



Minutes

Early Learning Committee Meeting
November 17, 2022, 7.30 pm,
online via zoom

Register for 2023 meetings and download [Meeting summaries](#).

Council's early learning subcommittee provides a forum for EL parent communities in ACT public schools. The committee promotes the benefits of quality early learning and parent engagement, and advocates for parents, carers and public education.

Early Learning Officer [email](#), ACT Council of Parents and Citizens [website EL](#)

1. Open/Apologies

7.30 pm

MS opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, and conducted an Acknowledgement of Country. Early learning subcommittee background summary.

Announcements: The EL parent rep [role description](#) has been updated, please share with P&Cs. Volunteer recruitment [templates](#) are also available via a free Canva account.

2. Orientation activities: welcoming and including preschool/kindy parents

a. Small grants, small events, low stress.

During the year, Council forwards small grant opportunities (for early learning activities) to P&C ELPRs. For example, Children's Week, an annual event promoting children's rights provide small grant funding for small events held during October-November. Council's [August'22 meeting](#) includes a guide to applying for funding, ideas for events, and support for P&C small event organisers.

Tessa collaborated with Mawson Primary to organise their preschool spring fair and garden working bee. She applied for a CW grant to hire a face painter and the school had a junior [Landcare grant](#) to buy materials for the garden working bee. Tessa shared the link to her [organisation spreadsheet](#) showing how she organised the volunteer roles.

With a little preparation, breaking down volunteer roles into defined tasks, and clear role descriptions and time slots, volunteers are easier to organise. Especially if family groups can volunteer an hour or two together.

[SignUp](#) is a free app for scheduling volunteer tasks/times, creating a volunteer sign-up link for volunteers to select what they can do and when. The app creates reports and running lists, sends reminders and equipment requirements, and can email or thank your volunteers when you're done. Plus, it archives your work to easily update and reuse the process.

Volunteer SignUp [example](#)

Nichola (preschool/kindy parent rep) from Neville Bonner shared her P&Cs 'small things' approach to organising small events... *'we have an events coordinator and fundraising coordinator (on the P&C),.. this year we've had our famous Book Fair, family portraits are coming up this weekend, the school disco was a couple of months ago. We've got happy hairbrushes fundraising on, and 'stuck on you' labels, plus the year-round entertainment book... lots of little things that don't take too much admin to be involved in... there are about*

10 key volunteers, everyone has taken ownership of a little thing. Which is manageable.'

b. **Closed Facebook groups** – do they work and who manages them?

Melita Caulfield, from Duffy Primary P&C, agreed to share details of the P&Cs closed Facebook parents/carer groups.

'This is my first foray into P&C life and my first year on a P&C. I have a preschool child and I hold two roles on the P&C - started off as preschool rep then added Secretary as well - it's a crash course in P&C and school life.

This year, we're trialing closed Facebook groups for every grade. The online groups are managed and moderated by the P&C - school staff are not involved and have no input to the FB groups - it's a space for families to engage with each other.

For each calendar year the groups remain with their cohorts and don't have to leave one group to join another. We would retire the year six Facebook group or, if they want to keep that running, that would be up to them. Every year, potentially one group is retired and, the incoming preschool group is added. It's too cumbersome for families to be in and out of groups every time their child goes up a grade.

I'm a member of the preschool one. So I can't speak for what happens in the other grade groups. I'm one of two moderators for our group. My experience is that there's little engagement, people are grateful for what we do post, but there's not that back and forth chat and social interaction that one might expect.

Because it's preschool, our children aren't in class five days so it's a great place to arrange playdates or after preschool events. Or ask for information and get to know the cohort. It's more than just 'P&C meeting times' or 'volunteers we need'. There's a social aspect beyond P&C business.

It's been slow to start but with Covid measures still in place, it wasn't until midway through term two that we were able to hold on-site events of a social nature. This cohort didn't have the benefit of those *stay'n'plays* that Duffy does, and other primary schools may offer in the year before starting. By the time we were able to start those *cuppa-and-a-yarn* social events, people were already in their routine - pick up the kids, maybe chat to a few parents at the gate and then leave.

With another 12 months as a cohort, we might be a bit more open and willing to engage. People are still finding their feet and we have two classes on opposite days so we're not integrated as a cohort. The Facebook group covers both classes and families have different priorities, so the preschool focus is different than perhaps it would be with full-time schooling.

The group will follow us into kindergarten so, if we keep at it and more families join, it will become more lively.

We had a person join who very quickly started spamming the group, innocent spam and not concerning in terms of content, but spam nevertheless. We contacted staff to check if this person was a preschool parent at the school. When we realized they weren't, we booted them out. So, it's not foolproof, but nothing is on the internet, that's something to be aware of.'

See attached ***closed group conditions*** for Facebook admin group rules.

Nichola suggested an online group for early learning parent reps. MS to provide options.

c. **Can you SPOT orientation?**

From enrollment until the start of school, families visit, or travel past, their child's school.

