Early Learning Centre Philosophy

The Canberra Girls Grammar School Early Learning Centre strives to provide an educational program of the highest quality for girls and boys aged 3 to 5. Central to this is the creation of an environment that is welcoming, stimulating and supportive of both our students and families.

Our Philosophy focuses on nine Core Areas: Administration, Learning/Curriculum, Educators, Children, Communication, Families, Relationships, Physical Environment, and Community. Cumulatively, the values and beliefs asserted in these Core Areas provide an all-encompassing picture of our unique Centre.

Administration

The Early Learning Centre (ELC) is part of Canberra Girls Grammar School (CGGS). We are governed by the School Board and its delegates, including the Principal, Head of Junior School, and ELC Coordinator. We are an Anglican School; we support and actively promote Christian values with our students.

We work closely with National and Territory specific agencies to ensure we meet all required regulations and standards, including those associated with the National Quality Framework, National Quality Standard and Early Years Learning Framework.

As an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, we offer the Primary Years Program (PYP) and we are guided by the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

We have clearly written policies and procedures in place to provide educators and parents/carers with consistent information about the day to day functioning of the ELC. Policies and procedures are open to ongoing reflection and review. Feedback from all stakeholders is both welcome and encouraged.

The professional conduct of our educators is guided by the CGGS Code of Conduct, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics.

Learning/Curriculum

As an IB World School offering the PYP, we aim to “develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” (IBO Mission Statement).

Offering the PYP in the ELC ensures a seamless transition into the PYP program at the Junior School and provides a framework to ensure the holistic development of young children. Our educational program directly addresses the key learning areas of emergent literacy and numeracy, fine motor, gross motor, creative, musical, scientific and cognitive development. A strong emphasis is placed on the social and emotional development of all children in the ELC. Opportunities to develop independence and self-help skills are also highly valued. In planning for learning experiences across all areas, educators use a planning cycle which incorporates assessing prior knowledge, observation, delivery, formative assessment, summative assessment, critical evaluation and review.

We believe that learning is a lifelong process, and that children, educators and parents/carers are all in the process of learning and growing. We believe learning is a
social and shared process and that children learn with and from those around them, including educators, peers, parents/carers and family members. We believe that all of these individuals scaffold children's learning to promote new understandings and the acquisition of new skills.

We believe that children benefit from a range of teaching and learning strategies, including explicit teaching, intentional teaching, open inquiry, guided inquiry, hands on exploration, play, and trial and error. We also acknowledge that, at times, children need time and space to acquire and consolidate new skills and understandings.

We believe that learning experiences must be meaningful and purposeful. Inquiry based learning, through which children are able to investigate, explore and discover freely, is central to our learning philosophy. Play is the most important process through which young children interact and co-construct their learning. We ensure that the curriculum content is organised and planned for so that “play” is the primary focus.

We believe each child brings their unique background and breadth of experience to their learning, and that the prior knowledge and individual learning style of each child should be respected and catered for. We offer a differentiated curriculum which is sensitive to the individual needs of each child and their mode of learning. In adopting this view, we consider both a child’s strengths and areas requiring support.

**Educators**

Educators in the ELC are highly qualified and possess detailed knowledge about young children’s learning and development. We value the knowledge our educators bring from both tertiary education and relevant work and life experience. Our educators are purposeful in the way they design and deliver the learning program. Educational programs are planned collaboratively in year level groups, and in class specific teams, and involving consultation with the Educational Leader and Curriculum Coordinator. Educators acknowledge that their role varies depending on the situation and needs of the children. Educators facilitate, guide, support, scaffold, teach, observe, redirect, challenge, and intervene as required. Educators are highly cognisant of their fundamental role in ensuring that the learning environment is conducive to making children feel safe, secure and supported.

Qualities valued in all staff at the ELC include being fair, inclusive, compassionate, innovative, reflective and passionate. All staff members are committed to working as a team and collaboration is highly valued. All staff are committed to ongoing professional learning and are supported by the school in these endeavours.

