



# Preschool Field Officer Service Newsletter Term Four 2021

To contact the PSFO Team:

Tel: 9742 8199

Email: [psfo.service@wyndham.vic.gov.au](mailto:psfo.service@wyndham.vic.gov.au)

## PSFO TEAM UPDATE

Hi Wyndham Educators,

Welcome Back as we SPRING into the final Term of the Year!!



We commend you all on your continued resilience and ability to encounter new ways to support children and families in these current times.

Once again, the PSFO team has had a few changes, as Narelle Keleher has stepped into an exciting secondment role as Senior Policy and Planning Officer. Narelle will be assisting in collaboratively putting the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) together. At this stage we do not have a Service Lead, as we await this role being filled.

We would also like to thank Eunice Chang who did an amazing job in her secondment role, supporting our Team for 8 weeks. Many of you would have had the opportunity to work in partnership with Eunice. We enjoyed watching Eunice's approach to coaching and capacity building with her fresh eyes and knowledge.

In our last newsletter, we touched on the importance of *the language we use in documentation to support children's needs through referrals and transitions*. As we reach this time of the year, it is crucial to consider when preparing documentation, as children transition to school, as well as 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten.

2022 marks a significant change with state-wide provision of funded Three-Year-Old Kindergarten commencing. We are very excited as funded **Three –Year Old kindergarten programs will be able to apply for PSFO support** to enhance capacity to support the inclusion and participation of children with additional needs.

In this newsletter, we are going to discuss ways to prepare, especially if you have not worked with 3-year old's for a while, have or perhaps never.....

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***



*It is exhilarating for early childhood professionals as finally children across the state will have access to 2 years of funded kindergarten.*

*As these children race into their new education environments, we are reminded 3-year olds are full of energy, enthusiasm and curiosity! As they grow and develop, they are absorbed in whatever may capture their interest, continuing to master and develop their large muscle skills, imagination is increasing, and communication is expanding (some learning more than one language).*

*It is essential to keep in mind that all children reach developmental milestones at different times, it is not a "one size fits all". Skills such as talking and walking are part of this process – children learn to behave, play, communicate, move and interact at their own pace.*

*As these children commence their educational journey, we as educators need to reflect on our own expectations and consider - are they too high? Now is the time to review the development of 3-year olds as a Team and unpack this further.*

Refer to the Developmental Milestones & Early Years Learning Framework & National Quality Standards link:

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-02/DevelopmentalMilestonesEYLFandNQS.pdf>

*Understanding how 3-year old's learn and develop is imperative in supporting the ways we interact, plan, support those BIG emotions, and teach children about the overall curriculum. Curriculum incorporates interactions, routines, relationships, experiences, collaborations, reflective practice, planned and unplanned events, to foster children's learning.*

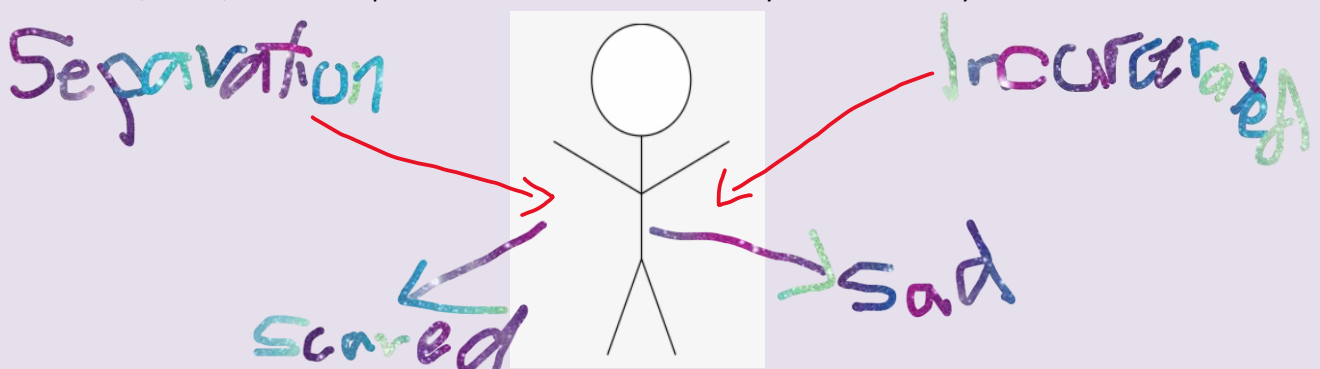
Developmental milestones provide a general idea around the changes to expect of a typical developing child, however we do not all develop on the same linear scale. It is however important to be aware of these milestones and to be able to identify potential red flags if you have any concerns.

