

NATURAL LEARNING CURRICULUM

Year 1 (age 6)

NSW BOARD OF STUDIES 2012

approval given for one year

My child (or more correctly, my children, as my 4 year old is also learning, they both started learning before they were born) is learning through natural learning, also known as unschooling, experience based learning or independent learning. This provides a unique opportunity to step away from systems and methods and to develop independent ideas out of actual experiences, where the child is truly in pursuit of knowledge, not the other way around. I want my children to learn because they love to learn, not because they are required to learn.

A large component of natural learning is grounded in doing every day, real, experiential things, not because we hope they will be good for us, but because they are intrinsically fascinating. My children do so many different things all day long and in a trusting and supportive environment. Doing real things invariably brings about healthy mental development and valuable knowledge. It is natural for children to read, write, play with numbers, learn about society, find out about the past, think, wonder and do all those things that society often unsuccessfully attempts to force upon them in the context of schooling.

Another important aspect of natural learning is a great connection with, respect for and trust in the child to be able to take control of their own learning and also to be able to express what they need and listen to what other people are needing as well. For me emotional intelligence and social skills in peacemaking, non violent communication and conflict resolution based in shared power are as valuable as any key learning area mentioned in this 'curriculum'. I have a strong desire to model a peaceful way of relating with my children by the way I relate with them and to me that naturally involves trusting them to guide their own learning.

Play is also an integral part of my children's daily life and therefore of their learning. Within natural learning play is not separated from learning, it is another experiential part of the everyday lives of children and from observing and joining in with them I can see that all key learning areas are being explored and learned in often profound ways simply through play which children naturally do a majority of the time.

Curricular, textbooks, and tests are not the defining, driving force behind the education of my children not only because they interfere with learning but because they interfere with trust in my children's natural development. In saying that, our natural learning doesn't rule out the use of workbooks or in fact any method of learning. Resources like those used in schools are seen as one resource among many that can be used when desired by my children, for as long as the resource inspires them.

Free from a schooling system which teaches that 'learning' can only take place by means of 'programs' and 'courses of study', my children spend over fourteen hours a day, every day of the year, learning. Because they are at liberty to participate in self-selected learning which entails obtaining information on a one to one basis and developing their skills and knowledge at a pace suited to their needs, the methods used and the knowledge gained by my children are as rich and varied as life itself.

My children are not partaking in a system which forces them to participate in programs designed to be suited to the average capabilities of children, denies children the opportunity to explore topics which interest them and separates learning into subjects. They are therefore able to retain the instinctive self-motivation for the gaining of knowledge with which all children are born and they have a love of learning.

My children have a rich social life that is not restricted predominantly to socialisation with lots of children their same age in a very defined and regulated playground. They interact with other children through home learning networks, family friends and they have also found valued friendships themselves through our social network. My children also have friends with people of all age ranges from babies to the elderly and all of these interactions provide for rich social learning. This extended community of support also provides for my children so much opportunity for varied facilitation, guidance and teaching around things that interest them. Everybody has different interests and skills and we are able to call upon different people to share their knowledge or passions if the curiosity for that arises in my children.

My children learn in a whole manner, covering and absorbing many topics at a time. Each day they are engaged in non-stop self-motivated learning which incorporates English, mathematics, science and technology, human society and the environment (which is everywhere, they are a part of it), creative and practical arts and personal development, health and physical education.

ENGLISH

The following overview does not cover a set period of time. Every subject is covered, on an on-going basis, every day of my daughter's life.

As my daughter learns via what are commonly known as natural learning methods, 'themes/topics' will be covered as they occur.

The 'order or sequence', again, will be covered as 'themes/topics' occur.

Time is not 'allocated' to my daughter for each 'Key Learning Area'. She is free to learn at a depth appropriate to her intellectual and developmental stages and to take as long as she wishes over each 'theme/topic' she covers. My daughter learns for well over ninety-eight hours a week, far more than the 'learning time' in schools.

Assessment of student achievement in each 'Key Learning Area' will be carried out by observation of and discussion with my daughter.

"Develop students' skills in listening, talking, reading, viewing and writing , including handwriting"

All children (with the exception of the deaf) are born with 'listening skills'. The ability to hear and therefore to listen, together with active intelligence, enables them to TEACH THEMSELVES to talk. Some children are capable of using clearly enunciated, well structured sentences at a very early age, while others are still struggling to use single words. However, by the time they reach the age of three or four, almost all children have easily recognisable 'listening' and 'talking skills' and the further development of these 'skills' is either delayed or enhanced by association. During the fourteen plus waking hours a day, for three hundred and sixty-five days a year, my daughter listens and talks in order to learn.

Through her efforts, my efforts and the input of our extended community of family and friends, my daughter has a lot of fun reading and being read to and is, in her own time without external pressures around what she should be doing when, well on her way to reading proficiently.

