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# GORDON COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL



PHILOSOPHY  
UNDER REVIEW IN 2020





## PLAY

We see play as being the "heartbeat" of our preschool programme. The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia defines play based learning as “ a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations”. Within the context of play there exists a myriad of learning opportunities. Children explore social relationships, contribute ideas and take on the ideas of others.

Play provides the opportunity to experiment, explore, discover, to solve problems. As children play there are opportunities to talk, to listen and to explore language. There are also opportunities to relax, to have fun, to experience and to express joy. Our teaching team plays an important part in supporting children’s learning within the context of our play based programme.

We provide resources which support children to form connections, to explore, create, construct and solve problems. We maintain a balance between experiences which are initiated by the children and those which are supported or facilitated by thoughtful and intentional teaching.

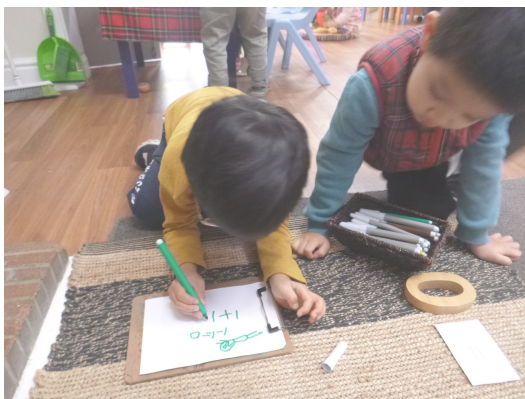


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# LEARNING, EDUCATION, AND TRANSITION TO SCHOOL



We do not adopt a "top down", "rote" or "direct instruction" approach to learning. Foundations of literacy and numeracy and other pre academic skills are learnt both in the context of play, and through responsive and intentional teaching. In practice, this means that rather than "teach" the alphabet, or "practice" counting or implement off the shelf reading/phonics programmes, we instead look for opportunities to engage with children about text and meaning, language, rhyming, ordering, counting, matching, spatial awareness (for example) in a natural play based context. Our programme aims to equip children for a positive transition to school - and we pay attention to research that suggests that emotional and social preparedness are key drivers in terms of being ready for school. Further, we pay attention to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia which reminds us to focus on a child's "being" as well as a child's "becoming". That is, a recognition of the here and now as well as future development and transitions.





# FUN, EXPLORATION, CREATIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT

We believe that preschool should be an enjoyable and fun place for children to be. We see children as being active participants in their own learning and recognise that this will happen best in an environment which provides fun, enjoyable and engaging experiences and where children are supported and encouraged to be creative and to think creatively, given time to explore their environment, test out ideas, investigate, express curiosity, ask questions and wonder in their environment.





# RESPECT, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACCEPTANCE

Gordon Community Preschool acknowledges and respects the uniqueness of each child and his/her family, culture, structure, language, beliefs and customs. We acknowledge that children learn within the context of their family and extended community and that they bring this knowledge and a wide range of experiences with them to preschool.

We place a value on ensuring that our programme is accessible and meaningful for all children, that it includes and supports children and families with diverse abilities and alternative perspectives.

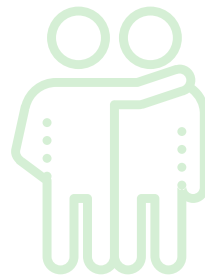
We extend this attitude of inclusion, respect and acceptance to visitors, students, and preschool staff members.

We acknowledge that the preschool stands on the land of the Guringai people and that this land continues to be sacred to them and pay our respects to elders past and present.



