



Pertame Language Nest

Practice, Principles & Learning Outcomes



pertameschool.org/language-nest

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BACKGROUND

Pertame (Southern Arrernte), is an Indigenous language that belongs to the country south of Alice Springs.



The Pertame grandparent generation grew up on Pertame country, speaking Pertame as their first language, steeped in their culture and community. However, due to the forces of colonization, punitive language policies, the stolen generation and English-only schooling, Pertame is a severely endangered language, with less than 30 Elder fluent speakers still alive. Without serious action, Pertame will be lost within the next generation. Pertame is an ancient and rich language, carrying 60,000+ years of history, heritage, knowledge of the country and a unique perspective of the world. Urgent action is required to teach Pertame to the next generations while we still have our precious few fluent Elders with us.



Pertame country

WHO WE ARE



The Pertame School is a community-led language revival program empowering Pertame Elders to pass their language and cultural knowledge onto the next generation.

Pertame School is creating a thriving, connected Pertame community, with increased mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing through language and cultural renewal.



PERTAME NGETYA UNTYA

The Pertame Ngetya Untya (Language Nest) is a immersion playgroup for Pertame infants and their parents to be immersed within their language, culture and community to create bilingual, culturally resilient, and community-connected children, ready to transition into further schooling.

**We will be the first
true immersion
Language Nest in
Australia**

Who?

The Language Nest is open to Pertame 0-5 year olds and their parents or carers. This is a playgroup, not a childcare. The idea is for our babies' parents/carers to learn Pertame alongside their baby, support their baby through Nest and then continue to speak language in their homes. Our Nest is led by Pertame educators and guided by fluent Elders. We often have multiple generations of our children's carers supporting them in the Nest, from their parents to their great-grandparents.



Where?

The Pertame Language Nest will officially launch at the start of June in 2023 at the Yipirinya Childcare Centre. We have been running trial sessions in the mean time at the Batchelor Institute in the Desert Knowledge Precinct. We will have bus services picking up babies and carers to come to get to the Nest.



When?

Once launched at the start of June, the Language Nest will run 4 days a week, from Tuesday to Friday. Pick ups on the bus start at 9am, and the Nest activities will finish at 1:30pm, for a 2pm bus drop off. **It is critical that babies attend the Nest as regularly as possible for the babies to receive enough exposure to the language to become fluent speakers.**



What is a Language Nest?

A language nest is a language program for children from birth to five years old where they are immersed in their First Nations language.

A language nest creates a space where young children can be raised in their Indigenous language through meaningful interaction with fluent Elders and Educators, where all communication will be carried out in the Indigenous language. The idea is to raise babies naturally as fluent speakers of their endangered Indigenous languages, through repeated exposure to their language for 10-20 hours per week over several years.

Language Nests follow how our last generation of fluent speakers of Pertame were raised, immersed within their language, family and culture on their homelands, before they were moved into Alice Springs for English-only Schooling. Language Nests align with Indigenous traditional methods of intergenerational transmission, passing down knowledge orally from Elders to adults to children.

Language Nests grow new first language speakers to ensure the continuity of our Indigenous languages and worldviews within the next generations. Language Nests create a home and a community for our languages, so they can flourish as they did before colonisation and the domination of English.

Language Nests have been recognized internationally as the most successful means to revitalise endangered Indigenous Languages.

Language Nests gained international recognition through the Te Kōhanga Reo Māori language nest movement in New Zealand, inspiring early childhood immersion programs for Indigenous languages in Hawaii, North America, Canada, and Alaska.



Pupils of the first Waiwhetū kōhanga reo (Language Nest) in NZ, taken in 1984



Photo of the Pertame team visiting the Yuchi Language Nest in Oklahoma USA in 2022

English Left At the Door

The most important characteristic of immersion is that no English is used whatsoever! All communication is done in the Indigenous language. When the child has difficulty understanding, the speaker uses non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, actions or pictures to give meaning, instead of switching to English. When new parents or guests enter the Language Nest, they will need to stay quiet and use non-verbal communication until they pick up enough Pertame to communicate. When a child says something in English, we model for them by repeating what they said in Pertame, then reply to them in Pertame. We are creating a norm and expectation of Pertame in the space, and it is essential that English does not creep in and break this norm we have created.