Does your P&C or school have something for 3-5 year olds to 'spot' outside your school?

Share your ideas: earlylearning@actparents.org.au

3. Partnering with schools – Fostering P&C-school relationships

- a. In response to the benefits of school-family partnerships and parent engagement, Council asks P&C Presidents to partner with schools through early learning via the EL parent representative. Please introduce the role, see attached **template letter** ‘*introduce, invite*’ below.

The letter introduces the role to key EL school staff and provides information about ELPR activities. [Council’s information sheets](#) #1+#2 have further details about engaging parents and reviewing communication practices in your school community.

- b. For more information on engagement the latest [HandsUp Education Podcast S1E5 Why families and carers matter](#) interviews Di Giblin ACSSO, and Barbara Barker ARACY.

4. ELO report what we’ve been up to since August

- a. **Transition to School:** in its fourth year, the 2022 parent forum (Sep 15) received 224 registrations, with 120 attending online. [Link to the recording](#). Each year participants complete a registration survey, while this year a ‘Starting school survey’ (May-Jul) sought feedback from last year’s attendees. The **Results summary** of parent ‘*concerns and helpful things*’ is attached below.
- b. Early Learning Committee Meeting held: Aug 18 and Nov 17 [Meeting summaries](#).
- c. Terms of reference and ELC budget attached
- d. Annual Report [2022](#)

5. 2023-24 planning - key EL events for next year's calendar

- a. See the annual content planner for early learning parent reps on Nov [Meeting summaries](#) page.

Meeting closed 8.30pm

3a: P&C-school relationships - EL parent reps

Introduce, Invite – letter template

Dear (Deputy Principal, Exec teacher)

The P&C have created a new committee role for preschool/kindergarten parents and carers. The early learning parent representative helps P&Cs welcome new parents and connect with the school’s EL families.

We’re delighted the role has been filled by [parent name] who has a son starting kinder this year.

The role applies an EL focus to P&C activities and helps distribute information and invitations. If possible [name] will direct relevant enquiries and explore opportunities for strengthening our early years parent community.

We look forward to communicating further about EL activities and working with the school where appropriate.

Sincerely

P&C President

4. Transition to School

Parent webinar registration survey (Aug-Sep)

Follow up Starting School Survey (May-Jul)

Results summary

Concerns

In relation to **Covid**, concerns about 'not having access to school ie to settle children in, to bring parents together, to see the inside of a classroom, engage with teachers, to model interactions for children to feel safe and build confidence, make friends, and playgroup access prior to school.

In relation to **Communication** and engagement, concerns about information access, ie schedules, getting to know the teacher and children's friends, lateness of some notifications, managing big emotions, and helping children to speak to teachers.

In relation to **teaching staff**, concerns about inconsistency, ie when teachers are moved to other roles. Importance of early years educator relationships with children.

In relation to **peers and friendships**, an important part of belonging, a key component of the EYLF. Children are learning boundaries and appropriate behaviours so meeting other children and parents in facilitated settings is valued. One parent felt the process for establishing routines with children who were often by themselves in the first couple of weeks needed attention.

In relation to navigating **school and work hours** ongoing concerns re difficulty of juggling pick up and drop off times with work, negotiating extra time off work, OSH availability to cover school holidays and before/after school care.

Concerns in relation to **settling in** to preschool or kindy reflected the diverse nature of families and schools. All reported the need for preparation and supportive teachers.

Packing a **healthy lunchbox** is often challenging for families. One Primary school has a 'parents-pack-your-lunchbox' event after the morning drop-off. Parents bring an empty lunchbox and pack it from the selections provided.

What helped

In relation to **teachers and staff**, easy communication with the teacher when needed. Recognition of wonderful, kind and extremely helpful, caring teachers. Teachers coming to talk to me, and being positive. Educators liaising directly with parent regarding child's medical condition... The teachers have gone above and beyond to try to make things as good as they can. My child has been able to integrate at own pace and hasn't been pressured to participate until comfortable. Knowing which teacher they were going to have and having an interview with them before my child started. Access to classroom teacher. The teachers and joining the P&C. Meeting the teachers before starting. One on one with the teacher. Having supportive teachers who care about the children.

In relation to **Connection and engagement**. Engagement with the teacher, knowing the classroom before starting school - visited last year in preschool transition... Being able to walk them in on the

first day of school. Supportive, close-knit class of kids. A lovely school community. Smaller school has been less daunting for starting in kindy. Covid segregation of years has made it easier... Talking to the teacher before day 1 of preschool. Informal get together of new families so kids and parents could meet each other. Very welcoming preschool director who made the effort to get to know each child, and greets us each drop off and pick up with a comment about how the day went.

In relation to **Information**. Access to information from school regarding daily structure and programs used in the school... The upload of photos and videos and descriptions of how my child is spending their time at school helps me to feel integrated... My kindy child already knew the school thanks to older siblings attending, and the preschool connection to the main school, so we all felt very comfortable with the transition to a familiar environment... Day one activities and the P&C welcome pack.

