

Transcript Shantra Roach- City of Yarra

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0B9KJnGYh0&feature=emb_imp_woyt

Yarra City Playgroups page: <https://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/services/family-and-children/playgroups>

MC: My name is Margaret Corrigan, and I am representing vicTESOL here today and I'd like to introduce Shantra Roach who works with the City of Yarra as a supported play group facilitator. We're going to have a chat today about some of the work that Shantra is doing at the City of Yarra. Shantra, could you just start by telling us a little bit about your setting and about the level of diversity that you see?

SR: Many of our supported playgroups are usually held in Maternal Child Health Centres or community hubs where there might be Allied Health professionals, childcare centres and kindergartens, and medical and dental services; all sorts of different professionals in the hub space and the diversity of the environment is very varied. We have families with all sorts of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds from various social and economic circumstances, ages, and abilities; and it's really just all walks of life. I should add that since COVID-19 we need to comply with protocol around social distancing. We were really fortunate to work in partnership with local non-profit organisation, Caringbush adult education whereby we facilitated parent/child Mother Goose via Zoom. It was a first for us all but very rewarding and mutually beneficial. And we got some great feedback from the families around getting that extra support.

MC: So what are some of the ways that you're building community in your setting?

SR: First, and foremost, it is important to say that we focus around having inclusive and welcoming environments and a culture of respect. All families are welcome, and we work very closely with professionals and families in partnership and we do build that sense of community by maintaining that relationship as best we can over the early years and supporting families through their various journeys via links with community organisations whether it be around health or education. It's an all-encompassing kind of focus around supporting families within the community and the local setting.

MC: How do you think that sort of community approach it helps to make some of the challenges and constraints that you might see in your work?

SR: That community focus enables us to be there as not just for a play group while the child is under 3 or facing particular challenges for the family. It allows us really to link and be engaged with that family over the whole early years period where family's needs often change so much but they have the ability to interact and engage in be in communication with us over that. As well as with the other professionals, we were able to work in a holistic fashion with services around families which is really key. We often have families that disappear and then know when to contact us when they when they might need some help. This is more important with our more vulnerable families.

MC: What has worked well for engaging families in the community? For example, does the use of the home language come into it at all in your programmes?

SR: Use of home language is really key so we want to make our families feel welcome and as respected, and appreciated, and valued as possible so of course we take the time to get to know about family's backgrounds and languages and their needs and we very much tailor our programmes around those understandings and work in partnership with encouraging

them to be as involved as they feel ready to. Whether that's with sharing ideas, sharing songs, fingerplays, stories - all those sorts of things that we then as a community really value and share amongst ourselves and take the time to learn and incorporate into our practise. Families really understand that we are really interested in learning more about them and they see us going through the process of modelling learning. We're learning from them as well.

MC: What would you like to share about your practise with other educators around that?

Most importantly, we are maintaining nurturing safe, welcoming, inclusive environments and taking time to really get to know the families and their needs and their goals for their children. What is important to them? Finding that out and working in line with that. A lot of consistency and of course repetition and understanding, as you do because you get to know them, with their learning. If it's in English as a second language how did how did they feel? We've got to be mindful of where each family is. How do they feel in the group setting? We need to be flexible and aware when the dynamics shift within the group and be willing to sort of hold the space and then wrap that support around families so it can be the place where no matter what's going on, and how I'm feeling - I'm not ready to actually speak in the group practise my English or to share that story or song.

MC: You mentioned that you have partnered with other organisations and, in particular, Caringbush adult education. Could you tell us a little bit more about the role that organisation any others have played?

SR: They're really key in the referral process in any case, but also with providing extra pathways for our families with information and resources and professional links and community links with families but particularly, with Caringbush adult education, we have a lot of our families that have gone to do English classes and other courses in general employment

pathways, so I respect our relationships with like organisations are really key in looking at the family as a whole. Actually, these organisations help support the family along. In terms of information and the ongoing relationship. We are aware when they have local events happening and they're aware when we do (have events). We work in partnership with consultation and collaboration when we possibly can and we're looking forward to hopefully continuing to do that. It is really key in again wrapping supports around the family.

MC: We haven't really talked exactly about the parent/ child Mother Goose programme what that looks like. Can you just give us a little rundown of that and perhaps what resources do you use/are available for that programme?

SR: Our parent/child Mother Goose programme is an evidence-based programme. As mentioned, it's always been previously face to face. We have also had the capacity to have outdoor groups. A lot of our families that are referred to everything the 1st place may be on the wait list for speech therapy or occupational therapy and may have a language delay that's been identified by the paediatrician or maternal child health nurse and it's a really great space where the family can be. We focus particularly -there are no props- we focus on language in terms of songs, stories, fingerplays... We incorporate other languages which is wonderful as we show our community how much we value their first languages. It's a real focus on being present in a group and sharing without the props and it's all about oral story telling or oral communication. A session usually runs for about an hour- they are quite short sessions. For example of how this might look is the parents might arrive and be welcomed and have some small amount of equipment out for parents for children to engage with. Parents have some time to get to know each other. We then put everything away and we get in a circle we do our acknowledgment, which we usually do in sign, we do welcome songs or introduce all the families we use different greetings from the families' languages

and then we have a lovely period of songs, stories, and finger plays- all those things relative to where those children are at age and stage wise. We will try and get as much information from families about what they're doing at home and of course sharing those beautiful songs from their Homeland when they're comfortable in doing so. It's a beautiful experience that is very immersive and it very much involves the whole group participating at their own level. We then have another time, we **used** to have time, to share some food so hopefully that will return. Again it was time for community connection at the end. We might discuss other programmes going on and just really take the time to be together. It's the resources that we use you can find on the parent/child Mother Goose website. There is a lot of information about this programme. Many councils run parent/child Mother Goose programme. One of the main aspects of the programme is that it's always free and there's always to be 2 facilitators. That way there's always another facilitator who's trained in parent/child Mother Goose also who will be very much aware of what's happening in group, and show extra support for families, and take the time to communicate as there is a leader. And the leaders generally tag team. Many of our families start with babies, so you know it's a little infant couple of months old all the way to our 4-year-olds. We have designed our programme around that. There's a lot of movement. There's lots of bouncing games and massage because the focus with it being called parent/child Mother Goose is that parent child interaction. So, we're modelling that. We want to show parents all the things that we can do because we're the resource. We don't need all the props and everything else, we can sing silly songs together, we can practise our words, we can tell a story. We can do all of these wonderful things without needing anything else so that the language focus the parent child interaction the attachment the community focus and then really the connexion is what it is all about.

MC: OK that's great we might put some links to those resources at the parent child Mother Goose on the VicTESOL website so thank you for that. Where do you see your programme going? I know you've mentioned it's already sort of had a metamorphosis with the COVID switch to remote delivery what do you think the future holds for it?

SR: Hopefully more partnerships with local organisations and more specialist groups so maybe around disability or Caringbush adult education will do partnership to have a specialist group for families for the Vietnamese group and language. We hope to more communities in the kitchen. We hope to get back outdoors and within a couple of different venues and they are very accessible and larger so we can maintain our groups. We do work a lot with upskilling our families. We have families that have come to us- young moms have come to us as part of parent/child Mother Goose to learn about attachment have gone on to be offered training, resources, information and then actually have been able to employ that person. We have offered training to connect until you open up bring up skilling where it's sort of starts parent run sessions. Parents were running their own sessions and building that community from that level and yeah hopefully will start being chained to more groups.

MC: Sounds like a wonderful programme. Shantra thank you very much for sharing all of that, it's most interesting and it's fantastic the work that you are doing.