

Lobethal Community Kindergarten

# 2016 Annual Report

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*"It is through others that we develop into ourselves" Vygotsky*



## *2016 Annual Report*

2016 started off at a very different pace than we were used to. Having only half of the children, meant that we ran a half time centre. Whilst this was certainly strange, it was a wonderful opportunity for us to all build deep relationships with each other and to push the boundaries of innovation around our ongoing focus of "Providing quality learning environments".

We quickly learned that this group were a curious bunch! The questioning, noticing and wondering were evident from day one, which excited us no end. We used this as an opportunity to build and extend children's thinking and encourage the development of powerful learning dispositions. We set up some routines and rituals which helped us frame our thinking and develop our executive function patterns that support powerful learning and thinking. At group times children were encouraged to use their impulse control to 'hold their thought', have some 'wait time', do and think multiple things at once and use calming and mindfulness techniques to focus their thinking. We saw the children's dispositions and skills develop incredibly over their kindy year, which upon reflection, taught us a lot as educators about the importance of developing these rituals at the earliest of stages.

Our learning program was as exciting, fun filled and challenging as ever. We had some broad over arching themes, but ultimately allowed the children to decide on the how, what and why behind curriculum decision making.

Our over arching themes were conceptualised as a rainbow as follows:

Term 1: Belonging, Confidence and Curiosity

Term 2: Relationships with Community, Connections with Nature

Term 3: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Mind, Healthy Attitudes, Healthy World

Term 4: Wellbeing and Transitions

Our year was certainly a special one and one which I referred to constantly throughout the year as a gift. Having time and the resources to connect deeply with children and each other is rare in our current system. The relationships built and the deep learning experiences shared by all are certainly something that will be treasured by us all.

Here are some highlights of a wonderful year of love, joy and learning....

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### *Parent/ Family Support*

Our Parents and families played a big part of our learning program in 2016. We had so many families come and help with clean up, laundry, donations of goods and the all round support of excursions and events was staggering. There were only a handful of days across the year that we didn't have someone in to clean up at the end of the day and there was never a week when our kindy washing wasn't done. We truly do appreciate all of this help and support and acknowledge that this help enabled us

to focus on our core business of quality teaching and learning.

We were also lucky enough to have some parents come and share their skills with us. We had Chase's Mum come in and talk to us about dental hygiene, Landon's Mum came and shared her skills about being a map-maker. Lucy's mum also came to bush

kindy and showed us how to abseil and told us all about rock climbing! Tobi's Mum, Liz also came in to be a teacher- that was pretty cool!



### *Every Child, Every Day...*

This was a major focus in our 2016 Quality Improvement Plan. We wanted our children's needs, interests and learning to be at the centre of our programming and decisions. Establishing this process enabled us to have a non-negotiable measure to ensure that each and every child was discussed by all available educators each afternoon at our daily reflections meeting. The information obtained gave us powerful data to make informed decisions in relation to children's individual learning plans, intervention and relationships. This is now an embedded part of our practice and will be carried on in 2017.

### *Making Learning Visible*

This was also another major focus for us in 2016. Making learning visible to our children, families and each other is an important part of us developing an image of ourselves as powerful learners and understanding and respecting the important work we do as learners and educators. In May,





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we had a closure day and attended a workshop by Wendy Lee, where she shared with us the thoughts, theories and ideas behind the New Zealand approach to learning stories. This was indeed a game changer for us all. We left the workshop feeling inspired and brave about writing and sharing learning stories and documentation. From that day onwards, we reviewed and consequently changed how we use our 'Learning journey Books' with children and made them far more accessible to families and children. we feel that this gave our children and families far more ownership of these wonderful records of learning.



We also worked on creating displays and documenting children's thinking and learning. We created a 'Wonder-Wall' where we could park children's ideas and wonderings, along with a mathematics/ numeracy display space and a spot to display newly written learning stories. We re-introduced the 'Table of Learning' which was set up at the end of each day and although this was a great way for children and educators to share learning experiences that occurred that day, the most successful way of connecting with our families was through our closed Facebook group. This group was a way for educators and families to connect throughout the day or retrospectively. We could communicate and also share the wonderful learning experiences in real time. This quickly became our major form of communication with our families. It is certainly an embedded part of our daily reporting, communication and reflection and will be carried on in 2017.



