

Moort Dandjoo Kaadadjiny: Growing up Aboriginal kids strong in their culture and identity

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BACKGROUND

Attending early childhood education (ECE) programs is important for children being ready for school. However, many Aboriginal children do not attend programs. Local community Elders identified this as a priority for research.

The aim of the program was to co-design and implement a culturally safe ECE program that meets the needs and values of Aboriginal families and encourages attendance.

WHAT WE DID

The team co-designed a culturally safe ECE program called Moort Dandjoo Kaadadjiny (family learning together) for Aboriginal children. The program was run by Aboriginal staff and led by Aboriginal Elders. Children learned Noongar language, participated in cultural activities and connected with family and community.

Parents and carers were interviewed about their experience with the program.

KEY FINDINGS

Success of the program was based on three key factors:

Trust. Establishing trust between parents, carers, staff and Elders builds the foundation for providing support to parents, creating a sense of community, and fostering safe environments for cultural learning

Aboriginal led. A completely Aboriginal led and run program, with Aboriginal people in control, such as community Elders, research staff, and playgroup educators, was seen as critically important to program success

Aboriginal culture. Families stated it was really beneficial that the program provided their children and themselves with the opportunity to engage and learn more about their culture and be connected to their community.

These factors combined contributed to families wanting to attend the program.

RECOMMENDATION

ECE programs need to be co-designed with local Aboriginal knowledge, values and practices embedded. This provides culturally safe ECE programs that families want to attend and ensures children are ready for school.

