



Philosophy of Learning Early Years

Mission Statement

Bethania Lutheran School is a Christ-centred community supporting the educational journey by providing dynamic, innovative teaching and learning, within a nurturing environment.

Values

At Bethania Lutheran School we value the development of the whole learner. We aim to teach our students the skills that they need to be functioning, caring, valuable, contributing members of their community. We nurture our students as individual, unique creations of God and aim to develop not just academic goals but social/emotional development also.

Philosophy of Learning

We believe that every student is a unique individual created by God with their own special gifts, strengths and needs. In order for students to build their own positive image of themselves as learners and contributors to their communities they are provided with real-world, relevant and purposeful learning experiences, in alignment with the Education Goals for Young Australians within the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration of 2019. These learning experiences, which have an emphasis on Project Based Learning, are structured and presented in a variety of ways with opportunities for both personal success and challenge. Students are encouraged to take ownership of, and contribute direction to, the learning experience. The school facilitates this learning by providing timely and purposeful feedback in dynamic learning environments which promote a warm atmosphere of safe risk taking, rigorous learning and joy.

At Bethania Lutheran School our Philosophy of Learning – Early Years is driven by guiding principles, which fit within the separate, though interconnected, Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration Goals for Young Australians.

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Children have individual learning styles and needs

Children in the early years need multiple varied and multisensory opportunities and experiences to gain knowledge and understanding. Individual learning styles require a variety of teaching approaches and opportunities to learn. Movement and change keep children interested and involved. Examples of the way in which the individual learning styles of children are addressed at Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Use of online learning platforms and digital applications to present and share content and ideas
- Utilization of a range of teaching strategies that support different ways of thinking and learning e.g. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences
- Use of independent learning tasks, matrix learning, and multimodal communications tasks to allow for choices



Philosophy of Learning Early Years

Children with disabilities are supported in an inclusive learning environment

Children with disabilities, as well as students who are identified as requiring additional support are provided with rich and intensive intervention by specialized staff in the early years, with all learning underpinned by the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions. Examples of the way in which children at Bethania Lutheran School receive support include:

- Classroom teachers and teacher aides
- Learning Support teachers and teacher aides
- Behavioural and social skills support

Self-esteem and self-image are important factors which impact learning in the early years

A holistic approach to education in the early years which focuses on both the emotional and behavioural aspects of each child builds self esteem and a positive self view of learning abilities. The building of emotional security and identity through positive relationships are vital to a successful early childhood program. Examples of the way in which we address child-centred learning at Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Targeting questions, or responding to answers in a way that acknowledges individual needs and contributions
- Providing opportunities for all children to have a voice and share about their lives, opinions and interests
- Incorporating character building experiences into daily practice e.g. Chapel, devotions, 'Play is the Way'

Families are an important part of the early childhood team

Learning within the school is maximised when home and school work in partnership. Early childhood education is a joint endeavour with children's families that is facilitated by positive links of communication that flow in both directions. Examples of the facilitation of parent involvement at Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Allowing for participation of parents in the classroom to provide support, expertise and insights
- Frequent communication with caregivers in different formats, both formal and informal
- Parent information and training opportunities to support home and school programs

Children bring with them their own beliefs and knowledge that we value and build upon

Early learning occurs from birth. Progress in the early years occurs by building on prior knowledge and experiences and making links to new concepts and skills. Basic skills provide the basis upon which all other learning is based. Transitions from home to school and through school should be seamless. Examples of connecting learning with the personal experiences of students at Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Actively seeking to establish childrens' knowledge, beliefs and skills as part of planning
- Explicitly linking new ideas with the language and perspectives the children bring to the classroom
- Creating an environment of encouragement for students to contribute personal stories to class discussion



Philosophy of Learning

Children need a connection to nature and place

Early Years

A focus on nature play and a connection to the Yugambah people, our traditional land owners, is vital to develop a rich and deep knowledge of our local Indigenous culture, as well as provide students with opportunities for the exploration of the natural world around them. Examples of the way in which students are supported to develop a connection to nature and place include the exploration of:

- Yugambah language, culture and history
- Nature playgrounds, including loose parts
- Dadirri (active listening) and nature exploration experiences

Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community

Children are active participants in learning

Children are creative individuals with their own ideas, interests and wonderings. Child-directed tasks encourage children to have ownership of their learning, feel valued as individuals and provide the freedom to express their creativity and perceptions. Curriculum and timetables are flexible to suit children's dynamic and individual learning needs. Examples of innovative, child-centred learning environments and pedagogy include:

- Agile learning spaces encourage students to make choices about how and where they learn best
- Project Based Learning with links to realistic problems and challenges that require deeper thinking, understanding, questioning and reflecting
- Flexibility of unit and lesson planning to allow investigations of children's areas of interest.
- Opportunities for children to make individual and collaborative decisions about learning directions, goals, assessment criteria and demonstrations of learning

Children learn through both structured and unstructured play experiences

Play is an important learning experience for early childhood years. Both guided and undirected play experiences help children make sense of their world, develop and practice social skills, become co-contributors to each other's learning, experiment with new ideas, explore new concepts and develop their sense of self and identity. Examples of the way in which play-based learning experiences are supported at Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Timetables and equipment which allow for unstructured, child directed play
- Student-centred exploration supported with structured learning times



Philosophy of Learning Early Years

Children require hands-on experiential learning

Children learn best when they are engaged in active tasks that are interesting, make sense to them, connect with and value their experiences and encourage active mastery of their world. Hands on tasks with purpose engage thinking and problem solving skills and encourage children to discover their own learning. Examples of hands-on learning at Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Concrete materials and equipment to enable children to plan, design, create and experiment
- Learning challenges embedded in familiar real life experiences and contexts

A supportive, warm and positive learning environment encourages risk taking and resilience

A positive learning environment provides routine, structure and stability, which helps children feel secure and confident to take risks and be supported in their choices. The early years learning environment is vibrant, flexible and child-centred. Asking questions is encouraged and open-ended questions are asked and appreciated. Mistakes are valued for the learning they provide as natural parts of the inquiry and discovery process. Examples of the well-rounded and supportive learning environments within Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Individual strengths and areas for growth are explored and built upon
- Providing stimulus materials and programs that challenge children's ideas, raise questions, encourage discussion and ongoing exploration

Assessment and feedback are a part of learning to facilitate growth and learning

Consistent and purposeful feedback, praise and direction are employed constructively to guide and monitor student growth and learning. Multiple and varied assessment opportunities are planned for, as part of the everyday learning experience, to foster the child's development of skills and understanding. Examples of the use of high quality assessment and feedback within Bethania Lutheran School include:

- Varied methods of formative feedback are used as a tool by teachers
- Students implement kind, helpful, specific formative feedback strategies with their peers
- Effort, perceptions and attitude are valued and commented upon
- Evidence from assessment is used to inform unit and lesson planning
- Students display, explain and celebrate their learning to an audience