



EARLY YEARS PHILOSOPHY

CEWA Vision: Catholic Education Western Australia is a Christ-centred and child-focused community of engaged learning environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel.

St Lawrence's Vision:

With Christ as our model, we seek to nurture our community in an environment that enables all to grow.

INFORMED BY:

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), National Quality Framework and Standard (NQS)
Western Australian Curriculum (SCSA), CEWA Early Years Learning Position & Care Statement

Quality Catholic Learning (QCE) – CEWA Vision for Learning

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WE BELIEVE

At St Lawrence's Primary School, Bluff Point, Geraldton we believe that every child is uniquely created by God and will develop in their own special way. We recognise that childhood is a special, important and valued phase of life – a time for wonder, exploration, creativity, inquiry and curiosity.

As educators we believe that it is vital to work carefully and intentionally towards establishing trusting and mutually respectful relationships with children, families, their school and the wider community. This way, allowing each child to develop a sense of being, belonging and becoming in their new learning environments.

We commit to building and nurturing Christ-like relationships in our Catholic pastoral community to engage and partner with parents and caregivers.

We work towards enabling a gentle transition from home into the school environment to ensure every child feels safe, secure and supported so that they can become active meaning makers of the world around them.

St Lawrence's School Leaders and Early Childhood Educators commit to the spiritual and social teachings of the Catholic Church.

(Quality Catholic Education - QCE: 1.2b, QCE: 2.3 a, c, 3.1 a, 3.2)

Catholic Identity: The lived expression of our Vision and Mission, our decision making and collaboration:

Educators:

- ❖ endeavor to work with children to develop their spirituality which allows them to build an awareness of themselves in relation to others, their personal /family journey, work and the global world. (QCE 1.1 a, b)
- ❖ work together to nurture each child's spiritual, emotional, social, cognitive, physical and creative development. (QCE 1.1 c, d)
- ❖ ensure all children learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. (QCE 1.2a)
- ❖ respect and acknowledge the diverse cultures, religious charisms and traditions, (inclusive of catholic icons and symbols), that influence St Lawrence's school community (QCE 1.2 e, f)
- ❖ collaborate with informed members of the community. (QCE 1.2a)

Education: A Curriculum inspired by the Principles of Catholic Education, Religious Education, and Catholic Vision for Learning.

Educators:

- ❖ plan for learning by implementing the National Quality Standard (NQS), Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2), the Western Australian Curriculum documents (SCSA:3YO-2), QCE and CEWA Religious Education Curriculum. (QCE 2.1)
- ❖ experience learning that is engaging and builds success for life. We acknowledge children as capable, competent, co-contributors and active participants in their own lifelong learning. (QCE 2.1)
- ❖ have children learn in a safe and secure environment where relationships between students, educators and families are valued. (QCE 2.2a)
- ❖ provide every student with a high quality Catholic religious education and recognise it as the first learning area. (QCE 2.2)
- ❖ respect the important role of parents as their child's first educators. (QCE 2.3 a, b, c)

- ❖ acknowledge that each child is capable of learning in his/her own way and at his/her own rate. (QCE 2.3 b, c, e)
- ❖ encourage and challenge children by providing learning opportunities that will extend their knowledge and skills. (QCE 2.3 d, e)
- ❖ initiate exploration and independent learning and foster independent and capable learners who are confident to take risks. (QCE 2.3 a, d)
- ❖ accept that young children are already hypothesis testing problem solvers. (QCE 2.3 b, c, d, e)
- ❖ see the learning environment as the 'Third Teacher'. Our environments are safe, inclusive, and predictable with flexible spaces that cater for children's developmental needs within indoor and outdoor spaces. (QCE 2.3b, e)
- ❖ provide opportunities for children to develop their curiosity, creativity and critical reflection skills through play -based learning with intentionality, inclusive of rich tasks and explicit teaching at a child's point of need. (QCE 2.1, 2.3 b, c, e)
- ❖ plan for intentional learning through purposeful play and explicit teaching. (QCE 2.3d)
- ❖ respond to children's interests through Inquiry Based Learning. (QCE 2.3b)
- ❖ challenge students by providing learning opportunities within their Zone of Proximal Development*. (QCE 2.3 c, d, e)
- ❖ are flexible in timetabling and learning requirements. (QCE 2.3e)
- ❖ collaborate with informed members of the community. (QCE 2.3a)
- ❖ engage in critical reflection to evaluate and adjust practices to suit learners, ie - the time, place and context of learning. (QCE 2.3 a, d, e)
- ❖ engage all students with "minds-on" learning. (QCE 2.3 b)

Community: Catholic Pastoral Communities, parents & caregivers, partnerships & engagement.