My daughter writes as I do, when necessary, in real life situations and sometimes just for fun or experiments sake and she is continually learning to spell as she needs to.

“Encourage students to read, listen to and view widely with understanding and enjoyment.”

My daughter is provided with a wide range of material to read, listen to and view which she is free to choose from. As my daughter has a wide vocabulary she is able to understand a wide range of material.

“Teach students to spell and punctuate accurately and to write grammatically”

My daughter is learning to use punctuation and to write grammatically through her continual exposure to written material and her questions that arise from this exposure. My daughter spells out words and notices different punctuation through curiosity and desire in all kinds of everyday contexts like reading a road sign out of the car, reading a wide variety of books together or reading the packaging on food we may buy.

“Teach students to communicate in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences.”

Because listening, speaking, reading and writing all enable communication in a variety of situations, as my daughter's writing and reading continue to improve, she will be more than adequately equipped in this area. My daughter also communicates in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes and audiences in real life situations.

“Provide students with opportunities to experience a wide range of good literature.”

My daughter has always been and will continue to be provided with a wide range of literature in our own home, homes of friends and families and also libraries.

“Provide students with opportunities for diverse writing and speaking activities.”

My daughter is and will continue to be provided with opportunities to develop her diverse writing and speaking activities through so many of life's everyday experiences.

“Provide students with opportunities to understand the nature of mass media.”

My daughter is exposed to the mass media through real life situations just as I am and opportunity is always available to her for discussion. She is exposed to different opinions about and relationships with mass media through her interactions with our diverse and supportive extended family and community. She is also encouraged to formulate her own opinions (and she readily does) and they are valued as much as anyone else's.

“Develop students' skills in problem solving, analysis, synthesis, communication, information-gathering, research, reflection and the use of a range of technologies including computer based technologies.”

My Daughter is always developing these skills through real life situations and, as she grows and develops, her abilities in this area will continue to grow and develop with her. As varied technologies such as computer-based technologies are a regular part of our life she is exposed to them and develops these skills when her self inspired learning requires it.

MATHEMATICS

The following overview does not cover a set period of time. Every subject is covered, on an on-going basis, every day of my daughter's life.

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Assessment of student achievement in each 'Key Learning Area' will be carried out by observation of and discussion with my daughter.

"Develop students' skills in questioning, problem solving, analysis, synthesis, communication, information-gathering, research, reasoning, reflection and the use of a range of technologies including computer based technologies."

My daughter's abilities in these areas will continue to grow and develop with her. She has access to computers with a wide range of software (and the internet which has so many possibilities), calculators, scales, and much other equipment around our home and the homes of our family and friends, and we use them on a regular basis when the need arises.

"Develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding in: The application of mathematics to real-world situations and problems, including those needed to the general demands of everyday life mental and written computation and numerical reasoning; pre-algebra concepts by patterning and generalisation; collecting, representing, analysing and evaluating information; identifying and quantifying the attributes of shapes and objects and applying measurement strategies; spatial visualisation and geometric reasoning."

My daughter learns math through living in real-world situations. My daughter has already partly covered the basics of the above and will continue to enhance her learning in these areas as she grows and develops. Living everyday provides my daughter with the opportunity to use all of the above on a daily basis. My daughter also has a general fascination with numbers lately and mentally works on mathematical equations for fun and within discussion because it interests her.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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over each 'theme/topic' she covers. My daughter learns for well over ninety-eight hours a week, far more than the 'learning time' in schools.

Assessment of student achievement in each 'Key Learning Area' will be carried out by observation of and discussion with my daughter.

"Develop students' knowledge and understanding of the natural and made environments."

This has already naturally been done and my daughter's already extensive knowledge and understanding of the above will continue to increase as she grows and naturally learns.

"Provide first hand experiences for students in investigating, designing, making and using technology."

My daughter has both the time and freedom to gather much information about science and to conduct many scientific experiments. With my encouragement, my daughter continuously stimulates her own interest in science, learning about and questioning scientific information. Everyday life provides many opportunities for scientific discoveries and we are able to follow them through in more depth if that is exciting for her.

"Develop through first hand experiences, students' knowledge and understanding of the process of scientific investigation, designing and making and the technologies people select and use."

Through the process of natural learning, my daughter has experience and understanding in this area which will continue to grow as she does. She explores and makes things so often and naturally investigates, designs and makes and also watches, learns and is influenced by so many inventions around her.

"Develop knowledge and understanding that is consistent with scientific and technological understandings appropriate to their own stages of development."

While my daughter's knowledge and understanding of 'accepted scientific and technological understandings' is growing and will continue to grow and expand she will also continue to be encouraged to question 'accepted' scientific and technological understandings as a part of a diverse learning experience involving critical thinking.

