



Preschool Field Officer Service Newsletter Term Two 2021

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PSFO TEAM UPDATE

Hello Wyndham Educators

As we launch into Term 2, you should now be familiar with the children in your groups. You should have a good indication of where they are at developmentally and be building purposeful partnerships with families. This is a time to record observations and have crucial conversations with families about referral pathways, a second year of kindergarten or maybe even specialist school options etc

This newsletter will highlight the significance of working in purposeful partnerships with families to create the best outcomes for children. It will include information on uncovering families concerns, needs, and desires as well as a reflective tool to assist in shaping your classroom to be family centred and inclusive.

Additionally, we also share how you can build the capacity of families who may be embarking on planning meetings with NDIS and ways to help them prepare. We discuss how we can share strategies with families and build their skills to ensure consistency at home as well.

When we consider Family Partnerships, we need to contemplate:

- ❖ *Building the capacity of our families & encouraging independence*
- ❖ *Ensuring we have professional boundaries and understand where our professional boundaries lie e.g. deciding not to communicate with parents on social media*
- ❖ *If families were initially coming to meetings and now avoiding them – what may have transpired that they may no longer want your support?*
- ❖ *Families that come to us with their own experiences through their lifetimes, e.g. trauma - this can affect their rapport with us*
- ❖ *We are all different, our culture and values differ*
- ❖ *Being aware of our own “constructs” (biases/judgements/assumptions) which can be positive or negative*
- ❖ *Accessing resources can be difficult for others in their chaotic lives*
- ❖ *Is an interpreter required?*
- ❖ *Are they able to read or write in English or own mother tongue?*

It is imperative we engage with families and create trust. Engagement to build relationships can take place on many platforms including face to face, virtually and email.

We need to:

- *Build rapport – create trust and a safe space*
- *Get to know the family & their circumstances*
- *Be non-judgemental*
- *Validate the family’s feelings and identify their needs*
- *Simplify language so that it is comprehensible and not in jargon terms*
- *Identify what you can or cannot help with and seek extra support*
- *Be aware of how we conduct ourselves including our body language. Are we actively listening?*

- Be open & transparent in our communication – honest, respectful, listen without interrupting
- Conscious of our own reactions to something that may be disclosed - take a moment to think about what we will say, how we will respond & how your words are received
- Identify goals and strategies in collaboration with the family, review along the way and adopt where needed through the process
- Consider an Individual Learning Plan
- Give choice and allow them to choose – especially when suggesting referral pathways
- Be flexible
- Gain permission from families to support them

TEAM UPDATE:

- We congratulate our Team Member Lisa Blake who is going on a secondment to work in the space of the Early Years Reform Project for the remainder of 2021. Throughout this term, the remaining PSFO Team will be working additional days to cover Lisa.
- Narelle continues to work on the SRF Funding Initiation Project and as the PSFO Service Lead support.

PSFO Team



Please remember you can call the PSFO Service at any time for general advice, you do not have to have a child referred

MCH UPDATE:

At this point, Wyndham Maternal Child Health Service has postponed the Outreach MCH Programs to Early Education & Care Services.

If you have children at your centre that need a MCH assessment, please direct families to call 9742-8148 to make a booking or email

MCH.Appointments@wyndham.vic.gov.au

MCH see children from birth until 4yrs old and are available 8:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday or Saturdays twice a month.

UPCOMING PD SESSIONS

For Educators:

- Hanen Teacher Talk Part B – 4, 11 & 18 May
- Journey to Full Teaching Registration - 4 May
- Hanen Teacher Talk Part A – Encouraging Language Development – 1, 8 & 15 June
- Guiding Children’s Behaviour – hosted by Hopscotch & Harmony (Jessica Cleary) - 13 May
- Managing Uncertain Times and Staying Connected – a session for educators – hosted by Drummond Street – 7 June

For Parents:

- Funded 3 Year Old Kindergarten – What you need to know for your child – 19 May
- Managing Uncertain Times and Staying Connected – a session for parents – hosted by Drummond Street – 1 June
- Supporting your teen with managing stress – 16 June

Flyers and booking links will be circulated via the Wyndham Learning Together team when released so keep an eye out for the emails or contact wcfns@wyndham.vic.gov.au for more information.

Unsure about what Family Centred Practice Is?

This is practice principle 1 in our Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. Go to this link and click 'download' to view the Practice Principle Guide for more information:

<https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Resource/LandingPage?ObjectId=5dd960bd-ea88-4d77-8c1a-22dd13800328&SearchScope=All>

Want to learn more about the Family Partnership Model? Courses can be found at:

https://www.rch.org.au/ccch/training-dev/Family_partnership_training/

Families are the experts of their journey – we sit alongside to guide them

All families have strengths – take the time to explore and understand the supports and resources they have available to them

Continue to understand and reflect on our practice and the family’s experience along the way

How are YOU building the capacity of your families?

First and next is also a great way to encourage children in your classroom to complete tasks. **First** pack up, **then** outside.

