Welcome to the Mt. Pleasant & District Kindergarten Annual Report 2013
Mt. Pleasant is situated on the boundary of the Adelaide Hills and Barossa regions, situated 64km from Adelaide CBD, half an hour from Gawler and 45 minutes to Mt.Barker.

Mt Pleasant and District Kindergarten provides high quality, innovative Preschool Education and Occasional Care programs for 2-5 year old children from the township of Mt Pleasant and the wider surrounding areas including Birdwood, Mt Crawford, Williamstown, Springton, Eden Valley, Sanderston, Tungkillo, Palmer, Milendella and Mt Torrens.

It has been a year of inspiration as staff have focused deliberate efforts to personalise learning for all children using research practices from Reggio Emilia, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) planning cycle which requires all staff to plan with an holistic approach, with responsiveness to individual children (ILPs – individual learning plans), group strengths and interests, and incorporating intentional teaching. The year has also been one of challenge as staff have concentrated on meeting National Quality Standards in all quality areas, and aiming for continual improvement.

This report will outline some of our site’s thinking, trials, developments and achievements over the past year.

The staff at Mt. Pleasant Kindergarten have collaborated with other preschool and kindergarten sites and their staff within and beyond the Barossa region to engage with international research around teaching and learning with a shared vision to simply be the best that we can be and to ensure that the children have the opportunities, support and means to do the same. Our aim is for children to develop life dispositions such as an optimistic outlook, perseverance, resilience and approaching new experiences with optimism.

Our wonderful community has again stepped up in its support through volunteering, fundraising, transporting and generally chipping in wherever they can.

It is with pleasure that we present to you the 2013 Annual Report. Enjoy the read!!

Ailsa Zadow                      Sharyn Phaup

Director                      Chairperson

Preschool Name: Mt. Pleasant & District Kindergarten
Preschool Number: 4638
Preschool Director: Ailsa Zadow
Region: Barossa
Holistic child driven learning – An introduction

What is it?

An holistic approach means we pay attention to children’s physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning. ‘Child driven’ means we are responsive to children’s ideas, interests and play, which form an important basis for curriculum decision-making. Staff reflect, anticipate and extend children’s learning via open ended questioning, providing feedback, challenging their thinking and guiding their learning.

Individual learning is a term used to describe the tailoring of a child’s learning to match their learning needs and to support the development of their personal interests. Children learn by experiences that allow them to absorb (see, hear, smell, feel), do (activity), and interact (socialise). In addition, children also learn by staff supporting them to reflect on such experiences. Reflection with children links their recent experiences to prior knowledge in order to recognise and verbalise learning. The goal is to develop higher order thinking skills.

This can happen through individual learning plans, small group work or by working in a flexible fashion with a whole group. Entry points may begin with a teacher (intentional teaching), support staff, parental input or by the child themselves.

Individual learning is not about children meandering their way through an aimless curriculum. It is about rigorous structures with high learning expectations guided by EYLF, and supported by high levels of monitoring and intervention to provoke, inspire and challenge by staff.

Why is it important?

Mt Pleasant and District Kindergarten is a vibrant and exciting learning community, with supportive parents and a passionate staff team, who are committed to continually striving to build on our culture of inclusion, and of providing quality play based learning environments which are highly supportive of all children’s learning.

So why pursue holistic child driven learning?

There is extensive research in recent years in improving learning outcomes for children. Significant results are achieved by connecting the needs and interests of the learner, the learning opportunities presented to them and the intervention they receive.

How does it happen?

In developing the ‘how’ of individual learning for children at Mt.Pleasant kindergarten it is important to consider where we have been in order to inform where we are going. This is not about change just for the sake of it. The immediate challenge is to determine the best way forward for our site, rather than to try and duplicate the approach of other sites we visited and researched.

These are some of the ‘how’ elements.
Learning Environments

This has meant a critical look at our learning environments, inside and outside, to assess their arrangement, purpose, and use by children.

Assessment for Learning

This is the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand. It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children’s learning. Staff attended ‘meaningful assessment’ delivered through Lady Gowrie to inform our best practice.

Learning stories are used by the teachers to plan individually for children. Teachers write the narrative (story) followed by an analysis connecting the child’s learning to the EYLF and then think how to grow this learning further (planning). These three parts are considered narrative assessment and individualised planning. Their intention is to make a positive difference to nurture learning opportunities for children.

