

7.9.2021

With the delivery of the pine bark soft fall yesterday, the play equipment project finally entered its final stages.

This morning we engaged the children 'on site' with the completion of the WHS risk/ benefit form. We deliberately involve the children in such processes to raise an awareness about health and safety and to have them reflect on potential risks within their environments. This also teaches them how to efficiently deal with risks in reasonable ways towards ensuring their own wellbeing and safety and that of others. Such learning opportunities in authentic contexts enable children to make meaningful connections to real life scenarios in ways that imaginative 'play set-ups' can't, at least not to the same extent.

By doing this children are empowered and experience themselves as valued participants in matters that directly affect them and their lives.

They collaboratively construct their social setting and the rules that apply within this instead of just learning to fit in and being compliant within a set of rules that happens to be in place.

It teaches them responsibility, reflectiveness and fosters problem solving skills.

EYLF Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

They develop understandings that their actions or responses affect how others feel or experience *belonging*.

When educators create environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships with people and the environment, children respond accordingly. When children participate collaboratively in everyday routines, events and experiences and have opportunities to contribute to decisions, they learn to live interdependently.

Children's connectedness and different ways of *belonging* with people, country and communities helps them to learn ways of *being* which reflect the values, traditions and practices of their families and communities. Over time this learning transforms the ways they interact with others.



When Theo arrived he declared: 'It has a fire pole! I looove fire poles! They are so much fun'. As the children have enjoyed playing fire fighters, this feature will make their role play much more exciting. Everyone congregated in the area around the equipment ready to tackle the challenge and keen to finally conquer the climbing frame.

Silke showed the children the risk assessment forms and asked what they knew about risks.

"It's when you can get hurt" was one of the explanations. "You can fall off" Benji remarked.

Silke encouraged the children to think about the difference between falling in the trampoline and falling on the concrete path.

"When it's soft, you don't hurt yourself" "Yeah you can break your arm when it's hard" Benji added "Or split your head"

The children unanimously agreed that it was very important to have a soft surface underneath a height.

Silke explained how we must legally have a pine bark depth of at least 300mm or 200mm when it is compacted and showed them how high this is. We measured the soft fall and decided to rake it back to an above minimum height within the fall zone around it.

Before the children picked up the rakes to complete the task, we also spoke about overcrowding and how children might accidentally get pushed down when the platform would get too full.

The children made connections to the safety discussion we regularly have in the sports hall. We spoke about how we must ensure that everyone gives each other sufficient space and awaits their turn. As the children are already experienced with reflecting on safety aspects in relation to our sports program, they were able to transfer and adapt this knowledge to the new equipment as well.

We also spoke about only using the equipment in ways it is intended for, e.g. not to climb up onto the barriers as a fall from there could potentially cause significant injury.



While raking the pine bark in place, the children ensured that there was sufficient left around the tree as now, they would finally be able to climb the lower rungs of the tree. In the past they were only permitted to swing on these as there was no soft fall. Now with the soft surface underneath, there would be no reason to inhibit using this naturally grown climbing structure as well.

EYLF:

Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation.

This is evident, for example, when children:

- cooperate with others and negotiate roles and relationships in play episodes and group experiences
- take action to assist other children to participate in social groups
- broaden their understanding of the world in which they live
- express an opinion in matters that affect them
- build on their own social experiences to explore other ways of being
- participate in reciprocal relationships
- gradually learn to 'read' the behaviours of others and respond appropriately
- understand different ways of contributing through play and projects
- demonstrate a sense of belonging and comfort in their environments
- are playful and respond positively to others, reaching out for company and friendship
- contribute to fair decision-making about matters that affect them

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After all of the raking it was time to test the frame out. The children worked on different ways of climbing up and sliding down the pole, with Simone on hand to assist with ways of moving from the platform to the pole.



Although there are steps on one side, it is quite fun to have a friend help you to climb back up onto the platform. 'I just love it!', said E. as she demonstrated her climbing skills before moving back to the tree.



Educators promote this learning, for example, when they:

- promote a sense of community within the early childhood setting
- build connections between the early childhood setting and the local community
- provide opportunities for children to investigate ideas, complex concepts and ethical issues that are relevant to their lives and their local communities
- model language that children can use to express ideas, negotiate roles and collaborate to achieve goals
- ensure that children have the skills to participate and contribute to group play and projects
- plan opportunities for children to participate in meaningful ways in group discussions and shared decision-making about rules and expectations

Empowering children with taking on an active role in risk assessments and decision making processes goes beyond keeping them safe during the hours they spend at preschool. They gradually build increased awareness and they learn to transfer relevant skill sets to circumstances they might encounter in their lives outside of supervised environments as well. This keeps them safe in self-directed ways, protecting them whenever they may encounter potential risks elsewhere.

Risk averse environments are usually designed to keep children safe in that particular moment but are less likely to prepare the children well for potentially risky encounters or experiences outside of this. Risky play helps develop a child's confidence, resilience, self-regulation, independence, executive functioning abilities and management skills. Developing awareness and building relevant risk management skills ensures that children can experience all these benefits safely as their abilities keep them and others well protected.

ACECQA Talking about practice: Adventurous play— Developing a culture of risky play

<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-11/AdventurousPlay%E2%80%93DevelopingACultureOfRiskyPlay.pdf>



Speaking of safety:
We have added another layer.
Meet our new 'R2D2' air purifier android who will ensure that we have clean air, hopefully free of viruses.
Blue & violet light indicates good air quality.