"Develop students' skills in problem solving, analysis, synthesis, information- gathering, research, reflection and the use of a range of technologies including computer based technologies."

Through natural and interest based learning my daughter has already developed skills in these areas and these skills will continue to expand and grow with her.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

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Assessment of student achievement in each 'Key Learning Area' will be carried out by observation of and discussion with my daughter.

"Provide students with knowledge and understanding of the diversity of Australia's people, their heritage, history, geography and social, economic and political institutions."

My daughter has both a wide knowledge and understanding of the above and her knowledge and understanding continues to grow with her and our adventures in life. Concepts of social diversity come up regularly in our learning and communicating and they are welcomed and valued. My daughter also interacts with a great diversity of people in many parts of Australia.

"Develop students' knowledge and understanding of aboriginal history and culture."

As Aboriginal people are far from being separate from 'Australia's people', this is included in the above. It is also such an integral part of our history and culture so I place emphasis on understanding and connecting with indigenous people and culture with an attitude of deep respect (in saying that nothing is forced upon my daughter as she learns naturally and the above is covered through everyday living and interacting within community).

"Develop students' understanding of citizenship and its responsibilities, especially in Australia."

My daughter has a reasonable understanding of local government, state and federal laws and what it means to be a citizen of this country. She is exposed to a healthy level of diversity in opinions to be able to develop critical thinking around the complex questions of what it means to be a citizen of this country and what it means to be responsible. Those are such complex concepts that could be the subject of very in depth discussion and my daughter is made aware of the complexities of such ideas and her understanding will grow with her.

"Provide students with knowledge and understanding of Australia's place in the world, and of other peoples, places, and events, both past and present."

As she communicates, gathers information, analyses and synthesises it, my daughter's knowledge and understanding of the above will continue to expand as it has always done. These are very interesting topics that inevitably arise in learning about life, the world, its diversity and our place within it and they provide so much interesting scope for learning!

"Provide opportunities for students to explore the religious and moral beliefs held by themselves and others."

I value open mindedness, open heartedness and compassion for all of life and continually attempt to share that with my children by example. My daughter is continually exploring and questioning her own and others spiritual, religious and moral beliefs and will continue to do so as she grows and develops, as her own beliefs grow and develop and as she interacts with a variety of people throughout her life.

"Develop students' understanding of the values of tolerance, consideration and respect for others."

We are born tolerant, considerate and respectful and my daughter will continue to value and appreciate all life, human and more than human, especially through consideration, respect and empathy being directed toward and shared with her.

"Develop students' knowledge and understanding of the interrelationship of people and the environment."

Living as she does in the everyday world, and in intimate connection with the natural world, my daughter sees each day how interrelated all life is and this understanding seems intrinsically within her. I think this is one aspect of learning that we as adults in our disconnected culture actually often unlearn as we grow older. Through gardening, being in nature, camping, eating locally grown food, caring for animals, eating our chickens eggs and meat and through interacting with local animals and plants my daughter has a deep knowledge and understanding of the interconnection of life.

"Develop students' skills in 'problem' solving, analysis, syntheses, communication, information gathering, research and the use of technology, including computers."

As she gathers information, by communicating and by using modern technological equipment and as she analyses and synthesises it, my daughter's knowledge and understanding of the above will continue to expand as it has always done.

CREATIVE ARTS

The following overview does not cover a set period of time. Every subject is covered, on an on-going basis, every day of my daughter's life.

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Assessment of student achievement in each 'Key Learning Area' will be carried out by observation of and discussion with my daughter.

"Develop students' knowledge, understanding, skills and experiences in the creative arts including visual arts and music."

Music and visual arts are a large part of my daughter's everyday life and opportunities are always available to her to explore these areas both formally and informally. Her father who lives away from us (although sees our children regularly) is an artist and musician and due to my daughter's obvious love of music (she sings very, very often) they learn that together as much as possible. My daughter has a guitar and already plays chords and sings along. She has recorded many songs informally with her father and all of this learning is done from a love and passion for it.

"Provide children with experiences in a range of creative arts activities."

My daughter has always been and will continue to be provided with a variety of experiences in creative arts activities. There is so much scope within the creative arts and we explore many creative interests with enthusiasm.

"Encourage students' appreciation, self-expression, technical competence and creativity in the area of the creative arts."

All of the above is encouraged extensively through formal and informal experiences, through my daughter's, my own and other people's passions for creative expression.

"Provide students with opportunities to manipulate a variety of materials and to use tools and implements according to their needs, interests and abilities."

As with all 'subjects', my daughter's needs and interests, regardless of ability (which develops and grows through needs and interests being catered for), are fulfilled by her being provided with opportunities including a variety of materials and tools/implements.

"Develop students' understanding of the place and importance of creative and practical arts in Australian society and in other societies and cultures."

