

Preschool Field Officer Service Newsletter Term Three 2019

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AREA LEADER UPDATE

Hello Wyndham Educators

Welcome to our Term Three Newsletter.

We acknowledge that many of you have submitted requests for PSFO Support some months ago now and are still waiting for a service visit. Please be patient during these times as we work through the waiting list and try to get the most out of the phone support that we offer by

committing the time to following up with the suggestions and strategies that are offered. If you feel that things have, or are significantly changing with a child or a group that you are working with, contact us as soon as possible – don't wait for us to contact you in the next round of support calls.

As mentioned in our last newsletter, the PSFO Team attended the International Society of Early Intervention & Early Childhood Intervention Australia Conference back in June. In this edition of the newsletter we share some of the material that we learnt from the sessions by providing a snap shot of information and links to useful websites and resources. You will be able to read about the latest research on *Photo Elicitation* and *Supporting Language and Literacy Development for Vulnerable Families*.

We have also included some information on the transition to school process with some useful links.

If you are having a break over the school holidays, take the time out to reflect and re-energise yourself ☺

Narelle Keleher, PSFO Area Leader



Photos from the very 1st Educators Teaching Educators Breakfast Forum delivered by the Wyndham Child & Family Services Network - hosted by the PSFO and Early Education and Care teams

The discussion topic was Indigenous Inclusive Practices



Transition to Primary School

- ❖ It is a Kindergarten funding requirement that every child transitioning to school has a TLDS (Transition Learning and Development Statement)
- ❖ The TLDS can be shared two ways – ONLINE - final copy of TLDS should be given to the family and then submitted via the Insight Assessment Platform (IAP) to the child's future school
- ❖ Educators working in non-funded kindergartens are encouraged to write a transition statement for any child in their care as they also make transition to school
- ❖ \$2.8 million will be provided over the next 4 years, to allow for the release of early childhood teachers to write the TLDS, and to support educators to work with other professionals and families when constructing the statements. For example, if kinder is funded for 66 enrolments the time release would be for around two days or 22 children enrolled = 5-6 hours release time
- ❖ ALL Victorian Government funded kindergarten providers will receive the funding whether stand alone kindergarten services, long day care or Early Years Management. Funding is calculated according to enrolment data provided through the Kindergarten Management (KIM) system in April with payments provided in June each year. Funding is dependant upon enrolment numbers at the time of April census.

Transition to School for children with additional needs

- ❖ For children with additional needs, the Transition statement includes Section 1.2. This section encompasses information about the early childhood professionals supporting the child and reports or assessments that have been done to support inclusion planning. Educators should discuss the importance of sharing this information with the family, to the school of choice and how this will further support the inclusion of their child.
- ❖ If a child is spending substantial periods of time with an early intervention program or support worker, a discussion should be held with the family and people involved to determine who would be best to manage the transition statement.
- ❖ To support families to understand the significance and intention of the statements, Family Transition to School Factsheets are available (including Translations).
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/family.aspx>
- ❖ **Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder** – a template is available to share relevant and useful information prior to a child commencing school please refer to:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/transsupport.aspx>
- ❖ **Hearing Impaired:** Victorian Deaf Education has created a kit for educators and families to support transition for children with any level of hearing loss
<https://www.deafeducation.vic.edu.au/resources/school-transition/transition-to-primary-school>

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Transition to Primary School Contd.....

Program Support Group (PSG)

- ❖ The PSG brings key people together to support the planning around the inclusion of children with additional needs prior to their transition to school. Meetings are held in conjunction with the parents, wellbeing coordinator, Prep Coordinator or Principal or Assistant Principal to discuss support needs required as well as children's interests, abilities and any other relevant information such as recent assessments, or documentation around diagnoses or strategies provided by therapists involved.
- ❖ This is an essential opportunity for educators to be involved in to support the parents in ensuring children's needs are met and possible funding support being initiated prior to children commencing in the following year.

Transition support for children and families at risk of experiencing vulnerability

- ❖ As we know, children and families experiencing vulnerability will tend to have more complex needs in transitions within the early years and this will vary according to their situation. For successful transitions to occur, it is imperative as educators that we build respectful relationships with families and other professionals involved. Obviously, some relationship building will require more effort and time than others.
- ❖ It is important once you have learnt more about what is occurring holistically for the child/ren, to discuss this with your Team to aid in understanding behaviours exhibited and possible angst of families you are working with in this situation.
- ❖ Schools have a Principal transition person to support each child and family in this situation and once again, the support of the Early Childhood Educator is crucial in assisting families with the transition process or support for children with additional needs.

Please don't forget the upcoming Transition Swap Afternoon to be held on: FRIDAY 1st November 2019 at Encore Events Centre, Derrimut Road Hoppers Crossing 2-4pm

Also don't forget the Kindergarten Inclusion Support (KIS) Information night: WEDNESDAY 18th September 2019 at Civic Centre, 45 Princes Highway, Werribee – 5.30pm-7.30pm

Supporting Language & Literacy Development of Children from Vulnerable Families

Fostering a child's language and literacy skills, especially in the first three years, is of paramount importance. They are the foundation of all learning for young children. Language and literacy is associated with long term outcomes such as reading ability, high school graduation rates, income and healthcare outcomes (*Michnick, Golinkoff et al., 2018*). Research tells us that there is a strong connection between children's earliest experiences with books, stories, songs and games to their language and literacy ability. (*Ambrosy & Webster, 2018*).

