

Welcome to the 2020 Hume / Moreland DET Early Childhood Improvement Branch Updates

Loving learning at home through the COVID-19 pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has presented enormous challenges across society, including for the early years sector. The Northern Schools Early Years Cluster (NSEYC) responded to this challenge with innovation, flexibility and commitment, ensuring that some of the most vulnerable children and families in Victoria were supported to learn at home and remain connected to the kindergarten community.

The NSEYC is an Early Years Management organisation that delivers 11 kindergarten services co-located on school sites across Hume and Moreland, in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the state. Most families are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and many children have high levels of vulnerability – such as in Dallas, where 35% of children are vulnerable in two or more areas.



In 2019, the NSEYC developed a strategic plan with the shared purpose to “love a life of learning and living”, including an objective to strengthen the capabilities of families to contribute to and be involved in their children’s learning.

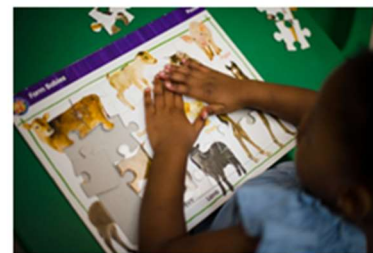
When COVID-19 hit, families were understandably anxious about coming to kindergarten, and for much of Term 2, most NSEYC

kindergartens had no children attending.

The NSEYC team share an understanding of the vulnerability and disadvantage in the community and the importance of continuing to deliver a quality kindergarten program for children. Working with families as co-contributors to their children’s learning and reducing the risk of families withdrawing their children from kindergarten during the crisis was paramount.

NSEYC’s educators and management team worked collaboratively and swiftly to develop a multi-faceted plan to ensure continuity of children’s learning throughout the crisis, combining the use of technology, home-learning packs and outreach support, and reflecting the community’s diverse needs.

An online learning portal, introduced in Term 1, became crucial for collaborating with families. Educators shared the program, observations and experiences via video to demonstrate and scaffold learning at home, families could comment and share their child’s learning. Educators developed experiences across all learning domains and considered each child’s unique context. Images and graphics supported CALD families, with interpreting where required.



Home-learning packs were developed to provide materials and guidance for what could be found at home, based on individual children's interests and skills, scaffolding learning goals.



The use of the portal, home-learning packs, and regular outreach with families through phone, video-conference and email, strengthened relationships and supported learning and wellbeing.

Upon returning at the end of term 2, children settled back into the kindergarten environment easily and were able to seamlessly connect with peers and staff and continue their learning. Educators reported strengthened relationships with families, who in turn reported increased confidence and understanding of the importance of early learning and their own role as educators. This is testament to the innovation, creativity and commitment of NSEYC staff to improving

children's access and participation in kindergarten for highly vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, during one of the most difficult times the sector and modern world has faced.