Don't forget to teach your families common strategies like this. Families could use **First** drawing/reading, **then** Ipad/TV for example, depending on their circumstances.

Some services are building the capacity of their families using Hanen strategies!

Some families are being taught by their child's Educator how to support their child's language development. These parents are reporting success using the Hanen strategies in their home environment which is great to see!

The Hanen Teacher Talk™ Training Series teaches core strategies to help Educators create rich and stimulating language-learning environments for the young children you work with.

If you haven't heard of the Hanen strategies yet, get in touch with the PSFO team, look out for training opportunities that are being run by Wyndham City Council in the 'Wyndham Learning Together' calendar, or see this link for more information: <http://www.hanen.org/Programs/For-Educators/Teacher-Talk-Training-Series.aspx>

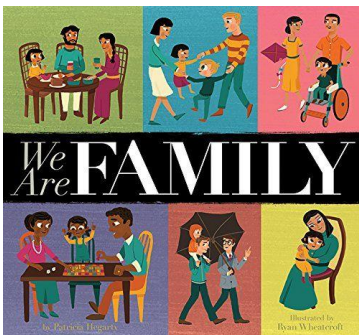
What have YOU learnt lately that you could teach your families, to support all the fantastic work you are doing with the children you teach? The more people on the child's team, who are on the same page, the better the outcomes! Isn't this what we all want?

Remember - not all families look the same... How are you recognising diversity and promoting inclusion in your service?



Until we recognise how each family is uniquely different, whether it is something that we can see or not, how can they be at the centre of our practice? Remember the iceberg analogy - we may only see the tip of the iceberg....what is going on deeper than that? What can't we see?

We will only discover what is really the story for a family, once RELATIONSHIPS are built. Without RELATIONSHIPS, there is no TRUST. Without TRUST there is no VULNERABILITY. And...without this....there is no GROWTH.



It's time to check in!

Have you relied on your enrolment form to ask families if their child has any additional needs?
Have you relied on your enrolment form to ask families if they are involved with any specialists such as Paediatricians or therapists?

It's time to consider, when the families complete the enrolment form:

- ❖ Did they know you and trust you? (when they probably did not know you yet)
- ❖ Did the family worry if they disclosed information about their child's development, they would not have the enrolment form accepted?
- ❖ Did the family have a previous experience at a service where their child was excluded, not allowed to begin or even asked to leave?
- ❖ Did your enrolment form ask if the specialist was involved in the past, or currently? Could this have been disregarded by a family, thinking that it didn't matter as 'that was last year' for example?
- ❖ Did the families know what additional needs even means? We know a lot of families year after year do not know this!

It's time to check in with your families - now that we are in term two, and relationships are being built.

Asking your families verbally, in newsletters, in posters on your door, in emails etc "Please tell me if you have anyone involved in your child's development such as a Paediatrician, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Pathologist, Physiotherapist or anyone else" is CRUCIAL! In many instances, therapists are involved and the Educator is not aware. This results in the team around the child is not working in partnership. Evidence tells us this is crucial for better outcomes.

Many times we hear "the therapists have not contacted me". Have you contacted them? (With the parent's permission of course). Some Educators send an email to the specialist to open up the lines of communication first and it could be as simple as this example:

Email for therapists - families MUST be cc'd in. Full transparency is vital.

Re: (Child's name) DOB: (Date of birth)

Dear (therapist)

I am writing to you with permission from (child's name) carer's/parents (parent's names).

(Child's name) attends my kindergarten program at (your service's name). (Child's name) has attended our program for (length of time).

I wanted to connect with you, to open our lines of communication, so that this can be of benefit for (child's name)'s developmental outcomes, and to support his/her family. It is best practice as we know to work in collaboration with one another, and to keep the family at the centre of everything we do and I'd really like for us to do this together if you are willing.

Email could be a great way for us to keep in touch throughout the year at a minimum? Could I please ask for you to give the family or email us both, any strategies or priorities that you are currently working on, so that we may be consistent with you in the way we support (child's name) at kinder?

If you would like to discuss this further, or contact me, you can do so on (number) during my planning times (times and days) or please let the family know if there is anything we can be doing to help.

If you are not doing this already, you may find this email idea helpful. Best practice that aligns with the Family Partnership Model is the acknowledgement of the Educators in a HELPER role. This is when we work in true **partnership with families**. We do not want to be seen as 'taking over' when discussing their child with their therapists/specialists. It is empowering for families when they are assisted to build relationships with their child's therapists. You can support and encourage your families to have the crucial conversations. Parents who have children with additional needs should be supported to advocate for their child. The need for advocacy will continue in to Primary School, Secondary School and beyond..

The role of the 'helper' comes to an end eventually. It is important to set families up for success for when this time comes.

For Educators working on the Zones of Regulation in their classroom -

Article 'Do we really need to "Get Back to the Green Zone?" we think not'

When thinking about our inclusive classroom, and family centred practice, how comfortable are we, in supporting and being inclusive of ALL emotions - if we truly believe no emotion is 'good' or 'bad?'

