



SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Blue Gum Community School seeks to offer a model of 'best-practice' within a uniquely Australian learning environment that:

- is inspiring, challenging, interactive, reflective, evolving and sustainable;
- offers negotiated, collaborative learning choices;
- treats each student as Competent, Capable, Creative, Responsible, Resourceful and Resilient;
- values diversity and difference;
- and allows/encourages each student to explore their place in the wider community.

We are intentional about developing policies and implementing practices that support our students to flourish through an Emergent Negotiated Curriculum, within an environment that promotes the social justice principles of access, equity, and participation.

We are indebted to Reggio Children and the Educational Project in Reggio Emilia Italy, for their generous provocations to our work as educators. Our image of the child/student as Competent, Capable, Creative, Responsible, Resourceful and Resilient has been borrowed from their thinking, principles and provocations.

Other influential reference points to our programming and practice include: slow schooling, big picture education, social constructivism, positive education, place-based education and nature education.

PHILOSOPHICAL AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Blue Gum Community School aims to provide a uniquely Australian learning environment by:

- studying and reflecting on educational approaches regarded as 'best practice' internationally, from the perspective of Australian culture and society;
- setting up a physical and educational environment that is a microcosm of Australian culture and society, and reflective of our school community;
- valuing our Australian heritage and identity, particularly in relation to Aboriginal culture/history and the importance of the outdoors.

Blue Gum Community School aims to provide an inspiring, challenging, interactive, reflective, evolving and sustainable learning environment by:

- treating the environment as a third teacher, and valuing its use as an educational resource;
- creating an aesthetic, multi-sensory physical environment - indoors and outdoors;
- offering, each day, a range of open-ended multi-level challenges/activities/stimuli for students to choose from and explore, to gain understanding and to research further;
- encouraging students, educators and parents to contribute ideas and artefacts for inclusion in the educational program, and to work alongside each other as co-learners in exploring these ideas and artefacts and discovering new questions to answer;

- posing questions and inviting students and educators to hypothesise/ theorise about possible answers to the questions and then find ways of testing their hypotheses/theories which they can pursue in a supportive 'joint-discovery' context;
- continually looking for ways of responding differently to real-life situations encountered, so that 'best-practice' is a journey, not a destination/outcome; and
- re-connecting students with the broader community, especially different generations and cultures, through immersion in e.g. shared intergenerational and intercultural activities/experiences that are life-long.

Blue Gum Community School aims to offer negotiated, collaborative learning choices by:

- offering students a range of learning options and encouraging them to contribute their own, then inviting them to negotiate a learning option, with an educator or other students, that satisfies their own interest, the interests of other students, and an educator's perception of an appropriate/positive learning activity;
- re-directing students' focus away from educators as the main reference point, towards seeing their peers and the wider community as valuable resources and satisfying co-learners/collaborators;
- encouraging students to work in small groups, where students are more likely to successfully initiate, negotiate and work together on activities that maximise learning while being personally satisfying and empowering.

Blue Gum Community School aims to treat each student as **Competent, Capable, Creative, Responsible, Resourceful and Resilient**.

Because educators see students as **COMPETENT**, they treat them with respect – intentionally recognising what students bring to their experiences and celebrating what students can already do. The language used when working with students reflects this, as educators set high expectations, inviting students, and educators alike, to engage and lean in to their learning together, always from a place of hope, strength and mutual respect. Educational contexts provided and learning experiences offered every day are meaningful and have a strong sense of purpose. Students are invited to solve real problems, using real tools and involving real skills. The environment is challenging, so that students' skills/competencies can be tested and improved.

Because educators see students as **CAPABLE**, they give students daily opportunities to make decisions about matters affecting their lives, and to initiate and plan activities, then weigh up the options available and make choices. Through regular opportunities to make decisions and reflect on their learning, students are invited to see what we see, their multiple and diverse capabilities. Students are invited to take responsibility for their ability to influence and shape their experiences and the culture around them.

Because educators see students as **CREATIVE**, they expect students to generate new ideas and forms of expression, and do not limit them to copying and reproducing other people's ideas. Educators

encourage students to hypothesize and then test out their theories, so that their lateral, as well as their logical, thinking skills develop. Students are exposed to a wide range of media (e.g. clay, wood, wire, paper, charcoal, paint, music, drama) through which they can explore ideas and deepen their conceptual understandings.

Because educators see students as **RESPONSIBLE**, they expect students to weigh up each situation they encounter and to make choices about how to respond, including accepting and dealing with the consequences of the choices they make. Students cannot expect others to know instinctively what they are thinking and feeling; instead they accept responsibility for communicating their thoughts and feelings to others, including constructively challenging behaviours they find unacceptable. Educators facilitate this process, but do not take over control. The educator's role is to 'model' ways in which students can assert their feelings, needs and concerns in a responsible way. By learning self-discipline, students develop strategies for handling new and different situations, and are not reliant on external authority figures for maintaining good order.

Because educators see students as **RESOURCEFUL**, they expect students to bring a wealth of understandings, experiences and personal resources to contribute to the program. The educator's role is to validate and explore the richness of each student's resources (directly with them and within the group context), while at the same time challenging and extending their understandings and experiences. The educators ensure the learning context and culture enable students to act on their resourcefulness, providing adequate time, space and resources needed to unravel problems, design solutions and relate with others creatively and collaboratively.

Because educators see students as **RESILIENT**, they know that students can handle difficult situations and develop resilience through the process. Students' ability to bounce back from the 'slings and arrows of misfortune' is strengthened through being given time to respond at their own pace in a supportive environment. The goal is to equip students to handle the ups and downs of life, so that they don't fall apart or run away at the slightest setback, but persevere to find a solution.

Blue Gum Community School aims to value diversity and difference by:

- welcoming a mixture of ages, abilities and backgrounds (in students, educators and families) in each class, reflecting the wider community;
- offering a range of multi-level learning choices; a team of educators in each class; vertical age groupings; co-education; inclusion of students with disabilities, where possible; and an educational approach that encourages students to try out different ways of thinking, doing and being.

Blue Gum Community School aims to allow/encourage each student to explore their place in the wider community by:

- recognising that childhood is not preparation for life, but is life, so being alert to authentic opportunities for students to engage deeply, and for extended periods, with different aspects of living, different roles and different agencies within the community.