

ARIAH PARK PRESCHOOL

Parent & Community Collaborations Policy

Aims

In conjunction with the centre's stated philosophy, and past early childhood tradition, the **Ariah Park Preschool** aims regarding parent and community collaborations are:

1. To view parental involvement in all preschool activities including the educational program, as an interactive, integrated process that will:

- Benefit the children in terms of their ability to maximise the effectiveness of the program (as supported by research in the early childhood field as well as at other levels of education)
- Provide continuity as children make the transition from home to preschool and from the preschool to primary school
- Contextualise learning meaningfully for all children through acknowledgement of each child's family and cultural background
- Expect and respect diversity in all its many forms

2. Local community involvement is highly supported and valued by this preschool which is situated in a small, rural community. A centre-to-community web of relationships will be encouraged both indirectly through normal parental involvement in the centre, and by more direct links among the preschool and various community groups, individuals, facilities and events such as the town's agricultural show, fairs, festivals and other events.

(Note: acknowledgement of parents as partners can be found in all the centre's policies.)

Legislative Requirements

Education and Care Australian National Regulations 2011
Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Equal Opportunity & Discrimination Act 1986
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Who is affected by this policy?

Children
Staff
Families
Management

Relevant Early Childhood Professional Standards

Early Childhood Code of Ethics:	I-3 to I-5, I-7, II-1 to II-10, IV-1 to IV-6, IV-1
Early Years Learning Framework:	Outcomes: 2.1, Principles:1-4
Education & Care Services Australian National Regulations:	157
National Quality Framework:	Quality areas: 1.2.1, 6.1-6.4.3, 7.6-7.6.3

Sources/References

Athey, C. (2007). *Extending thought in children: A parent teacher relationship*. (2nd Ed.), London UK: Paul Chapman

Early Childhood Australia: *The parent partnership*: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au>
(Retrieved January 2012)

Harris, K. & Graham, S. (2010). (Eds.), *Working with families of young children with special needs*. New York NY: Guilford Press

Keyser, J. (2008). *From parents to partners: Building a family centered early childhood program*. St Paul MI: Redleaf Press

MacNaughton, G. (2004). Children, staff & parents: Building respectful relationships in New Zealand & Australian early childhood contexts – the Australian context. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 29 (1) pp1-7

Procedures

1. The Director will establish an open door approach with parents to encourage parental input. This will first be discussed at the initial enrolment interview (see the centre's 'Enrolment & Fees Policy' Procedure 1.4, and the 'Initial Enrolment Interview Checklist') and will re-occur on a continuing basis in a variety of ways e.g. daily plans that are posted for parents to see also invite parent suggestions and feedback (see the centre's 'Educational Program & Practice Policy' Procedure 1), plus casual staff/parent conversations etc
2. It will be understood by all staff and the Committee of Management that:
 - Not all parents may choose to become directly involved in the centre's day to day functioning
 - Parents who are employed, may not be able to participate in all, many or any centre functions, opportunities to volunteer help etc
 - Those parents who do choose to become involved will be free to choose the manner/s in which they support the centre e.g. Committee of Management membership, volunteer help in various ways, cooking for street stalls and other fund raising ventures, financial donations etc
3. The Director will continually inform parents of their child's progress throughout the year. This will take various forms eg, child's communication book, in casual drop off/pick up chats (provided the child is unable to hear), phone conversations, private meetings with parents that may or may not be related to times when the child is being planned for on an individual basis, or in relation to things that children may be making/experiencing/showing interest in at the preschool, eg drawings, construction play, etc. (For specific details on this see the centre's 'Education Program & Practice Policy' Procedures 1, 2 & 14)
4. All staff will respect and actively support the role that parents/guardians play in their child's upbringing and development. The Director will provide parents with related information in a variety of ways throughout the year. This will include community links, information about local events and family support services, poster information etc
5. The centre's program will encompass aspects of the rural life of the local community in the following ways:
 - Opportunities for learning occur during grain or fruit harvests, shearing and lambing. This may take the form of excursions, or inviting people into the centre to talk with the children. Where possible these visitors will be parents of children at the centre
 - Local key events e.g. the annual agricultural show, will naturally involve children and families, and the potential of this event for increasing children's learning about their community will be supported and acknowledged in the centre's program

- Fund raising opportunities for the preschool will usually involve the local community e.g. in small country towns, the Lion's Club have a community caravan/stall for hire that different organisations use to run a cake stall in the main street, for which permission is given by the local council. In rural communities local families and the elderly are strong supporters of these stalls.

6. Parents and other family members are invited to share aspects of their culture and family life with the staff and children: such as creative abilities, cooking, music, dance, introducing their language (if different), bathing a new baby etc

7. Parental involvement is invited regarding the centre's administration and management in the following ways:

- Membership of the Committee of Management
- Review process of the centre's policies. The 3 yearly external review of policies is open to feedback from parents at Committee of Management meetings which are opened to all parents
- Feedback from parents is continuously invited in relation to the educational program, excursions, and other aspects of daily life at the centre. This expectation for ongoing parental involvement is first established at the initial enrolment interview (see Procedure 1 above)
- A sub committee consisting of parents and the Director advertises for and interviews new staff (see Staffing Policy, Procedures 1.2, 1.4, 1.7, 1.9)

8. Links with community bodies will be encouraged e.g. using a local gardening club to get advice about the playground plants etc. (Further examples are in the centre's 'Environmental Awareness & Sustainability Policy,' Procedures 10-14). When local community links like this are made, the information will always be shared with parents

The Director will ensure that this policy is maintained and implemented at all times

Review

The rationale and procedures for reviewing this policy are twofold. They are as follows:

(1) This policy will be formally reviewed after three years. All formal reviews will be conducted by the Committee of Management, the Director, parents, and interested community members if the Director feels it is necessary. For example the Director might decide that a health and hygiene policy should be considered by a local doctor or nurse as part of the formal review process. All formal reviews will

be recorded as per the 'Centre Review Sheet – Formal Three Yearly Review Form' attached to each policy. Given the large number of policies that early childhood centres are now required to develop, it is considered that a formal review does not need to be taken more frequently because (1) each policy needs time for staff to adapt to and time to run so as to enable a well informed evaluation/review during the third year and (2) the formal, three year review process will be a demanding one for the preschool Committee of Management which is composed of voluntary members. Therefore it is considered that a formal review should occur regularly but not excessively so.

(2) Within this three year period however the policy will still be monitored, evaluated and minor adjustments can be made in line with daily occurrences or needs at the centre. This will occur as part of an ongoing process of review undertaken by the centre Director and staff during each calendar year. These reviews will be recorded and dated as per the 'Director's Annual Review Form' and these will also be attached to each policy, along with the formal, three yearly reviews.

The Director's annual review will occur on an ongoing basis and will thus ensure this policy is continually updated. For example if updates are received from a government department that warrant immediate change of some policy procedures, or if implementing a policy has resulted in agreement by staff that minor modifications are necessary before the policy is enacted upon again, these improvements can be made immediately through the Director's annual review process and then be presented to the Committee of Management for ratification at the next formal, three yearly review.

Reviewed: 18th November 2014.

Signed: Leanne Nixon