

CALL EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT, BECAUSE YOU CAN'T FAIL AT AN EXPERIMENT. YOU CAN ONLY LEARN - CLARE DUBOIS

Waterford West  
Education and Care  
Centre

MARCH  
2022

# ON *this* MONTH

AT WATERFORD WEST EDUCATION  
AND CARE CENTRE

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## Letter from the Director

Welcome to the March edition of our centre newsletter for 2022. This month sees the inclusion of our Nature Explorers, Uncle Boomerang, and Swimming programs.

We are also hosting our first Parent's Meet and Greet event for 2022, which will provide a great opportunity to get to know your child's educators this year, as well as discuss goals and achievements to work towards for 2022. Reminder to all parents . . . If you have not already, please return your child's vision statement, as this will also aid in setting goals for your child to reach this year.

In preparation of "What's on" at the centre, don't forget to "LIKE" us on Facebook and Instagram to receive daily reminders about upcoming centre events. Also, if you have not already downloaded the OWNA app, we encourage you to do this ASAP, as this is another interactive way to communicate with your child's teacher daily, track upcoming events and be apart of their learning journey.

With the Queensland Government's recent increase in child care subsidy, we have seen fees decrease for some families with two or more children enrolled in our service, YAY! In the upcoming weeks we will advise you of new weekly fees and encourage parents to take this opportunity to increase days at the service while there are still spaces available.

We would like also to take this opportunity to remind parents, if they have not already, to work towards getting their account two weeks in advance. Please contact our centre office for support with navigating our OWNA app to make additional payments on your account to achieve this.



# Room News

## Early Learners Room

This month has seen every day being a new learning adventure for us, full of lots of sensory play, which is the favourite activity amongst our centre's youngest age group that helps encourage them to participate, extend friendships and become more confident in their surroundings, through hands on experiences.

Our Abecedarian Games and Conversational Reading opportunities have allowed educators to find some one on one time with each child, helping them to become more confident in speech, as they discover new words and put meaning to what we are doing.

We are all looking forward to extending our learning and development next month, by introducing fire trucks and police, an interest that we have seen our early learners group express this month. We are excited to extend fine motor and gross motor skills as we explore this interest further creating our own resources that children can engage with daily

## Junior Early Years Room

In the junior early year rooms we have enjoyed getting to know the children and building bonds with them to help make them feel safe and secure in the room with our educators. At such a young age it is important for us to take the time to build these bonds so that children feel safe and secure transitioning from parents at drop of times.

Children have been enjoying the outdoors exploring nature each week at our local parklands and bringing back some nature to use in our art work and around the room. This visual recognition helps to give more meaning to their learnings outdoors as it provides a visual cue to remind them what they have been doing

We are noticing that the some of the children are showing interest in colours so we aim to explore this some more this coming month, with lots of activities designed to help children identify primary colours

## Early Learners Room



## Junior Early Years Room



# Room News

## Early Years Room

Last month, we have been focusing on settling the children into their environment and becoming familiar with educators in their new “big room” and putting routines and transitions into place.

We have been learning about ourselves, where we are from, likes and dislikes, focusing on Feelings and Emotions, and most importantly making sure the children are feeling safe and secure in their environment

We have been continuing with learning about our Environment through our nature explorer’s program and discovering what is around us, building a strong relationships with each other and developing our sense of belonging in our environment.

Zumba has become a big part of our routine, allowing children times to calm their bodies before transitioning into a new activity

Next month, we are focusing on introducing the alphabet and exploring colours of the rainbow, and we are excited to use our weekly bush kindy event to extend children’s learning and understandings.

## Pre-Prep Room

The last few weeks have been an incredible an exciting time in the Pre Prep room as we have welcomed new faces and moved into the room with old friends. Our educators for this year are the wonderful Miss Jessica and Miss Faida and our new ECT Miss Louise! They are working hard to get to know each of us and plan amazing learning experiences for the year ahead.

We have been focusing on a variety of subjects over the last few weeks and have been very excited about Bush Kindy and our first experience of the year with Uncle Boomerang!

We have begun learning about each letter of the alphabet and have been enjoying moving and grooving to our letter songs and showing off our expertise as we form our foundational knowledge of words beginning with each letter.