In relation to **Orientation or tours**. Orientation session... Being able to take my child to first day face to face... An orientation afternoon to meet the teachers, children and get a tour around the school... being able to have an in-person visit was great, even if only one parent was allowed to come along... The interview we had with our child's classroom teacher prior to starting... Due to covid our stay and play session was cancelled, a big disappointment... Child Teacher Interview

In relation to **connections, friends, and community**. getting into the groove of preschool and making many new friends... Having older kids there from the family and neighbours for the kindergarten starter to feel at home... Experience going to childcare... Making a connection with another child also attending before day 1... Meeting new families, playgroups pre-covid had allowed my child to build confidence in the school environment. feeling part of a community... engaging with one teacher who cared... preschool on campus to kindergarten... second child made our understanding of the process easier.

staggered starting times so parents could come in for a bit longer rather than having to do a dump and run, especially with the restrictions... Being allowed in on the first day was welcome. Not being on day 2 was unfortunate,.. Connecting to other parents.

Early Learning Subcommittee Terms of Reference

- Promote the importance of preschool education to ACT families,
- Support parent engagement in early years learning,
- Support families to complete online enrolment for preschool,
- Provide information, training and support services to associations
- Advise Council Executive and meetings on policy and matters relating to ACT preschool/early childhood education,
- Provide input to Council submissions on preschool issues,
- Provide representatives on behalf of Council to related external forums, committees, advisory/working groups or task forces.
- Provide updates to the Education Directorate on activities
- Maintain the early learning subcommittee.

Closed Facebook Groups

Group rules from the admin

1 Be kind and courteous

We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Please treat all members with respect and courtesy.

2 No hate speech or bullying

Please do not post any obscene, abusive or hateful comments, links or images. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed. Degrading comments about race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity will not be tolerated. These posts will be removed and you will be blocked from the group.

3 Respect everyone's privacy

Please do not share pictures of students, even your own. This is a blanket policy to ensure digital safety of all students. If sharing information about events etc. please be mindful of not sharing the names of students.

4 No promotions or spam

Self-promotion, spam and irrelevant links aren't allowed.

5 Contacting the school

This group is designed to connect you with other parents and carers and you are welcome to ask questions in this group. However, if you have a specific question or feedback that would be best directed to the school, please contact the office at info@SCHOOLNAME.act.edu.au or your child's teacher at firstname.lastname@ed.act.edu.au. If you need to contact a principal or team leader, you can find their details here: SCHOOL WEBPAGE STAFF LINK

6 Admins

Our admins are volunteers with families and other demands on their time. They will do their best to respond to you as quickly as possible, but please be patient. Other members are also welcome to respond to questions, with accurate information. The admin for this page is (ADMIN EMAIL). Please contact them if you have concerns regarding information shared on this page. The admins will delete posts if they do not follow the above guidelines, with a private message explaining why the post was deleted.

This group is for parents/carers of [school] students in [---] year group. If this isn't you, please remove yourself from the group. If you have any enquiries please contact (moderator)

LEGAL STUFF

You must not post anything:

- if the copyright is the property of somebody else
- that might cause a breach of any law or other obligation
- that might be defamatory, offensive, pornographic, in breach of confidence or a similar obligation, threatening, abusive, liable to incite hatred or a breach of privacy
- that might be considered as spam
- that infringes any rights belonging to another person

While we hope that this group will last a lifetime, we may alter or cease the operation of the group at any time in our sole discretion. If Facebook changes terms, we will try to find an alternate space, but cannot be held responsible for Facebook's change of terms.

6) PRIVACY POLICY

If you post personal information, it will be managed in accordance with Facebook's privacy policy (over which we have no control).

Every post in the group is made by the individual poster, and we don't accept any responsibility for the content. Let us know and if appropriate, we'll take reasonable steps to have it removed.

If you acquire goods or services from other members, the relationship is your responsibility. You release us from responsibility in relation to such arrangements.

Last of all HAVE FUN!!! We want you to actively engage with the group. Post pictures, ask questions and network with one another.

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ACT Council of Parents Citizens Assoc

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Job Profit & Loss Statement

July 2022 To October 2022

ABN: 53 870 517 949

Email: tsanders@actparents.org.au

Account Name	Selected Period
EL	Early Learning
Expense	
Audit/Accounting (MYOB)	\$85.00
Dues & Subscriptions	\$70.00
Internet & Web Development	\$65.00
Insurance	\$45.00
Photocopying	\$22.00
Postage	\$8.00
Stationery & Office Supplies	\$145.00
Telephone Expenses	\$115.00
Wages & Salaries	\$9,928.29
Superannuation	\$1,042.47
Workers Comp Insurance	\$53.00
Staff & Member Training	\$350.00
Total Expense	\$11,928.76
Net Profit/(Loss)	-\$11,928.76