Language Immersion

The reason the children are in the Nest is because they are not getting the language anywhere else. They are getting English everywhere they go—from their parents, family members, friends, television, radio, internet, games and books. The purpose of the nest is to bring the language up to equal status with English; to create a place where the language learner gets a break from English, and gets to enjoy being surrounded by another language.

Immersion is like diving into a pool of water. You are entirely immersed under the water, which is the Pertame language environment. We don't come up to breath air, which is the mutually understandable English language, until our Language Nest finishes for the day.



Not bilingual!

Immersion is not a bilingual program! We sometimes talk about a program being "50% immersion", but if the program includes English, it is a bilingual program, not an immersion program. True immersion is "all or nothing". Bilingual programs were popular in the Northern Territory in remote community schools in the 80's and 90's. Their aim was to introduce children who were first language speakers of their Indigenous language into English. Since Pertame is a severely endangered language, our Pertame children are exposed to mainly English in their homes and daily lives.

The Language Nest will create the one place in the world where Pertame is the dominant language. **Every time something is said in English that could have been said in Pertame, we are taking away from our children a rare opportunity to hear their precious Indigenous language.** English will always be there for our children, but the future of Pertame rests in the hands of a few Elders.



BENEFITS OF LEARNING LANGUAGE

Learning more than one language is a skill humans have had for thousands and thousands of years.

This Language Nest will lay strong foundations for Pertame children to develop pride and confidence in their cultural identity, self-esteem, and a sense of security within their Pertame community to increase their overall wellbeing later in life. The 2020 National Indigenous Language Survey (NILS) found learning language increased Indigenous student's confidence and engagement in school, and increased their community pride in their culture, social connectedness, and social skills (AIATSIS, 2020). Studies from the Mi'kmaq immersion programs in Nova Scotia showed that students in the immersion programs also attained high academic achievement (Tompkins & Murray Orr, 2011).

Early childhood is a critical time for the development of thinking and social skills, as well as cultural and personal identity. A language nest is an excellent place to grow and nurture all of these aspects of a child's development.

Learning two languages at once will not confuse your child!

All the evidence finds that bilingualism (speaking two languages) positively enhances the cognitive (brain) development of children. In fact, some research has shown that the English of children in Language Nests tends to catch up to and then overtake the English of children that only speak one language.

