



Bold Park School Philosophy

BOLD PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Philosophy

The philosophy of Bold Park Community School [BPCS] holds at its core the right of the child to participate in a learning environment which promotes mutual respect, shared learning, reflectivity, creativity, imagination and problem solving and participation in the life of the community. The school's innovative educational philosophy seeks to consider the whole child not in isolation, but in the context of a community of learners.

In striving to provide this learning environment for children and families the pedagogical practice is informed by the educational theory of social constructivism and inspired by the educational practice of the educators in Reggio Emilia. The learning theory of social constructivism proposes that knowledge is actively constructed by learners in response to interactions with the environment and that meaning and understanding grow out of social encounters. In addition to this theoretical foundation, the staff at the school seek to remain informed on current and innovative research conducted by contemporary educators who set about to study childhood and how children can best be supported in their growth to be happy, healthy and active contributors to society.

In our journey towards developing a school with respectful learning environments for families and children the following has inspired the school:

1. An acknowledgment that any education is founded on values.

At BPCS we aim to create a community where children will respect and value their families and the society in which they live; where children respect, know and value themselves and are comfortable with the challenges that lie ahead. Therefore, there is an emphasis on the development of interpersonal skills and self-regulation, understanding and valuing social justice and mutual respect in everything that is undertaken.

2. The social constructivist practise of the educators in Reggio Emilia, Northern Italy.

The Reggio educators hold an image of the child as strong and capable. We too consider children, as unique individuals who are powerful contributors to their own learning, not empty vessels ready to be filled with knowledge. For this reason purposeful learning experiences that touch the child's interest, curiosity or motivation to learn are pursued and the curriculum outcomes weaved into these. The Reggio educators promote the concept of "100 languages of learning". We support this by also valuing equally, the varied and authentic ways in which children make sense of their learning, wonderings, researches and discoveries. These 'languages' may include words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, dramatic play and music. The 'Reggio Approach' has been adapted to our Perth context and is not aimed at copying the Reggio Emilia schools of Italy.

3. A belief that children need to feel valuable, capable, unique and therefore safe and supported by their environments in order to learn.

Our classrooms are inclusive environments for children to learn and allow for a flexible approach to address individual needs within the group. This is based on the knowledge that children are not all the same. Just as children's growth occurs at different rates so too, do children learn at different rates. Children respond to different experiences and have different learning styles. The developmental approach of the WA Curriculum Framework accommodates these needs. For this reason, at any one time different children may be working on different tasks. Learning is rarely whole-class and static but rather small group, dynamic and often noisy. Children will have varied experiences within the same classroom. Their portfolios may look very different to others from that same class.

4. A belief that there is power in collaborative and peer-based learning.

As such our classrooms are multi-aged community classes that may allow for children to experience being both the eldest and the youngest of a group. There is plenty of opportunity for children to work together; planning, sharing ideas, reflecting; helping their peers and in turn being helped by peers. Children are encouraged to work in collaboration as opposed to competition.

5. A belief that reflection and metacognition are required in the pursuit of understanding and an ethic of excellence.

Children are encouraged to reflect and discuss the process of their learning. They are encouraged to ask questions, relate experiences and to express feelings and opinions. By encouraging meta-cognitive (thinking about thinking) practise and an ethic of excellence, we support the children to identify strategies and skills that will assist them to reach deeper levels of understanding and communication as they strive to do the best they can. This helps the child to make appropriate choices when engaging in learning experiences and transferring this learning to experiences outside the classroom. So, while there are quiet times for reading and other work, there is also a considerable amount of time for talking as children make sense of their experiences through discussion and social interaction.

6. A belief that the best learning occurs in authentic and integrated experiences.

The school uses the eight learning areas outlined in the WA Curriculum Framework (The Arts; English; Health & PE; LOTE (Language other than English); Mathematics; Science; Society & Environment; and Technology & Enterprise) "...as guides to the construction of a comprehensive, broad and balanced curriculum rather than using them to divide up the curriculum and create narrow and artificial boundaries across learning areas. Emphasis on particular learning outcomes may vary according to phases of development." (WA Curriculum Framework, p28) For example, literacy and numeracy learning is integrated within the individual and group project work when and wherever possible. The teaching of skills depends on the needs of the individual and the group as well as the developmental readiness of the child.

7. A belief that sustainable healthy lifestyle participation provides the foundation for life-long practices, as exemplified through the Bluearth programmes and REmida initiative.

Bluearth is the school's physical education programme. The school does not have an emphasis on competitive team sports but rather we believe in equipping children with a positive attitude to physical activity through enjoyable and personally satisfying physical activity experiences. These also support children in developing the physical and mental skills they need to pursue the sports and activities they may wish to follow in their local community. REmida is a creative reuse centre established by the staff and families of BPCS that sources clean waste from local manufacturers for the use in creative and educational programmes. Many of the classroom resources are REmida materials.

