



# EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM Information Book

Phone **07 4755 8777**  
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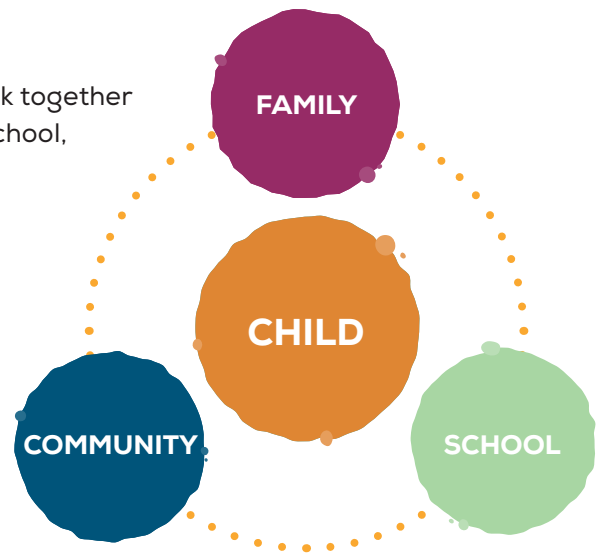
 **Act for kids**

# Early Education Program Outline

When schools, families and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.<sup>1</sup>

The Early Education Program (EEP) is a trauma-informed, developmentally-focused early learning program designed to help kids and their families get ready for school by supporting their emotional, behavioural, social and functional development.

<sup>1</sup> *A New Wave of Evidence: The impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement, Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp.*

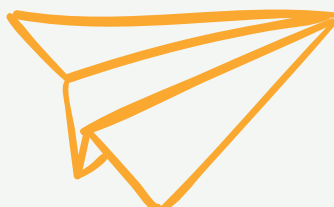


## Important dates, times and information

Our Early Education Program sessions are held on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday during school terms, from 9:00am to 1:30pm.

### Term dates:

In Term 1, we start EEP on Week 2 of the school term, to allow families with school age children to get them settled in without any extra stress.



### What we provide:

- ♥ Fruit for morning tea and water.
- ♥ A hat, sunscreen and insect repellent.
- ♥ All toys, equipment and learning activities.

### What to bring:

- ♥ A healthy lunch in a named box or bag.
- ♥ A water bottle.
- ♥ A spare set of clothes and underwear, marked with your child's name.
- ♥ A backpack is also a good idea to carry all these things to and from EEP.

## Early Education Program

### Creating the right space

As a part of providing a great service, we need to create the right environment that allows families to feel welcome, stay connected and be involved. By partnering with our Act for Kids colleagues and external providers we offer a unique and multi-disciplinary program.

### Getting to know you

To best support your child to learn and develop, it is important we get to know your child and your family. We use our enrolment form and some assessment tools that help us understand your child's development and learning needs, as well as what support needs you might have as a family, in the important role you play in your child's development.

### Keeping you up to date

We will touch base with you each time you drop off and pick up your child. At the end of each term, you will receive a snap-shot overview of how your child is going at EEP and how we are supporting their learning and development goals. We will also ask you to give us an update on how you think your child is going, so we can be sure we are meeting your family's needs.

## Parents, carers and families

### Building connections

Pick up and drop off are important times to help your child to feel confident and safe at EEP, as well as a great time to get to know us. When you drop your child off, you will be invited to help them tell us how they are, and settle them in with an activity.

### Joining in

Including parents and carers in our program helps to keep children engaged in their learning, and grows our EEP community. Once a week, there is a structured, play-based session for parents and carers to join us, scheduled just before pick up time. We will also invite you to come along to the excursions we do away from our centre, as well as to special activities at the centre.

### Keeping in touch

Big or small changes or events at home can change what support your child might need from us during the day. It is also helpful for us to know if there has been any change in their eating, sleeping, toileting, or play/interests so we can adjust their day as needed. You can give us any updates about your child at drop off or give us a call outside of class time.

## Community

### Finding our place

We want children to know that they are a part of a community, and that the community values them. Throughout the year, we seek to connect children to people who represent different parts of our community including police officers, fire fighters, paramedics, and dentists. We visit libraries, places within the university, other organisations, and engage in activities that celebrate culture and the arts.