We are currently taking part in the Heggerty's Phonemic Awareness Programme which will assist them in the beginning stages of identifying sounds and words.

Over the next few weeks we will be exploring The Very Hungry Caterpillar and the life cycle of a butterfly!

We are also learning all about gentle play and what it means to be a good friend!

Now that the rain has stopped we are very excited to head back to Daisy Hill for our next Bush Kindy adventure and extend children’s learning in the classroom from the amazing opportunities that the outdoor environment provides

## Early Years Room



## Pre-Prep Room





**CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY – MARCH 6**

The amount of plastic waste has been surging because of the pandemic and we're concerned there will be long-term impacts on our environment. Over a third of Aussie households reported producing more waste and having had more items delivered than

usual during lockdown periods. Get a small group of your friends, family and neighbours together and give back to your community. **FIND YOUR LOCAL CLEAN UP HERE**

**NEIGHBOUR DAY – MARCH 27**

For the last 20 years Neighbour Day is Australia's annual celebration of community, encouraging people to connect with those who live in their neighbourhood. Loneliness can affect anyone, at any time throughout their lives, and addressing loneliness across Australia is everybody's business. Getting involved in Neighbour Day is good for you and your community. **FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO.**

**MOROCCAN PUMPKIN & CHICKPEA STEW**



PREP 10 min | COOK 4-6 HRS SERVES 5

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups pumpkin, peeled and chopped
- 2 tins chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 onions, diced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 cup kale
- 1/2 cup dried figs or dates
- 2x chopped tomatoes
- 4x Dutch carrots, chopped or 2x regular carrots
- 1 cup vegetable stock

**Moroccan spice blend:**

- 1 tsp ground cumin, 1 tsp ground ginger, 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp black pepper, 1/2 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp coriander
- 1/2 tsp cayenne, 1/2 tsp allspice, 1/4 tsp ground cloves

**METHOD:** Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a pan and sauté the onion, garlic and the spice blend until onions are soft. Add to a slow cooker along with the pumpkin, chickpeas, kale, figs, tomatoes, carrots and stock. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. It will be ready when the pumpkin and carrots are soft. Serve on its own or with some rice, quinoa or sourdough. Pop it into the slow cooker and enjoy the fact that dinner is mostly done.

*Love this recipe and want more? Go to [Jo Kate Nutrition](#) Jo's course **The Nourished Family** provides you with a realistic approach to nutrition, health and cooking and will teach you foundational principles to use for the rest of your life.*



Three of Australia's best parenting blogs for 2022.



**MY CHILD MAGAZINE**

[mychildmagazine.com.au](http://mychildmagazine.com.au)

*This is a place to find not only wholesome and simple parenting reads and information, but encouragement, humour and motivation for your journey as a caregiver.* My Child Magazine is a free subscription online mag that's always there when you need it.

**KIDDIPEDIA**

[kiddipedia.com.au/parenting-blog](http://kiddipedia.com.au/parenting-blog)

*Kiddipedia is Australia's leading parenting resources website, providing useful parenting tips and all sorts of parenting information such as parenting helpline numbers, parent directory and kids events.* Use the search function to find answers and articles for any of your parenting questions instantly.

**PARENTING IDEAS | POSITIVE PARENTING**

[parentingideas.com.au/blog/](http://parentingideas.com.au/blog/)

*Parenting Ideas was founded by Australia's leading parenting educator, Michael Grose. Parenting Ideas offer positive parenting tips on child development for raising children and teenagers to be happy & resilient and building strong families.* Over the course of nearly twenty years, Parenting Ideas has become one of Australia's most trusted sources of parenting education and support.



# FOCUS: Simplifying Childhood May Protect Against Mental Health Issues

When my Dad was growing up he had one jumper each winter. One. Total. He remembers how vigilantly he cared for his jumper. If the elbows got holes in them my Grandma patched them back together. If he lost his jumper, he'd recount his steps to find it again. He guarded it like the precious gift it was. He had everything he needed and not a lot more. The only rule was to be home by dinner time. My Grandma rarely knew exactly where her kids were.

