



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A YEAR AT TKC

Roy Faulkner | AGM | March 14, 2018

Introduction

It is hard to believe that a year has passed; time flies when you're having fun. And fun is what TKC is all about. The Centre has grown, and we've had to evolve and adapt to the many competing demands placed upon the staff. It has been challenging.

- Firstly, there are more children which means more interests, likes and dislikes to negotiate
- We have more years 4, 5 and 6 at after school sessions.
- Fluctuations in staffing

Increase in children

More children inevitably means more staff, and an increase in the amount of arts and crafts supplies we churn through, as well as, the games, sports equipment and toys that are inevitably loved into non-existence. But at the end of the day it is more fun and more satisfying to work at a centre which is thriving than one which isn't. It is a feather in the staff team's cap that they have adjusted to the increase in numbers and adapted the programming accordingly.

Programming

A centre thrives or dives on its program. Children will only put up with so much before they let you know that they are not happy – starts as a low whining and rapidly becomes an incessant moaning. The answer is to keep them engaged and keep them busy. I've implemented many changes, specifically designed to engage the multiple-intelligences through which children learn - these include an enhanced arts and crafts program that is designed to challenge the children – the era of the paper doily is well and truly over. It is through Art that children explore themselves, and relationships – it is through Art that children make meaning of their world.

Our themed fortnights, which were introduced last year, continue to engage and excite the children, who work very hard to create our 3D art displays.

The sports program has been a success, with a different team sport played every afternoon to ensure that all preferences are catered for.

Years 4, 5, 6

There's nothing worse than a gaggle of 4,5,6s mooching around the centre proclaiming to all, "We're bored!" A phrase, I'm sure every parent has heard. To counter this, we introduced a Senior Members After Hours School club or SMASH Club. It has been a huge success; from senior movie afternoons, to arts and crafts sessions, and games events, the seniors have loved having their own dedicated space.

WHS

Only one major incident worth mentioning and that happened two weeks into Term 1 2017. A kindy child received a deep laceration to her cheek which resulted in stitches. A third party supplier provide faulty equipment, a scooter, and their own personnel failed to carry out the necessary safety checks. After providing extensive reports to ACEQA – the Government Body that regulates the OOSH sector - they ruled that neither I, nor TKC staff members had any case to answer. Obviously we knew this already, but due diligence required going through the process.

I am happy to report that the Kindy child is doing well and that the doctors have said there will be no visible scarring within a few years.

Staffing

We've hired several new staff in the last 12 months. However, the continual changes in Uni programs has resulted in us having days where we are short of staff – fortunately Anna has been able to cover. Trucking in relief staff is expensive – between \$35- \$50 per hour plus travelling. Maintaining a pool of 'true' casuals (one's that can come in at a moment's notice) is always challenging, who am I kidding, it's nigh on impossible (and not the way I believe any centre should staff) – it's not like they sit at home waiting for a call from TKC, and if they are good at what they do, then they are in high demand and have plenty of work.

Keeping staff is important. The consistency of having the same staff, the same faces fills the kids with confidence, and allows them to relax and enjoy their space, and time at TKC.

New Look. New Lease of Life

It took a while to arrive, but the new furniture has been a success and has certainly brightened up what was, and nobody can deny, a very dowdy looking centre. More importantly the children love it, the staff love it, and the parents love it. Money well spent.

And whilst we are on the subject of things taking a while to arrive, the new shed is finally in situ after 2 years of quotes, broken promises and a lot of tears – mine mostly. And it's brilliant. The additional storage space has allowed us to stock up on the essentials of every centre – arts and crafts materials.

Vacation Care

Our Vacation Care program continues to attract good numbers throughout the year. Being different, exciting and providing engaging and challenging activities has been an uphill battle especially in the latter half of 2017. But that said, we did have fantastic attendance numbers over all the holiday periods.

Why we program some of the activities that we do

'Risk' is essential to the healthy development of children. It promotes:

- Pleasure
- Development of self-confidence and well-being
- Engagement with the natural environment and natural elements
- Learning through experience
- Mixing between different age ranges

Our children need opportunities to:

- Develop skills in negotiating the environment (including risks)
- Learn how to use equipment safely and for its designed purpose;
- Develop coordination and orientation skills;
- Take acceptable risks; and
- Learn about the consequences (positive/negative) of risk taking

To put your minds at ease, as part of my training I have had to undertake numerous 'Risk Assessment and Hazard Mitigation' training courses, both here and in the UK. Effective risk assessment and management requires:

- Distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable risks including:
 - The likelihood of coming to harm;
 - The severity of that harm; and
 - The benefits, rewards or outcomes of the activity.
- Observing the children and identifying those who need greater challenge or specific support
- Establishing and displaying expectations for behaviour
- Actively encourage children to assess risks and possible consequences
- Establish a systematic maintenance program

Getting the balance right (makes the difference between a successful program and one that has the kids moaning about being bored or worse not wanting to come along and join in)

Changing Perceptions – from babysitters to educators

Ever since a parent said to me, "You're only working with children. How hard can that be?" Changing how Child Educators are perceived has been something of a cause celeb with me. Unfortunately, the current perception by many parents is that working in child care is the equivalent of babysitting, but on a bigger scale. And to be honest, despite the introduction of National Quality Standards, there are Centres where that is the case. It's the word 'care' that is the problem, soft and fuzzy, it undermines everything we do... if one lets it.

But not me, not here. At TKC we're Educators.

Our role supports and enhances the education of the children with whom we work. The team and I pride ourselves on getting to know the children, their like and dislikes, their interests and what

worries them. It is only by doing this that we can ensure the Centre is a fun and engaging environment.

Education through play is incredibly powerful. It engages children who might otherwise disengage in the classroom. We've already introduced several innovative sessions specifically designed to engage children with attention difficulties. Child centred with the content aimed at the interests of the children – in this case modelling and tabletop gaming – so far these are working really well. With 16 children engaged across years 4, 5, 6 it is something I will continue for the rest of the year.

To Infinity and Beyond or at least 2019

Future programming includes dressmaking, learning sign language and the introduction of more STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) based activities that are supportive of the school curriculum. Learning through play is a powerful tool – it provides familiarity of concepts, which ultimately helps with learning in the classroom. I am also planning more 'small collaborative group' activities to provide role modeling and support.

Final Word

All-in-all it has been a pretty good year at TKC. But like everything there is always room for improvement. Which is why your feedback is essential – I don't want to hear just the good things either...

Please feel free to drop me a line at directortkccc@gmail.com or call 02 9417 7183 or pop in for a coffee and a chat.