Educators:

- ❖ ensure all children learn about and show respect for the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. (QCE 3.1 d)
- ❖ provide educational opportunities that enable Aboriginal children reach their full potential and develop their sense of identity and agency. (QCE 3.1d)
- ❖ acknowledge, respect and celebrate the diverse cultures influencing our St Lawrence's community. (QCE 3.1a)
- ❖ create safe and secure learning environments for children where relationships between students, educators and families are valued to allow the voice of each child to be heard. (QCE 3.1 b)
- ❖ maintain being 'child- focused' and have a strong awareness of trauma and the influence that this may have on a child's readiness to learn. (QCE 3.1 c)
- ❖ recognise that each child's unique development is critical to his/her learning as all children will learn at a different pace and timeframe. (QCE 3.1 c)
- ❖ provide support and modelling to empower children to make informed decisions, develop resilience, spirituality and their sense of identity and use their sense of agency, to become strong in their mental wellbeing, physical, social, and emotional development. (QCE 3.1 c)
- ❖ understand and are guided by the CEWA Code of Conduct. (QCE 3.1 e)
- ❖ form meaningful partnerships with parents and respect their role as the first educators of students. (QCE 3.2)

- ❖ partner with our parish and faith communities to develop each child's spirituality so they build an awareness of themselves in relation to their own sense of identity, others and their place in our global world. (QCE 3.3)
- ❖ lay the foundations through catechesis activities and our Religious Education Curriculum for their future participation in the Sacramental life of the Church. (QCE 3.3)

Stewardship: Staff, Natural Environment, Finance, Infrastructure & Compliance

Leaders and educators:

- ❖ recruit and appoint staff committed to early childhood practices and pedagogies. (QCE 4.1 a)
- ❖ use the 'Fruit of the Spirit' program as a means for educators to be witnesses of their faith and participate in ongoing options for faith formation. (QCE 4.1b)
- ❖ follow line management processes to ensure educators are supported pastorally and professionally. (QCE 4.1c)
- ❖ reflect the principles of participation and subsidiarity of contemporary leadership and Christian service. (QCE 4.1d)
- ❖ commit to helping our children begin to understand and use sustainable practices in their settings and communities across all dimensions of sustainability as they learn to care for our Earth. (QCE 4.2)
- ❖ resource and equip our early childhood centres to cater for the diverse needs of all. (QCE 4.3 a)
- ❖ manage our centres so that they are sustainable, accessible and affordable. (QCE 4.3 a)
- ❖ ensure our centres reflect Catholic simplicity. (QCE 4.3 b)
- ❖ are well governed, future focused and comply with all regulatory requirements. (QCE 4.3c)
- ❖ commit to procurement practices that reflect Catholic social teaching. (QCE 4.3 d)

PRACTICES: Informed by the following Five Teacher Practices:

QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS – *the practice of modelling Christ-like relationships between students and teachers, enabling all to grow in the image of God.*

At St Lawrence's we:

- ❖ honour and affirm the diversity of cultures, languages, family structures and gender.
- ❖ nurture attachment relationships with the school and broader community members.
- ❖ work in partnership with families, valuing each other's knowledge and gifts to support the development and education of each child.
- ❖ communicate openly and respectfully, keeping families informed and providing opportunities for shared decision making.
- ❖ strive to develop and model Catholic values as well as secure and respectful relationships. This supports children's thoughts and feelings, assisting them to form trusting relationships with educators and their peers.
- ❖ acknowledge that smooth transitions and familiar routines are pivotal in supporting teaching and learning. They encompass continuity of learning and building relationships between home, school, and year levels.
- ❖ intentionally model Catholic values and behaviours such as respect, empathy, compassion, and maintaining dignity.
- ❖ believe that when relationships are nurtured, children develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others which enhances their learning.
- ❖ encourage children to become socially responsible and show respect for the environment.

LEARNING DESIGN: *the process of creating and enabling learning experiences for each student to achieve their true potential.*

At St Lawrence's we:

- ❖ recognise and respect children's innate sense of play.
- ❖ as adult educators are actively present in play through sustained-shared thinking.
- ❖ plan creative & intentional play experiences to engage children in teaching and learning.
- ❖ use data, observations, and work samples to purposefully plan a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences to address the specific needs of students.
- ❖ plan and allow for student growth and use whole class, group and individual instruction to scaffold* learning.
- ❖ support students with the necessary scaffolding for them to achieve success.
- ❖ make learning intentions visible and known to all students and educators with clear and specific success criteria to develop the skills to become lifelong learners.
- ❖ provide clear, explicit and timely feedback to students and reflect on our own pedagogical practices.

