

Best Start NEWS



www.beststart.vic.gov.au
MAY 2005



Welcome to the First Edition

Welcome to the first edition of *Casey Best Start News*, a newsletter for parents and carers of children living in Casey.

Casey Best Start News will provide you with the latest information on the early years of childhood including news from the Best Start project, local services, facilities and programs available to families, information about child development, health, education and wellbeing, and special events.



Casey Best Start News will be available from the following locations:

- Childcare centres
- Maternal and child health centres
- Family support agencies
- Libraries
- Council centres
- Neighbourhood/ community houses

Contact

For more information or if you would like to contribute articles please contact City of Casey Best Start Community Facilitator, Susan Heywood.

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Email: sheywood@casey.vic.gov.au

Website: www.casey.vic.gov.au

What is Best Start?

Best Start is a prevention and early intervention project that aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of all children from pregnancy through transition to school (usually taken to be eight years of age).

Best Start will achieve this aim through supporting communities, parents, families and service providers to improve universal local early years services. These improvements will:

- Result in better access to child and family support, health services and early education.



- Improve the capacity and confidence of parents and families to care for children, and help them to enjoy parenting.
- Assist communities to become more child and family friendly.

Best Start is co-ordinated by the City of Casey in partnership with local service providers, community organisations, and parents. The project is under the joint auspice of the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Training and is assisted by the Community Support Fund.

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Activities

Here are some activities young children enjoy to build the skills they need in learning to read and write. Many of these activities also support the development of mathematical skills.

Sorting and Matching Skills

- Card games – playing snap, concentration, or just looking to find cards that are the same.
- Matching saucupans or plastic containers to lids.
- Sorting socks from the washing basket.
- Sorting clothes pegs by colour.
- Setting the table and putting cutlery away.
- Finding the letter of their name in a page of the newspaper (give them a highlighter to draw over the top, then you could count how many there are).

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Helping Your Children to Read and Write

Learning to read and write starts long before children go to school.

Parents are the first and one of the most important links in the chain of teaching children to read and write.

Children watch and copy their parents actions when we:

- Read the paper;
- Write messages and lists;
- Use the computer;
- Look up phone numbers and send text messages; and
- Write down measurements for jobs around the house.

These activities show our children that reading is FUN!

Choosing books for children



Here are some helpful hints to consider when choosing books for your child.

0-2 years

- Books with large simple pictures and bright colours.
- Cardboard or fold out books that can be placed on the floor or stood up in a cot.
- Books that have pages that are easy to turn.
- Material or vinyl books that if chewed or dribbled on, can be wiped or washed clean.
- 'Touch and feel' books with cut-out pages and different textures.



- Books with photos or clear pictures of everyday objects eg. other babies and children, animals, toys, food.
- Small plastic photo albums with photos of themselves, family, friends and pets.

3-5 years

- Books about their favourite things.
- Stories that have lots of rhyming words or a pattern eg. each, peach, pear, plum; Hairy McClairy from Donaldson's Dairy.
- Books with clear illustrations that match the story.
- Books that are easy to read aloud.
- "Find the..." books that encourage children to look for certain objects.
- Books with stories about everyday things and experiences that your child is familiar with or interested in.

Ideas for gifts that support reading and writing

- Case or basket with sticky notes, staplers, stickers, highlighter pens, paper clips, scissors, pencils and pencil sharpener.
- Tape measure, notebook and pencil.
- Letter-writing kit with envelopes, paper, markers, pens, pencils and pencil sharpener.
- Jumbo coloured chalks for drawing on the paving.
- Large, simple dot-to-dot books.
- Scrapbook for drawing or pasting in old Christmas cards.

(Parent Focussed Literacy Officer, Department of Education & Training, Gippsland, 2004)

Supporting Parents through Playgroups in Casey

Casey's Best Start project is committed to supporting parents through playgroups. The project runs three playgroups in Casey.

- The South East Region Migrant Resource Centre is facilitating a playgroup in Doveton. To help get the playgroup off the ground Playgroups Victoria provided playgroup leadership training to staff and parents. The training helped participants understand how children learn through play.
- Two *Mother Goose* parent-child programs are being run through a partnership between City of Casey Maternal and Child Health, Cardinia Casey Community Health and Department of Human Services Specialist Children's Services. The programs are taking place in Cranbourne and Hampton Park and involve staff teaching parents and children nursery rhymes, songs and stories.



- Facilitators from Specialist Children's Services report that parents are gaining confidence as learners and as parents. Children are also showing improvement in their language skills.
- The City of Casey has created a new position to help support and provide advice to local playgroups. If you are interested in starting a playgroup, would like some new ideas for your playgroup or are interested in joining the Casey Playgroup Network, please contact the Playgroup Development Officer on 9705 5200.