But the world has moved on since then. We've become more sophisticated. And entered a unique period in which, rather than struggling to provide enough parents are unable to resist providing too much. In doing so, we're unknowingly creating an environment in which mental health issues flourish. When I read Kim John Payne's book, *Simplicity Parenting* one message leapt off the page. Normal personality quirks combined with the stress of "too much" can propel children into the realm of disorder. A child who is systematic may be pushed into obsessive behaviours. A dreamy child may lose the ability to focus. Payne conducted a study in which he simplified the lives of children with attention deficit disorder. Within four short months 68% went from being clinically dysfunctional to clinically functional. The children also displayed a 37% increase in academic and cognitive aptitude, an effect not seen with commonly prescribed drugs like Ritalin. As a new parent I find this both empowering and terrifying. We officially have a massive opportunity and responsibility to provide an environment in which our children can thrive physically, emotionally and mentally. So, what are we getting wrong and how can we fix it?

**The Burden of too much** Early in his career, Payne volunteered in refugee camps in Jakarta, where children were dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. He describes them as, "jumpy, nervous, and hyper-vigilant, wary of anything novel or new." Years later Payne ran a private practice in England, where he recognized many affluent English children were displaying the same behavioural tendencies as the children living in war zones half a world away. Why would these children living perfectly safe lives show similar symptoms? Payne explains that although they were physically safe, mentally they were also living in a war zone of sorts, "Privy to their parents' fears, drives, ambitions, and the very fast pace of their lives, the children were busy trying to construct their own boundaries, their own level of safety in behaviours that weren't ultimately helpful." Suffering with a "cumulative stress reaction" as a result of the snowballing effect of *too much*, children develop their own coping strategies to feel safe. Parents and society are conscious of the need to protect our children physically. But sadly, we are messing up. Modern day children are exposed to a constant flood of information which they can't process or rationalise. They're growing up faster as we put them into adult roles and increase our expectations of them. So, they look for other aspects of their life they can control.

**The Four Pillars of Excess** Naturally as parents we want to provide our kids with the best start in life. If a little is good, we think more is better, or is it? We enrol them in endless activities. Soccer. Music. Martial arts. Gymnastics. Ballet. We schedule play dates with precision. And we fill every space in their rooms with educational books, devices and toys. The average western child

has in excess of 150 toys each and receives an additional 70 toys per year. With so much stuff children become blinded and overwhelmed with choice. Simplicity Parenting encourages parents to keep fewer toys so children can engage more deeply with the ones they have. Payne describes the four pillars of excess as having too much stuff, too many choices, too much information and too much speed. When children are overwhelmed, they lose the precious down time they need to explore, play and release tension. Too many choices erode happiness, robbing kids of the gift of boredom which encourages creativity and self-directed learning. And most importantly "too much" steals precious time.

**How can parents protect childhood?** Similar to the anecdote of the heat slowly being turned up and boiling the unsuspecting frog, so too has society slowly chipped away at the unique wonder of childhood, redefining it and leaving our kid's immature brains drowning trying to keep up. Many refer to this as a "war on childhood". Developmental Psychologist David Elkind reports kids have lost more than 12 hours of free time per week in the last two decades meaning the opportunity for free play is scarce. Even preschools and kindergartens have become more intellectually-oriented. And many schools have eliminated recess so children have more time to learn. The time children spend playing in organized sports has been shown to significantly lower creativity as young adults, whereas time spent playing informal sports was significantly related to more creativity. It's not the organized sports themselves that destroy creativity but the lack of down time. Even two hours per week of unstructured play boosted children's creativity to above-average levels.

**Why parents need to take charge (and simplify)** So, how do we as parents protect our kids in this new "normal" society has created? Simple, we say no. We protect our kids and say no, so we can create space for them to be kids. *No*, Sam can't make the birthday party on Saturday. *No*, Sophie can't make soccer practice this week. And we recreate regular down time providing a sense of calm and solace in their otherwise chaotic worlds. It provides a release of tension children know they can rely on and allows children to recover and grow, serving a vital purpose in child development. We filter unnecessary busyness and simplify their lives. We don't talk about global warming at the dinner table with a seven-year-old. We watch the news after our kids are asleep. We remove excessive toys and games from our toddler's room when they're sleeping. We recreate and honour childhood. Our children have their whole lives to be adults and to deal with the complexities of life, but only a fleetingly short time in which they can be kids. Silly, fun-loving kids.