Tracking Child Progress

Whole region agreement about the type of learning information collected and its purpose is monitoring of specific short term, numeracy goals/targets outlined in individual learning plans to identify individual progress.

Whole site agreement to implement Jolly Phonics Literacy program and to monitor short term, literacy goals outlined in individual learning plans to identify individual progress.

Focused Learning for Small Groups

With the introduction of Single Intake this year, we will have an age gap of 12 months from our eldest child to the youngest in 2014. In terms 3 & 4, this year we have offered an ‘Associated Program’ for children entitled to begin kindergarten Term.1 2014. Children have been attending either one or two days a week, funded by the parents. We chose to offer an ‘Associated Program’ to our community as families have a lack of other services in our district. It is making good use of our resources and our service we can provide to the community. With the introduction of this program, we now have a large age range of children at kindergarten. For ‘teacher led mat’ times we established ability or interest groups. Targeted ability grouping and focus/interest groups support children in having their individual learning needs met.

Where to start?

Well, we already have! Quality Area.3 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) focuses on the physical environment, ensuring it is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children’s learning and development.

Indoors has changed in a few different ways.
The level of lighting in our dark brick building was well below Occ. Health Standards. All interior lighting was replaced with ‘warm’ LED tubes transforming the ambiance of the rooms.

The old drab linoleum and carpet were replaced with fresh lino and carpet mats of all different sizes – large and small; shapes – rectangular, circular, semi circular; textures – rough, smooth, fluffy; and colours, to support more flexible use of the indoor space, and ample opportunities to incorporate numeracy learning into whatever the learning.

Learning resources such as games, puzzles and adjuncts for play have been organised in open-front, low, sliding storage draws allowing staff and children immediate access to the learning materials that they need.

Interior coloured pin-up boards have been ordered to cover the large dark brown, blu-tak plastered bricks. This will freshen their appearance and make the space much more light and bright.

Staff have set up flexible playing spaces with a low couch, large floor cushions and small colourful cushions in a ‘retreat’ internal room with lots of windows to provide children with a choice of learning environments. The internal room with large glass windows that was a teacher prep room is now an attractive, inviting space for children to retreat to for some quiet ‘down’ time.

Quality Area.2 of the NQS focuses on safeguarding and promoting children’s health and safety. Our outdoor environment is flexible and can be rearranged or adjusted to meet changing interest, or provide variety and challenge. Our yard offers challenge and allows children to take appropriate risks, while every reasonable precaution is taken to protect them from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

Outside, the sandpit shade structure was condemned before my arrival as Director, but needed replacing with money from fundraising. The shade cloth was torn, the support beams had broken and had obvious efforts of repair and the posts moved when touched. The committee worked hard fundraising in 2012, to replace the structure with a bright, modern, sturdy shade sail from Shadeform early in 2013. The shade sail location was determined to maximize shade in Summer, therefore now the sandpit is now a learning space throughout the day.

We enlisted help from members of Onkaparinga Rotary Club to help some families of our Governing Council spread 3 truckloads of ‘soft fall’ around all climbing trees and areas with climbing equipment. Soft fall was replenished to a depth of 30cm as per regulations in all areas required.

Further contributions from our community were gratefully received to purchase a gazebo to provide shade and shelter at our numerous outings of fundraising. Our thanks to Mt.Pleasant CWA, and Rosenberg & Co for your kind donations towards our purple purchase.
Roller blinds have been installed on the North and West facing sides of the verandah providing wind and rain protection in Winter and shade in Summer. These blinds have increased our useable ‘protected’ learning space for the children.

The children, staff and parents have established a thriving edible garden. Daily, children pull weeds and vegetables for the chooks and rabbits, feast on the raspberries and strawberries, and use herbs as a flavoursome addition to weekly cooking. Our children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment. This is reinforced through our embedded sustainable practices. Food scrap, compost and rubbish bins are provided at our eating areas. Children enjoy participating in the appropriate management of the contents of each bin, and the follow on of planting seeds using the compost, and fertilizing using worm ‘juice’ and castings.

What does it look like?

A kindergarten that is successfully implementing holistic child driven planning for children will have a creative and engaged ‘buzz’ around it. Children and adults will be clear on the purpose of each activity and will gain satisfaction from their individual and collective progress.