<https://files.constantcontact.com/c437c8d1301/80f676e9-6754-4ba9-b365-955ecd807ccb.pdf>

NDIS PLANNING MEETINGS

Do you have any families about to have their planning meeting with the NDIS? No? You may have a family who will undergo this process in the future...

The more a family is able to identify as being an additional need, the more funding they may be successful in obtaining through their NDIS package.

Families can benefit greatly from the Educator helping them to determine what their child's needs are.

When at the planning meeting, parents will be asked by their planner what their child's needs are. For some families, this can be a really daunting question, as they may not know any different from their own experience.

Parents do become 'used to' their own child - to the point that it becomes quite tricky to determine what these individual needs are. It can be really hard to work out how their own

child's needs are above and beyond a child the same age, who is typically developing, when they are with their child each and every day, and know no different often.

One way of Educators being able to help families to figure this out, is by using routine based interview questions. By going through the family's typical day, the family can begin to see where support is required for them and their child. For example, a family may say that their child is not able to dress themselves at an age where this is deemed appropriate. This would suggest the child may need funding to support them in the area of self-care. Some sample questions can be found at

https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/4/conversation_starters_rbi.pdf

A handy booklet to help families to prepare for their NDIS planning meeting can be requested via the following link:

<https://www.yooralla.com.au/ndis/ndis-resources/free-guide-on-the-ndis-for-your-child>



As at 24/3/21:
The Brotherhood of St Laurence currently has only a one month waiting time, between receiving an application to the planning meeting being arranged.

IPC Health has a 3 month wait on Occupational Therapy and Psychology services. Speech Pathology is working on a triage system to reduce their waiting times from 12 months to 6 months. Contact IPC Health Intake for more information.

A yellow sticky note with a red pushpin at the top right corner. The text 'Important Information' is written in black on the note.

Important Information

If you are currently accessing the Allied Health Service under the School Readiness Funding, (this does not refer to NDIS), you can also still access the PSFO Service simultaneously.

This is a great way of two services complementing one another; as the Allied Health Service is supporting from a clinical direction and the PSFO Service from an Educational setting



“BELONGING Experiencing belonging – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. Belonging acknowledges children’s interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they can become.”

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf



How are you building relationships with children and families?

Questions to reflect on with your team

- How are you responsive to children? What does this mean to you?
- How do you work in partnership with families?
- Consider the amount of information a family has about their child, do we utilise this?
- When children commence at your service, what do you do to find out child & family information to help you get to know them?
- Asking better questions get better answers! e.g. on your enrolment form does it say “Does your child have additional needs” What else could we ask families?
- How do we keep the lines of communication open?
- Do we just rely on pick up/drop off times for quick chats? Or do we make our communication intentional as well?
- How can we work in a respectful, responsive & empathetic way with families & children from diverse cultures & backgrounds?
- Are there any particular activities you do to support positive relationships with children? With families?

Your Family-Centred Inclusive Classroom

This is a tool that the PSFO team use at times with Educators to support them to reflect on their inclusive classroom. You may like to use this as an individual, or as a team to guide your reflective practice.

	Always	Sometimes	Infrequently
1. Adaptations of space and materials/equipment The physical environment is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.1 The amount of furniture and equipment in the environment is sufficient for the number of children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 The environment is organised and adapted to support every child's participation and engagement in quality experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3 The environment provides the right amount of visual stimulation and input	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Educator guidance of children's play and peer interactions Relationships with children are responsive, respectful and promote children's sense of security and belonging. Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1 Educators understand the practice of intentional teaching and can apply it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.2 Educators are actively engaged in children's play, not static supervision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.3 Children's development is supported and promoted through play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.4 Educators observe and reflect on children's play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.5 Educators understand what the play is telling them about the child's learning and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.6 Educators negotiate their position as a play partner, responding sensitively to children's play cues to maintain or extend the play flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Conflict resolution/child interactions Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.1 Educators listen genuinely to children when they approach them with complaints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.2 Educators allow sufficient time for children to resolve conflict when safe to do so	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.3 Visual communication is incorporated in to the curriculum to support behaviour guidance of all children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.4 Educators look for triggers for behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.5 Replacement behaviours are being offered to children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.6 Educators provide dialogue to support children to resolve conflict with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Sensory supports The environment provides for children's physical and psychological wellbeing. Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.1 A secluded calm area or sensory tool box is always available, and the children are guided on how to utilise these supports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.2 Sensory supports available to children go beyond tactile experiences by recognising and supporting self-regulation and movement breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This tool is also perfect to use AFTER your team has spent time making some modifications to your inclusive practices. We encourage you to give it a go! Let us know if you have any feedback! We'd love to hear from you.

References

- ACECQA National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard>
 DET Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework - <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx?Redirect=2#link36>
 Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia - <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
 Soukakou E.P. (2016). *Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP)*. Baltimore: Paul Brookes