Childhood serves a very real purpose. It's not something to "get through". It's there to protect and develop young minds so they can grow into healthy and happy adults. When society messes too much with childhood, young brains react. By providing a sense of balance and actively protecting childhood we're giving our children the greatest gift they'll ever receive.

Source: Gillet, Tracy. (2016, March). *Simplifying Childhood May Protect Against Mental Health Issues*. Retrieved from <https://raisedgood.com>

## PEG PLAY

**A tub of colourful plastic pegs can mean many hours of play and learning.** Learn colours and counting, improve fine motor skills and engage in experimental play. Sort the pegs by colour into different containers. Encourage your child to name the colours. If your child can count, they could count the numbers of pegs of each colour. Be playful with the pegs. See how many pegs you can fit on your sleeve or on someone else's. **Find more ideas here**



## HEALTH & SAFETY: Sensory processing difficulties

We've all experienced sensory overload at some point or another. We just don't stop to think about it, or give it a name. Sensory overload happens when something around us overstimulates one or more of our senses. That could be a loud TV, a crowded room, or a noisy, smelly cafeteria. There's suddenly too much information coming in through our senses for our brain to process. It's usually easy enough to escape the discomfort we're feeling. We leave the party, eat somewhere else, or walk out of the room where the TV is. And if not, we just put up with our discomfort. But overload is more intense and much harder to deal with for kids with **sensory processing issues**. Many everyday situations can trigger a response.

### About sensory processing difficulties

Sensory processing difficulties are a group of symptoms and related behaviours that happen when someone has trouble taking in information from their senses and responding appropriately to it. This can be information related to sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste, or information related to internal sensations in the body, like pain and movement sensations. Some children with sensory processing difficulties might behave in unusual ways, or in ways that aren't typical for their age. Others might avoid particular activities. Most children have trouble with sensory information sometimes. But when these reactions happen frequently, or for long periods of time, they can interfere with social interaction, learning, behaviour or development.

### Children with sensory processing difficulties might be:

*Oversensitive (hypersensitive)* – that is, they take in too much sensory information

*Under-sensitive (hyposensitive)* – that is, they take in too little sensory information.

Sensory processing difficulties affect up to 1 in 6 children.

### Symptoms of sensory processing difficulties: oversensitivity

Here are some examples of behaviour that you might see if your child is oversensitive, sometimes called hypersensitive.

**Sound** Your child hides or runs away from common sounds like the sound of the vacuum cleaner. Or your child is hard to settle during or after noisy activities or birthday parties.

**Sights** Your child avoids brightly lit places or avoids looking at faces or busy spaces like walls with lots of pictures. Or your child prefers dull-coloured clothes or food.

**Smell and taste** Your child walks away from strong smells like perfume or eats only bland foods.

**Touch** Your child avoids messy play, rubs hands or fingers or holds them tightly together after touching everyday objects, or refuses to wear clothes like socks with seams on the toes.

**Movement or body position** Your child avoids playground equipment like swings or monkey bars, or gets upset or feels unwell in cars or on public transport.

**Other internal sensations** Your child is upset by changes in temperature. Your child avoids having a bath or swimming, or avoids going to the toilet because she doesn't like the feeling. Or your child is hard to settle after a minor cut or scrape.

### Symptoms of sensory processing difficulties: under-sensitivity

Here are some examples of behaviour that you might see if your child is under-sensitive, sometimes called hyposensitive.

**Sound** Your child doesn't notice noises like alarms or always wants the volume on loud.

**Sights** Your child likes to watch lights go on and off, or doesn't notice changes in personal details, like someone having a new haircut.

**Smell and taste** Your child seeks out strong smells, or likes strong tastes like salty or spicy food.

**Touch** Your child doesn't respond when someone taps him on the shoulder, or he fidgets a lot or drops things that are easy to hold.

