

# OPENING THE DOORS: SHOWCASING A FAMILY DAY CARE SERVICE IN ACTION

Collaborating with professional peers is always a great sounding board for critical reflection on our own program and practices. However, to take time out from your own service to be able to see, observe and experience another service in action is difficult, if not impossible.

Community Child Care visited the home of Danielle Davich, a Family Day Care educator in Mt Eliza for Bambini Family Day Care Service. We hope this article provides you with a snapshot of another service in action and some inspiration and ideas of different ways to approach program planning, documentation and assessment, and implementing the learning outcomes into everyday practices.

A bright red door opens and Danielle welcomes me into her family day care home. The well-lit and inviting entrance instantly speaks to families, children and visitors. Photos, information and relevant signs, artworks and messages from the children are visible and promote the authenticity that this service and Danielle are all about the children and their families.

Kerri, a field worker for Bambini is present, which allows me time to speak with Danielle about her family day care service, and in particular, to get inside the mind that has created a family day care service for children that I could best describe as 'encompassing Belonging, Being and Becoming – all in a day's play!'

'After only a short time at the service I could see, feel and hear the connections between the children's environment, experiences, and interactions with each other — and the five learning outcomes in the Early Years Learning Framework.'

With the eyes of a child, I sit in the play space excited about the amount of choice and inviting areas to explore and play in. With the eyes of an educator, I immediately start processing all the learning and development opportunities that are provided in both the indoor and outdoor play spaces. I am eager to learn and share how Danielle has created a family day care service that I myself do not want to leave after finishing the interview.

We discuss the following ...



## **What were your initial thoughts when the frameworks were introduced?**

'I felt that what I was doing in my everyday practice was already aligned with the principles, practices and learning outcomes presented in the framework; but now I had the 'words' to support it. I could definitely see how people might have been daunted with the new language used. The message I would give others is to try not to be daunted by particular words in the frameworks, but rather think about what they really mean in everyday practice. It is important to break it down.'

## **Is the way you currently plan, evaluate, implement and document your program the same way you have always done it?**

'No, it has changed a bit over time since my initial ideas. I keep my own learning journal. It is a place where I can record my own ideas, reflect on my working practices and work out new ways and ideas of doing things. When I first started thinking about the ways to document and assess the children's learning in my service, I had a range of different thoughts about how I could do it. I jotted all these ideas down in my journal and from that put into action what I thought would work best. I have written the EYLF learning outcomes on a big blackboard in the kitchen-dining area where it is clearly visible and I regularly look at this for guidance and confirmation.'

## **Can you tell us about your current program planning and documentation process?**

'I decided to break down the learning frameworks and my program into topics such as independence, culture, and transition to school and so on. Within these topics I plan and implement a range of experiences that involve intentional teaching, reflecting the learning frameworks, incorporating children's interests, and drawing on their life experiences and knowledge that they bring to my service.'

'I keep a 'Group Learning Journal' that includes photos, a narrative of the experiences and comments from the children. It identifies the links to the relevant learning outcome and where we can take the learning further. The group learning journal is a great way to share with parents their child's learning, successes and daily experiences.'



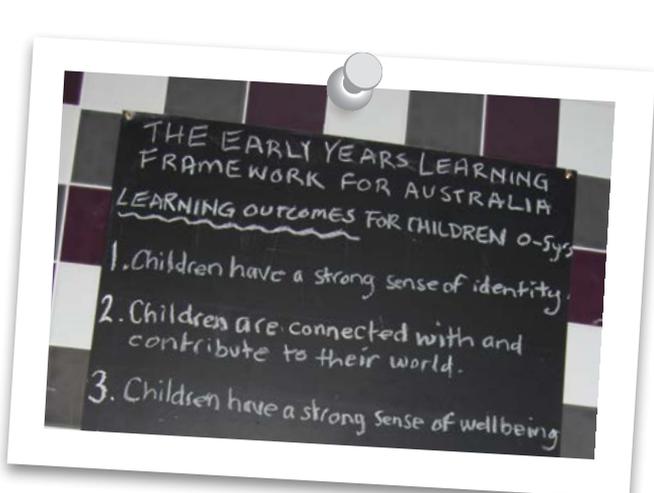
“I am a parent also, so I really reflect on what it would mean for me as a parent to have documentation of my child’s learning and development in the service to look at.”

‘I believe documenting children’s learning and development is important. It is a way to share with families their child’s daily experiences that can foster conversations in the family home. This helps bring the children’s lives to the service and vice versa. I am a parent also, so I really reflect on what it would mean for me as a parent to have documentation of my child’s learning and development in the service to look at.

‘As well as the group learning journal, I use daily emails to share and communicate with families. These are used to share photos that were taken during the day, list the activities the children participated in, what their child ate and drank, nap times, nappies and so on. It is also an opportunity to share their children’s development, record things they said and an opportunity to ask questions or provide notice of future experiences and excursions that the children will be doing. My clients [the families] love these daily emails, especially the photos of their children having so much fun!’

**How do the children and families have input in the service?**

‘Parents will often come to me with particular requests or questions about their children. I work with the parents to ensure we are both meeting the needs of their child. Some of the requests have been supporting the children’s transition to school or responding to concerns about social development. I discuss with parents and plan experiences that support the children’s wellbeing and development.





“Each morning I sit with the children and we have a chat about the day ahead. I incorporate intentional teaching with the children’s interests and requests.”

‘Each morning I sit with the children and we have a chat about the day ahead. I incorporate intentional teaching with the children’s interests and requests. For example, we have a vegetable garden outside that the children have been a part of since planting the seeds. The carrots are ready to harvest so I have this planned for the day. I then ask the children what we could do with the carrots. They have decided they want to make a carrot cake.’

**Danielle, you provide many experiences for the children that promote the cycle of life, the environment and sustainable practices and ensuring each child has a strong sense of health and wellbeing. Who supports you?**

‘I have a commitment to my own wellbeing, so I ensure that I engage in activities such as yoga to help regroup myself. I believe it is important to have a strong connection with the parents. I am lucky to have many like-minded parents who also help to support each other’s wellbeing. The field workers at Bambini are a great support. They sometimes bring ideas to me or I can chat to them about any thoughts or issues I have.’

‘My family are also a huge support. My daughter is so great with the children and has developed close relationships with several of them. My husband is an awesome help when he comes home from work and does the dishes, picks up and helps with dinner while I send emails to the parents. I couldn’t do what I do without their support!’

Sadly it is time for me to leave, but not before I watch the children collect eggs from chickens outside, harvest the carrots and take the greens off the carrots to feed back to the chickens!

Thank you to Danielle, for opening the doors to your family day care service and sharing with us your thoughts and ideas; to the children, for allowing me to share your space as I listened, learnt and watched; and to Kerri, for making the time to allow this interview to be possible.

#### **News Flash!**

*Since the interview, CCC has received the fantastic news that Danielle is the Victorian winner of the Family Day Care Australia Educator of the Year Awards.*

*Congratulations Danielle, very well deserved! 🍷*