

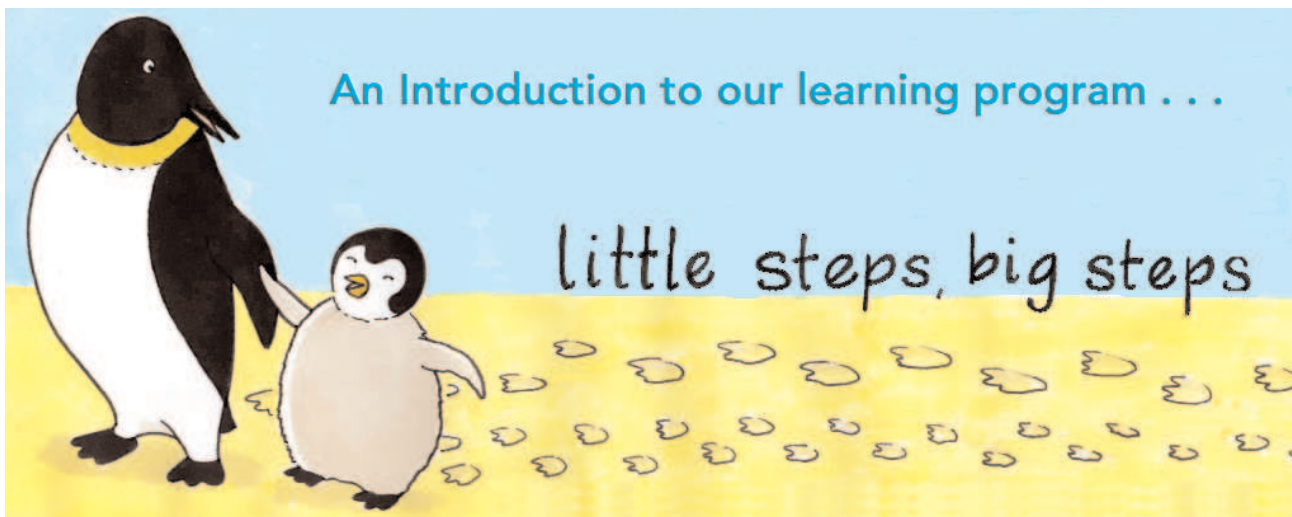


little steps, big steps

early learning and school readiness program



nursery, long day care centre and preschool for children 0-5 yrs



Not surprisingly, a lot of parents find it confusing when they first look at pre-school options for their children, the "local KU pre-school", community pre-schools, pre-schools that operate within long day care environments (such as ours) and programs offered by some private schools to name a few.

None of these programs are held to any one standard or curriculum, although there are initiatives to put some stronger guidelines in place across the different options.

Right now parents need to think critically about what each pre-school program might offer and decide if the program being considered is a "good fit" for their child and family.

The purpose of this short document is describe in broad terms our pre-school program and present its main points of emphasis.

If you have any detailed questions specific to programming or similar, please talk to your local centre director who will be happy to assist you.

We like to think this "Little Steps, Big Steps" program which we run incorporates the best of best practice*, such that our pre-school children when they arrive at school are as well prepared as they possibly can be.

We work hard with the local primary schools in the areas in which we operate to make certain that what the schools want in terms of preparedness for school is a major focus for us.

In addition we have a very solid relationship with the Macquarie University - you will probably notice students on practicum continually rotating through our centres - this helps us stay as current as possible in our thinking and methods.

How important is play to the development of children?

We believe that play is one of the most important media through which young children learn, interacting with their environment, experimenting and exploring, gaining an understanding of themselves and how they fit into the world.

At Sandcastles we provide opportunities for children to build relationships with their peers and their teachers. Within these relationships we work on substantive issues like boundaries for behavior, consequences for actions, the benefits of perseverance and so forth, we try hard through our program to enrich the lives of each of the children and with this increase children's confidence as learners.



The "building blocks" of learning:

Early literacy foundations are about pre-reading and trying to use a crayon or pencil, but equally developing literacy must also involve talking and playing. We focus on achieving a good balance across the different inputs that help to build positive learning behaviours.

For example, a child can practise many different ways of representing reality or telling a story, children love to create symbols with clay, paint, dress ups water and sand, "symbol mastery" is an important concept in the pre-reading stage.

Along with aiding in the development of the building blocks of learning, play is also a good therapy for children helping them deal with tension, anxiety, fear and anger.



School Readiness:

This is a common phrase these days you hear it used a lot, but what does it mean?

Our view is that school readiness starts a long time before a child turns 4 or 5 years old.

At Sandcastles, school readiness is an integral part of our daily learning program from our Starfish room (children under 18 months) onwards. The objective from the very beginning is to help children refine and develop skills that will stay with them.

School readiness is in effect integrated into all aspects of our learning program; everything we do at Sandcastles from infancy onwards is helping to prepare children for school.

