Early Learning Centre
Philosophy

Encounter Lutheran Early Learning Centre’s Philosophy is a mission statement identifying our beliefs and the reasons behind our practices. Our philosophy has been influenced by staff, children and families who utilise the service and reflects on current practises in Early Childhood Education.

We believe that each child is a unique creation of God and a person loved by God. We aim to encourage and support children and families.

In Relation to CHILDREN:

We believe all children are capable, unique with individual needs, interests and strengths. All children are given equal opportunities regardless of their gender, culture, socio-economic background and supporting the inclusion of children who require additional support.

We believe in the ‘circle of security’ a theory based on the foundation that once children form secure attachments they will be able to thrive in all areas of development. By addressing our children’s attachment, emotional and behavioural needs we are promoting their abilities to develop and maintain positive and trusting relationships with their families, educators, peers and the wider community. (Belonging)

Children develop at their own pace, therefore educators will ensure the expectations for children’s development are specific to each child and their unique experiences and individual backgrounds are valued.

Children learn best through play and educators will support development by providing experiences that are meaningful. Children are given the opportunity to choose their own experiences that, more importantly, reflect their interests. For example, the child’s knowledge is valued and can be used as a tool for enhancing the knowledge of others. (Becoming)

We appreciate the importance of the present day in our children’s lives, learning about themselves in a holistic manner, building and maintaining relationships and enjoying life. (Being)
Educators will use positive forms of behaviour guidance and will continue to work in partnership with parents throughout this process. We achieve this by acknowledging and labelling the children’s feelings. We support them by promoting alternative strategies for dealing with their emotions and thus developing and exploring the concepts of empathy and resilience.

Through the use of a Child Development Support Plan, underlying reasons for children’s challenging behaviours are explored and strategies developed to positively support and guide children.

Educators will act on behalf, protect and advocate for the rights and wellbeing, of all children and their families.

**In Relation to FAMILIES:**

Families are the most important people in their child’s life and have valuable information to share with us. Educators are respectful of parenting skills, culture and beliefs.

We believe that partnership with families is beneficial to their children’s success at the service. Therefore we endeavour to create connections and reciprocal relationships with our parents and the wider community. (Belonging).

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to become involved at the centre in whatever way they feel comfortable. Strategies in place to encourage involvement of parents are an orientation process, an open door policy, parent teacher interviews upon request, parent meetings and through surveys.

Families need to feel secure in knowing that their child is cared for in a nurturing environment. We also recognise that parents have needs and we endeavour to support them through stressful times.

Families can expect confidentiality, fairness and the respect for privacy at all times.

**Relation to EDUCATORS and STAFF:**

We recognise and respect that every educator is an individual with diverse needs, interests, skills, knowledge and experiences.

We are encouraged and given opportunities to reflect on current practises and to further skills and knowledge through training.

We work as a team by supporting each other to perform a variety of roles on a daily basis. We help to build an atmosphere of trust and respect through open communication, respecting different points of view, using constructive methods of conflict resolution and maintaining confidentiality.

We believe that the role of adults within the service is to be education facilitators who support, guide and encourage children’s learning at the child’s developmental level and pace.
In relation to the PROGRAM:

The program is based on the Early Years Learning Framework and the highly regarded International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Program (PYP). The program has strong Reggio Emilia influence. The program has an open approach incorporating a flexible and spontaneous outlook. Educators encourage the children’s interests and their contributions to the curriculum. We acknowledge that educators play an important role in shaping children’s identities giving them the skills to face life’s challenges. (Becoming)

A positive learning environment is created where children can learn at their own pace, utilising individual skills and abilities. Educators actively observe children extending learning by encouraging them to wonder, explore, test, predict, problem solve, negotiate, reflect, and research through play, and in partnership with each other and the educators. (Being)

We acknowledge and support the process of children’s play and learning rather than focussing on the final product. We implement a program, which is child initiated, child directed and adult supported.

Documentation is in the form of reflection journals, children’s portfolios, observations, photos, work samples, wonder wall, displays of children’s work around the environment all of which are available to families for any input at all times.

In relation to the ENVIRONMENT:

Our educators and staff recognise the importance of providing a safe, secure, homelike and consistent environment that supports trust and familiarity as well as active exploration of learning. We view the environment as the “third teacher”, consistent with the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

We believe that our service is an extension of our children’s home environments by establishing a calm, friendly and positive atmosphere where children take ownership and are active participants in respecting themselves, each other and our resources. (Belonging)

Our learning centre provides our children the opportunity to revisit experiences, refining, reinforcing and challenging their abilities. (Becoming)

By encouraging children to positively contribute in creating eco-friendly (natural surroundings) and sustainable (vegetable garden) environments we are developing active environmental ambassadors who are appreciative and exhibit an awareness of our environment and the wider community for future generations. (Being)