



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY SCHOOLS AUTHORITY

Post Office Box 20
Civic Square
Australian Capital Territory
Postcode: 2608
Telex: ACTSA AA62600

Please address all correspondence to:
Chief Education Officer
File Reference:
Contact Officer:
Telephone:

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Narrabundah Early Childhood Education Centre (NECEC)

"What is your centre's policy on parent participation and what programs Foster this".

The Narrabundah Early Childhood Education Centre exists to serve the parents, children and community of the Narrabundah area.

More specifically NECEC:

1. Assists parents in developing the abilities of their children,
 - a) through the pre-school program.
 - b) through the child/parent/teacher groups
2. provides social and recreational activities
 - a) through parent meetings, Fund raising and Social Functions eg. Fashion show, Lunches etc.
3. Develops the parenting skills of the parents and minders,
 - a) through the child/parent/teacher groups.
4. Develops the organisational skills of the parents,
 - a) through membership of Committees.

Parents are involved in the organisation and operation of NECEC as:

1. participants in the child/parent/teacher groups
2. Volunteer helpers in the pre-school program
3. members and the executive of the parents association.
4. Members of the NECEC Advisory Committee.

In our centre we expect and encourage parents to participate in our programs at a Level at which they are comfortable by providing -

1. help and encouragement to parents in the role of parenthood.
2. opportunities to Learn more about their children and others.
3. opportunities for observing the methods of handling children used by staff working with the children.

4. opportunities for Social contact with other parents thus lessening isolation and offering a break from their own house or caravan.
5. Learning opportunities relating to early childhood development and preparation of play materials for their children.

Parents are involved in the running and organisation of the centre and Fund raising activities. They are involved in either Laundry or Fruit roster whereby general cleaning and care of the Pre-school is maintained.

Mothers and Fathers are invited to call into the centre anytime to discuss any problems they may be having or to talk about the program their child is involved in.

Through the 3 child/parent/teacher groups (each of which consists of a maximum of 15 children 0 to 3 plus years as well as their mothers or minders, a teacher and assistant) parents are encouraged to work with their children during the session, both inside and outside. They observe groups taken by teachers and the ways teachers handle situations that arise. Parents can freely discuss with staff and other parents problems that they may be having with regard to their own children. These groups also enable parents to meet others with similar interests and enable them to see their children interacting with children of the same age. Parents are an extremely important part of this program.

Every Monday afternoon has been set aside for parent use, whether it be for parent meetings (once a month) guest speakers or classes of interest to parents and friends e.g sewing, pottery etc. This has not been a success this year due, we feel, to the fact that a staff member was not available to be of help.

Most mothers of children involved in 3rd Term Thursday extended group (this involved children who will go into kindergarten beginning of 1980) have participated in this program from 8th November. This has meant they have visited the kindergarten classroom at St Benedicts or Narrabundah Primary School with their children and a teacher, as well as being involved in the program there from 1.20 till 2.30pm. The following week they have been involved in NECEC's program from 1.30 till 2.30pm. This has proved to be a worthwhile program.

As far as the wider community is concerned, anyone is welcome at discussion groups and to join the parent Association. The community can also benefit directly in that parents involved in Pre-school committees seem to acquire the necessary self-confidence to go on then to school involvement and other community based committees.

This involvement has been particularly noticeable in the case of parents living in caravan parks. At one time people were left on the edge of town and felt excluded. The pre-school sought out mothers of young children and from that beginning has developed a closer community feeling between the suburb and the caravan parks.

There is still a positive approach to migrant and indo-chinese families living in the community. Continued efforts have been made to include both children and mothers in the NECEC programs. This has resulted in children who may not have otherwise acquired any English Language doing so before the Pre-school or kindergarten year. In some cases it has also encouraged the mothers to attend English classes. NECEC has in some cases been an entry point for New Australians into community life in the suburb. This suburb can still be regarded as generally a poor socio-economic area. The number of low-rental houses attract people on pensions. Single mothers and recently arrived immigrants. This is a population with very limited spending power. Many fees have to be waived or reduced on grounds of hardship. The centre is therefore hard-pressed to maintain these programs and remain financial, hence the continued emphasis on fund raising by the association. However we consider that the extra programs and benefits derived from these. For parents and the community as a whole, merit support.

It could be argued that NECEC is at the core of a network that radiates into further community involvement, thus the impact of the centre is felt far beyond the actual number of parents attending and acts as a stimulus for other community activities.

Future recommendations

1. Parent program on Monday Afternoon.
Although we see this as being a valuable program to continue next year, we could suggest a staff member be responsible, in conjunction with parents, for the running of this.
2. Thursday's Extended group.
We would recommend that this program with appropriate changes begins early 1980 and that parent involvement start much earlier than November.

These recommendations we hope will become policy in 1980 but as yet have not been approved.