INSTRUCTIONAL RANGE: is the practice of being agile and responsive to the needs of each student, employing a wide range of effective strategies to optimize learning.

At St Lawrence's we:

- ❖ co-construct learning that reflects student's voice and choice.
- ❖ cater and differentiate for a diverse range of students with varying abilities, strengths, interests, emotional needs, cultures, and learning styles.
- ❖ use data, observations, and work samples to purposefully plan a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences to address the specific needs of students.
- ❖ provide clear, explicit, and timely feedback to students that goes beyond praise and empowers students to discern the next step in their learning.
- ❖ challenge students to use questioning and higher order thinking skills to deepen their learning.
- ❖ use data from student achievement and growth to reflect and refine our own pedagogical practices.
- ❖ support students to move from focused instruction to independent learning, using The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model*

ENGAGEMENT: is the practice of attracting and holding the attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion of each student in the learning process and for their development as a whole person.

At St Lawrence's we:

- ❖ provide safe, supportive, and welcoming environments where all children and families experience a sense of belonging.
- ❖ plan creative & intentional play experiences to engage children in teaching and learning.
- ❖ understanding the individual and social behaviours that promote student engagement.
- ❖ provide opportunities for student voice and choice in collaboration.
- ❖ create opportunities for critical thinking, problem solving and personal reflection.
- ❖ guide the use of Digital Technologies to explore solutions related to our wider community and to develop learners who are sustainable as well as socially and economically responsible.

PLACE, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY: Place, space and technology is the practice of using all aspects of the learning environment to scaffold and accelerate learning for each student.

At St Lawrence's we:

- ❖ strive to utilise and maximise use of places, spaces and technologies to encourage children to explore, risk-take and connect with one another and the world around them.
- ❖ plan the environments according to the requirements of the current curriculum, focusing on the interests and needs of the children.
- ❖ provide learning environments that ignite curiosity, promote agency, flexibility and creativity.
- ❖ endeavour to provide a print rich environment which supports the children and allows for visible and intentional learning links.
- ❖ design a range of spaces that include the use of natural and synthetic resources. These are used as provocations for inquiry and learning with intentional links to the outcomes of the EYLF and Western Australian Curriculum.

- ❖ select resources and equipment which are easily accessible to students, fostering independence and providing group responsibility and initiative.
- ❖ utilise technology as a tool to scaffold and enhance learning to develop a deeper level of understanding.

ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING PLANNING – (EYLF V2)

Assessment is an ongoing cycle that includes observing, documenting, analysing, planning, implementing and critical reflection of children's learning. (EYLFV2 Planning Cycle) Children's interests and needs are identified and planned for as part of the planning and assessment process to ensure engagement with the curriculum and student learning.

At St Lawrence's we:

- respect the uniqueness of each child and provide diverse learning opportunities to allow for demonstration of his/her learning in different ways.
- provide assessment processes that offer children choice and agency* to express their learning.
- practice emergent and responsive planning that allows us to be child focused.
- work in appropriate planning blocks and post program to identify what curriculum has emerged through play-based learning and inquiry.
- actively seek out and chase the interests of the children (as a basis for our planning).
- see plans as place holders to get learning responsibly started.
- plans are shared with the learners.

Throughout all stages of planning and assessment, educators at St Lawrence's are self-reflective of their own principles and practices.

Student growth in all areas is reported to parents both formally and informally throughout the year.

GLOSSARY:

1. Agency- Being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world. (EYLF p.48)
2. Gradual Release of Responsibility- this model of instruction requires that the teacher shift from assuming all the responsibility for a task to a situation in which the students assume all the responsibility. (Pearson & Gallagher – 1983)
3. Scaffold: The educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning. (EYLF p.49)
4. Subsidiarity: (in the Roman Catholic Church) a principle of social doctrine that all social bodies exist for the sake of the individual so that what individuals can do, society should not take over, and what small societies can do, larger societies should not take over.
(QCE – Stewardship)
5. Sustained-shared thinking: where an educator scaffolds intellectual development by asking a wonder/pondering question (richest point of learning) Informed by EYLF)
6. Trauma: Single incident, complex, historical, intergenerational (EYLF p.69)
7. Zone of Proximal Development – refers to the difference between what a learner can do without assistance and what he/she can achieve with guidance and support from someone more skilled.
(Informed by Vygotsky.)