Pre-literacy skills

Wyndham Library Service has added another program to its *Early Childhood Literacy Framework* to actively engage with parents and caregivers and involve them with literacy and numeracy development in children from the earliest possible time.

Called *Kinda Kinder,* the program is the result of a successful partnership with Victoria University. *Kinda Kinder* is a literacy focused, play-based learning environment for children aged from birth to four years. The children attend with a parent or a caregiver for a one hour free program, once a week. *Kinda Kinder* began as an innovative partnership with the Shire of Melton, Sydenham-Hillside Primary School and Victoria University in 2005, initially developed to meet the needs of preschool children and their families from disadvantaged circumstances. Many children were missing out on a prior to school experience, and the opportunity to engage in an informal learning environment. This lack of experience, for some children, made the transition to formal education difficult. In Wyndham, the sessions are run by preservice teachers from Victoria University who are currently undergoing the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood/ Primary Education) and are targeted for all preschool age groups, but especially those that come from a low socio-economic background.

The first pilot program ended on the 17th of June and ran every Tuesday

from approximately 11.30 to 12.30 in the Storytime space. The second pilot program commenced on Tuesday July 29 and will run till Tuesday September 16, held in the Community Learning Room at the Heaths Road Library. This will allow assessment of the program being held in an open space, as well as in a closed access area. Previous *Kinda Kinder* sessions have always been in a closed access area.

Talk about success – in three weeks attendance nearly tripled, from an initial 15 children to 42 children. The program ended with approximately 50 children attending on a weekly basis. Some families stayed after Storytime finished and some came especially for the *Kinda Kinder* program.

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