We also need to consider and draw on a range of perspectives of early childhood theorists to 'drive' our Pedagogy. All Theorists have strengths and limitations thus we need to reflect and review our own philosophies as a Team and ensure to use a VARIETY of these to meet children's needs within our curriculum.

Additionally, we also need to consider children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity, abilities and disabilities, gender and family circumstances to ensure equity.

Furthermore, it is also crucial to consider the holistic child, as we begin to create trust and build their sense of belonging. What may be occurring for the child which may be impacting on them both externally and internally. To comprehend this in more detail, is where we need to build connections with the families/carers. These factors can affect children's behaviours and can be something we may not initially be aware of.

If we consider the diagram below and factors that may be impacting children eg parents have separated, are incarcerated, death, this can help us as a Team to understand why behaviours may be exhibited.



## Things to remember:

- *3-year olds enjoy being with other children and can now play together more*
- *Starting to take responsibility for their own toileting but may still have some accidents during the day*
- *The average 3 and a Half year old knows more than 1200 words*
- *Shifting from toddlerhood to a pre-schooler*
- *Tantrums may not be uncommon*

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/child-development-7-three-to-four-years#things-to-remember>

- Prior to their commencement – find out what their interests are
- Therapists the child may be involved with – gain permission (if possible) to speak with them or contact via email.
- Can you have a copy of any suggested strategies to trial to ensure consistency?
- Do you have visuals prepared and stuck around the room and on lanyards to assist children when you are encouraging them to wash their hands, get their snack etc. to support communication – don't forget it's great if some of your visuals can move around the room with the children.
- Visual schedules available to allow children to understand what is occurring next and alleviate some of that undue anxiety
- Calm Area – consider how you will introduce this to the group in a low traffic area of the room
- Family Tree – or photos of family for them to look at
- Can they bring in a security toy to support them to settle?
- Create Social Stories or encourage parents to attend and take photos on their phones to go through with children over the holidays
- Being aware of environment set up – flickering lights, too visually stimulating, acoustics
- Consider keeping the environment the same rather than changing things around, this allows children to feel a sense of trust and belonging & to master skills
- If the child speaks English as an additional language, consider using key words in their mother tongue (e.g. hello, toilet, eat, drink, more, finish, help, goodbye) – ask parents or Team members

## Emotional Regulation:

- Teach basic emotions – share visual pictures and discuss what this person may be feeling, identify in stories and express how you feel too “I feel sad because it's raining, and we can't go outside”
- Calm area
- Have tools to support children when they are zones eg sensory tools (bubbles, fidget toys, heavy movement)
- Have regular movement breaks
- Have as much sensory experiences available as possible eg playdough, clay, finger-paint, goop
- Have tools to support children when they are in a particular zone/s

## Friendships:

Some of these children have never had to share equipment with other peers and now must learn to express their needs, negotiate, take turns etc

- Consider how you can encourage this concept of sharing and turn taking- role modelling, through puppets
- Small group experiences for two
- Social stories



## Independence:

It is important to consider that these children have been at home for the last 12 months with the family and in some cultures, there are several people living at home and supporting the upbringing of the child

- It is important to capacity build families around the significance of building on children's independence e.g carrying the bags in from the car and putting in lockers by themselves, opening containers, putting on jackets etc
- Encourage this as a task to work on before they begin
- Display a visual toilet routine in the bathroom and remember this can be daunting too when you must sit on the toilet with other children seated beside you



