

PARENT FORUM MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday June ^{22nd} 2011

PRESENT: Catherine Checuti, Andrew, Maree, Angela Humphries, Daniel McCartney, Kelly, John

MINUTES: Meeting commenced at 6.15 pm and concluded at 7:40pm

CAMP QUALITY FUNDRAISER

Maree explained that the staff had engaged in a Fundraiser for Camp Quality to support children and families of children suffering with cancer. Staff from each room had a friendly competition to see which room raised the most funds. The Busy Bees won this contest with \$146 followed by the Possums with \$144 and the Bunyips with \$124. This was a great contribution by the staff to raise money for such a worthy cause. WE were surprised by the competitive nature of each team as it was a fun activity for all the children and the staff. We had a visit from Camp Quality on Monday 6th June and the children were able to see that children with cancer and adults with cancer can look different from themselves. They learnt about the story of friendship and how important it was to have friends when people are unwell. The power of friendship is really important to children and helps people recover.

This was a staff initiative and we are really appreciative of the support from families. We have forwarded a cheque to camp quality thanking them for their support. Maree, John and Kelly explained that as a centre we had undertaken the biggest morning Tea in the past, but over the last two years we have decided to donate to Camp Quality for children who are unwell. Last we raised just over \$120 for this cause and this is the first year that all the staff and rooms became involved in such a worthy cause.

John explained that as a centre we have a lot of people requesting donations for particular items and sponsorship. We have recently donated money to the Children hospital at Westmead to help support the publishing of a KIDS activity book that is given as a free resource for children in hospital who are sick. This is a worth while cause and support children and families which is at the centre of our business. The recommendation came from a parent and we were really happy to support this.

ROOM FEEDBACK SPECIFIC GOALS

Kelly, Maree and John gave feedback to parents about what room staff were developing as their main goals for their rooms over the next three months. These were providing to handout for parents so that they could openly discuss and take away with them the focus for each room. Catherine Checuti commented that the goals and learning at the centre were really important and that Chloe who has attended the centre last year was the only child at her school this year who was able to write her last name and her first name. The school commented that she must have attended a good centre as she had attended kindergarten with great skills. Catherine commented that she was really

pleased and that it was good that learning and the stimulus areas were taking place so that children were learning a variety of things from week to week.

BABY BUNYIPS

During the month of May, the Bunyips enjoyed learning about various countries and cultures from all around the world. The highlight for us was however the Multicultural show. It was great to see the Bunyips attend so well. They all enjoyed dancing to lots of different music styles and seeing such beautiful costumes and masks.

Our main focus recently has been on language, and encouraging the children's expressive language skills. We have been reading lots of extra stories, and by adding lots of photos and pictures to our felt board. The Bunyips have responded well to this and have taken a greater interest in reading as individuals in the book corner. Music is also a fantastic way to present language and is definitely a favourite activity in our class. We will continue working on language throughout the next few months. Colours is also our next focus. To assist children in learning their colours we are asking that the Bunyips wear a set colour each day of the week. We will then focus on that one colour each day through stories, craft, objects etc. Staff will also be providing activities on pets and providing lots of sensory activities, as the children at this age love to feel and "taste" EVERYTHING!!!.

POSSUMS

As the possum room has a wide age gap we have begun to split into two groups. A younger group and an older group. This allows the children to learn and achieve the goals that they are up to; completing activities which helps them develop and progress.

All Possums are Learning towards:

- **Departing from our parents quickly - sitting with the group**
- **Feeding independently**
- **Toileting**
- **Taking our own shoes off**
- **All verbal communication- using our words more**
- **Learning our primary colours**
- **Learning our shapes**
- **Counting 1-10**
- **Sitting and listening during all group times- large and small.**
- **Joining in during group times**
- **Listening to our carers**
- **Following instructions – 2 part**
- **Interacting with peers**

Some of the possums have already achieved some of these goals for those children we are progressing to learn patterns and learn to recognise their own names.

Busy Bees

The busy bee's room have been working on identifying our first and last names. All the children are now competent in doing this, and are also learning to verbally say their full names. The children have also been practicing their colours; most children are able to identify all primary colours and some secondary. The children preparing for school are now able to recognise and identify the numbers 1-10.

