

Summary of learning and proposed educational program for XXXXXXXXX

April 2013

Philosophy of education

Over the last 6 years of her life, XXX has grown and changed from a helpless infant, to an intelligent and articulate child simply by interacting with the world around her. We have watched her learn to walk and talk and feed herself food. We have watched her form and test many theories on her environment and the society within which she lives. In her day to day life she investigates maths, science, geography, physics, chemistry, society and biology. All through her own interests, play, talking, being read to, asking questions, observing and doing. Watching this growth, and this thirst for acquiring knowledge, has lead us as a family to appreciate and believe totally in the process of Natural Learning or Child Led Learning. Watching this wonderfully organic learning process has bought us to the conclusion that we will begin our home schooling journey without a formal curriculum.

This is not to say that we aren't aware of, or even that we plan to ignore/avoid the curriculum areas outlined by the Board of studies. To the contrary, we are more than satisfied that XXXX's self-directed learning will more than meet all of the objectives in each Key Learning Area, and indeed our record keeping and documentation will be reflective of this, as it will be based on the KLA's outlined by the Board.

Watching XXXX grow as a person, we have seen that learning occurs every waking moment. We have already seen the learning in action as she makes wonderful use of the resources around her be they books, people, play, life, her immediate environment, computers, craft materials, her imagination, the wider community or the library. We feel that by allowing and supporting her to follow her interests, we are enabling her to learn at her own pace, learn broadly and diversely and that we are allowing her to foster within herself a love of lifelong learning, and an ability to seek out, enjoy and learn from all aspects of life available to her.

Learning outcomes, content, teaching approach and learning experience

XXXX enjoys a variety of approaches to learning. From a very young age she has been interested in numbers and has worked out her own systems for calculating additions. At the same time she has also sought out the use of structured activity books to work on numeracy and literacy activities.

We have a very busy social calendar most weeks including weekly swimming lessons, yoga and active participation in sorting fruit and veges for a local co-op. We frequently participate in workshops with other homeschooling families through Living Learning at Lawson.

I have also become part of the committee of the Blue Mountains Home Education Network. We occasionally take part in excursions run by the Blue Mountains Little Explorers Club. And we visit the library every few weeks together as a family borrowing a collection of fiction and non-fiction literature.

Together with our friends, family and community, we are fascinated by the world and enjoy our experiences of the six key learning areas, English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and the Environment, Creative and Performing Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. We love to learn and live our lives together, in connection with each other and all of life.

Current Status and Proposed Directions

XXXX is currently working at her own level of ability. She spends a lot of time drawing and working on craft projects, doing jigsaw puzzles, discussing number patterns and goes through periods of time where she wears a wrist watch and recognises o'clocks. Recently she has been practising counting to 90.

XXXX is read to each day, she also spends a lot of time looking at books on her own. She has started to recognise simple words, will attempt to write more complex words phonetically, and a favourite pastime is to write short notes to other family members. She can read and write her own name and the names of all the members of our family. XXXX has been writing short letters to her pen friend with assistance.

For the past few months XXXX has been increasingly interested in refining her acrobatic skills. She really enjoys climbing, swinging and testing out the boundaries of her own body's flexibility.

Approximately 6 months ago XXXX was given a pet guinea pig. She has developed a close connection with her pet and has developed her problem solving skills in capturing her guinea pig on the odd occasion it has raced away from her. XXXX enjoys having a pet and is very interested in nature generally. She keenly observes a variety of animals ranging from insects to horses to aquatic animals and has been investigating how their bodies work, what their habits are and their place in the life cycle.

XXXX enjoys spending time playing games online. One of her favourites has a variety of learning activities ranging from map reading to pattern recognition to addition.

From a very young age XXXX has been very interested in music and visual arts. She is quite skilful at drawing representational imagery and has become increasingly creative with her choice of media. She is constantly singing and dancing at home and has memorised a very large number of songs ranging from nursery rhymes to movie theme songs to folk songs.

After attending a CSIRO workshop through Living learning a couple of years ago it became evident that XXXX was very interested in scientific experiments. She enjoys showing her friends lots of kitchen based experiments and has recently been creating volcanos with bicarb soda and vinegar.

In recent months XXXX has become increasingly interested in food preparation and has enjoyed assisting cooking pancakes for family breakfasts. We have discussed safety issues specific to fry pans and hot surfaces.

