

CASE STUDY 2

Helping Parents Make The Link Between Child Care And Foundational Learning

Childcare Centre: Centenary Childcare Centre
Contact: Jessica Wood
Location: Mt Ommaney, Brisbane
Age of Children: 6 weeks to 12 years
Number of Children Involved: 520
Nature Play QLD Involvement: Nature Play Passports and "Things to Do" lists



Parents

The Nature Play Passports were suggested to Centenary Childcare Centre by a new staff member who was hired to deliver a Life Skills Program.

The program, which was to run once a fortnight in addition to the normal curriculum, was based around getting the kids outside and learning about sustainability, gardening, water conservation and the like.

When Jessica looked into the Nature Play Passports, however, she was so impressed with how well they married with the 'earth lessons' they were trying to put into place, that she went one step further.

"We absolutely jumped on board, and instead of making it part of our Life Skills Program, we made it a mandatory part of the normal curriculum," she said.

Jessica says the program has been a learning curve for parents, but believes this is attributed to their overall perception of the role of childcare centres as a child minding service rather than an educational facility.

Jessica's team was able to overcome this by utilising the Nature Play QLD 'Things to Do' Lists, which were used as age appropriate checklists for the parents.

"Rather than trying to impose missions on the parents, we made them responsible for the '33 Things to Do' lists," said Jessica.

"We grabbed hold of those lists, and said, 'These are things parents would naturally do with their children, but they don't understand and don't put enough weight on the education they are providing'," she said.

Jessica said that the Nature Play QLD 'Things to Do' lists helped connect home activities with the centre's curriculum, allowing parents to see the importance of nature play from an educational perspective.

Children

The passports have given the children ownership over their learning, and have encouraged more peer-to-peer learning.

"They always have their passports when they go out on their missions, and that's the children's responsibility to document their learning in their passport. We let them have control of that," says Jessica.

The passports have provided a great bridge between the outdoors and indoors, with the kids now eager to spend more time outside, as well as engage in more independent thinking.

One example is when the children asked why they were throwing fruit scraps in the normal bin, which jump started a centre-wide composting scheme that Bunnings sponsored and the children now oversee.

The children have begun seeking the 'why' behind the things they do too, which has helped them overcome barriers like sun safety. With their newfound desire to be in nature, the teachers implemented a sun safety program using coloured UV gauges, so even the young children who can't read are able to understand the gauges, and know when it is safest for them to have outdoor play.



Teachers

The passports were overwhelming for the teachers in the beginning, because the website didn't allow the teachers to easily update multiple children's profiles.

Centenary Childcare Centre addressed this by registering each child, ordering their passports, printing off mission lists, and then using these as stand alone resources that do not feed back into the mission interface.

The centre then created their own electronic templates where learning stories, photos, and samples of work could be easily uploaded, to help track the kids' missions.

Thinking Bigger

"If you're trying to now put early education centres onto this program, I think you're going to find it hard for them, and very frustrating for them to use the website as it is," said Jessica.

Jessica suggests that changes to the website that allow the creation of a centre profile, which included subgroups (babies' room, toddlers' room, etc.) with individual children registered beneath these, would be hugely beneficial. She adds that a pre-populated system that allows simultaneous data entry would be one that could easily be rolled out to childcare centres across the state.