In 1995, Psychologists Hart & Risley released the '30 million-word gap' – a study suggesting that children from low socio-economic families hear far less spoken language before their first day of school than their peers from higher socio-economic backgrounds, setting in motion dramatic differences in vocabulary attainment and overall academic achievement (*Pondiscio, 2019*). It was recorded that children who were economically disadvantaged had 500 words in their vocabulary, compared with their peers who had 1100 words in theirs by 4 years of age.

Further research in this area has identified that collaborative work between early educators and families enhances literacy development in children from vulnerable families and helps to close the gap (*Ambrosy & Webster, 2018*). Educators have a huge influence in this space. Not just teaching children, but also teaching families how to support their children to learn language and literacy.

With all the demands placed upon early educators, how is such a feat even possible?

It could start by:

- ❖ Directing families to website <https://tmwcenter.uchicago.edu/parents/>
- ❖ Show families how to turn everyday routines into language building opportunities, to make set times for devices to be put away and to just chat (*The Hanen Centre website, 2019*).
- ❖ Help families to learn the 3 T's – *Tune In, Talk More, Take Turns*
<https://tmwcenter.uchicago.edu/parents/>
- ❖ Support families to understand that taking turns increases the number and length of conversations.
- ❖ Helping families to understand that parents are the child's most important language teacher and that children learn to talk, read and write through social literacy experiences.
- ❖ Teach families that they can make an enormous difference by keeping conversations going, by asking questions, by making comments and by inviting children to think and share their ideas.
- ❖ Send home suggested conversation starters based on children's interests and classroom projects. Include discussion questions in family literacy packs.
- ❖ Post videos of conversations between teachers and children on social media platforms (*Colker, 2014*).
- ❖ Send home Hanen parent tip sheets that share simple ways to encourage children to talk
<http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Parent-Tips.aspx>
- ❖ Teach families to narrate their children's play and experiences.
- ❖ Provide visual reminders for families to talk to their children that can be placed in the environment.

Additionally, highlight the importance of daily consistent reading with children to families and encourage them to take the time to go over new words. Communicate that books don't have to cost a lot of money. Books can be borrowed for free from libraries, purchased inexpensively from second hand shops and even catalogues can be used as a tool for extending language and literacy skills. Perhaps start a book borrowing program at Kindergarten/Childcare? Ensure families who do not know how to read, know how important it is to share books and the pictures in them. Perhaps telling stories from their own cultural background and experiences.

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Early Childhood educators are in powerful and influential positions to help turn around the astonishing statistics surrounding the lack of early literacy and language skills in young children. The outcomes are clear; poor language and literacy skills lead to poorer school performance, socio-economic wellbeing and health outcomes into adulthood. Let's ensure that the work we do in our community supports children to develop greater literacy and language skills and has significant and positive impacts for individuals, families, communities and generations to come.

References

Ambrosy & Webster, 2018 Colker, 2014 C4C
Michnick Golinkoff, Hoff, Rowe, Tamis Le-Monda & Hirsh-Pasek, 2018 Pandiscio, 2019
The Hanen Centre website, 2019 Thirty million words <https://tmwcenter.uchicago.edu/parents/>
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/feb2014/the-word-gap>
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2018/05/21/defending-the-30-million-word-gap-disadvantaged-children-dont-hear-enough-child-directed-words/>
<https://www.educationnext.org/dont-dismiss-30-million-word-gap-quite-fast/>

Photo Elicitation

Kimberly Hile

University of Illinois Alabama

Photo elicitation is an interview technique using visual images (Richard & Lahman, 2015). It is a strategy that could be considered to learn about families and promote conversations about their stories using photographs. Every family has a story to tell and photos can help us listen and understand.

Using photos of any type (printed, on a smart phone or device) during orientation days and interviews with new families could potentially enhance parent-professional collaborations by empowering families to share their stories. It could also help with the child's transition in to the kindergarten environment. Families could be asked to bring a few photos in to the service with them to share with the educators.

Photo Elicitation:

- Assists with building trust and meaningful relationships
- Gives the family an opportunity to *tell their story*
- Helps to facilitate more in-depth responses than a traditional interview as a result of using a visual aid (photo)
- Supports in depth participant responses and personal reflection
- Shifts or balances the power
- Focusing on the photos may alleviate anxiety with talking to unfamiliar professional
- Assists in memory recollection

Things to Consider:

- It's not the picture - it's the story behind the picture
- Reflect on "How will it help me understand this family?"
- Suggest the use of a smart phone or tablet
- Think about confidentiality, i.e. other people in the photo
- Maybe you could also share a photo to help build the relationship

For more information about Photo Elicitation please see the link below taking you to Kimberly Hile's paper titled *Exploring Photo Elicitation to Engage Head Start Families of Children with Disabilities*.

<https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/101531/HILE-DISSERTATION-2018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>