As for proposed directions of her learning, we aim to support her current interests and passions and continue to allow her to learn at her own pace. She has said she would like to do the following things this year:

- learn about why mice run so much
- how do trees grow by themselves?
- why is fire SO hot?
- Learn how to be a scientist
- Do experiments with my family
- I want to explore being a gymnastics person.

Proposed educational program

As we are choosing a natural learning approach, our proposed educational program will be quite eclectic: We will provide XXXX with access to a wide range of experiences and support her in following her interests and passions. We will help her find her way to where she wants to go. As our approach is ongoing and it requires being very responsive, it is difficult to say what exactly we will cover and when, however we have some ideas about what we would like to work on and these are listed under each key learning area. For all key learning areas we do not specify a set **period of time**, as every subject is covered on an ongoing basis every day of our lives. As we are choosing primarily natural learning methods **themes/topics** will be covered in the **order or sequence** they arise in our daily life. The **time allocated** to each key learning area is unlimited and XXXX is able to learn at a depth appropriate to her intellectual level and developmental stage. **Assessment of student achievement in each key learning area** will be carried out by interacting and engaging with XXXX and her work, by witnessing her learning and in discussion with her.

ENGLISH

XXXX has a pen friend who she writes to semi-frequently. She also enjoys creating cards for family members and friends. She writes with assistance, spelling either phonetically or by listening to me dictate individual letters to her.

XXXX is able to listen to and follow directions from a range of people. She and her younger sister engage in role play games together numerous times throughout the day and give instructions to each other as to the plot, intent of individual characters and character relationships.

Every day XXXX is interacting with a wide range of people in varying contexts. Currently she enjoys sending short messages to some of our adult friends via my facebook account. She does this with my guidance and supervision.

XXXX speaks with relatives on the phone and listens to a number of audio books.

Recently we have been focusing on full-stops when I am reading, and talking about what they mean. XXXX has been recognising the names of our family members and pointing out misspellings of her younger sister's name to others who attempt to spell it.

XXXX enjoys reading a range of texts. A few weeks ago she sat and listened to me read Roald Dahl's BFG for over 2 hours. She is becoming increasingly interested in graphic novels and likes to examine them on her own and to listen to someone else reading them to her.

As a family we have regular visits to theatre performances. On average we would attend one or two performances every two months. Last year we attended performances at The Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre and the previous year we saw quite a few shows at The Sydney Opera House. Before and after each performance we talk about themes, props, stage design and how we felt about the show.

When XXXX is seeking specific knowledge, she is aware that we can search for information on the internet. We also access our local library and have borrowed books about life cycles of ants, guinea pig care and various other topics.

XXXX can recognise a variety of words and can sound out all the letters of the alphabet. She is starting to be able to read and requires some self-confidence in realising her ability. She has memorised a number of familiar texts and "reads" them to herself and her sister.

When writing XXXX uses a combination of upper and lower case letters. She is becoming increasingly aware of the significance of upper case letters. She writes her own name with confidence and has been experimenting with various font styles. XXXX uses a range of writing materials including pens and pencils, computer keyboard and magnetic letters on the fridge. She enjoys working on workbooks that provide stencils of letters to trace over and practice.

XXXX is able to give clear recounts and instructions to her peers or known adults. She is becoming increasingly confident in speaking with less familiar adults.

XXXX is able to listen at length to a story being read and to view feature length movies maintaining focus most of the time. She discusses plot, theme and characters to help develop her understanding of the film or text.

Educational program

We will continue our responsive natural learning approach day by day, however we have some ideas about directions we would like to take:

- A focus on developing writing skills through regular letter writing with XXXX's pen friend.
- Looking at a variety of texts and discussing their purpose, in particular recipes, instruction manuals, poetry and story books.
- Provide XXXX with more hands-on opportunities to seek information with guidance/support.
- Ensure regular access to "good literature" by making time to read such literature on a fortnightly or weekly basis.

MATHEMATICS

XXXX has had a keen interest in numbers from quite a young age. She enjoys counting and has been practicing counting by twos and counting to 90.

We have provided XXXX with a variety of math related work books that focus on shapes, numbers and pattern. She can recognise numbers from 1-20 in written form and is developing interest in writing numbers herself. She especially requests to write the postcodes on envelopes when we write to family and friends.

She has had a wrist watch for the past 12-18 months and wears it semi-frequently. She recognizes all the numbers and can usually identify specific o'clocks. We are working on "past" and "to" concepts within the context of her usual attempts at telling the time.