Quality Area 1 of the NQS focuses on ensuring that the educational program and practice is stimulating and engaging and enhances children’s learning and development, and Quality Area.5 of the NQS focuses on relationships with children being responsive, respectful and promoting children’s sense of security and belonging.

Parent feedback will often comment on the relaxed, welcoming and happy atmosphere of our kindergarten. They comment that it is like a family away from home for their child.

In our program, children’s voice is heard through sharing information as a whole group, individual conversations and small group discussions. The children drive the program and have access to resources as determined by them.

The curriculum is developed with each child’s interests and the principles, practice and learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework in
mind. As stated in our site philosophy – Every child is supported to participate as a valued member of the group.

To ensure we know all children are participating, staff use the *involvement scale* from the *Respect Reflect and Relate* document to observe children to analyse their ability to engage in the curriculum.

Each afternoon, staff critically reflect on children’s learning and support needs, both as individuals and as a whole kindergarten group, which is used to implement the program. Fortnightly staff discuss, write and reflect on individual learning plans for each child. Belonging, being and becoming learning stories and narratives are written for children and their families, along with a summative report in their last term of kindergarten.

Relief staff have commented on the independence of the children at our Kindergarten. We ensure each child is supported to build sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults. Staff create opportunities for peer scaffolding. Children are encouraged to model and assist each other with routines and play. For example set-up and tidy-up of indoor and outdoor areas, self-help skills managing clothing, food containers and resources they need for their play, encouragement to show kindness and compassion to their peers, and negotiating roles and responsibilities in their play and collaborative projects.

Staff use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child’s learning/interest using a literacy program called Jolly Phonics, in small sized ability groups. Each child’s agency is promoted through intentional teaching of the Child Protection Curriculum.

Quality Area.6 of the NQS focuses on collaborative relationships with families that are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children and community partnerships. Improving communication with parents has been in our site plan for 2013, and all staff embraced this.

Collaborative partnerships with families and communities are crucial to children’s sense of belonging at kindergarten. Therefore, information of each child’s knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests is collected through pre-entry meetings and informal conversations with parents. As a relatively small kindergarten, staff has opportunities twice daily to share information with children’s family members about recent happenings at home and at kindergarten.

Narrative stories are displayed on a notice board at the kindergarten entry of particular events of interest, along with notices for the day that is to unfold. Three newsletters are produced each term, on top of invitations to parents to contribute to the development and
review of the Statement of Philosophy annually, and revision of site policies.

As a Kindergarten catering for predominantly rural children & their families (with a small number of our children from culturally diverse family backgrounds), we value and build on our communities strong links with our local and natural environments. We continue to develop our beautiful, spacious play based Outdoor Learning Environment, with a focus on sustainability and valuing the Peramungk people, plants and animals of our area.

Kindergarten friends and families assist us with a joint community 'Wirra' bush garden which we help maintain in the church yard next door and a bush tucker garden in the Kindy grounds. These gardens need pruning, weeding and replanting with medicinal and edible Indigenous plant species.

Together these projects create long-term habitat renewal and biodiversity within our town area, as well as teaching skills and raising the awareness of young children, their families and the wider community about the history of our local land – Peramangk Country, of how the Peramangk people used these plants. This opens up the opportunity to learn more about Peramangk traditions, dreaming stories, spirituality, lore, ceremonies and rituals.

Involving Mt.Pleasant children, families, staff and community in our Centre’s outdoor development, maintenance & improvement educates the importance and value of sustainable living; water, flora and fauna conservation; and creating and caring for a healthy environment and food source.

We have further explored our local community with regular visits to the local primary school to participate in fitness with the Reception class.

Are we there yet?

While we have made many steps into our journey, this will not be fully implemented overnight.

Quality Area.7 of the NQS focuses on effective leadership and management of the service that contributes to quality environments for children’s learning and development. Using our Quality Improvement Plan as an ongoing cycle of planning and review, we include engagement of families and create a climate for continuous improvement.

All teachers are being supported with the National Quality Standards, our site improvement plan and their own performance management through ongoing relevant professional development.

The performance of staff members is evaluated and each staff member develops a performance management plan that is supports their learning. All staff are involved in establishing clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning at the kindergarten. All staff are engaged in the process of implementation and improvement and have already trialed a range of initiatives from professional reading from Reggio Emilia’s Hundred Languages exhibition, professional development workshops such as Lady
Our emergent curriculum

Quality Area 4 of the NQS focuses on the provision of qualified and experienced staff who are able to develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create safe and predictable environments and encourage children’s active engagement in the learning program. All kindergartens are required to achieve the principles, practice and learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework.

