

Early Years Services – QA2.20 Bush/Beach Kindergarten Educational Program

TRIM Reference: D15/74634 Due for Review: 4 June 2027
 Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This policy aims to detail the educational benefits of nature play in the Bush/Beach Kinder environment:

- To ensure that the educational programs enhance the learning and development of each child participating in Surf Coast Shire Council early years' services.
- To ensure staff are adequately mentored and trained to deliver a high-quality nature play program that meets children's continuous learning skills.
- To ensure families are educated on the benefits on nature play

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Evidence of link to Educational & Care Services National Regulations: Part 4.1, 73, 74, 75, 76, 100.

Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Law: Section 155, 156, 168

Scope

This policy applies to all early childhood education and care programs provided by the Surf Coast Shire Early Years Services.

Policy

Activity	Developmental benefit
Imaginative games using the resources that nature provides	Open ended learning for children to explore at their own.
Role play	Shared imagination to explore drama context, teamwork and social behaviours.
Building structures from natural materials and adults	Applications of problem solving, goal definition, planning, engineering teamwork and resilience.
Counting objects or looking for mathematical patterns	Mathematics, visual recognition.
Memory games using naturally available objects	Memory, naming objects.
Listening to stories, singing songs and rhymes	Art, drama, self-expression, concentration, literacy and language skills.
Arranging items to make a picture, or installation	Art, imagination and creativity.

Drawing scenes	Art, creativity, observation of Surroundings.
Climbing at bush/beach kinder sites for example trees, logs and rocks while exploring nature. (Refer to Bush and Beach Kinder Health and Safety Policy for Tree Climbing Risk Benefit Analysis)	Improves gross motor strength, balance and physical awareness, coordination and risk awareness benefits.
Walking within the natural habitats	Improves strength and stamina, preparation (e.g., route selection) improves planning and communication skills.
Exploring or reflecting alone	Aids self-awareness and character development. Promotes physical and emotional wellbeing.
Play involving water where it occurs naturally (for example ocean, rivers, creeks, puddles and on walks in the rain in the Bush/Beach Kinder sites	Experience and understanding of water safety and the impact of all weather conditions and their effect on the natural environment.
Using tools	Using tools safely, for example, making items out of bark & sticks, or to plant seeds/seedlings and other gardening activities.
Observing seasonal changes and weather changes	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge Broadening understanding of the world we live in.
Observing animals and their habitats and becoming familiar with local flora and fauna	Gaining and sharing familiar and unfamiliar knowledge about animals, flora and fauna specific to the local area.

General

This policy sits alongside the Educational Program and works together to embed approved learning frameworks in all early year’s programs to ensure the delivery of high-quality education and care both at bush/beach kinder and at kindergartens.

Based on (as applicable) the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, the Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, Early Years Learning and Assessment Tool, Child Safe Standards, 8 Aboriginal ways of learning and Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, Surf Coast Shire Council early years services develop and deliver educational programs where:

- Curriculum decision-making maximises each child’s learning and development opportunities.
- Critical reflection and questioning of teaching practice occurs to maximise the child’s participation and voice within the program.

The Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management is responsible for:

- implementing and maintaining the Bush/Beach Educational Policy which provides clarity to parents/guardians and staff as to the types of activities children may be undertaking in Bush/Beach Kinder, while highlighting the benefits of these activities, including improved self-esteem, co-operation and ability to assess and respond to risks;
- providing an educational and safe environment for all participants in the Bush/Beach Kinder program;

- ensuring that all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy on the Surf Coast Shire website, and in written form upon request;
- ensuring staff and volunteers are appropriately educated on procedures detailed in this policy.

Staff are responsible for:

- supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety;
- creating a WH&S risk assessment for all bush/beach kinder sites
- educating children's awareness of their own safety and the safety of others at all times
- supporting children's engagement in the natural environment through play, for example – awareness of habitat features, animals, plants, weather, sounds etc.
- implementing teaching strategies that scaffold children's emergent learning;
- ensuring every child is actively and consistently supported to engage in the nature program;
- Critically reflecting with children on their learning and development as individuals and groups to review the education program on an ongoing basis;
- actively engaging with children;
- encouraging the children during play to help each other, share and to solve problems together, and affirm positive behaviour when this occurs;
- incorporating safety routines and awareness throughout the program;
- supporting the children's nature play learning and explorations from the bush/beach kinder site at the kindergarten services;
- documenting the children's learning, growth and development when at the bush/beach kinder site and sharing this with families.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- providing feedback to staff where applicable;
- ensuring protective and appropriate clothing is worn to Bush/Beach Kinder by their child, including closed footwear with a flexible sole to facilitate effective tree/log climbing and balancing on uneven surfaces;
- reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies;
- reading and being familiar with the policy.

Definitions

Appropriate clothing: (Refer Bush/Beach Kindergarten Protective Clothing and Visibility Policy)

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework - Overview

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework advances all children's learning and development from birth to eight years. The Framework supports all early childhood professionals to work together with families to achieve common outcomes for all children.

The Victorian Framework is informed by the principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)* and the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child* advances an image of children as subjects of rights and full members of society, capable of participating in their social worlds through their relationship with others. These principles are consistent with contemporary early childhood research.

The Victorian Early Years Framework sets the highest expectations for every child

It identifies five early years learning and development outcomes for all children:

- Children have a strong sense of identity
- Children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Children are confident and involved learners
- Children are effective communicators

The Victorian Framework describes each of these Outcomes for children from birth to eight years, linking the learning outcomes from the *Early Years Learning Framework* for Australia to the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) Levels 1 and 2*. The Outcomes provide a shared language for all early childhood professionals and families to use when planning for children's learning and development.