Have You Been to the Library?

Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation offers innovative, creative and entertaining services for children and adults through the provision of a large collection of books; talking books and picture books; videos; DVDs, CDs and CD ROMs; magazines and electronic databases.

Cranbourne

City of Casey
Cranbourne Complex
Berwick-Cranbourne Road
Cranbourne 3977
Ph. (03) 5996 3611

Doveton

Autumn Place
Doveton 3177
Ph. (03) 9792 9497

Hampton Park

22-26 Stuart Avenue
Hampton Park 3976
Ph. 9702 9744

Endeavour Hills

Raymond McMahon
Boulevard
Endeavour Hills 3802
Ph. (03) 9700 7177

Narre Warren

Overland Drive
Fountain Gate 3805
Ph. (03) 9704 7696

Websites of Interest

City of Casey

www.casey.vic.gov.au

Best Start

www.beststart.vic.gov.au

Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital

www.rch.org.au/ccch

National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN)

www.napcan.org.au

Victorian Parenting Centre

www.vicparenting.com.au/vp/index.php



Activities

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Eye/hand co-ordination skills

- *Pegging clothes on the line or just putting the pegs on and off the line.*
- *Threading macaroni or cut off egg cartons onto string.*
- *Playdough and basic cooking.*
- *Water painting (fill a small bucket with water, add a pastry brush or paint brush and let them paint the footpath, back fence, the bricks ...).*
- *Watering the garden with a watering can, or adding plastic bottles, funnels and plastic jugs to the bath at bath time (this is a great way to learn the meaning of 'full, empty, small, big').*

Imagination skills

- *Dress ups for boys and girls (have a box or basket with some hats, coats, a tie, dress and shoes).*
- *Empty cardboard boxes (television size, or fruit boxes).*
- *Dolls and teddies.*
- *Toy or old telephones.*
- *Tea set.*
- *Space indoors and out to play without fear of 'messing up'.*

Giving children time to play, to imagine and to help with jobs around the house enables parents and carers to assist children build the skills they need for school readiness.

(Parent Focussed Literacy Officer, Department of Education & Training, Gippsland, 2004)

Connecting the Community through Best Start

Local health and education services, community leaders and parents have joined together to form local partnerships to steer the development of Best Start activities. These activities will trial and evaluate new ways of connecting early childhood, social, health and education services to support families and maximise outcomes for children.

- The priority areas identified are Cranbourne, Doveton and Hampton Park.
- The Doveton and Hampton Park groups have been established. The Cranbourne group had its first meeting in March.

Activities focus on:

- Improving early childhood health (0 to 3 years);
- Increasing parent and child literacy skills;
- Providing information and support to parents to increase their confidence and competence in parenting; and
- Improving the access, inclusiveness, responsiveness and quality of early years services.

If you wish to be involved in the locality groups please contact Best Start Community Facilitator, Susan Heywood on 9705 5200.

Introducing the City of Casey Best Start Partnership

The City of Casey is facilitating the Best Start project in partnership with service providers, community organisations, parents and community leaders who are interested in the wellbeing of our children. Current partners include:

- Berwick Primary Schools Cluster
- Cardinia Casey Community Health Service
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Chisholm Children's Services
- City of Casey Family and Children's Services
- Connections Child Youth and Family Services
- Dandenong District Division of General Practice
- Department of Human Services
- Doveton North Primary School
- Hampton Park Community House
- Hampton Park/ Cranbourne Primary Schools Cluster
- Parent representative
- Playgroup Victoria
- Relationships Australia
- South East Region Migrant Resource Centre
- The Queen Elizabeth Centre
- Windermere
- Windermere's Biala

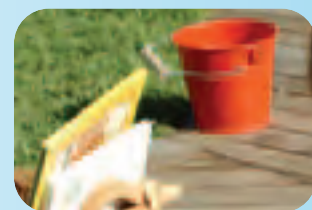


Best Start Grant Scheme

As a part of the Best Start project, the City of Casey Partnership has allocated funding to support locally initiated projects.

The aim of the grant scheme is to encourage the development of innovative programs that benefit children (0 to 8 years), support families and/or enhance early childhood services. There were three funding rounds in 2004. Successful applicants include:

- The Salvation Army, "The English Club".
 - Maternal and Child Health, "Parenting in your 20's".
 - Cranbourne Toy Library, "New developmental toys".
 - Good Beginnings, "Early Years Newsletter" and "Community Room".
 - Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation, "Library bags for Casey Kids".
 - Family Day Care, "Food for Thought Garden".
 - Relationships Australia, "Fun 4 Kids", a program to increase fathering skills and knowledge.
- There will be two opportunities to apply



for funding in 2005.

Applications close:

1. Thursday 30 June
2. Wednesday 31 August