

## Rationale

SDN is committed to providing high quality, inclusive and evidence based educational programs.

## Scope

This policy applies to all SDN services where an educational program is provided.

## Knowledge and beliefs that underpin this policy

Educational programs and practices at SDN services are guided by our knowledge that:

1. The first five years matter. The early years is a period of rapid and significant change when early experiences shape identity and change the structure of the brain. This period has a strong impact on present and future wellbeing, and wellbeing is important for learning.
2. Being safe, healthy, having material basics and being able to regulate behaviour, emotions and thinking are critical for learning and development.
3. The brain develops through use. Children learn through watching, listening, copying and by being engaged and doing. Play is one important way that children use their brain and learn, and is a key part of a child's life. Play is a child's right, providing opportunities to learn, discover, create, improvise and imagine. Physical environments that foster play and encourage exploration are critical for a child's development. Learning contributes significantly to wellbeing.
4. There are patterns to children's development and learning. Development proceeds at varying rates from child to child as well as across developmental domains for individual children reflecting the unique nature of each child. While children express their developing abilities, interests and learning in a variety of ways, broad patterns of development and learning are predictable and reflect increasing complexity over time across each person's lifespan. These patterns have distinctive characteristics that generally build from the experiences of earlier stages.
5. The best learning happens in nurturing relationships. Feeling that one belongs is integral to human existence. Secure relationships in the early years are crucial to developing a sense of belonging and are a foundation for lifelong learning.
6. Collaborative partnerships between families, community and educators support continuity between learning experiences, making learning more meaningful.

## Policy

Our educational programs and practice are based on a combination of knowledge from the neurosciences, allied health, social sciences and psychology, as well as from education.

Our educational programs and practice are informed and underpinned by the Australian *Early Years Learning Framework* and *My Time Our Place*.

Staff members providing educational programs will be respectful, intentional, predictable, and attuned and responsive to children.

Our educational programs and practices are designed to meet children's individual learning and development needs. They are tailored for each child's age, abilities, life stage, disposition and cultural context.

We value play and how important it is to children for fun and learning.

We listen to children and understand the things that help them to be safe, secure and included, and the things that help them to learn and develop.

We help children to tell adults about the things that are important to them so adults can understand their capabilities, wellbeing, learning and development.

Educational programs include planning for successful transition within the SDN setting and into new settings, such as the transition to school.

Educational programs are comprised of **curriculum** and **pedagogy**.

- Curriculum: is all of the planned and unplanned interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.

Curriculum decision-making is informed by each child's strengths, capabilities, culture, interests, current knowledge, life stage, ideas and experiences with continuous assessment of each child's learning and development.

The curriculum is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning and will promote each child's agency (the child being in control of their own behaviour and thoughts), enabling them to make choices and decisions and to influence events and their world.

Curriculum gives equal importance to both educational and social development and is informed and underpinned by the Australian *Early Years Learning Framework*.

The curriculum should include (but not be limited to) language, literacy and numeracy; the creative arts and culture (including popular culture); science and technology; technical and manipulative skills, construction and design; physical and emotional health and wellbeing; relationships and social competence; equity, and social justice; connecting to the natural world; sensory exploration and physical movement; critical thinking, investigating and problem solving; and socio-dramatic play.

Learning environments are designed to support children to understand expectations, to encourage positive interactions and engagement; to facilitate learning; to inspire exploration and mastery of new skills; and to support safety, wellbeing and a sense of belonging; a sense of wonderment and of self in relation to the world.

Learning environments offer rich and authentic learning opportunities so that children feel secure; and have opportunities to build their sense of autonomy.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE POLICY		SD-HLP-2.03	
Approved by SDN Board of Directors	Approval Date August 2019	Review Date August 2023	Page 2 of 4

- Pedagogy: is the professional practice that involves curriculum decision-making and teaching.

Staff members will establish respectful and caring relationships with children and families so that they can work together to construct curriculum and learning experiences that are relevant.

Staff members draw on a range of theories, perspectives and approaches to children’s learning and development including developmental, socio-cultural, socio-behaviourist, critical, and post structuralist theories.

Each child's learning and development will be assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, practice, documentation and evaluation. Planning will involve observing, gathering and interpreting information about children and reflecting on and documenting children’s experiences, development and learning.

Every child is supported to participate in the program and staff members will challenge practices that contribute to inequities, and will make decisions that promote inclusion.

Teaching is intentional - deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful – and is not done by rote.

Staff members respond to children's ideas and play, and use intentional teaching where adults encourage children’s efforts and help them to extend their work by talking with them about what they are doing, by joining in in their play and by helping them to solve problems.

Staff members use:

- scaffolding to extend each child's learning. Scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques to support children progressively toward new skills and greater understanding, and independence in the learning process
- a balanced combination of child-initiated and directed, and adult initiated activities
- instructive learning environments and sustained shared thinking where adults and children work together on challenges in a serious and extended way to solve a problem, or clarify a concept
- written plans and records of child assessment and evaluations to underpin their practices with children.

Staff members work in partnership with families to identify each child’s strengths and interests, to choose teaching strategies, to design learning environments; and to connect service-based learning opportunities with home-based learning.

The documentation about each child’s program and progress will be available to families. Staff members engage families in their child’s learning and share educational aims with them.

### Educational Leaders in SDN Children’s Education and Care Centres

All SDN Children’s Education and Care Centres have an Educational Leader who has knowledge of the theories of learning and development and of curriculum approaches; access to current research about curriculum and pedagogy; and knowledge of individual children and learning styles and disposition.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE POLICY		SD-HLP-2.03	
Approved by SDN Board of Directors	Approval Date August 2019	Review Date August 2023	Page 3 of 4

## Related SDN Documents

### Policies

- SD-OP-2.04: Guiding Children’s Behaviour and Developing Social Competency
- SD-OP-2.24: Interactions with Children

### Other SDN Documents

- SDN Strategic Plan 2019-2023

## Relevant Legislation/Regulations

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, section 168 and 323
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, regulations 73 to 76
  - National Quality Standards, quality area 1, standards 1.1 and 1.2, elements 1.1.1 to 1.1.6 and 1.2.1 to 1.2.3

## Other References/Related Documents

- Belonging, Being and Becoming – Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – **Principles:** Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships; Partnerships with Families; High expectations and equity; Respect for Diversity; Ongoing learning and reflective practice - **Practice:** Holistic approaches; Responsiveness to children; Learning through play; Intentional teaching; Learning environments; Cultural Competence: Continuity of Learning and Transitions; Assessment for Learning – **Learning Outcomes:** 1,2,3,4,5
- My Time, Our Place – Framework for School Age Care in Australia

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE POLICY		SD-HLP-2.03	
Approved by SDN Board of Directors	Approval Date August 2019	Review Date August 2023	Page 4 of 4