The Victorian Framework identifies eight practice principles for learning and development, which describes the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together and with children and families to facilitate learning and development. These principles are based on the pedagogy of the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* and the P–12 Principles of Learning and Teaching, and on the latest international evidence about the best ways to support children’s learning. In addition, the Victorian Framework emphasises the importance of supporting children’s and families’ transitions as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period.

Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan

Marrung Educational Plan 2016-2026 was developed to improve the knowledge of our First Nations people and decrease the gap and increase the educational outcomes of Aboriginal children within Victoria’s universal services.

“Victoria will be a state where the rich and thriving culture, knowledge and experience of our First Nations peoples are celebrated by all Victoria’s; where our universal services systems are inclusive, responsive and respectful of Koorie people at every stage of their learning and development journey; and where every Koorie person achieves their potential, succeeds in life, and feels strong in their cultural identity”.

Positive climate for learning and development

- Koorie children and learners of all ages are strong in their identity within all services.
- All Victoria understands and respect Koorie culture and history.
- Community engagement in learning and development Services and Koorie communities work together on local, place based approaches to improving learning outcomes.

Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework for Australia – Overview

The Council of Australian Governments developed this Framework to assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. In this way, the *Early Years Learning Framework* (the Framework) contributes to realising the Council of Australian Governments’ vision that:

“All children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation.”

The framework draws on conclusive international evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children’s learning and development. The framework forms the foundation for ensuring that children in all early childhood education and care settings experience quality teaching and learning. It has a specific emphasis on play-based learning and recognises the importance of communication and language (including early literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional development. The framework has been designed for use by early childhood educators working in partnership with families, children’s first and most influential educators.

The framework supports Goal 2 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians*, that:

All young Australians become:

- Successful learners
- Confident and creative individuals
- Active and informed citizens.

The framework conveys the highest expectations for all children’s learning from birth to five years and through the transitions to school. It communicates these expectations through five Learning Outcomes and provides broad direction for early childhood educators in early childhood settings to facilitate children’s learning.

In Children’s Learning

The diversity in family life means that children experience belonging, being and becoming in many different ways. They bring their diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills to their learning. Children’s learning is dynamic, complex and holistic. Physical, social, emotional, personal, spiritual, creative, cognitive and linguistic aspects of learning are all intricately interwoven and interrelated.

Play is a context for learning that:

- allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts
- stimulates a sense of wellbeing.

Child Safe Standards

The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 require that Child Safe Standards are understood and embedded across all Council services and programs.

Standard 3 –

- Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including safety, information and participation.
- The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated
- Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people.
- Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.

8 Aboriginal ways of learning

A pedagogy framework that allows teachers to include Aboriginal perspectives by using Aboriginal learning techniques – derived from research involving DE, James Cook University and Western New South Wales Regional Aboriginal Education Team between 2007 and 2009.

8 ways

Story Sharing – Approaching learning through narrative.

Learning Maps – Explicitly mapping/visualising processes.

Non-verbal – Applying intra-personal and kinaesthetic skills to thinking and learning.

Symbols and Images – Using images and metaphors to understand concepts and content.

Land Links – Place-based learning, linking content to local land and place.

Non-linear – Producing innovations and understanding by thinking laterally or combining systems.

Deconstruct/Reconstruct – Modelling and scaffolding, working from wholes to parts (watch then do).

Community Links – Centring local viewpoints, applying learning for community benefit.

Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool

- The EYALT empowers kindergarten teaching teams to provide information on where a child is at in their learning and evidence based intentional teaching strategies linked to that point of learning for programming through teaching teams observations.
- EYALT contains 8 assessment modules that align with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework outcomes.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D14/94973	Delivery and Collection of Children
D15/74476	Bush/Beach Kinder - Extreme Weather
D15/73628	Bush/Beach Kinder - Emergency Evacuation
D15/74606	Bush/Beach Kindergarten Protective Clothing and Visibility
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D15/35364	Early Years Sustainability Policy
D14/70701	Educational Program Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

Online	Early Years Enrolment and Consent Form
D17/23578	Template Regular Outing Parent Authority Form (Kinderloop)
D25/216436	Template Excursion Parent Authority Form (Kinderloop)
D24/136792	Work Instruction – Campfire – All Surf Coast Shire operated Kindergartens and Pre-schools
D25/142472	Work Instruction – Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
D25/141710	Work Instruction – Kindergarten Reps
D25/137590	Work Instruction – Early Years Research projects
D25/141711	Work Instruction – Professional Development (PD) Days
D25/141712	Work Instruction – Kindergarten RAP Management
D25/141709	Work Instruction – Staff Development Plans
D26/7831	Work Instruction - Kindergarten – Excursion / Regular Outing / Incursion
D26/63091	Visitor registration in Early Years Services via SISO

Other References

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, 2011 amended 2016
 Belonging, Being and Becoming Early Years Learning Framework for Australia, 2009.
 ‘Benefit-Risk Assessment of Tree Climbing’ MindStretchers Pty Ltd (October 2009)
 A Marvellous Opportunity for Children to Learn ‘Liz O’Brien and Richard Murray, Forestry Commission (2006)
 Wikipedia – ‘Forest Kindergarten’
 ‘Nature Kindergartens’ – Claire Walden
 ‘Understanding the Danish Forest School Approach - Early Years Education in Practice’ – Jane Williams-Sieghfredson
 Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026
 8 Aboriginal ways of learning 2007-2009
 Early Years Assessment and Learning Tool 2024

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (National Law)
 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (The Regulations) and the
 National Quality Standard, 2011 (Schedule 1 of the Regulations)

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approval Date	Manager Aged and Family - 1 October 2015
2	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 3 January 2018
3	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family - 23 August 2018
4	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening - 9 January 2020
6	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 4 October 2022
7	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 11 April 2024
8	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 11 October 2025