We recently attended a 3 week Math through Art workshop that I co-facilitated with another home schooling parent where we explored angles, shapes and measurement. XXXX seemed to really enjoy creating artworks based on mathematical concepts.

XXXX is quite successful at solving greater than and less than problems that are presented to her in computer games that she plays. At the same time she is able to work out subtraction questions reasonably quickly too.

She can identify a number of 2D and 3D shapes and discusses shapes when creating arts and crafts, when she notices them in her environment and in other contexts.

A few months ago XXXX started working on a workbook focusing on number bonds of 10. She seemed to enjoy the process of working through the workbook and was able to work out most of the activities with little, if any assistance.

XXXX explores number patterns herself and has discovered that 2 plus 2 plus 2 equals 6. She made that discovery at least a year ago. She works through these type of patterns in her head.

Days of the week, months and seasons have become a focus for XXXX in judging time frames. She has recently become aware that when people say "Just a minute" they don't always mean 1 minute.

Educational program

We will continue our responsive natural learning approach day by day, however we have some ideas about directions we would like to take:

- Focus semi-frequently on identifying “to” and “past” times. Encouraging XXXX to wear her watch more often.
- Place more emphasis on units of measurement.
- Involve XXXX more frequently in measuring ingredients when cooking at home.
- Create some activities involving weighing, measuring and comparing mass.
- Continue to support XXXX with her interest in numbers and number patterns.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

XXXX has attended a number of CSIRO workshops aimed at homeschooled children. She seems fascinated when viewing chemical reactions and is keen to be involved. She confidently re-creates experiments at home to share with friends and family.

Recently XXXX has been discussing her own thoughts around electricity and how coal powered electricity impacts the planet. She has seen wind turbines and read about sustainable design practices. She has commented that she would like electricity that doesn't damage the earth because she enjoys going on bushwalks. So she is starting to make connections with the impact humans have on ecology.

During the week XXXX demonstrated to one of her peers how to power a battery operated clock with citrus fruit. She was able to follow the guidelines and assemble a basic circuit with very limited guidance from observing diagrammatic instructions.

XXXX is familiar with operating a number of devices ranging from smart phones to digital cameras to stereos. She is able to successfully access and operate these independently and does so frequently.

Creating signs and messages using a combination of text and symbols has been a keen interest of XXXX's. She has developed a series of codes to write short messages to members of our family.

Insects, plants, birds and animals have generally always been an interest of XXXX's. She enjoys observing living things in her own environment and in those that we visit. She likes to discuss life cycles, food chains and habits of animals.

XXXX is constantly exploring and observing built and natural environments. In recent days she and her sister were busy creating habitats for fridge magnet beetles and attaching leaves that resembled fairy wings onto the back of numerous small toys and figurines.

XXXX has had a lot of questions about how the earth was created, how the first people arrived on earth and how they got here if there were only dinosaurs. We have viewed a variety of utube clips as a family that focus on evolution and the big bang theory.

As a family we have been reading an illustrated book about how human babies are conceived, their gestation and birth. I am an Australian Breastfeeding Association counsellor so we have regular contact with pregnant women, new babies and families with young children. XXXX is very fond of babies and enjoys interacting with them. We often discuss topics such as breastfeeding, nutrition for babies, sleep, and “normal” baby behavior.

Sometimes we get out our sewing machine and create a range of items together. We have collaborated on creating soft toys, throw pillows, greeting cards and dress-up outfits. XXXX has actively participated in the design process, operated the sewing machine pedal with guidance and discussed appropriate fabrics for given designs.

We have also created a range of tie-dye t-shirts for gifts and XXXX has been involved in creating screen-printed t-shirts as gifts for extended family members and close friends.

Educational program:

We will continue our responsive natural learning approach day by day, however we have some ideas about directions we would like to take:

- XXXX has said she would like to learn to be a scientist and to do more experiments with her family. We will look at sourcing more home based science kits/experiments to support this.
- Explore the behavior of a variety of animals with a focus on mice as per XXXX’s interests
- Investigate the life cycle of trees, how they grow and how the first tree arrived on earth.
- Examine the qualities of fire.

HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

XXXX has had an interest in people’s spiritual beliefs and ideals from a young age. We have read a variety of Christian bible stories and discussed ideas about gods and spiritual practices. Last year we began practicing yoga as a family and XXXX really enjoys many aspects of yoga. We have discussed ideas about god and how there are many different ideals around god and what god is to different people.

