



Early Childhood Director of the Year

Submission Form, 2015

Nominee Name:	Jacqueline Taylor
Position:	Centre Director
Service Name:	Rainbow Station Early Education Centre

Professional Philosophy (100 words maximum):

Summarise your philosophy towards early childhood education and care

My philosophy for early education and care is driven by those two words, education and care. I believe that by providing safe, nurturing and attentive environments children will thrive and flourish within them and the learning and education will follow. As an educator my philosophy has altered and developed over the years and I take close consideration to the works of Loris Malaguzzi and Les Vygotsky. I believe that all children are competent and capable beings and by providing the space and materials to express themselves through open creativity, social settings and play, children truly develop.

1. WELLBEING:

Describe a specific strategy that you have put in place that has had a powerful and positive impact on the emotional, social and/or physical wellbeing of a child or group of children. What specific targets/needs did you identify? How did you measure the progress of this initiative in terms of its impact on the child/ren? (max 200 words)

I am a member of Strengthening Children and Young Person Interagency which comprises of workers from Family services including Brighter Futures, health, education, housing and FACS. We meet on a monthly basis to discuss services, development and resources for families in the local area and then follow this up with child protection case work. This allows me to discuss any families that I have within the centre that may require help either for children at risk or families that may require assistance with housing, medical needs or other assistance and at the same time I am able to offer assistance or guidance when it comes to developmental needs of children or day care requirements. I have found this to be truly helpful to the wellbeing of not only our service but that of the local community. Strong friendships have been built with the local organisations and I have had staff members really notice the connections it provides as I am able to offer them advice about what specifically the family requires. I have used knowledge from this group to provide food and clothes for families in need and offer day care to others. It is not necessarily an initiative that is measurable but I certainly feel that it is an important aspect of our centre.

2. PROGRAMMING:

Describe one innovative change made to the children's program that has scaffolded learning and provided authentic experiences for the children (either by you personally or by a team under your direction). Describe how this met a particular outcome of the EYLF. (max 200 words)

Guiding and modelling manners, respect for others and patience are important to me. I feel that providing children (and educators) with these skills helps to set them up as resilient and respectful participants in society opening many doors for them. Presently working in an area which has a high demographic of parents who are or have been incarcerated has lead my philosophy to again develop and add these life skills to the forefront of my teaching and mentoring. I have studied a program called 'Fun Friends' which helps children to help build resilience though play. I have introduced this program to families and specific children that may require extra help in this area including a staff member's child who was struggling in her day to day thinking. By encouraging the confidence to be resilient she has been able to develop her social skills and focus more on learning and less on the worry that it was causing her. The program is easily adapted into the centres program and day to day running of the centre. Having the conversations with families and creating one language is also an important aspect of how the program runs. The ability to be open to new challenges, take considered risks, persist when faced with challenges and demonstrate an increasing capacity for self-regulation are covered throughout both the Fun Friends program as well as the EYLF (Outcome 1.2) making it a very vital tool to be utilising.

3. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS:

Discuss a project that you as a leader have introduced to and implemented within the centre/service that has been significant in its impact on service delivery. Provide an overview of the project's intent, process and outcome *For FDC focus on the operations and coordination process improvements you have made to your scheme. (max 200 words)*

I took this question to the educators in the centre to find out what they thought our greatest improvement had been. We tossed on a few points including our reflective nature, programming styles but ultimately landed on our community relationships. A service improvement is not a sole participant attribute rather that of team work. Together we decided that we wanted to feel that we were making a difference in the community. We reached out to other child care centres to break down the 'competitive barriers' that existed including them in professional development experiences that we had organised as well as connecting with services including the local High School, sporting teams and gardening centres. We have had students with additional needs come and complete work experience at the centre as well as the High school Netball team assist children with ball skills and help out at our events. The centre also sponsored the local Indigenous football team helping raise funds for their jerseys. We then invited them to our 'Father's day BBQ' where they interacted with the children and engaged in play with them. My ultimate aim is for the children to grow up in a happy and safe environment, this includes their community and the people who fill it.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