Our practice and improvement in holistic child driven learning is to achieve the principles, practice and learning outcomes of EYLF by supporting each child’s individual learning needs and interests. In achieving this, all our staff members share a democratic work environment, sharing tasks and responsibilities, and offering assistance and support to each other.

What now?

On with the learning! We continue to challenge our practices, reflect upon the areas described in this report and plan for continuous improvement. Our job is to make it work for our kids, their families, our staff and our site.
We support a small number of children with DECD allocated levels of support. These children have individual learning plans, which are formed through communication with other support agencies and parents, which identify short-term learning goals. They are supported through ‘in their play’ and withdrawal programmes according to their levels of support and learning goals.

These children are typically involved in speech, gross and fine motor, social and emotional support activities.

Children requiring more support in transitioning to school than we receive in DECD funding, are supported, wherever possible, by internal funding.

Priorities

The site’s work towards holistic child driven curriculum is gathering momentum and will guide the site priorities in the near future. More discussion is provided in the first section of this report.

Our amazing Outdoor Learning Area continues to develop. Its connection to sustainability practices as well as all other curriculum areas including literacy and numeracy has become even more embedded in 2013.

The implementation of our Quality Improvement Plan as an ongoing cycle of planning and review has begun. This work has been supported through staff meetings, pupil free days and professional training and development in Adelaide.

The implementation of our QIP has been interwoven with our intent to improve individual learning for all

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### Table 2: Attendance Percentages 2011 - 2013

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Term 2</th>
<th>Term 3</th>
<th>Term 4</th>
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<td>2011 Centre</td>
<td>94.1</td>
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<td>2013 Centre</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 State</td>
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<td>89.1</td>
<td>88.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012 State</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>85.9</td>
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<td>2013 State</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on attendances recorded in the two week reference period each term, and calculated to an average unadjusted daily attendance (deemed attendance). Attendance percentages are based on the calculated deemed attendance (integer), divided by the number of enrolments. Excludes pre-entry

Source: Preschool Data Collection, Data Management and Information Systems

Attendance is comparable with state average. With such small enrolments, a very small number of children make a large difference in the attendance percentage.

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**Intervention profile**
children utilising the reflection cycle for EYLF. These two agendas are interconnected and are not to be seen as a case of one or the other.

**Workforce Composition**

We employed 1 Director and 1 teacher for 3 days a week, and 1 Early Childhood Worker Level.2 (ECW2) for 1 day a week for Occasional Care. All female. We do not have any Aboriginal educators in our team. The teacher position is permanent, but this is held as a substantive position for a person in Regional Leadership. It has been filled by the same contract teacher for the past two years on 12 month contracts. The ECW2 position is 12 month contract each year.

Our staff have a mix of metropolitan, rural and Special School experience that they bring to our site.

All staff have appropriate qualifications and registration including current mandatory elements (First Aid, Child Protection Curriculum training, Anaphylaxis and Asthma).

1 ECW1 staff member worked 1 day 1 week, and 2 days the next to complete support services, lunch and administrative support. We do not currently employ any Aboriginal support staff.

**Parent Satisfaction**

Parents are surveyed each year to gauge satisfaction across the quality of teaching and learning, support of learning, relationships and communication, and leadership and decision making of our site.

Responses were overwhelmingly positive to all areas surveyed.

Parents indicated that they have confidence in the teachers and the Kindergarten, that the teachers make learning interesting and enjoyable for their children, and are generally really pleased with the quality of education their child receives.

Parents felt that they are able to have input into the kindergarten in all kinds of ways, and they feel comfortable approaching the staff for feedback regarding their child.

**What next?**

**2014 Priorities**

Our work in holistic child driven curriculum for all children will continue in 2014.

We will continue to reflect on the best use of our learning environments to build in flexibility and to maximise learning opportunities.

Our work in numeracy is ongoing

We will continue to review our management of the reflection cycle for EYLF, with a view to determining a
more time efficient method of documentation and implementation.

We will be liaising with Reception teachers to work with the implementation of EYLF and the Foundation level of the Australian Curriculum.

2014 promises to be another challenging and rewarding year.

We look forward to the journey!