As a family we enjoy consuming foods from various cultural backgrounds. Japanese foods are a huge favourite and as a result XXXX has learnt quite a few Japanese words. We have also viewed a number of Miyazaki animations as a family which has added further interest in Japanese culture. XXXX has enjoyed demonstrating her Japanese vocabulary with a few acquaintances we have met who have Japanese background.

In January this year we had a lot of discussions about Australia Day and how appropriate it was or not to recognise the day that British people first arrived in Australia. We discussed the Aboriginal people not being recognized as custodians of the land and talked about how being Australian is so much more than acknowledging the day when Anglo-Saxon Australia began.

XXXX was given a deck of playing cards that have Aboriginal symbols on them. She is able to recognise and name all the symbols and enjoys playing the game. She recognises symbols from the game in artworks and printed media in our local environment and points them out as being Aboriginal works or imagery.

From a young age XXXX has generally displayed great empathy for others, especially other children. She has been developing skills in problem solving and negotiation to assist herself and others in achieving a desired outcome. She is well versed in taking turns when playing board games, using outdoor play equipment and playing computer games.

Sometimes after social interactions with other groups or families XXXX asks me about the parenting practices of others. "Why is that mum so unfriendly/bossy?" We talk about how everyone has feelings they need support with and that some mums don't have enough support. XXXX also likes to ask me why other families have two working parents or why different families we know don't home school. She is very curious about the practices of other families, especially those of her friends.

XXXX's aunts are travelers and have been to numerous countries for holidays and on working visas. So XXXX has heard a lot of discussion about Mongolia, Tonga, China and South Korea to name a few. She has been given various artefacts from places her aunts have travelled. We have a globe of the world and discuss different countries and XXXX can identify Australia on a globe or world map.

In February we took a family road trip to Melbourne and discussed our route on a map with XXXX and her sister numerous times before, during and after the drive. This was our first long road trip as a family and XXXX now has more of a concept of locations as she has realised that her grandparents who reside in Ulladulla are not such a long drive away as her Great G'ma who resides in Melbourne. We discussed the changing landscape during our drive and the cattle trucks we observed along the way.

XXXX pointed out to me that one person being vegetarian (i.e. myself) wasn't going to stop all those cows being taken away in trucks to be turned into other people's food. So our toilet stop in Yass started a great conversation about the food industry.

Quite a few times XXXX has asked about death and ceremonies around death. We have discussed ideas around different cultures and how different people treat a dead body. We talked about the ecological practices of Aboriginal cultures that enabled bodies to turn back into the earth and compared those practices with traditional western burials involving coffins.

Today XXXX asked about how trees die and what makes trees die. She came to the conclusion that too many termites would kill a tree and then when it fell, some of those termites would be squashed and also die.

XXXX is very keen to experience camping as a family. We have been investigating and discussing purchasing a tent for quite a while now. We have read a picture book ("Are We There Yet?") about a family who take a road trip around Australia and that has inspired XXXX further with her interest in outdoor adventure.

Having recently moved to a new home we are exploring our new built and natural environments. We plan to create a vegetable garden and this will be something we work on a family.

Educational program

We will continue our responsive natural learning approach day by day, however we have some ideas about directions we would like to take:

- Focus on further development of Japanese language through reading, viewing and speaking.
- Continue discussing and exploring customs and practices of various families and cultures.
- Introduce and explore the concept of natural vs man-made environments.
- Create more opportunities to read/utilize maps.
- Plan a camping adventure as a family
- Discuss, plan and create a vegetable garden together using “no dig” gardening techniques.

CREATIVE ARTS

Creative arts have always been a big focus in our family. Both myself and XXXX’s father have tertiary qualifications in Visual Arts and a strong interest in performing arts. So XXXX is exposed to and involved in creative arts on a regular basis.

From a young age XXXX has been able to play percussion instruments in time with music on a cd or in collaboration with other performers. She has attended a variety of music classes focusing on collaboration, voice and percussion. Last year we attended music classes in Terms 3 and 4 with other home schooling families and XXXX became confident enough to sing solo for short periods of time with the use of a handheld microphone.

One of her current favourite activities is recording songs onto our phones and playing them back to us. She explores the limitations and variations of the pitch and tone of her voice. She has memorised the lyrics for a large number of songs ranging from nursery rhymes to movie theme songs to folk tunes. Occasionally XXXX will perform a song over the phone when speaking with her grandparents.