This happens naturally through life, through conversation, through our interests and through attending cultural festivals, concerts, art galleries, dances and theatres. My daughter has a rather extensive understanding of the place and importance of creative and practical arts in our society through exposure and interest and this will continue to develop.

"Develop students' skills in problem -solving, analysis, synthesis, communication, information gathering, research, reflection and the use of a range of technologies, including computer-based technologies."

As with all 'subjects' my daughter will continue to gather information, analyse and synthesise it. She will continue to communicate and she will research and use technology, including our computers, their ever increasing range of software and internet opportunities.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The following overview does not cover a set period of time. Every subject is covered, on an on-going basis, every day of my daughter's life.

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Assessment of student achievement in each 'Key Learning Area' will be carried out by observation of and discussion with my daughter.

"Develop students' knowledge and understanding of the importance of an active and healthy lifestyle."

My daughter already knows (and due to the fact that she knows she understands) the 'importance of an active and healthy lifestyle'. She leads an active and healthy lifestyle.

"Provide opportunities for students to participate in regular physical activities."

My daughter is provided with a wide range of opportunities for regular physical activities both formal and informal and will continue to have these opportunities. Because she learns naturally and has the time and space, my daughter has ample opportunity for regular physical activity. From her own choice and a desire and passion to learn my daughter also currently attends a weekly gymnastics class.

"Provide opportunities for students to learn to participate in and learn the skills for a variety of physical activities."

As above.

"Develop students' knowledge of healthy food habits and the capacity to make informed health decisions."

My daughter already has extensive knowledge of this and is continually making informed decisions in regards to health, as healthy, whole, organic food is important to me, we also regularly discuss food and health and the importance of healthy eating. As a part of natural learning I am also wanting to trust my daughter to know and trust her own body intimately and make choices from that space.

"Develop students' knowledge and understanding about road safety, drugs and mental health."

My daughter's knowledge of these issues is comprehensive and applicable to what has arisen in her natural learning so far and it will continue to grow with her.

"Develop students' knowledge and understanding of personal safety in a wide range of contexts, and procedures to follow in emergency situations."

My daughter has a strong sense of personal safety in contexts that are relevant to her life and is aware of emergency situations which could affect her.

"Develop students' knowledge of themselves and their physical, social and emotional development."

As my daughter grows and develops her knowledge in these areas will naturally also develop as she is allowed to know herself and tune into herself and as she trusts she can ask all sorts of questions that will be answered in honesty and respect

"Develop students' knowledge and skills in co-operating with others and establishing positive interpersonal relationships."

My daughter's knowledge and skills in these areas develops through interaction within our family, wider community and within all the other interactions she has throughout her life. They are developed through the ways we relate with one another and I believe the most effective and respectful way to develop those knowledges and skills is by my example and also by clearly expressing what I am feeling and needing, making clear requests and maintaining connection while in conflicts with them.

"Provide opportunities for students to develop a positive set of values to guide their behaviour and to develop a strong sense of their personal worth."

My daughter naturally has positive values to guide her and her sense of personal worth and security is well provided for and nurtured and I think that being out of schooling institutions supports that.

"Develop students' skills in 'problem' solving, analysis, synthesis, communication, information gathering, research, reflection and the use of a range of technologies, including computer-based technologies."

All of the above are an ongoing part of my daughter's everyday life.

METHOD BY WHICH A RECORD OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES WILL BE/ARE BEING KEPT

Learning activities take place for well over fourteen hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days per year. I or a trusted and loved member of our extended family or community of friends are available to my children for all of this time and more and to formally record and analyse my daughter's actual learning activities for the purpose of satisfying Board of Studies requirements would take me away from my children and due to the manner in which my daughter learns it would not be productive to her education. Therefore a minimum amount of time will be taken each day to briefly record our family's learning activities in the style of a journal. This record is not broken down into subjects as my daughter's (or any of our) lives are not fragmented in that way. We follow our interests and our interests inevitably lead to science, literature, history, mathematics and music - all the things that have interested people before anybody thought of them as "subjects".

METHOD BY WHICH STUDENT'S ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS WILL BE/ARE BEING RECORDED

I or someone close to us who we trust is with my children all day, every day and I know them as well as you can know another person. Through living together, observation and discussion I am aware of my daughter's achievement and progress. At the same time I cannot be fully aware of what my daughter is learning as she owns her own knowledge. She learns for its intrinsic value not for external assessment.

Like watching a garden grow, no matter how closely we examine the garden, it is difficult to see that anything is happening at any particular moment. But as the season progresses, we can see that much has happened, quietly and naturally. Children pursue life, and in doing so, pursue knowledge. They need adults to trust in the inevitability of this very natural process and to offer what assistance they can.

As with all children who are free to use natural learning techniques, as my daughter grows and develops, her skills in all areas grow with her. She learns because learning is instinctive in humans and all of life.