

Media Release

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New Approach to Teaching at Dimboola Early Learning Centre

Local Broadmeadows children at Mission Australia's Dimboola Early Learning Centre are set to benefit from an innovative new educational study.

A collaboration between Mission Australia and the University of Melbourne, The Victorian Advancing Early Learning study (VAEL) explores the effect of more focused interactions between teachers and children on early childhood learning and development.

The ultimate aim of the study is to develop a much more tailored, individual experience for children at Dimboola – and elsewhere - that will advance their learning and development.

The three-year study is based around the Abecedarian Approach Australia, or 3a, program; a teaching style that prioritises language and cognitive development through specifically designed games, reading approaches and interaction styles to help children build strong language and thinking skills.

Melbourne Graduate School of Education and Development's Professor Collette Tayler - leading expert on early childhood development, and Chief Investigator on the VAEL study - says that the results of the Dimboola study will be used to help steer educators and policy makers on the future of early learning in Australia.

"Previous research suggests that high quality, deliberate interactions between adults and children help children build sharper learning skills," Professor Tayler said.

"The results are quite clear, in that children who participate in early childhood education programs designed with more focused teacher-child interactions can achieve more both at school and later on in life.

"The period before kindergarten is a vitally important time in a child's development. We're seeing a lot of children around Australia, particularly those from disadvantaged areas, going into school lacking the basic concepts and foundations upon which they can build knowledge - our research seeks to find ways to fill these gaps.

"One of the biggest advantages of the 3a approach is that it doesn't require additional expensive equipment, instead focusing on the quality of interactions. For example, a big component of the program is looking at how adults speak with children, ensuring they are exposed to a wide and rich variety of words, and given the chance to have meaningful exchanges."

Dimboola Centre Manager Bianca Collard says that she and the team are excited about the program, and can't wait for it to commence in early February.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for us here at Dimboola, and we’re honoured to have been selected as the site for such a pioneering study.

“We always try to use a holistic approach to education, allowing children to learn in ways that are both fun and meaningful. This study is well aligned with that ethos and will help provide children with the skills and tools needed to become active, enthusiastic learners.

“Having worked with children for nearly a decade, I know just how important it is to communicate with them in a way that will help them engage with what’s being taught. This study takes that approach to the next level and I can’t wait to see the positive impact that it will have on both the staff and the children.”

“This study has the potential to pave the way for the future of education in this country, and change the way we approach early learning. With more of a focus on these high-quality interactions, we can help level the playing field, ensuring every child receives the same opportunity to reach their potential – Dimboola is just the beginning.”

The Victorian Advancing Early Learning study is principally funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training and is a partnership between the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Mission Australia, Broadmeadows Valley Primary School, Hume City Council, and the Department of Education and Training.

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For images or further information contact: **Patrick Rasmussen** on **0430 159 690**