

Key WLA principles

Listed below are a number of the key elements of the WLA and implications for practice.

- Children's interests are used as the predominant means for learning experiences during investigations. Teachers may add other ideas and concepts.
- Children's interests are expanded, scaffolded and supported as a means of ongoing engagement in particular learning areas.
- Additional issues or concepts at a community or school level are incorporated within the planning document but not viewed or used as the 'topic' or 'theme' on which planning is based or all experiences are planned.
- Investigative play-based experiences are the major pedagogical tool for teaching and learning alongside formal instruction.
- The nature of experiences promotes creativity, imagination and scope for children to invent and create and avoid cloned art work, worksheets and stencils.
- Planning documentation identifies intentions for the children's development in the first instance and in addition, identifies key learning intentions and children's interests as a basis for planning learning experiences.
- The learning experiences emphasise active engagement, provide children with opportunities to explore processes (not just end products) and seek to encourage children to pursue some of their learning experiences into ongoing projects for either short or longer periods of time.
- Observation and documentation by teachers of key skills, needs, strengths and interests of individual children is used to further plan and implement appropriate experiences and set further learning and developmental objectives.
- Formal skill instruction sessions and small and large group times are still used within the classroom in literacy, numeracy and other areas of learning. These skills are also integrated within a range of learning experiences.
- Teachers must still direct, scaffold, extend or intervene with children in order to ensure that children are actively engaged and learning.
- The notion of integrated curriculum within the WLA refers to all learning areas being recognised as integrated and embedded in children's learning and not as discrete parts of the day where a particular content or focus area is used.
- A balance is set by the teacher incorporating interests emerging from the child in response to experiences, and what the teacher wishes to introduce in relation to skill and content.
- In practice, the WLA uses a mix of active, hands-on investigative play-based work, alongside group times, personal reflection times, skill instruction and other learning experiences provided by the school each day.