Pilot update

The Tasmanian Government’s commitment to Working Together – supporting early learning is opening up opportunities for eligible three year olds to access quality early learning in the year before kindergarten.

Over the last month the Working Together (WT) project team has been facilitating information sessions and meeting with individuals and organisations across Tasmania with the shared purpose of supporting children’s well being and early learning.

WT is achieving this by investing in quality early learning and holistic supports to address barriers to participation in the year before a child starts kindergarten.

The WT team was encouraged by the high attendance from a broad range of services who are interested in collaborating on the initiative. This included: principals, educators, teachers, nurses, speech and language pathologists, social workers and community services representatives.

This highlights the breadth of committed individuals and organisations working towards our shared purpose, ensuring children are thriving in strong, connected communities.

There has also been a series of information sessions for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services interested in becoming WT partners for 2020–21. Many went on to submit an expression of interest (EOI) in the process, which closed on October 31. The EOIs will be processed over the next month with an announcement scheduled for December 2019.

The referral process has opened for eligible children whose families are keen to become involved in WT in 2020. The contacts for referrals are the WT engagement workers. Please contact them via email: WT@education.tas.gov.au.

Our existing and new relationships with a diverse range of services will help ensure as many eligible families as possible have the opportunity to participate.

In this edition we share with you: the WT locations for the next two years, how we will achieve our shared goals and details about how the team is assisting families from the 2019 pilot with their transition to school.

To find out more about WT and the implementation plan, visit our new website: www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/projects/working-together/ or contact the WT team: WT@education.tas.gov.au

Our vision:

Confident and creative three year olds, thriving in strong, connected communities.
Taking the next step: transition to school

Starting school is a major milestone for families. That's why the WT team is working with parents, carers and children participating in the 2019 pilot to make the transition as smooth as possible.

There are 55 children who received free, quality early learning this year as part of the pilot, many of whom will start kindergarten next year.

The strong relationships that have formed between WT engagement workers and service partners will be invaluable over the coming months, as we work together to help families navigate their individual journeys.

While the transition to school support may be different for each family, it will involve liaising with parents and carers to find out what sort of information they would like to share with the school ahead of their enrolment. Many have connected with the Department of Education’s Launching into Learning and pre-kinder programs.

If required, families will also be assisted with referrals for continuing support.

Where possible, WT engagement workers will support families into the first term of 2020.

What does it take to enable success?

WT focuses on removing barriers to accessing quality early learning opportunities for three year old children in Tasmania in the year before they start school at the age of four.

It will achieve this by using a model that has been co-designed with families and early childhood and community services.

Two of the foundations that will help us build success are: providing families with holistic support and supporting the extending the capability of the ECEC sector through an integrated culture of learning.

In order to participate in the early learning, eligible families may need support to overcome a number of barriers to participation.

During our co-design process, families highlighted some of these barriers, including: transportation, distrust of authority and institutions, social anxiety and fear of judgement.

To help overcome these challenges, the WT project team working in partnership with families, ECEC service partners and other community services provide holistic support before, during and after their enrolment.

The WT team includes engagement workers, a senior social worker and an early learning consultant who collaborate with a suite of early childhood services. This involves understanding what sort of extra support individual carers and children need. This could include: regular check-ins and referrals to other services, supporting access to food, clothing or transport.

ECECs partnering with WT will have up to three team members who are responsible for providing quality early learning, holistic support and reporting components.

This provides consistency for the family and enables children and families to build strong, secure relationships with the ECEC service.

Early childhood educators will be given access to a range of professional learning and training to help them support families, some of whom may be experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. This includes training in: cultural awareness, the Family Partnership Model and Trauma Informed Practice.

They will also be part of a team working towards a shared goal; providing support and learning opportunities that may enable them to assist families in a way that has not previously been possible.
The foundations of success embedded in the WT model:

- Partnership: Working together for shared purpose
- Quality: Investing in ECEC capability development and system-wide capacity building to design and deliver quality early learning in the year before kindergarten
- Quantity: Managing growth over time to support viable supply of early learning places in high need areas
- Participation: Addressing barriers to participation to make early learning an option for all
- Integrated funding: Leveraging available sources

Professor Gunilla Dahlberg presentation

Professor Gunilla Dahlberg shares her extensive knowledge during a workshop in Hobart last month. Up to 50 early childhood educators from education and care settings and schools and community services representatives attended a thought-provoking workshop with Professor Gunilla Dahlberg last month.

What families are telling us is great about Working Together

“I’ve got a lot of balls in the air and some days I forget how to juggle… not having to have that ball in the air about [name’s] care, it’s one more thing I can put down.”

“Knowing that [name] is safe, and is having a good time rather than staying home bored. They send photos and do daily reports. I can just go on that and check everything.”

“[Educators] helped me with enquiring about when pre-kinder starts and stuff. They called the school, found out information, and every second Thursday we go to pre-kinder now.”

Prof Dahlberg is professor emerita of education at Stockholm University, Department of Child and Youth Studies.

Since 1971, she has carried out research in the area of education and social welfare policy for young children and their families.

Her work in developing new philosophical, theoretical and aesthetical perspectives have been an inspiration for early childhood education internationally.

Hosted by the Department of Education’s Early Years Partnerships and Projects Unit, the workshop delved into the role of pedagogical documentation.

Prof Dahlberg also spoke about quality in the early years, standardisation and democracy in education and care.

Attendees heard about the importance of a child’s relationship and relations in connecting to others, the environment and self.

“It’s not that we place everything on the child; the child is relational to so many things and interacting all the time,” Prof Dahlberg said.
Where will WT be available?

Next year there will be 120 places for eligible children to access free, quality early learning. In 2021 there will be a further 120 places available. The locations where WT will be offered will initially be in areas where there is the highest number of eligible children. Every two years, more places will become available and the decisions about the future locations will be driven by data.

Here is a list of the locations for 2020–2021:

» Devonport
» East Devonport
» Newnham
» Glenorchy
» Moonah
» Claremont
» New Norfolk
» Kingston
» Blackmans Bay
» Invermay
» Mowbray
» Newstead
» Ravenswood
» Clarendon Vale
» Rokeby
» Warrane
» Oakdowns
» Howrah
» Bridgewater
» Gagebrook
» Herdsmans Cove
» Brighton
» Burnie
» Acton
» Shorewell Park
» Somerset

News you can use:

The Bright Tomorrows parenting app, developed by CoLab, a partnership between the Minderoo Foundation and the Telethon Kids Institute, is now available. It provides parents with individually tailored tips on how to engage with their children. Visit the website to find out more: www.brighttomorrows.org.au

A new report highlights the need for specialised training

A new Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) survey of early childhood education and care found that training specifically to work with children is not always included in staff education.

Educators who have received this type of training say they use more practices that help children’s learning and development.

Staff also said there was a need for in-service training, particularly relevant to working with children who have additional needs.

The most common barrier to participation was a lack of personnel to compensate for absences.

As part of Working Together (WT), early childhood service partners are provided with a range of funded training opportunities, with a particular focus on working with vulnerable or at-risk populations.

Funding is also made available to ensure service partners can ensure their ratios are retained while staff are attending professional learning and training sessions.

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education.tas.gov.au/WT3