## Transitions:

- How will you ensure that ALL children are aware of a shift in routine eg music or a specific song played to alert them to pack up
- Have supportive secure and consistent Routines
- Staggered snack and table ready for arrival if they have not had breakfast

## Curriculum:

- Find out about children's interests before they begin
- Keep things simple eg use everyday items such as teacups and teapots
- Focus on building the relationships
- Same songs each week
- Leave learning areas the same, allow children to practice and learn through play eg home corner
- Keep it simple
- Consider splitting the group in two over a part of the day to allow children and team to get to know each other (eg half indoors and half out)
- Consider being outside on arrival



## Group Time:

Remember, some of these children have never been in care before so don't expect them to sit down, cross their legs and look at you and listen attentively – we need to teach children the expectations and the skills. Be consistent and use visuals to support this

- Consider creating smaller groups and splitting the group into three or half - as groups develop, begin to join two together, then three (until whole group)
- Be conscious of children's developmental age rather than chronological (meet them where they are at) – keep group time minimal (what are you hoping to achieve today?)
- Use lots of puppets and visuals and make it interactive – can they have props to hold too?
- Alternate between active and passive experiences – meet the children's energy where they are at before getting them to sit and focus
- Consider a variety of seating options eg cushions, beanbags, move and sit cushions, a few chairs
- Some children may not be developmentally ready to engage in a group experience. Consider a Wait Box or Calm Area where the child can sit and play. Always provide them with a choice; but make your expectations clear, eg Wait Box (box containing variety of toys or sensory items) or Calm Area / Mat Time.



## Supporting Parents:

*Finally, and most importantly, form a Team with parents/carers by creating a two-way partnership. As children's first teaching partners, invite them to share their expertise about their child/ren.*

*What are the child's strengths; interests, challenges you are hoping to help them to overcome? Capacity build families around the significance of embarking upon things together, support this for example by sharing topics you're learning, encourage them to get some books at the library you're reading, provide a YouTube link to a new song you are teaching the group, give them conversation starters "ask your child to teach you a new game they've learnt this week".*

*Dr Kaylen Henderson states "Parents should feel like valued Teaching partners" – form the Team and educate the child together!*

- Remind parents to speak positively about kinder, as children can pick up on parents' anxiety
- If the child has additional or medical needs, encourage the parent to make an appointment with the educator to share information. (If possible, the meeting should occur Nov/Dec prior to starting kinder). This could be done in the Educators' non-contact time.
- Encourage parents to choose clothes that are easy to get on/off independently – including pants/skirts for toileting, limit number of hooded jumpers to allow safer play
- Remember parents who speak English as an additional language – do they require an interpreter?
- Encourage families to share any significant events that occurred recently such as: death, separation, birth, illness, moving to a new house etc. with the Educator

## Useful sites and links

### **Transition to Kinder – A Tipsheet for 3 year Old Educators:**

<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/PSFO%20-%20Tip%20Sheet%20-%20Transition%20to%20Kinder.pdf>

### **3-4 Preschooler Development (Raising Children Network)**

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/development/development-tracker/3-4-years>

### **Learning Alerts Tip Sheet:**

<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-06/PSFO%20-%20Tip%20Sheet%20-%20Developmental%20Alerts%202-6%20Year%20Olds.pdf>

### **The Red Flags Tip Sheet:**

<https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/PSFO%20-%20Tip%20Sheet%20-%20Red%20Flags%20Referral%20Guidelines.pdf>



# Family Centre Practice – Interpersonal Skills for Working Together – Empathy in Practice

## **What is Empathy?**

Empathy is our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion. Empathy occurs when we suspend our single-minded focus of attention and instead adopt a double-minded focus of attention (Simon Baron-Cohen, 'Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty')

Empathy is an attempt to understand another's position, thinking and feelings and to respond appropriately.