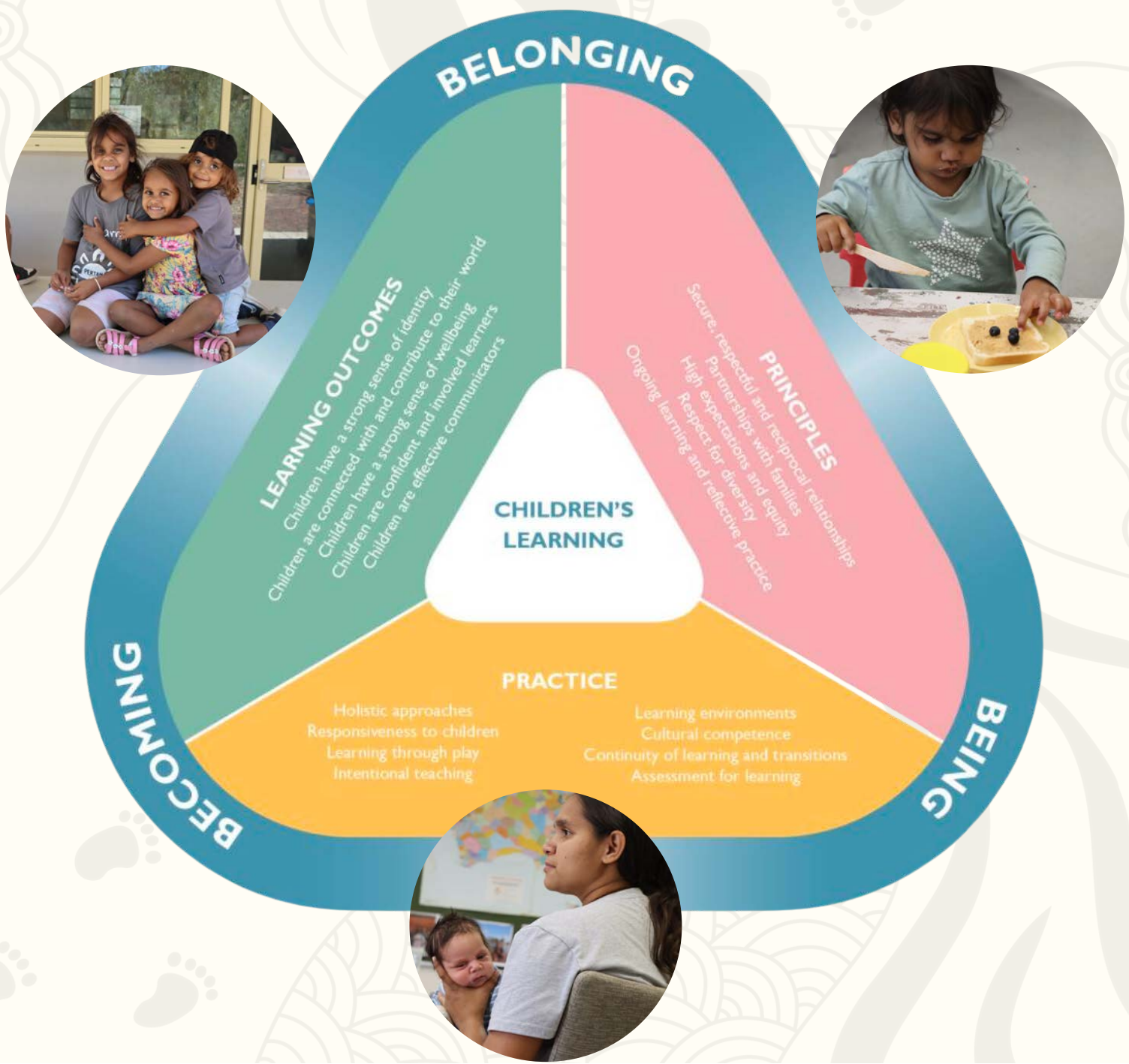


Learning another language may help your child academically. Learning a language is a complex process that involves problem-solving and making meaning. Children are required to pay greater attention to the clues and patterns of communication. This in turn results in children who can speak two languages having higher levels of cognitive (brain) flexibility than children that can only speak English.

THE AUSTRALIAN EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

The Australian Early Years Learning Framework was developed by The Council of Australian Governments to assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning. The Framework draws on conclusive international evidence that early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development.

The Framework provides broad direction for early childhood educators in early childhood settings to facilitate children's learning. The Pertame Language Nest ensures that its principles, practise and learning outcomes meet and go above and beyond the national standards set for all early childhood programs in this Framework. Over the next pages, we will demonstrate how our principles, daily routines and curriculum align with best-practise early-childhood national standards.



Our Principles

1. SECURE, RESPECTFUL AND RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIPS

Our Educators give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support to assist children to develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others. In the Pertame Language Nest, our children are surrounded by multiple generations of their direct family. Their parents/careers are employed to support them during the Nest, as well as their aunts, grandparents and great grandparents supporting them as Nest Educators and Elders. This allows our children to be nurtured within their culture and community in a culturally safe environment.



2. PARTNERSHIPS

We recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers. We form genuine partnerships, where families and early childhood educators:

- value each other's knowledge of each child
- value each other's contributions to and roles in each child's life
- trust each other
- communicate freely and respectfully with each other
- share insights and perspectives about each child
- engage in shared decision-making.

Nest Educators, Elders work alongside parents/carers to develop the curriculum, activities, and run all aspects of the Language Nest program.



3. HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND EQUITY

Children progress well when they, their parents and Educators hold high expectations for their achievement in learning. In the Language Nest, Educators and parents role model for the children putting their full engagement and effort into the learning process. The Nest provides the children independence through guided routines that parents and children can take back home and continue practicing with the children.



4. RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Respecting diversity means within the curriculum valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. The Language Nest honours every aspect of our children's culture, language, heritage and community, because it comes from their culture and community. We are able to respect the worldview of these children in a way that no other early-childhood program could achieve. We also understand that each child learns differently and put many different learning styles into the curriculum, including physically active, visual, hands on and quiet listening activities to teach to each child's different strengths.



Our Principles

5. ONGOING LEARNING AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

In the Language Nest, Educators become co-learners with children, families and community. After each Language Nest session, our Educators, Elders and parents debrief together, reflect on the successes and implement the improvements. Parents/carers are also involved in planning each day's schedule, so they are better able to support their child succeed through the day.



6. MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE ACCURACY

We acknowledge our Pertame Elder fluent speakers as the most critical element of our Language Nest. We will seek to always have a fluent Elder present, to support the Educators as they run and communicate within the Nest to maintain language accuracy. Elders are involved in all curriculum and resource development to ensure it's cultural and language accuracy. We also hold Pertame Elder meetings each term to get advised from the wider Pertame community and bring in new Elders.



ENCOURAGE THE LEARNING PROCESS AND CREATE A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN

"The only way to speak your language wrong is to not speak it at all"

Pertame is a severely endangered language, so all language revival efforts involve new adults learning the language to teach it to the next generations. We cannot rely solely on our fluent Elders to manage 20 infants. It is essential that our young adult Educators and parents/carers learn the Pertame as a second language to do most of the heavy lifting within the Nest. This means that the adults are on a Pertame learning journey just as much as our babies. Therefore, the Pertame Language Nest must be a safe space for learning, for trying and making mistakes, but improving through the corrections of our Elders. We provide lots of encouragement, praise and confirmation for not just our children, but the adults stepping outside their comfort zone into the learning zone as well. We all must start off crawling in language before we can walk, then eventually run. We do not shame or talk negatively for trying to speak language, we celebrate the bravery for what it is.



Our Daily Routine



Introductions in language



Breath, blow, cough to clear airways



Recite Pertame identity chant



Nature walk and talk by Elders



Obstacle Course & physical activity



Pertame meditation & stretches

Our Daily Routine



Pertame yoga



Wash hands and narrate in language



Healthy morning tea



Children wash own dishes



Songs, dances & Nursery rhymes



Art and Craft activity

Our Daily Routine



Story time through books or role play



Show Pertame animation or movie



Wash hands



Healthy lunch



Children wash own dishes



Self-directed free play until home time

Our Daily Routine

We have embedded the 5 learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework into the the daily routines and practises of our Language Nest. See the table below for a full schedule of our routines and activities, and the detailed methods we use to develop the learning outcomes in the Nest.

The Early Years Learning outcomes include:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators.

Time	Activity	Learning Outcomes
10am	<p>Introductions Adult and children introduce themselves and their skin names in language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities.
10:05am	<p>Breath, Blow & Cough Children and adults breath in through their nose, blow their nose into a tissue and cough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children clean their airways so their hearing and attention is improved • Outcome 3: show increasing independence and competence in personal hygiene, care and safety for themselves and others
10:10am	<p>Pertame identity chant Children chant in language "we are Pertame people, we have always been here and our language will never finish"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: promote in all children a strong sense of who they are and their connectedness to others
10:20am	<p>Walk in nature Pertame Elder lead the children and adults on a walk to discuss what is seen in the natural environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC1: develop their social and cultural heritage through engagement with Elders and community members • OC2: model respect, care and appreciation for the natural environment • OC2: find ways of enabling children to care for and learn from the land • OC2: consider the nature of children's connectedness to the land and demonstrate respect for community protocols