**Movement or body position** Your child doesn't like being turned upside down or stretching a lot.

**Other internal sensations** Your child doesn't seem to feel pain.

**Other signs of sensory processing difficulties** If your child has sensory processing difficulties, you might also notice that your child gets anxious or worried in busy or unpredictable environments like parties or on public transport, finds it hard to focus, gets tired, particularly in busy environments like playgrounds and shopping centres. They may have trouble getting to sleep and staying asleep, avoid tasks that involve lots of sensory experiences, like dressing herself.

**Assessment of sensory processing difficulties** If you're concerned that your child has sensory processing difficulties, it's a good idea to talk with your GP. Your GP can refer your child to a health professional with expertise in sensory processing difficulties – for example, an occupational therapist, psychologist or paediatrician.

Source: Raisingchildren.net.au. (2019, November). Sensory processing difficulties. Retrieved from <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/a-z-health-reference/sensory-processing-difficulties>



## TEACHING KIDS TO BE WATER CONSCIOUS

*With our water being exposed to pollution, climate change and a growing population, it's important to find ways to help connect children to this valuable resource so they appreciate why we need to save it. Showing them how they can make a big difference every day by reducing the amount of water they use will foster a "green" mindset that will stay with them as they grow.*



### Five Quick Ways to Teach Kids About Saving Water

- If clearing the dinner table is on their chore list, make sure they skip the rinse and put dishes directly in the dishwasher.
- Ask them to make a label for a special water bottle they can keep in the refrigerator so they don't have to run the tap until the water gets cold.
- Make sure they turn off taps tightly when they're done using them.
- If the kids need to wash their bikes or scooters, tell them to fill a bucket and use a sponge instead of keeping the hose running for the entire wash.
- If they're done with a glass of water, tell them to water the household plants instead of dumping it down the drain.

FIND OUT MORE WAYS TO SAVE WATER WITH KIDS HERE





## STEM

STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering, and maths. Skills developed by students through STEM provide them with the foundation to succeed at school and beyond. Young children learn through active exploration—and the drive to observe, interact, discover, and explore is inherent in their development.

“During the earliest years, infants and toddlers develop 700 neural connections every second,” Buchter said. “These biologically driven neurological processes and natural curiosity of how the world works make early childhood an optimal time to introduce children to scientific inquiry.”

### What does STEM look like in Early Learning Settings?

- Cooking activities
- Nature walks
- Challenging building activities
- Grocery store exploring
- Water play

**National Quality Framework** | Quality Area 1:  
*Educational Program and Practice*

**1.1 The educational program enhances each child’s learning and development.**

**1.2 Educators facilitate and extend each child’s learning and development.**

University of Nevada. (2020, January 15). The Issues: Why STEM Education Must Begin in Early Childhood Education  
Retrieved from <https://www.unlv.edu/news/article/issues-why-stem-education-must-begin-early-childhood-education>

## Nature Explorers Program

As part of our kindergarten program our centre is offering all children the unique experience to participate in our Nature Explorers program. This program runs alongside our other centre; Edens Landing Childrens Centre. Our area manager has had extensive experience developing this program and has successfully run this program over the last 2 years exploring different environment’s around the Gold Coast.

This educational program has proven to have many benefits to the children’s learning such as increased confidence, motivation and concentration, increased social, physical and language skills, deeper conceptual understandings and respect for the natural environment (Borradaile, 2006; Massey, 2004; Murray, 2004; Murray & O’Brien, 2005; O’Brien & Murray, 2008; O’Brien, 2009), increased social and imaginative play (Fjortoft, 2001; 2004) as well as more varied risk-taking behaviours and positive dispositions towards risk and challenge (Waters & Begley, 2007).

The program will run over the school terms and allows the children opportunities to explore different environment around the Logan area from the bush to the beach.



### Simon Says

Short simple activities to get some active minutes in the day.

This is a very simple fitness activity using the basic ‘Simon Says’ framework. Take turns being Simon and setting the fitness challenges. Here are a few examples to get you started:

Simon Says: Shake your whole body, jump up and down, spin around, walk like a bear on all 4s to the clothes line, hop like a frog, pretend to sit on an invisible chair 5 times, hop on your left foot, jump as far forwards as you can then jump back again.