Whenever we see a busker performing she likes to stop and listen, acknowledge the performer and contribute a coin to their collection. Sometimes XXXX talks about learning the trombone or violin. She is able to recognise a number of instruments when she is listening to a given piece of music.

A favourite dinner time activity for XXXX and her sister is dancing. Many an evening we are lucky to have a dinner-show in our kitchen. The girls either take turns in singing and dancing individual pieces or they will collaborate and perform in unison. XXXX often practices her dance moves in front of a mirror. Ever few months we invite a few friends over for a disco and our lounge room becomes a dance floor.

XXXX has been exposed to a range of art making experiences. She has regular access to water colours, acrylic paints, collage materials, crayons and pencils. Every day XXXX creates an art or craft piece of some description. Her skill in creating representational imagery is very sophisticated and she has been drawing recognisable faces for at least 4 years. Recently she has been focusing on adding lots of detail to faces; lips, teeth and nostrils have been featuring in most of her drawings. She has worked on a small scale in her journal and on large scale works that are life size or bigger.

We visit local art galleries like Lewers Bequest and Braemar Gallery on a regular basis. XXXX really enjoys attending galleries and often asks to do so.

Educational program:

We will continue our responsive natural learning approach day by day, however we have some ideas about directions we would like to take:

- Plan regular visits to galleries both locally and further afield.
- Explore and discuss the works of a variety of artists
- Investigate more opportunities for group music classes/ jam sessions

PDHPE

During the course of a given day we frequently talk about foods that give us energy and junk foods. XXXX is aware that fresh, whole foods like fruits and vegetables will give her body lots of energy to grow and function while other foods like cakes, biscuits and lollies might taste great but can be harder for her body to digest. We talk about being friendly to our bodies and giving our bodies a range of foods so that they can function adequately.

XXXX has participated in a First Aid course that emphasised the process involved in ringing 000. She was able to perform basic skills like checking for danger, response, airways. And has some idea of what she needs to tell the telephone operator when she calls 000.

Last year XXXX began formal swimming lessons that were arranged by another local home schooling parent. She has been attending weekly lessons for 3 school terms and is now much more confident in the water. She is able to dog paddle independently and is aware of water safety. When we first began lessons XXXX was disinterested and reluctant. She is now enthusiastic and eager to be involved.

At the age of 3 XXXX began learning to ride a bike. She started on a balance bike and became very skilful at riding. She now has a peddle bike and is taking her time in familiarising herself with riding it. She is aware of bike safety rules and always wears her helmet and enclosed shoes. She knows to stop and check for traffic when crossing the road.

At home we have a trampoline and swing set so XXXX has frequent and regular access to sporting equipment. She has mastered some acrobatic skills and is able to swing from

monkey bar to swing and back again with great speed. She enjoys climbing and has recently discovered a few tree climbing tricks with the help of a peer.

XXXX has attended gymnastics classes at a range of venues and has recently begun practicing yoga. At the moment we attend yoga twice a week and XXXX has learnt a number of poses that she also practices at home.

Each week we have regular activities with other children and their families. XXXX is well rehearsed at taking turns on equipment, playing games that have rules and enjoys playing games on the trampoline with her peers like poison ball or crack the egg. Occasionally friends are familiar with a variation of a game XXXX enjoys and this can result in conflict. I have witnessed XXXX at numerous times, negotiating with friends and explaining her point of view. This does not always end peacefully and sometimes requires support from an adult.

Educational program:

We will continue our responsive natural learning approach day by day, however we have some ideas about directions we would like to take:

- Continue to provide XXXX with regular, weekly sporting activity. Next term XXXX is enrolled in a local gymnastics class
- Introduce outdoor games like soccer or cricket with more structure and frequency
- Focus specifically on “self” and what does it mean to be “me”. Relationships with self and others.

RESOURCES:

- Blue Mountains Home Education Network-specifically Living Learning
- Local library
- you-tube video clips
- Museum trips
- Theatre productions- various venues
- Audio books
- Documentaries
- Local community- food co-op, ABA, BMHEN
- Curious George website-mathematic and language based activities
- CDs
- Story cards
- Science kits
- Local swimming pool and swimming instructors
- Local home schooling parents with specific skills and interests relevant to our own.
- Internet search engines
- Various workbooks focusing on numeracy and literacy.
- Local and on-line book stores
- Board games - Zingo, Kids of Catan, Little Orchard, dominos etc.
- Yoga classes with Blaxland Yoga and I am Bliss Healing