

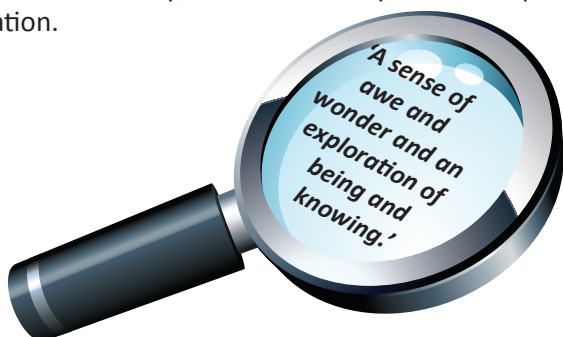
Welcome



This material is divided into four sections

Made in love (2 weeks) - creation/world and creation/us
Who loves you? (3 weeks) - parents/family, friends/services and God
What do you love? (2 weeks) - things/people/friends/family and diversity
Loving others (3 weeks) - helping others, mission and being kind

INTRODUCTION: Children's early learning is foundational for their future development in all areas, e.g. social, emotional, physical, spiritual and cognitive. We intentionally address these areas in our 'spots' so as to engage children's learning experiences in a holistic framework. As we cover the four topics above, the children and their families will be exploring their own sense of wellbeing, a strong sense of connectedness to family and community, as well as their contributions to their relationships and environments. This learning will hopefully lay a foundation for future development in the areas of: their family, their community and their spiritual formation.



HOW TO USE THE MATERIAL: This material is produced with a multi-functional purpose in mind. You can take this curriculum and use it in your playgroup during the week or you could also use it in your pre-school kids church on a Sunday (or whenever you might hold it). Children at this age learn in a variety of ways, from interacting with their environment and materials, from a highly play-based program, with relevant and age appropriate stories, language and activities and at an individual pace. This material is designed for you to set up an environment in which children can explore and learn in relation to the outlined topics. You can pick and choose and design what your program will look like for the week, it is not a prescribed outline that you must follow. Learning is not always predictable and each child will have specific needs, you will know the children in your group and so will be the best person to choose what activities will work best in your environment as they progress towards the goals in different but equally meaningful ways.

PLAYGROUP: You will not only have children in your program but you will have their parents/caregivers coming along with them. It is so important that you work to equip the adults that are engaging with the children as they learn. It is important to support and encourage the adults to engage with the children and participate in all areas of the program. Giving them language to model and to help engage the children with the topic will be a useful and essential tool. The 'take home spot' resources are an important way to also equip the parents with language and tools for engaging with their children beyond the program while still exploring the topic.

KIDS CHURCH: The children will generally be with just you and the leaders of your group but it is so important that you engage and equip the families to help partner with you on their children's spiritual formational journey. Communication and the 'take home spot' resources are essential for this partnership. Children's spiritual formation is not just something that happens at church but a partnership between kids church, the church community, significant adults as well as the essential input of the parents in the home.



INTERACTIVE LEARNING: We know that children learn from interacting with their environments and will take away much more from engaging all their senses with activities rather than just being told something. Children are active learners and learn through play. Interactive learning builds children's understanding of ideas and the creative thinking and inquiry processes that are necessary for ongoing learning. Children learn by being immersed in experiences that will engage their senses. Learning does not only happen during the program but the children will transfer what they learn into other environments and contexts that they are in. Children's learning is not linear, especially within the early years of development.

ENVIRONMENT: Setting up your program and environment is very important for providing a framework in which the children can engage and learn. They will not necessarily follow a prescribed process of learning, we must be guided by them as they move within the learning environment, supported by significant adults who will guide and encourage their learning exploration. The language and questioning that we use to help this process is essential to facilitate their development and learning.

LANGUAGE: You will find, throughout the material, numerous references to language and the importance of its use with your children. We have provided a section as outlined in the 'description spots' that will highlight some of the words and phrases that are recommended that you use throughout that week or topic. The repetition of this language during the program and at home with parents and family will help to reinforce learning and language development. It is important that we understand our focus and what we want the children to have learnt, understood or experienced during the session so that we can use the right words, phrases and questions to help facilitate understanding and project meaning. Using these words and phrases is modelling not only language development but learning and understanding. We can promote the use of language and guide exploration on a particular topic by joining in children's play and engaging them in meaningful conversations. It is also important that we think about the words that we use when we are trying to communicate meaning to pre-schoolers. The children need to be able to understand the words that are used and should be conveyed with simplicity to keep focus and interest in a topic.



SPONTANEOUS TEACHING MOMENTS: Following on from the comments above about language and non-linear learning, we want to highlight how important it is to be on the lookout for spontaneous teaching moments. These unscripted moments are wonderful opportunities to reinforce and build on the topic being explored in that session (or past sessions) to both cement and extend their learning. You need to be intentional about looking for moments to engage with children as they play and interact, to stimulate their thinking and guide their understanding.



REPETITION: When planning your program and deciding which activities to include etc. do not be scared to repeat an activity. Repetition encourages healthy development in young children. Early learning is closely linked to their early developmental building blocks and repetition is a key learning process helping to establish a strong sense of well being, identity and security.

Repetition helps children feel comfortable and safe, so not everything in your program should change each week. Children will often go the activity that they know before venturing to something that looks a bit different. You can have the same activity but just change a few things in it—you will notice that there is lots of repetition in the program but where the focus is just slightly changed. This is where the parents and leaders job becomes important. The language you use and the questions that you ask are so important to help then engage with the activity and the topic that you are focusing on.

LEADERS: Make sure that you help to equip your leaders to be good facilitators and that they know what the topic is and the language/questions that they need to be asking at each activity. Leaders can be roaming and help to facilitate in any area as needed or they can just be assigned to a particular activity that they can work with the children and parents as they engage.