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# CARING AND NURTURING

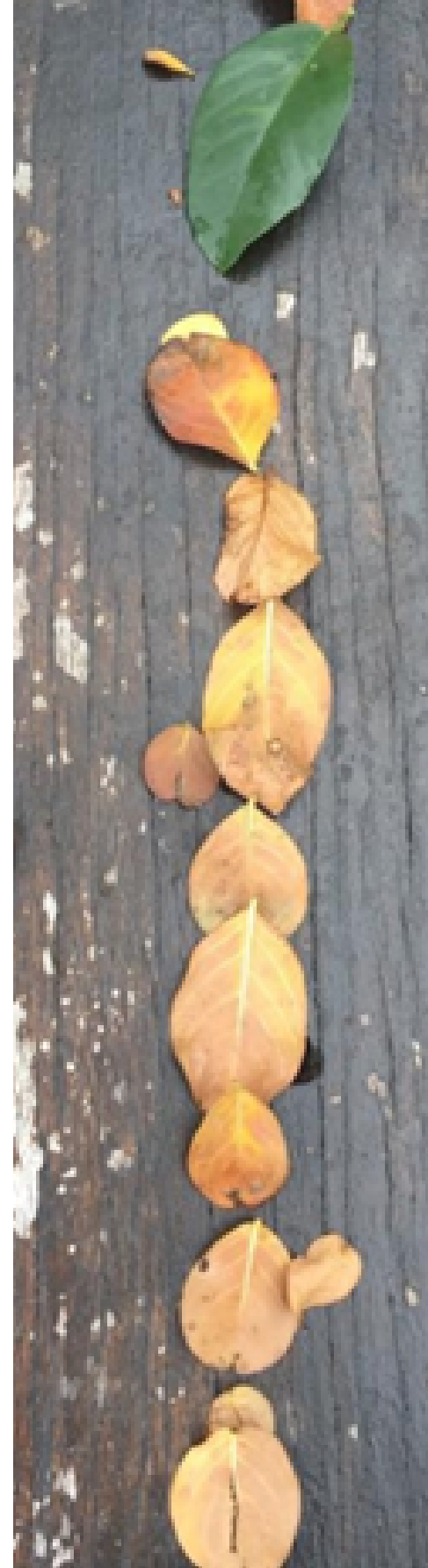


We place a value on providing a caring and nurturing environment

for children, their families and for preschool staff. If people feel cared for and nurtured, this supports healthy

emotional, physical and mental development and engenders a sense of belonging, self worth and connection.

We also endeavour to promote practices which care for and nurture our environment.





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## COMMUNITY & CONNECTIONS

Gordon Community Preschool places a value on building connections between a child's home, family and the preschool.

We believe that it helps children to develop a sense of belonging if they know that their preschool teachers take an interest in and value the child's own experiences and life outside of preschool. Woven throughout the rhythm of our preschool day are opportunities for children to share their own experiences, ideas and interests. A similar value is placed on encouraging families to participate within the programme and on building connections and relationships with each child's family. We give thought to creating a "home away from home" for our preschool children. Through small touches such as furnishings, displays of photos, objects of beauty and cooking smells from the kitchen, we endeavour to establish a sense of home.

This seems only fitting, given the context of our building - a beautiful old house. In addition to nurturing and building upon our own preschool community, we aim to reach outwards, forming connections with and taking an interest in the broader community. We believe that it is important for children to begin to have an understanding of what it is to belong to a community. We help children begin to identify with "belonging" in a number of contexts. For example, belonging to their preschool class group, belonging as part of the preschool as a whole, belonging to their family and also that we belong to a wider community - our country, our world.



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## RELATIONSHIPS

We see one of the key elements of our preschool programme as supporting children in developing the tools, knowledge and insights in how to initiate, develop and sustain positive relationships and social connections. In terms of having a sense of belonging – relationships are pivotal. We endeavour to place an emphasis on positive relationship building and also on learning within the context of groups and social contexts throughout our preschool day.





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# LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCES

Our learning environment supports the development of children who can make choices, think independently, take challenges, explore ideas, ask questions, feel nurtured, safe, and well cared for, within a social play based context. While there is a rhythm to the day, we endeavour to be flexible and responsive to the children's own rhythm and to their interests, ideas and contributions.

We aim to place an equal value on the learning through play that takes place both indoors and outdoors.

Experiences tend to be open ended

– with children encouraged to use art and craft materials, blocks and construction materials creatively, in their own way, with teachers on hand to guide, support and facilitate. Teachers and children work collaboratively together – co-constructing knowledge, meaning and understandings.

There are a number of pedagogical influences and supporting theories, approaches, ideas which underpin or weave

throughout our programme.

These include:

## **The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)**

which places an emphasis on a child's sense of belonging, being and becoming and which

identifies five key learning outcomes:

1. children have a strong sense of identity
2. children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. children are confident and involved learners
5. children are effective communicators

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# LEARNING ENVIRONMENT & PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCES...

## **Social constructivism**

Learning and development is a social, collaborative activity.

Preschool learning should occur in a meaningful context and not be separated from the learning and knowledge children develop in the "real world."

Out of preschool experiences should be related to the child's preschool experience.

## **Drawing on the experiences of schools in the town of Reggio Emilia in Italy**

Children are seen as strong, competent and capable. Children are regarded within the context of community – ie in relation to other children, their family, teachers and the broader community rather than in isolation.

Consideration of the role of the environment in supporting learning, thinking, communication, collaboration and relationship building.

The role of the teacher as a guide, collaborator, nurturer, partner, researcher.

Parents regarded as partners within the learning process  
Consideration given to the recording and documenting of children's ideas, their learning & thinking.

The importance of teachers reflecting on their own practice – collaborating with one another.



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# A LIVING DOCUMENT

Our philosophy is seen as a living document, continually evolving in the light of new research, changes to our preschool and it's community, ideas from new team members and input from children and families.

In 2020 we have begun the process of reviewing our philosophy.

A reflective practice exercise among the staff team has seen contributions of key words or phrases from each team member to reflect their thought about their own or their team's philosophy of teaching and learning. These words have been put together and formed into a word cloud. (see below) The same exercise will be undertaken in 2021 with families and children. We will then begin the slow and steady process of talking, thinking and considering what each of these mean for our pedagogy and practice.

**To be continued into 2021**