**Children**

We believe that children are unique individuals who have a natural ability to think, wonder, create, reason and imagine. We believe they are capable and competent individuals, who are developing the ability to be autonomous, self-aware and socially competent. We acknowledge that these skills are developing and children require the support and guidance of trusted, sensitive and knowledgeable educators.
We believe that children learn at their own pace. They require ongoing opportunities to engage with a wide range of familiar and novel experiences in order to learn and grow. We believe that children learn best through meaningful, play-based experiences and by engaging with others, both educators and peers, in a variety of situations and groupings.

In order to maximise young children’s full potential, we believe that young children must feel safe, secure, respected and supported in their learning environment.

**Communication**

We believe that communication is fundamental to our work. Clear, open and respectful communication is expected between all parties at all times, including staff, children, parents/carers and family members. ELC staff work to ensure that communication is professional, positive, honest and culturally sensitive at all times. Communication with children is of particular importance and educators and staff are aware of the impact of their language (verbal and body language), volume and tone, and work to ensure all aspects are respectful and appropriate when communicating with children.

We believe frequent communication between educators and parents/families is important for children’s learning, wellbeing and development. Within the ELC, communication between educators and parents/carers occurs in a variety of ways, including verbal, written, online and printed, and may be formal or informal. Communication may be initiated by either educators or parents/carers. All staff work to develop strong relationships with families to promote open, reciprocal communication between home and school, in order to promote the best interests of each child.

**Families**

We value the important role that family plays in the life of each child. We value the diversity present in our community, and welcome families of various backgrounds, compositions, and faiths. While our educational programs are offered in English, we respect the importance of a child’s cultural heritage, and support parents/carers to maintain their home language/s.

We respect the intricate and detailed knowledge that parents/carers have of their child. We believe that each child’s development and education is optimised by parents/carers and educators working together.

We recognise that families include a range of individuals including grandparents/carers, extended family members and friends. We welcome the involvement of these important people, with approval from parents/carers. Parents/carers and family members have regular opportunities to be involved in the educational program, and are encouraged to do so.

**Relationships**

We believe that relationships are fundamental to the well-being of our staff, students and families. We believe relationships are best built on foundations of trust, mutual respect, confidentiality and impartiality. ELC staff work to demonstrate
professionalism in all relationships, including with other staff, children and parents/carers.
We believe that the relationship an educator builds with a child is critical for the child’s well-being, learning and development and that opportunities for learning at the ELC are maximised when children have strong, positive relationships with their educators. We work to create relationships with children that are nurturing, playful, supportive, compassionate, respectful and accepting.
We acknowledge the unique relationship that educators have with parents/carers and view the relationship between the two as a partnership. We acknowledge that educators have a unique role in providing support, information and education to parents/carers in some circumstances.
Staff within the School, including class teachers, single subject teachers, learning support staff and administration staff, develop professional relationships and share information in order to promote the best interests of each child and ensure continuity of care.

**Physical Environment**
We believe that the environment is the “third teacher” and should be comfortable, welcoming and aesthetically pleasing at all times. We believe children have the right to learn in an environment that is safe and hygienic, well maintained and well resourced, and one that is designed specifically to meet their needs as a young child. We believe that the physical environment should be inclusive of all children. We organise the physical environment in particular ways in order to offer a range of experiences catering for the differing needs of all children, and allow all children to maximise their participation in the program.
We believe young children have a basic right to feel safe and secure in their learning environment. To this end, we strive to create an environment in which children feel they belong and are cared about and where expectations and experiences are fundamentally consistent and predictable.

**Community**
We believe that there are positive outcomes for children and families when a strong school community is present. Parents/carers and families of the ELC are encouraged to develop relationships with other families within the school community, and are provided with structured opportunities to do so.
The School community, including the ELC, is connected to wider communities, including local, national and international (global) communities. These connections enable us to raise awareness of social, humanitarian and justice issues, and promote internationally minded citizens.
We utilise agencies and members of the local community as a resource to support and enhance our learning program in purposeful and meaningful ways. We access professional therapists, support agencies and counsellors as required.
In summary, at the Canberra Girls Grammar School Early Learning Centre we believe in the unique and special nature of early childhood. We value the opportunity we have to be a positive influence on young children’s well-being, development and education, and embrace the opportunity to support parents/carers in the care and education of their children. We strive for excellence and to be a service of the highest integrity and quality.