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As we are a small centre, each educator develops relationships with all children from all the rooms. We believe that this creates a community feeling in the centre and gives children and families opportunities to have a relationship with each team member. The children's primary educators generally develop the strongest relationships. However, over the years we have observed how children and families develop strong relationships with educators from previous years and these continue to evolve throughout their stay at Rosie's.

Children with diverse learning needs, complex situations (including significant court order requirements) and diverse cultural requirements enter our service. Our philosophy recognises that children's sense of agency is promoted when children feel a sense of belonging and this is evident throughout the centre where family photos adorn walls and family members are welcomed and strongly encouraged into the program.

The 'Emerging image of the Child' form* is used to document when children require this individualised thinking and planning. Examples of this are how to best support a child if the child's parents have significant court orders; or the child is suffering from a heightened separation anxiety; or the child's self-regulation skills are not yet fully developed. This individualised planning system has been developed to provide children with the support needed and as a tool for communication with families and other educators. The plans may be ongoing or they may just be short term and we see this as an important factor in supporting the skills for lifelong learning. Secondly, we also provide support for the parents. For example, when a child begins at the centre after the family has moved into a women's domestic violence shelter. These children and women flee from their homes with not much other than the clothes they are wearing. On starting at the centre, we organise a collection for the family in confidence. This could be clothing, books and toys for the children and something like toiletries for the mother. We donate these to the families to help them regain some control over their lives.

A sense of belonging is facilitated through a range of experiences including rituals or routines at the centre and others that are spontaneous. Collaboration occurs in small and large group projects to allow children and families to develop shared knowledge and pleasure in learning. Many projects initiated individually lead to collaborative play, research and investigation by larger groups of children. The research that educators complete when developing the Statement of Intent* reflects the emotional well-being of children at all times. As this is shared with family feedback and input, the approach of holistic lifelong learning becomes more apparent and understood.

Educators also engage the children in relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation and reflective walks to further share with children strategies that can help our bodies relax. The children are encouraged to communicate their feelings, share their ideas verbally and listen to and acknowledge the feelings and ideas of others. This enables children particularly from non-English-speaking backgrounds to communicate and find 'their way' to develop a sense of belonging in the community at Rosie's.

Building children's capacity to reflect on issues of equity is also important. Engaging children in a framework of thinking about their actions and responses around fairness, kindness and safety is embedded into the centre's practice. Children's assumptions about gender, ability and cultural norms are gently challenged and scaffolded to enable children to view situations from a variety of points of

view. Equity and fairness is discussed, explored and developed in conjunction with the children to ensure all children are treated respectfully. For example, a child who was biologically a girl was beginning to make decisions to be a boy. It was evident that these feelings were very strong and we began working with the child and the family by acknowledging this, and providing emotional support and relevant information to the mother, to enable her to better support her child. The child developed a very strong sense of self-worth and has transitioned into school seamlessly with the support of her family, Rosie's and the school. Follow-up with the family was made once the child started school to enquire if we could offer any other assistance in adapting to school.

At Rosie's, we foster a loving and caring environment in which each child is valued and respected as an individual. This environment builds the trusting relationships on which all further interactions are based. Vygotsky's theory of how children find the 'More Knowledgeable Other' (MKO) to learn new information drives our thinking of collaborative learning and how we can continue to assist the children to find their 'MKO'. This will look different for each child and we understand that we are not always going to be this 'MKO' in their lives.

(*Note: for anyone wanting more information about these documents please contact the centre through its website: www.rosiesel.com.au).