8. A belief that place-based and nature-based education plays a critical role in children's learning.

It is increasingly recognised that providing children with positive experiences within their local community and natural surroundings (place based; nature based) can serve to promote the health and well being not only of our children but our communities both locally and globally. As much as possible we connect our students with the local community. We see the community as a vital partner in the collaborative learning process so we take the children out into the community and bring the community into the school on an ongoing basis through excursions and incursions. As and when possible, we connect and encourage children's investigations and research into their immediate natural world.

9. A belief that teachers are researchers.

Each classroom has one qualified teacher and one teaching intern. They work together as co-teachers to provide a social constructivist environment for our teaching staff and to explore the power of this learning. We see teaching staff as researchers, who model life-long learning as a way of life. In support of this, the school provides weekly professional development on Wednesday afternoons, together with workshops and conferences hosted by BPCS. This allows our staff to not only access excellent PD opportunities but also to share our teaching and research experience with the wider community.

10. A belief that establishing a genuine partnership with parents, characterised by mutual respect and confidence, provides a collaborative learning process.

We see families, teaching staff and children as equal partners in the learning process and need all parties to contribute to the school community in a positive and engaged manner through school educative forums, reading groups etc. Bold Park Community School attempts to forge close links with parents in a partnership of mutual respect for each other's unique role in the education of the child.

These ten inspirations, or beliefs, form the basis of the educational philosophy at BPCS. It means that our classrooms may look, feel and behave very differently to the classrooms that parents may have experienced themselves or seen in other schools. There will not be regular classroom testing. This means that your child will not be compared to others in their class and given a ranking. We prefer to monitor children in a more authentic way. We use a range of methods in order to gain an understanding of where a child is on their developing continuum. These include teacher observations, images, conversations, rubrics, developmental continua (First Steps from 3-5 years), and individual snapshots based on the WA Curriculum Framework (6-15 years).

It is also necessary for families to understand that whilst BPCS believes that traditional testing such as the compulsory National Testing (NAPLAN) in Years 3, 5, 7 & 9 sits outside our educational philosophy, the children in these year levels do sit this compulsory testing each year. Additionally, at the same time as this National Testing, the children in Years 4, 6 and 8 will sit EasyMark Diagnostic Tests in order to provide diagnostic information to teaching staff, and provide children with some experience in testing.

Families also need to understand that homework is not set in the Primary school at BPCS, although occasionally children will want to continue with their research, practice skills or extend their learning outside of school so they may bring articles of interest home from time to time. Once children reach Middle School, it does become an expectation that homework is a part of the student's learning culture. However, this is only with work that will extend student knowledge and interests through research and practice and the refining of skills that are essential to sustaining their progress.

It is also important for families to recognise the essential role that open and transparent communication between families and the school plays in support of the child in their learning and for families to feel confident about what is happening in the classrooms and to solve any problems. We ask that parents utilise the school website, classroom learning journals, and information evenings to keep informed on school and classroom events. The school has in place communication channels for parents including the teaching staff, team leaders, parent representatives, management team, parent committee members, and we ask that you use them to keep communications mutual.

Finally, the school seeks to support children to become individuals who know how to listen, who acknowledge and respect diverse points of view, who work with others to solve problems, who can interpret and understand the world in increasingly complex ways and communicate this understanding to others in many different ways. The school seeks to provide opportunities for children to experience depth, meaning and joy in their learning.

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that if we are going to educate children in this manner, where children are given time to plan, revisit, make mistakes, correct mistakes, talk with each other, invest in their work; then we must also accept that this will take time. We must begin to look with a bigger view at the progress and development of a child. Viewing the progress of the individual child as a developmental continuum that stretches across grade levels and across subject areas. We must consider that the education of a child goes beyond easily observable and measurable behaviours and must include the very difficult to measure areas of imaginative thinking, creative self-expression, decision-making, problem solving, attitude to learning and self-concept.

Parent Declaration

I/We have read this Parent Interview Document and understand the philosophical foundation on which BPCS has been built. We are satisfied with the explanation that has been provided to us in this document and/or interview.

I/We support the community element of the school and will contribute as fully as possible in this aspect.

I/We understand that the school's direction reflects the school's philosophy and that all decisions taken by BPCS Parents Advisory Council and BPCS Management will be made in good faith and for maintaining Bold Park's unique educational programme.

Documents that parents need to commit to reading are:

- Parent Handbook – on the website
- School Policies – on the website
- Class learning journals, documentation and snapshots provided by the teaching staff during the year

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

BPCS Rep: _____