Time	Activity	Outcomes
10:30am	<p>Maintain bush tucker garden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC2: provide sensory and exploratory experiences with natural and processed materials • OC2: Explore relationships with other living and non-living things and observe, notice and respond to change
10:35am	<p>Outdoor physical activity and obstacle course</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC1: engage in and contribute to shared play experiences • OC2: show enthusiasm for participating in physical play and negotiate play spaces to ensure the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others • OC3: combine gross and fine motor movement and balance to achieve increasingly complex patterns of activity
10:45am	<p>Pertame Meditation A mindfulness meditation with stretches is spoken to the children as they copy the actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC1: promote children's sense of belonging, connectedness and wellbeing • OC3: provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation
10:50am	<p>Pertame yoga Yoga positions are described in language and modelled by educators for children to copy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC4: develop an ability to mirror, repeat and practice the actions of others, either immediately or later • OC4: demonstrate spatial awareness and orient themselves, moving around and through their environments confidently and safely
11am	<p>Wash hands Children wash their hands while an Educator assists and narrates their actions in Pertame.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC3: actively support children to learn hygiene practices • OC3: promote continuity of children's personal health and hygiene by sharing ownership of routines and schedules with children, families and the community • OC1: spend time interacting and conversing with each child
11:05am	<p>Healthy Snack</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC3: engage children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote healthy lifestyles and good nutrition • OC3: model and reinforce health, nutrition and personal hygiene practices with children
11:20am	<p>Children wash own dishes Educator assists and narrators the child's action in Pertame</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC1: Children's develop resilience and an ability to take increasing responsibility for self-help and basic health routines to promote a sense of independence and confidence.

Time	Activity	Outcomes
11.25am	<p>Pertame song and dance Educators sing nursery rhymes with actions and dance movements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC5: sing and chant rhymes, jingles and songs • OC5: engage children in play with words and sounds • OC5: respond through movement to traditional and contemporary music, dance and storytelling
11:35am	<p>Art and craft activity OR STEM activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC4: manipulate equipment and manage tools with increasing competence and skill • OC5: teach art as language and how artists can use the elements and principles to construct visual/musical/dance/media texts • OC5: use the creative arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, music and storytelling to express ideas and make meaning
11:55am	<p>Story Time read book, play in-language movie, role play or puppet show</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC5: begin to understand key literacy and numeracy concepts and processes, such as the sounds of language, letter-sound relationships, concepts of print and the ways that texts are structured • OC5: use information and communication technologies (ICT) to investigate and problem solve • OC5: join in children's play and engage children in conversations about the meanings of images and print. recognise and engage with written and oral culturally constructed texts • OC5: model language and encourage children to express themselves through language in a range of contexts and for a range of purposes
12:10pm	<p>1-on-1 game: Pair children with carer to complete a game, puzzle or trouble solving activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC1: initiate one-to-one interactions with children, particularly babies and toddlers, during daily routines • OC1: organise learning environments in ways that promote small group interactions and play experiences • OC4: provide experiences that encourage children to investigate and solve problems
12:30pm	<p>Wash Hands, Lunch and wash dishes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes as above for hand washing, healthy meal and children washing their own dishes
1pm	<p>Goodbye song then free play until hometime Children farewell every individual in the Nest, then the team debrief and plan with parents as children free play</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OC1: provide opportunities for children to engage independently with tasks and play • OC1: demonstrate deep understanding of each child, their family and community contexts in planning for children's learning • OC4: draw on family and community experiences and expertise to include familiar games and physical activities in play

Our Curriculum

Each fortnight of the Language Nest, we have a theme relating to an element of Pertame culture that we model our activities and routines around. We plan themes in advance, involving songs, art activities, problem solving games and stories that relate to each theme.

