic and social backgrounds possessing diverse ideas, abilities and needs. The Centre highly values and acknowledges parents as the child's '*First Teachers*'. We strive to create a close bond with families and a strong connection with home-life and the wider community.

Finger Prints Children's Centre will use this Framework to provide a broad direction that facilitates children's learning. The Centre staff will use this as a guide to assist with planning, implementing and evaluating the weekly program to ultimately strive towards achieving these learning outcomes.

Steiner defined 'three golden rules' for teachers:
*'To receive the child in gratitude from the world they come from;
To educate the child with love;
& To lead the child into the true freedom which belongs to man.'*