### Guiding development

Kids brains are built over time and the early years provide the essential foundation for future learning. Our program is designed to understand each child's progress in their development so far, and identify if they need specialist support to help with their ongoing development. We can then help you as a family to connect with Allied Health providers either through a GP, paediatrician or the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI/NDIS) program.

### Connecting families

We know that for healthy development, children need life to be on an even keel. But for families experiencing stress, raising children is like sailing in rough waters. Helping parents and carers connect to support services makes sure they have the lighthouses and safe harbours that they need to navigate these rough waters. EEP seeks to help parents and carers access the support and tools they need to help their kids develop and thrive.



# Learning at EEP

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The EEP is lead by an Education Queensland Teacher and an experienced Teaching Assistant. The program curriculum is based on the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines, and draws on trauma-informed and child development practice principles to create a unique and specialised early learning program.

Our learning activities target the five learning and development areas of the Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines and are enhanced by a number of complementary program elements.

## Identity

- ♥ Building a sense of security and trust
- ♥ Acting with increasing independence and perseverance
- ♥ Building a confident self-identity

## Wellbeing

- ♥ Building a sense of autonomy
- ♥ Exploring ways to be health and safe
- ♥ Exploring ways to promote physical wellbeing

## Communication

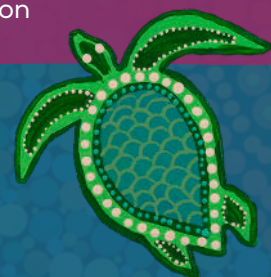
- ♥ Exploring and expanding language
- ♥ Exploring literacy in personally meaningful ways
- ♥ Exploring numeracy in personally meaningful ways

## Connectedness

- ♥ Building positive relationships
- ♥ Showing respect for diversity
- ♥ Showing respect for environments

## Active learning

- ♥ Building positive dispositions toward learning
- ♥ Showing confidence and involvement in learning
- ♥ Using technologies for learning and communication





Sunshine Circles is a structured play therapy-based group for children and their parents or carers that uses playful, cooperative, and nurturing activities to build the emotional wellbeing of children and their relationships with their peers. Sunshine Circles will start in Term 2 of the school term.

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Learn to be Safe with Emmy and Friends is an evidenced-based protective behaviours program developed by Act for Kids. The program is activity based, fun and interactive, and helps teach children about unsafe situations and empower them with skills and knowledge to respond and seek help from a trusted adult.

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Excursions and incursions are recommended as a part of the early years learning framework and create ways for kids to build skills and develop concepts about the world that help them to feel confident, connected and engaged.

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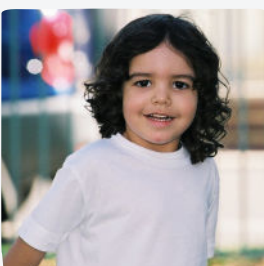
Drawing on our multi-disciplinary team, an Occupational Therapist partners with our EEP team to inform and support a Motor Skills program designed to further fine and gross motor development.

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Animal-Assisted Activities provide opportunities for motivation, engagement and regulation within the learning environment. In partnership with animal-assisted activity providers, learning activities are supported by visits from specially-trained dogs and their handlers.

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Celebrating and understanding culture is an important part of helping kids to find their place in their community. Our Act for Kids Cultural Advisor facilitates regular sessions including story telling, art, cooking and yarning circles.

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# Big feelings, behaviour and staying safe while learning at EEP



It takes time for children to develop the skills they need to manage their feelings and behaviours. The foundations for this part of development starts when children are babies, and is built on their early life experiences.

We know that when families are living with stress - like financial stress, managing mental health, relationship conflict or violence, managing drug or alcohol use, housing problems - children may need a bit more

support to develop those skills before they start school. EEP is an inclusive program that seeks to support children and families who have been working to navigate rough waters while parenting.

## PARENTING IN ROUGH WATERS AND THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

### HYPERAROUSAL: fight/flight response

Run, hit, scream, shout, bite, mean words, squirm, disrupt - your body wants to fight or run away. It's not something you choose; these reactions just take over.



All children learn to manage their window of tolerance. Children who have been parented during some rough waters may have a smaller Window of Tolerance.

HYPER

HYPO

### WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

When you are in your window of tolerance, you feel like you can deal with what's happening around you. You can think, learn, connect, play and relax.