A School will ask the following questions

1. Is your child socially ready for the experiences and challenges they will meet in the classroom and the playground?
2. Do they have the skills to sit in a group and listen without disrupting?
3. Are they able to express their wants and needs?
4. Will they be able to listen to and take instructions from an adult the teacher?
5. Can they sit for extended periods of time and concentrate?
6. Do they have the social skills to move in and out of a group?
7. Are they able to share equipment and negotiate with peers?
8. Can they contribute to group discussions and ideas allowing others equal say?
9. Do they know the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour?

At Sandcastles we will assist your child in developing skills and behaviours so that you will feel confident in answering "yes" to all of the questions above.

Learning Outcomes: 0-5 years

The following are the learning cycles that each child will achieve as they move through the rooms and classrooms at the centre.

Exploring/learning about their world

- Exploring through their senses
- Recognition of familiar faces
- Copying behaviour
- responding to queues
- Learning about their body, self awareness

Engaging/making connections with their world

- Trusting others outside the family
- Feeling secure in familiar environment
- Reaching out to interact with peers
- Social responses - what is required of me?
- Repetitive behaviour, mastering of activities and skills

Expressing sense of self image their place in the world

- Language to express their feelings
- What defines me, makes me different?
- Reflect on the impact of their behaviour on others
- Respect for environment
- Developing a sense of humour

Emerging Independence and self help skills

- Self control
- Grasping intangible concepts
- Internalising difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
- Development of imagination

Equipping preparing for future learning

- Refining relationships within society
- Building confidence and self image in relation to the group
- Consequences for actions
- Opportunities to practice life skills
- Understanding others perspectives / empathy
- Voice opinions and thoughts

Egressing bridging the gap to school

- Learning to take instruction from a teacher
- Sharing teacher's attention
- Concentration, completion of task
- Co-operating in a group situation

What can I do as a parent to prepare my child for school?

Learning doesn't have to be confined to a formal setting, as parents you are a great source of knowledge for your children.

- 😊 Read to your child
- 😊 Encourage them to recognise the letters in their name
- 😊 Read names on shops and street signs
- 😊 Discuss the number of your house
- 😊 Find numbers in registration plates on cars as you drive
- 😊 Go to the zoo, the aquarium
- 😊 Make a story from photographs
- 😊 Make a story from your children's artwork
- 😊 It is important that the male role model in a child's life takes time to read books with them
- 😊 Have a teddy bear's picnic

All of these everyday occurrences are rich experiences - building blocks of knowledge - that can be taken advantage of.



Some Common Questions:

Do emergent curriculum-based programs discourage early attempts at reading and writing?

It is a common misconception that the emergent curriculum in some way discourages early attempts at reading and writing, nothing could be further from the truth. A lot of thought and effort has gone into setting up our classrooms as "literacy rich environments", rich in print and writing materials.

The reading centre is a focus in all rooms, books and other reading materials are constantly updated, and writing and drawing materials are always on hand. Through 2010 you will see a considerable expansion in our book collection, (along with recommendations/book-lists for parents appearing on the walls. "Book-making" is also a big part of our program.

Is "big steps little steps" focused on maths?

A major focus of our learning program is to help children develop stronger memories about the information in front of them. By way of a simple example, at Sandcastles you will see children counting the number of sandwiches on a plate, but you won't necessarily see the children sitting at a desk learning the numbers 1, 2 and 3 off of a black-board. However there is no less emphasis on numeracy we just do it all a bit differently. We would regard our approach as likely to increase a child's potential for complex thinking and learning not detracting from it.

If my child shows a particular interest in reading will they be catered for?

Children learn at different rates, our program is not wholly teacher directed, narrow or with an emphasis on discrete pieces of knowledge, it is however child-centred, flexible and process-focused. Inevitably we will have some children who show particular interest in particular skills, it is not unusual to see a teacher sitting with a child one-to-one where that child might already be able to read a little bit, that is precisely what "meeting children at their level and extending them" actually means.

Is routine encouraged especially in children not far off going to school?

Yes, routine is progressed in subtle ways, but as children get older and move into the last two steps of our program, routine becomes a far more important focus; the importance of making children self-reliant in this area is noted in our "egressing" step, as children learn to work with a teacher and share a teacher's attention.

**Our Learning program is in line with the National Curriculum (The Early Years Learning Framework) and supports the new initiative in primary schools (Best Start Program).*

FRESHWATER

The Freshwater centre is located at
74-76 Lawrence Street, Freshwater NSW 2096

Hours:

Monday to Friday 7.30am - 5.45pm

CHATSWOOD

The Chatswood centre is located at
Level 4, 1 Cambridge Lane, Chatswood NSW 2067

Hours:

Monday to Friday 7.30am - 6.00pm

For more information about any centre, please see our website

www.sandcastleschildcare.com.au

or call 1300 662 497