All the busy bees have been practicing writing their names, some are able to complete this with ease, others are still developing in this area.

The children have been looking at a different letter of the alphabet each week. The children are asked to name some words that start with the letter. We have seen a progression in the children's answers over the last few months.

The children have also been involved in helping during routines times, e.g helping teachers hand out plates, drink bottles, pencils etc. This helps develop their pro social skills, and develop caring relationships towards others.

Over the next 3 months in the busy bee room we would like to encourage the busy bees sharing and turn taking skills, through programmed activities.

We would like to encourage the use of verbal language to express their feelings, needs and wants. We would like to work towards more opportunity for small group activities, to provide better learning experiences. We would like to have all children participating in news time and sharing something special to help develop their social skills, and to become more confident around their peers. We will continue to practice name writing as well as our shape, colour and number recognition, we will also practice writing numbers.

As staff we would like to build on our use of open questions, and encourage children to further express their ideas. We would like to use more visuals, including pictures and sight words such as "my, the, and, on" to name a few. We would also like to introduce some basic sign language to help encourage communication, social relationships and to develop language skills.

LANGUAGE REPORTS

Maree explained that the Busy Bees and the Bunyips had completed Language screeners for the children. Maree expressed that the staff were not speech therapist rather we were trying to pinpoint different language skills for children and identify area where language problems may be evident so that we can support parents with referrals for therapy if needed. Staff were only able to complete these assessments for children who were 2 years 9 months and 3 years 9 months. These reports have been placed in portfolios, children's files and personally provided to families so that staff can explain the screener to parents on a one to one basis. Families were pleased with this and the staff have used this material in their programming to provide more opportunities and explicit teaching for the children in areas such as preposition words , directions , expressive language opportunities (how children use language to explain what they what) and receptive language.(What children understand when they hear speech)

MID YEAR REPORTS

Last year at our last Parent Forum meeting in November Mr and Mrs Walker suggested that we give half yearly reports so that families could see how their child was progressing. They were really happy with the final report, but felt that a half way point would be beneficial for them. Kelly and Maree explained how we came up with the format and that this was a report for parents to see how their child was progressing. Maree explained that the staff placed a great deal of effort into these reports and that staff had individually looked at each child and reflected on their progress rather than developmental checklist that are not really reporting on the positive aspects each individual child can do. Maree noted that the ELYL Framework was about individual children and that these reports were reflective of this.

Maree and Kelly also noted that the staff were constantly reflecting on what they were teaching children and the opportunities that they were providing to children on a weekly basis.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

As a centre we do support children with additional needs. We use the children's services inclusion support and have employed at times additional staff over our ratios so that we can support children needs. We do this so that we can assist children learning so that they have the best possible start to school.

SIGN LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CENTRE

Maree explained that a lot of children need support with their language skills and that she had recently attended an in-service on language and the use of visual aids and sign language. Maree explained that as a staff we would be initiating the use of simple sign language across the centre so that children who had limited language skills could communicate without the need to become disruptive.

OUTDOOR MODIFICATIONS

John explained that we had maintenance on the outdoor drains and that as a result we would be having changes to the soft fall area. We are currently undergoing quotes for this and hope to have the outdoor area changed slightly to allow for a more viable drainage system. Once this is completed we will set up our outdoor garden area.

CHILDREN'S NEEDS IN ROOMS

Kelly expressed that we are still having challenges with parents not labelling items and it is really difficult when we have parents with the same bottle and no labels. We have placed up sign for this, but really require parents to assist with this for the safety and well being of their child. Kelly expressed that last week there were 6 bottles that were not labelled that were of similar appearance.

PORTFOLIO FEEDBACK:

Maree and Kelly expressed that we will not be sending portfolios home. Rather we will be having a set up in each room that allows parents to speak with staff about their child's portfolio and provides time for them to record information. Families will be able to bring a photo or make a comment. Staff will take a photo of the parent and the children viewing their photo on the day and have this inserted into the portfolio. This way we will not be in the position of families not returning them. Last time we had outstanding portfolios for 6-8 weeks. Kelly expressed how hard this is for staff to catch up and to provide portfolios to parents if we do not have them. It is also time consuming to catch up on so many weeks. We are really asking that parents support us as we have challenges making connections with programs and providing the best for all children.