In term 3 staff created a learning web, showing all of the amazing planned and incidental learning that happens at kindy. We added to this at the end of each day/week as we reflected on our program. We are challenged for space, so weighing up where to display things vs. the sensory overload that displays can have on some of our learners is an ongoing issue for us. We decided to use our outside verandah area as a programming display space. We will continue this in 2017 and review its effectiveness over the year.



A major part of sharing our learning journey is our responsibility to light the flame for others in our community. With this in mind, our Bush kindy program received incredible media attention in 2016. In June, staff were invited to speak about our bush kindy program on the morning show with Ali Clarke, sharing the power and advantages of nature play. A wonderful addition to this was that past parent rang the show and contributed their own wonderful stories about their child's Lobethal kindy bush kindy and nature play experiences. What fabulous advocacy!



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Along with a major focus article, Nell also took on the role of coordinating a fortnightly spot in The Adelaide Hills Courier newspaper. This was a wonderful opportunity for our children to share their learning and theories with others through drawings, quotes and photos. We received wonderful feedback from a wide range of community members about this initiative. Our Lobethal kindy Bush Kindy junior reporters did us all proud! Fingers crossed we can continue this into 2017.



### ***Nature Connect- BUSH KINDY!***

Where do we start sharing the successes of this program? It's truly hard to quantify. The program took on its own energy, propelled by our supportive parents and incredible children. At the commencement of our nature connect program, we asked our families to choose how often they would like to access the bush kindy program. Our thinking was we would go there once a fortnight as we had done in previous years. No way, not this group. They voted with dots and the results were a resounding option for once a week! They were keen for this, the children were prepared and we were pumped.... Bush Kindy 2016 was go! We ended up spending 40% of our kindy time at Bush kindy in terms 2 and 3 due to us running a few extra back to back sessions.



#### **Here are some fun Bush Kindy 2016 FACTS:**

- We inducted 72 people into our program to help with supervision and the implementation of the learning program
- We had 28 educators come and observe bush kindy in action



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- We had two visits from the learning Improvement division
- We had International play consultant, Niki Buchan spend the day with us and then followed up with another visit to our kindy as she LOVED our work!
- We are going to feature as a case study for best practice in Niki Buchan's new book
- We have our very own Bush kindy pal!
- We have created our very own Bush kindy short film (very short)- to be released soon!
- We conducted two seperate educator research inquiries whilst out at Bushland Park
- 100% of parents valued our program and found the communication and organisational processes easy to follow.



### Numeracy Inquiry

Our Numeracy Inquiry was a result of our staff team exploring the Literacy and Numeracy Indicators. as part of this learning and exploration, staff wanted to explore the question...

***"How can we support children to become highly skilled and curious noticers?"***

This exploration was around us focussing on noticing, one of the numeracy learning processes. We focussed on 'Noticing the Noticing'.

Staff all contributed to the inquiry, completing surveys, performing, collecting and collating observations. Together, we attended Professional development and created a checklist for a noticing toolkit and some resources to support noticing. We will use these tools and continue our explorations into noticing in 2017.





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### Involvement Inquiry

Each year, staff commit to using the Respect, Reflect, Relate resource to analyse, review and improve our practice. this year we decided to use the resource to look at Improvement. we knew from our own observations and feedback that our children were more involved in the bush. meaning that they were focussed, engaged and committed to the play experiences they were involved in. We used the scales to measure the involvement levels of the children in the bush and also used the scales to measure the involvement levels back at kindy. We measured a random group of children and also a focus group of children. This focus group were simply children that we noticed took longer to become involved in play scenarios or sometimes found social interactions and communication tricky.



The results were as expected. The involvement levels were measured from 1-5. 5 being totally involved, 1 being not at all involved in the activity or play. All observations are gathered, then added and dived by the amount of observations to get an average score.

Normal Kindy	
Focus Group	Average Score: <b>3.291</b>
Random Group	Average Score: <b>4.0</b>

Bush Kindy	
Focus Group	Average Score: <b>3.89</b>
Random Group	Average Score: <b>4.5</b>

What was evident was that the learning environment in the bush allowed those children in the focus group to interact with each other easily, use symbolic play and provided them with many opportunities to easily enter into and out of play situations.

