



Education through Community

Community through Education

PHILOSOPHY DOCUMENT

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VISION

To inspire children to be successful confident learners; to have respect for themselves and others; to treasure their environments; and to value their own and others contributions to the world.

Beginnings

Spearwood Alternative School (SAS) was established in 1984 in response to the *Commonwealth Schools Commission project for Choice and Diversity in Government Schooling*.

SAS aimed to address the educational requirements of interested families through the establishment of a small alternative school within the public system that considered flexible, child-centered curriculum, alongside merit-selected Principals and staff well before the establishment of Independent Public Schools.

SAS continues to offer a progressive approach to pedagogy within the parameters of the Department of Education, the School Education Act 1999 (WA) and School Educations Regulations 2000 (WA).

Context

SAS is an Independent Public School and part of a vibrant and cohesive wider community. It has a population of around 100 students from K-6 and caters for families looking for a progressive educational experience that addresses the whole child within a safe and supportive community. The extensive school grounds incorporate living classrooms and nature-based 'wild' outdoor spaces that support the SAS educational philosophy.

Ethos

The ethos of **Education through Community** (everyone aligned to create the best possible environment and opportunities for our children, families, community) and **Community through Education** (continuing to create an effective, compassionate, socially active and just community with a local and global view to connection and contribution) is embedded within the shared values that connect each child, their family, the school and the wider community.

SAS is an intentional community school based on connecting, relating and supporting children to be their brilliant best (kind hearts; fierce minds; brave spirits). SAS values of **agency, connections and possibility** underpin all decision-making within the school.

Educational Philosophy

The educational philosophy of SAS is embedded within the values and shared beliefs that connect the child, their family, the school and the wider community through diversity, connection, kindness and respectful relationships.

These beliefs provide the foundation on which the pedagogy of the school is grounded:

1. a democratic community;
2. progressive pedagogies;
3. community health and well-being; and
4. a respectful relationship that embraces Australian First Nations' culture.

1. Democratic community

SAS operates as a democratic community in which all citizens have opportunities and are supported to become their brilliant best.

- Children and staff engage as citizens of the school, with teachers working democratically within a learner-centred environment. Teachers have an essential role as facilitators of children’s learning, providing scaffolding through reflection and deep knowledge of each child.
- As integral partners within this community model, parents contribute and support learning, both onsite and within the home.
- Within the wider community, strong partnerships are established that allow for rich connections and authentic learning opportunities.

2. Progressive pedagogies

SAS educators are informed by current research and professional learning opportunities to stay abreast of progressive pedagogies to support learners to strive for excellence.

SAS provides a rich, learning environment within a multi-aged context to support the school values of agency, connections and possibility. This enables curious, confident and capable children to enjoy a zest for learning and are supported to flourish as lifelong learners.

SAS offers an educational experience to develop learners who:

- are driven by curiosity, passion and purpose;
- generate ideas;
- think critically; and
- persevere in the face of difficulty.

SAS practices a culture of thinking to deepen children’s learning and support their holistic well-being through the *Cultural Forces* identified by Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education (Ritchhart, 2015).

Cultural Force	Directed toward thinking by
Time	Allocating time for thinking by providing time for exploring topics more in-depth as well as time to formulate thoughtful responses.
Opportunities	Providing purposeful activities that require students to engage in thinking and the development of understanding as part of their ongoing experience of the classroom.
Routine & Structures	Scaffolding students’ thinking in the moment as well as providing tools and patterns of thinking that can be used independently.
Language	Using language of thinking that provides students with the vocabulary for describing and reflecting on thinking.
Modelling	Modelling of who we are as thinkers and learners so that the process of our thinking is discussed, shared and made visible.

Interactions & Relationships	Showing a respect for and valuing of one another's contributions of ideas and thinking in a spirit of ongoing collaborative inquiry.
Physical Environment	Making thinking visible by displaying the process of thinking and development of ideas. Arranging a space to facilitate thoughtful interactions.
Expectations	Setting an agenda of understanding and conveying clear expectations. Focusing on the value for thinking and learning as outcomes as opposed to mere completion of "work".

*Taken from Intellectual Character: What is it, Why it Matters, and How to Get It by Ron Ritchhart (2002),
 Jossey-Bass Publisher. ©Ron Ritchhart, 2002.*

SAS champions play as a core fundamental right for all children in line with the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child and embeds play pedagogies across the school (K-6) utilising the indicators of playful learning (Pedagogy of Play, Project Zero) and the cultural forces within a Play Framework.

For more detail please refer to the **SAS Play Policy**.

SAS values connections to enhance learning programs and opportunities for all SAS community members. These include but are not limited to:

- ❖ Einstein Project – University of Western Australia and Sci-Tech.
- ❖ Creative Schools Program – FORM.
- ❖ Harvard Project Zero – Creative a Culture of Thinking (Making Thinking Visible) and Pedagogy of Play.
- ❖ Rock and Water Institute.
- ❖ Restorative Practices community.
- ❖ Be You: Beyond Blue.
- ❖ Cockburn-Fremantle Network of Schools.
- ❖ Department of Education (WA).

3. Community health and well-being

All SAS members have responsibility for creating and fostering a safe and respectful environment based on positive relationships and guided by restorative practices. This collective pastoral care supports children's emotional health, well-being and positive social interaction to create an optimal learning environment.

SAS supports children's development of resilience, effective communication, assertiveness and optimism through Harmony Groups, Restorative Practices, Compassionate Communication, Rock and Water, yoga and meditation.

SAS is supported by a School Chaplain and a School Psychologist.

4. Relationship to Noongar culture

SAS community carefully considered and chose Australian First Nations' names to represent each classroom community.

Kindy & Pre-Primary	Narooma	'place where magic happens/magic place'
Years 1&2	Cooinda	'happy place'

Years 3&4	Bakoolba	'freedom and happiness'
Years 5&6	Bungana	'eldest'
Whole school meetings	Kadijini	'meeting place'
Native garden	Piara	'banksia'.

Inspired by local Noongar culture, SAS has developed Harmony Groups in which staff members act as consultative elders to senior students in leadership roles of facilitating community building activities across the school. SAS has six harmony groups represented by colours and which comprise children from Kindy to Year 6. Harmony Groups work together weekly in an integrated Kitchen Garden program.

Noongar culture and history are woven throughout the learning programs and consolidated with the biennial Desert Adventure in Years 5 or 6. Throughout their time at SAS, community members assume a custodian relationship with the school grounds.

In developing a sense of place-based and nature-based programs, learners begin to understand Noongar connection to country (boodja) as well as their own relationship to the land and the need to care for country. In keeping with Noongar culture, SAS embraces a commitment to sustainability across the school.

As part of the SAS Reconciliation Action Plan, an Acknowledgement to Country is a priority for all community members to pay their respects to the traditional Noongar owners.