

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

This Month's Local Reflections and Educational Highlights

Will Will Rook – Nature Pedagogy in practice

Sigi Hyett Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Northern School Early Years Cluster Inc.

Will Will Rook Kindergarten is located in Glenroy, 14 km from Melbourne CBD. The kindergarten is one of 11 managed by NSEYC and educates 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.



In 2019, the NSEYC developed a strategic plan with the shared purpose to “love a life of learning and living”, including an objective to operate as an engaged and connected organisation where children thrive and are active participants in their own learning and development. Knowing that linking children to the outdoors and nature is critical for learning, development, health and wellbeing,

the NSEYC was keen to implement at least one bush kindergarten program.

The kindergarten's outdoor area is a natural setting with many plants, trees, an edible garden, sand, rocks, mud, water and other natural elements, and is adjacent to parkland owned by the Wurundjeri people.

The space invites open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature, aligning with the National Standard 3.1 where outdoor spaces are dynamic and flexible, offering children opportunities to be active, make mess and noise, and be wholly engaged in play.

Given the context and varied cultural backgrounds of our families, working in collaboration, developing authentic relationships and building an understanding of the benefits of nature pedagogy among families has been crucial to the development of the program.



In 2019, many families would comment "I do not want my child to go outside today, it is too cold/wet/windy/sunny" and the service would experience very low attendance in inclement weather. Families were supported to understand the benefits of nature pedagogy for children's brain development, bone and muscular development, confidence, motivation, concentration, imagination, self-regulation, resilience, language skills, eye-sight -- and of course reduced illness!



This included:

Explaining the bush kinder program during orientation and throughout the year, using photos to show the value of children playing in the cold, mud and rain.

Connecting families to their childhood memories of outdoor play, where appropriate.

Meeting families where they were at and celebrating each milestone towards loving nature and the program.

Respecting families' concerns, and working together on potential risks and solutions to support children's independence, agency and resilience.



Supporting families to provide wet weather gear, and having spares at the service.

Sharing articles, videos and research on nature pedagogy, other bush kindergartens and outdoor play.