At EEP, we help children to expand their window of tolerance so they are better able to cope with challenges.

HYPER

HYPO



### HYPOAROUSAL: freeze response

Zone out, frozen, numb, switched off - your body wants to shut down. It's not something you choose; these reactions just take over.

*Adapted from The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioural Medicine, 2019*

## What happens when big feelings get in the way of staying safe?

Children can be moved outside of their window of tolerance by different things, depending on their stage of development and their childhood experiences.

Kids with a small window of tolerance might be moved out by lots of things, or things that might not seem like a big deal - like having to wait their turn, someone taking something they were playing with, a loud noise, or changing activity. Our small class size (6-10 children), means we are able to include and support children in our program, even if they are still learning to manage their feelings and behaviours.

When a child is outside their window of tolerance, particularly if they are in hyperarousal, there is a chance they might hurt another child while feeling out of control.

To help keep everyone safe, we draw on trauma-informed classroom strategies that help children return to their window of tolerance, feel connected and learn to understand their feelings and behaviours better.



If your child hurts another child at EEP, or is hurt by another child, we respond using the 3Rs – Regulate, Relate and Reason.

**Regulate:** Your child will be supported to feel more calm using strategies like proximity (being near but not too close), tone of voice, reassuring words, allowing your child to be away from the group for a little while, breathing techniques, or using sensory strategies like swinging or holding something soft.

**Relate:** By naming and understanding your child's feelings, and expressing empathy. We will remind your child that they are in a supportive environment where they are cared about.

**Reason:** By talking about what happened we will help your child to understand their feelings and actions or reactions and where appropriate, learn what they can do differently next time. They will be supported to learn ways to repair relationships – this might look like asking if someone is okay, helping fix something that was broken, helping with first aid, saying sorry or to let their classmate know how they feel about being hurt.

## Communication about safety:

If your child is hurt at EEP either during play or by another child, we will let you know. If they have not been seriously hurt (have tripped while playing and scraped their knee) we will let you know at the end of the day. For more serious injuries, we will phone you. In your enrolment meeting, you can let us know what your idea of 'serious' is, if your preferences for communication about safety are different to what we have in place, and also what your preferred contact method is.

## Who can pick up and drop off?

In our initial meetings we will talk about who the key people in your child's life are, and who is approved to pick them up and drop them off. If you have any Family Law Court orders, Parenting Agreements, Domestic Violence Protection Orders or Child Protection Orders that can help us understand the parenting or caring arrangements for your child, please let us know.

## EEP and staying safe for parents and carers

We understand that as grown ups, we have our own window of tolerance and the things that can move us outside of our window are unique to us, just like our kids. Please let us know what we can do to support your participation and engagement with us. For example, a parent or carer who feels anxious at drop off time might prefer to step aside a little bit from the group to let us know how their child is going. Or a parent or carer living with violence might only be able to receive phone calls at a certain time of the day.

# Getting to know your child and family – the intake and assessment phase

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In the first few weeks of the program, we will spend some time one-on-one with you and your child to get to know more about your family, your child and their learning goals.

We use three assessment tools to help with our conversations. Every family is different and there are no wrong answers.

1

The **BRIGANCE SCREEN III** is a developmental screener that lets us know how your child's development is going, what we might like to focus on as goals for your child's time at EEP, and helps us know if they could benefit from any specialist support.

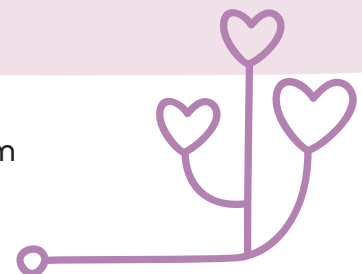
2

The **FAMILY CIRCLES OF SAFETY** tool lets us know who is supporting you (both socially and professionally) in your important role as parents or carers, and allows you to let us know who else we should include in our work with your family.

3

The **PARENTING DAILY HASSLES** helps us get to know what parenting is like for you at the moment, and talk about any additional support we could add to your Family Circles of Safety.

Make sure you have a copy of our Early Education Program timetable flyer, which outlines all the details and activities of sessions week-by-week.



For more information please call **07 4755 8777**  
or visit our website [actforkids.com.au](http://actforkids.com.au)

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