This was fabulous information for us to take back to kindy. We plan to use this information to look at the learning environments and opportunities for children with communication difficulties and sensory needs. How can we replicate this into regular kindergarten? As a staff team , we constantly ask this question and certainly try and do this on a daily basis. I feel this is a wonderful opportunity to inquire into in 2017.

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Many other findings were also discovered through this process. We looked at gender, physical vs. dramatic play and areas at bush kindy that promote this. We noted areas and play scenarios that promoted oral language development. We can use this data to help us provide stretch for children and plan our bush kindy days to enable children to access environments inline with their social, physical, sensory and developmental needs in mind. It certainly is fascinating stuff!

### *Site Improvements*

- We had our Office area revamped during the term 1 holidays. We had new storage, office furniture and data points installed
- We purchased a new coloured photocopier to assist with wireless printing off of our iPads. A great support for our documentations and assessment processes.
- We had our gazebo transformed into a mud kitchen
- Rear Wall brace erected, making our digging patch fully functional again- yay!
- New fence erected on kindy boundary- funded by kindy
- Manchurian Pear tree removed due to safety risk
- trenching done for the plumbing to mud kitchen.

*Jobs still in final stages of planning/construction*

- Vertical garden on rear brace wall
- Plumbing from rainwater tank to the mud kitchen







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### Community Connections



We aren't called Lobethal COMMUNITY kindergarten for nothing!

Our links with our community were as strong as ever! We visited local schools, engaged in Professional Learning communities with educators from our Torrens Valley partnership and with Lobethal P.S. We visited local shops, went on short excursions, we also planned to visit every child's house on a bus but due to flooding this wasn't possible.



We had Bunnings come and set up a worm farm with our children and Volunteers from Volunteers Australia and Boral come and beautify our garden and dig our trenches for our mud kitchen. Hughes constructions supported our major fundraiser, so too did Kloses supermarkets.

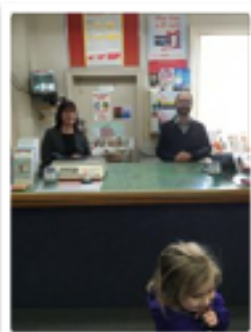
We held sausage sizzles, held major fundraising events at a local winery, and held an election day bake-sale.

We visited our elderly friends at Restvale retirement village and shared with them some of our favourite songs and stories. We also had our Grandparents come to visit for Grandparents day! We worked with the Adelaide Hills Council, Friends of Bushland park, Trees for life and the Rotary and Lions club to pull together funds and resources for our sustainability initiatives. We also will continue working with them to try and get our neighbouring park fence erected.

We worked with Niki Buchan, organised two conferences at our local Recreation Clubs for educators from across Adelaide.

We also, had visits from emergency services- some not always planned ;) but always appreciated!

Our Volunteer award was awarded to Chris Klaer (Bush Kindy Pa) and Cath Thomas for their exceptional contributions to our Bush Kindy program.



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### *Conclusion*

Reflecting upon 2016, it is clear that it has been a year of incredible growth and learning. The fact that we had 33 children enabled us to take risks and explore learning opportunities to build our capacity as educators. Our children's curiosity, enthusiasm and resilience supported our risk taking and taught us so much about the power of quality learning environments.

Our achievements and successes are in part due to the partnership we have with our wonderful community. The unwavering support we receive and the advocacy for our bush kindy and our nature pedagogy is the stuff dreams are made of.

Thanks also to our support services team Kathy Kleinschmidt and Katherine Boorman for their guidance and support of our delivery and work with children with additional needs. Thanks also to the Torrens Valley partnership leadership team for their belief, support and educational leadership.

Our staff have been exceptional contributors of quality teaching and learning experiences in 2016. To Nell Ward, Janice Jenkin, Nic Wood, Amie Longford, Ness Curry and Mel Randall, your high quality program delivery, commitment to excellence, risk taking, deep love of what you do and the strong relationships you built are a director's dream! Thank you for all that you give and do and are.

To the children and families of Lobethal kindergarten in 2016. Thanks for coming on the most exciting, fun filled, challenging, rewarding and wet and rainy ride! You have inspired us, made us laugh, cry, squeal with joy and discover 'wonderful' over and over again. It is through you that we have developed into ourselves. For that we are extremely grateful.

Lee Munn