What do you do to foster a community of learning (eg professional conversations, mentoring, networking, courses, research, grants etc). As part of this, describe the knowledge you have created and shared with your peers/professional learning network. How has this made an observable difference in the way your staff members conduct their working lives? (max 200 words)

I am very passionate about the team members continuing to grow and develop as educators and have successfully encouraged many staff members to further their studies. To help them with this I hold weekly study sessions for anyone who would like to attend. I make myself available on Wednesday afternoons for all educators as we have 9 team members completing study from their Certificate 3 to their Bachelor's degree. This is one area I really am proud of. I have encouraged a mum and a grandmother of the centre to study and now both are employees on traineeships for the service. One has just handed in her last assignments and is looking forward to completing her Diploma. In her words, 'It has changed her life'. This team member has been a victim of domestic violence and the confidence the work environment gave her has provided the encouragement to leave and take control of her life for herself and her children. I gave each team member a form for professional development to find out what they were enthusiastic about and have used this to then source sessions for them to attend from a variety of organisations, for example working with additional needs, creative arts, and sustainability. I feel this way they are truly engaged in their learning as it is developing on from their own interests and passions.

5. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS:

Describe your community of families and the strategies you use, as the Director/Scheme Manager, to build and encourage interaction between families and your service. What, if any, challenges have you faced and were they overcome? What benefits have you achieved? (max 200 words)

Our community of families is incredibly diverse. We live in a rural town within the Northern Rivers of NSW. We have a large population of farming families, Indigenous families and young parents. Unfortunately our town has been named 'the Ice Capitol of Australia'. The impact the drugs have had on the town is noticeable and we have a number of children who are from homes with young mums, in grandparent custody, from Brighter Futures or FACS or have a parent incarcerated. This means our staff need to be constantly aware of the children's needs as there are many children struggling with separation anxiety and others that require close attention and documentation. I try to work closely with the families to provide the best possible care we can which can include giving them information on health care, services they can utilise for parenting skills and housing.

We also noticed that as many of our pre-schoolers were graduating last year there was a severe gap in Afterschool hours care. Through conversations with parents struggling to find care and concerned about their own work we realised that to move forward we needed to adapt to our parents needs and incorporated Before, After and Vacation care to our service. This has had a positive impact with our families as they truly know we listen to them and hear their concerns and will certainly do anything for them.

DESCRIBE FUTURE PLANS

1. *These awards can create opportunities even for those who do not win (eg networking, PR, reflective practice etc). What opportunities do you see for yourself as a result of being involved in the awards and how might you use these opportunities professionally? (max 200 words)*

I believe being a part of the awards could have a positive impact on not only our service but I would love to be able to share the Child protection Interagency that I belong to with as many other early childhood services as possible. I feel that it is a worthwhile service that perhaps many Directors could be involved in or even start. By meeting and greeting with other services and agencies it can put child protection on the forefront of their minds. Through discussions with other educators I found even though they had their Identify and Respond to Young People certificate they felt this was purely a document and report when needed as 'mandatory reporters'. I feel that we truly have the voice as early educators and providers of care to offer children and their families support and information as well as utilising 16A within the community to provide a safe place for all children. I am incredibly passionate about child protection and I would certainly utilise any platform to have these discussions with others.

2. *What are your career/professional goals for the next 3-5 years? If you were to win the National Director of the Year Award, what would you do with the prize (\$4000 One World for Children training grant and \$4000 professional development grant)? (max 200 words)*

I have recently taken over the role of Area Manager travelling to another centre to help develop and oversee their programming and day to day running of the service. I plan on continuing to develop my skills in this area and enjoy spreading my knowledge with others and working with them to create wonderful environments for children, families and educators.

If I was to win I would like to put the development money towards a parent or person at risk completing their traineeship/ certificate or diploma. I have witnessed the benefits that education has provided for staff members who have been in difficult situations and how by completing studies this has helped give them a confidence that they have never had before. We have staff members who have begun their traineeships well into their 40's. I want to be able to give others the same opportunities to show that their life is meaningful and that regardless of age they can accomplish anything.