## **Why Empathy?**

- Can increase trust in the relationship; helps people to feel connected
- Enables people to open up, and say more
- People feel listened to, understood and valued
- People may move from the practical, tangible level of their situation to the emotions level

## **What might stop us showing Empathy?**

- Self-protection: Their experience may be close to ours or we may feel overwhelmed by their emotion, thinking we must solve something or do something to improve things
- If we put ourselves in their position rather than trying to understand what it is like for them in their position; blame of any kind
- If we think showing empathy suggests that we agree with or condone the other's views or behaviour; we can show empathy and disagree; can respect someone as a human being and disagree with their views and actions
- Being unsure whether/how we can be empathetic as well as focused, practical and sometimes brief

## **How might we show Empathy?**

- Non-verbal: body posture, facial expression, tone of voice
- A gesture or an action, e.g. anticipating need
- Verbally, e.g. "I wonder if you feel...." "it sounds like you...."

## HANEN TIP

### **FOLLOW THE CHILDS LEAD**

*The best conditions to enrich and encourage communication are embraced with a child centred approach. Children need a chance to initiate discussion and then build on their interests. "Letting go" is a crucial role in being a responsive communication partner.*

*When children initiate verbally or nonverbally, the educator follows the lead by:*

- ❖ *Responding verbally to their initiations*
- ❖ *Using animation*
- ❖ *Avoiding commands and vague acknowledgments e.g. aha yes that's right, good job etc*

One crucial step in supporting this is

### **Comment on Play:**

You can try "Commenting" from Hanen's "Teacher Talk Program"

- ❖ Say something based on the child's play, **not** questioning - this shows them you are interested and that you received their response
- ❖ Provide words that the child can use with their peers, related to **what the child is playing/doing**
- ❖ Your comments give children information they can learn from – respond with warmth & enthusiasm.
- ❖ Your comments will become longer and more complex as children's understanding increases and language develops over time

(Hanan, Early Language Program)

**ADEC** is a not for profit organisation providing various aged-care and disability services to communities of diverse backgrounds.



Part of those service is our NDIS Transitional Support Service, where we assist families (with children presenting developmental delays or with a diagnosed disability) with accessing the NDIS through the early childhood early intervention pathway. We can help with collating the supporting evidence and be your point of contact for all things NDIS.

<https://adec.org.au/>

For families who are already on the NDIS, we can also assist those requiring assistance with plan reviews or any upcoming planning meeting.

Please feel free to reach out to our intake officer Leila at [werribee@adec.org.au](mailto:werribee@adec.org.au) or 9480 7000 (option 3) for any enquiries or to complete intake.

## Wyndham Learning Together – Educator PD Calendar – Term 4

**Compassionate & Effective Communication with Parents** – Presented by Jessica Cleary of Hopscotch & Harmony – 28<sup>th</sup> October at 1pm In this workshop Educators will...

- Feel better prepared to have difficult conversations with families.
- Learn the six ways a parent can behave in a defensive way and how to deal with it.
- Learn the four steps educators can take to respond to an upset parent.
- Learn a mindfulness technique that can be used to calm themselves when feeling challenged during a conversation.
- Receive sample questions and conversation starters that are non-judgemental and non-emotive to help navigate tricky conversations.
- Learn how to discuss behaviour observations with families
- Learn about family-centred, strengths-based approaches to communicate with families.

Tickets: [GET THEM HERE!](#)

**Hanen Teacher Talk – Part A – Encouraging Language Development in Early Childhood Settings** –  
Dates: 4 November (10am-1pm) – 11 November (12.30pm-3.30pm) - 15 November (10am-1pm)

This training will show you how to use everyday conversations, play and daily routines to promote the communication and social development of all children, including those with language delays and those who are second language learners.

You'll learn how to :

- Identify children's conversational styles and the role teachers play in interactions
- Implement six steps to following the child's lead; Observe, Wait and Listen, Be Face to Face, Imitate, Interpret, Comment and Join In and Play
- Help children become better conversation partners by using appropriate questions, comments and turn-taking cues
- Use five important steps to ensure that no child is left out of the interaction during group activities

Tickets: [GET THEM HERE!](#)