

Family partnerships and creating welcoming spaces

Transcript

Speakers: Amy Shine and Debbie Yates

Amy Shine

I've got a little slide there for you about walking together. We are partners with our families, our community and we need to ensure that we support best long-term outcomes for our children. So I believe with this, this quote that we've got up. It's about, you know, parents are the child's first leader, first teacher. So really need to pay respect to that and pay respect to that, we need to walk hand in hand. We're not, we're not the experts, parents are. We need to go on this journey together and I think that's something that I can't, just doesn't resonate enough with me that, that walk in front, don't walk behind, let's walk together. Because this is a big journey and I was only saying to another service today, that had visited our preschool. The complexities that we're seeing today are so much more complex than what we probably saw five to ten years ago, so we do really need to be in this together.

Might just move on to the next slide.

To me that's really thinking about our first impressions as well. So, the picture that you can see up there is a local Aboriginal artist. She's a young girl that actually went to our preschool and she's now grown into an amazing artist and one of her art works actually is up in the Pinterest office in Sydney. She's awesome.

So she came in and she did some work and communication with our community, our Aboriginal educators, our children and we talked about our journey and about who we are and that's the first thing you see when you walk you into our preschool is that artwork and her artwork is distributed throughout the preschool as well.

Because I remember when I first moved here twelve years ago. One of my friends was an Aboriginal lady and she came into the preschool and we just, had an Aboriginal artwork up and she said, gosh, this is the first time I've walked into this preschool and felt like I really belong in that I have a place in here. And to me that really resonated because we want a place where people walk in and it feels like a sense of home, in a sense, I can see myself and I can see my family here. And it doesn't have to be hard, it doesn't have to be expensive.

I mean we've done some amazing things here but to start with it was simple. Little things like employment of Aboriginal people; changing a bit of the environment that we had and adding some pieces and they were not expensive. Adding some nature, just making people feel that real sense of welcome in their space that they came. It's reflective of our community. Also artwork that we actually do have in our space is local. So we've got a local, just outside my office, so I'm sitting in my beautiful office in Forbes, is a piece of art that an Indian lady made and it's her, and her

daughter. Her daughter playing in India, but it reflects just different parts of our community. So, really think about the first impression that people get as soon as they walk into your space.

So, our next slide is about our family partnerships and it's about this family walking through our door and I always say, I said this a lot of times, if people have heard me speak before, you might have heard this. We treat everyone all the same, but different. We know, we have really respectful relationships and it doesn't matter if you're the mayor or if you've recently been in jail or because we have quite a few families like that. It doesn't matter who they are. Everyone is given a really respectful 'hello' and it is meaningful and it's authentic and I heard another phrase just recently about 'be interested don't be interesting'. I think when we're genuinely interested in our families and who they are, and who their children are, and show delight in them you can't fake that, and I think that gives people just such a strong sense of wellbeing.

We want to lift people, we want to lift our community and we're all here for the same outcome. So I think by giving that initial welcoming it just spreads and, and word-of-mouth spreads so we want everyone to feel like this is their space because we are a Community Preschool. Or if you're, even if you are a private service we're all here with fam, like it's a family friendly environment. So we want to, want to give that vibe to everyone who walks in the door that we're absolutely delighted in seeing you, and your children are so important but you are so important to us too as a family, and our educators and our community members. We have lots of community members in our preschool, including child and family health nurses and domestic violence groups. You name it, they're here, because it's such a welcoming place and if you can create that welcoming space and it's not about a physical space it's about working with what you've got. You'll see great outcomes. So next...

Debbie Yates

Sorry, I was just about to say how we often see those first entry points. Sometimes there's a place to share policy information or administrative kind of information so I think like saying, just really reflecting on what does this first entry point, what is it saying and communicating to our families and to their children and young people that are walking through the door. I think that's such an important thing to reflect on and really, really can set the tone for what happens in the next, in that first five minutes; can set the tone for what happens after.

Amy Shine

Absolutely, and even like, as we know there is regulatory documents we do have to have on display as people walk through the door, but we're really thoughtful about the way that they are displayed as well. And decluttering our environment which I'll talk a little bit more about later. But it's having that space and you can stop and say hello and have that time and, yeah, pay respect.

In the next little slide, you can see one of our spaces that we have created in our hallway. Also, when we designed this space, we've only been in this preschool for, since 2016. Gosh, the years fly by.

Debbie Yates

But yes, that's quite a while now, isn't it?

Amy Shine

It still feels relatively new. We created, we didn't want to feel like you walk down a hallway, and as I say we are very fortunate that we got to purpose build our service. But you can still do these things in different ways. But we created a space that is wide enough and it doesn't feel like you're standing in a hallway so that the parents especially pre COVID...We wanted, we have lounges and adult seating so the parents could sit and have a yarn with each other or with us.