Two practices in childcare... what makes a difference?

Primary Caregiving

Primary or home group care is a practice where each child (and family) is assigned to a particular ‘primary carer’.

The primary carer is a consistent educator for a small group of children and takes most responsibility for the nurturing and learning needs of that group. With a consistent carer, and in a small group, young children are more likely to develop a secure attachment (bonding) relationship at childcare. Research shows that this helps them to trust, explore, feel good, begin to organise their behaviour and learn.

Primary Caregiving practices make it easier to develop trusting partnerships between educators and families, where personal information about children’s learning and development can be shared, respected and used to plan for children.

Using a curriculum framework

When educators use a curriculum framework such as the SACSA Framework (that is, the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework) there is likely to be more consistent quality across the centre, more continuity in children’s learning, more informed educators and better partnerships with parents.

The SACSA Framework states the goals that educators use to plan for and support your child’s learning and development. When you know what these goals are you can talk with educators about how they match the goals you have for your child. You can also talk with educators about what happens to assist your child’s learning and development and how your child is progressing.

What makes a difference?

The information in this brochure can help you to:

- be aware of what is important when choosing care for your child
- discuss with your child’s educators your child’s learning and development, how they spend their time and how educators plan for and track your child’s progress
- explain some indicators of quality care to others
- think about your child’s learning and development in situations outside the centre.

Where can you find more information?

Ask the educators at your centre. Each childcare centre in South Australia has copies of a book titled *We can make a difference*. This book expands on the ideas in this brochure. You may be able to borrow a copy.

Talk to your DECS District Office Early/Primary Years Learning Band Coordinator.

Go online and visit the SACSA website at [www.sacsa.sa.edu.au](http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au)

Visit the Gowrie Resource Centre, 43 Dew Street, Thebarton.
Phone 08 8234 5850

Go online and visit the National Childcare Accreditation Council’s website at [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)

Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Group
Department of Education and Children’s Services
31 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000
TEL: (08) 8226 4393
Educators make a difference

In early childhood education and care settings, the term 'educator' describes all the adults who contribute to planning the curriculum and putting it into practice. In child care, educators play a vital role in the learning and development of babies and young children.

Research tells us that there are four particular factors that make a difference:

- the strength and type of relationships between educators and children (and their families)
- the understandings educators have and the practices they use to help children learn and develop

which fundamentally contribute to:

- children’s wellbeing while they are at the centre
- children’s involvement in interactions, activities and experiences with adults and other children at the centre.

These four factors can all vary depending on what educators do.

Educators make a difference to children’s learning and development.

Relationships that make a difference are strong and positive

Educators build strong, positive relationships by:

- responding warmly and promptly to each child
- knowing each child and their family well
- paying attention to what interests children
- being consistent and positive when guiding children
- acknowledging children’s feelings
- chatting with and sharing special time with each child.

Understandings and practices that make a difference are supportive and collaborative

Educators show supportive and collaborative understandings and practices by:

- encouraging children to play
- listening carefully to children
- giving children time, places and confidence to explore and investigate place, relationships and ideas
- maintaining a safe and interesting environment where children can make choices
- being consistent and enjoying real-life activities with children.

Children’s wellbeing that makes a difference is healthy and sound

Educators support healthy and sound wellbeing by:

- ensuring that children are safe and the environment is predictable
- being consistently warm and positive towards all children and accepting children’s different temperaments
- providing experiences where children can be creative, imaginative and successful
- supporting children’s efforts to develop friendships and to play and achieve together
- asking for and respecting children’s opinions and preferences; and giving children time and encouragement to communicate their thoughts and feelings.

Children’s involvement that makes a difference is deep and focused

Educators support deep and focused involvement by:

- providing experiences that interest children and materials that can be used in different ways
- giving children choices and opportunities to make decisions
- minimising disruptions and allowing children time and space to concentrate and persist
- making sure that activities are neither too easy nor too hard for children.