Theme	Outcome
Welenty / Feelings	Children learn language relating to emotions and expressing their needs
Merna / Plant food	Children learn the names and how to identify bush foods that grow on Pertame country
Ilkera / Sky	Children learn the times of day, the features in the sky, seasons and natural cycles on Pertame country and how to describe the weather and the external environment.
Mparrka / Body	Children learn the names and movements of each body part
Altya / Family	Children learn about the kinship structures in Pertame culture, the family terms, the relationships and responsibilities they have to each generation.
Ilengara / When?	Children learn the seasons, times of day and how to indicate the past, present and future.
Pmera / Country	Children learn about different types of landscapes on Pertame country, and the value that Pertame people hold to country.
Thip / Birds	Children learn the names and messages different birds on Pertame country carry.
Kera / Bush meat	Children learn about the animals on Pertame country, which animals they can eat and where and when to find them.
Kwatya / Water	Children learn words relating to water, and the connection between water in desert country.

Working with Families

"Educators' practices and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children's involvement and success in learning. Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership to support young children's learning. Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers. - Early Years Learning Framework, 2022

Pertame Parents/Carers

The Pertame Language Nest actively employs young parents/carers of our Pertame babies to bring their baby four days a week to our Language Nest. Our mothers/carers go on a journey with their baby, learning Pertame together in the Nest, then taking the language home to continue living in the language outside the Nest. Homelife is the most critical place where language is transmitted, so we invest in their family to be deeply involved in all aspects of their child's language learning.

Elders

Our Elders are our last language carriers, and they are the most important part of our Language Nest. Our Elders enrich our Nest with critical language and cultural knowledge, and create the intergenerational connections so our babies are supported by up to three generations of their family.

Nest Educators

Our Educators have trained in Pertame language for 2-4 years from Elders, and are responsible for facilitating all the Nest activities and keeping the language flowing under the guidance of fluent Elders. Our Educators support the parents/carers to learn the language.



Pertame Culture and Science

"Children are more likely to be confident and involved learners when their family and community experiences and understandings are recognised and included in the early childhood setting" (The Early Years Learning Framework, 2022)

For one of our science activities, our Pertame children created their own bird feeders. We guided them through the creation process in Pertame language, assisted them to put the feeders in the tree, modelled the purpose of the feeders and watched with the children as the birds came to eat their creations.



The Staff Team

Elders:



Doreen Abbott grew up speaking Pertame at Idracowra Station, travelling into Alice Springs for schooling at Hartley Street School. She learned English when she was 8 years old. She

worked as a project officer, in night parol and as a warden in Aboriginal organisations for 10 years. She also worked as an Aboriginal Health Worker in Alice Springs and Wallace Rockhole. Doreen has been working as an Elder teacher with the Pertame School for two years.



Kathleen Bradshaw grew up on Henbury Station, speaking Pertame as her first language. She is a qualified primary school teacher with over 30 years experience teaching children and adults in

Western Australia. She also taught English while living in Taiwan. She worked as an English language teacher, an Aboriginal Education Officer and became a qualified teacher in 2008. Kathleen uses her language and education skills to pass her Pertame onto the next generations.



Valda Forrester is a Pertame Elder who grew up on Henbury Station speaking her language. She has just joined us to support the Language Nest.

Language Apprentice Nest Educators:



Leeanne Swan

Leeanne Swan has been learning Pertame as an apprentice for three years. She has over 10 year experience working in Early Childhood Centres with Indigenous families. She has a Cert III in Community Services - Children's Services, a Cert III in Natural Resource Management and a Cert III in Education and Training. She worked for 10 years as a facilitator for the parenting program at the Kwatja Etatha Playgroup from the Lutheran Community Care. She also started and ran a Families Learning Together Program at the Play Group, an in-house parenting support program.



Shania Armstrong

Shania has been learning Pertame as an apprentice for four years. Shania is currently a representative on the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages Directions Group, advising the Federal government on policy around the decade. She has a Certificate II and III in Arrernte Applied Languages, graduating with the highest score in the NT. She was awarded the Karmi Sceney Aboriginal Excellence and Leadership award, won the 2021 Alice Springs NAIDOC Youth of Year & the Girls Academy Inspirational Leader award. Shania also has a Cert III in Education and Training



Sam Armstrong

Samantha is already fluent in her mother's language, Pitjantjatjara and has been learning Pertame as an apprentice for two years. Samantha has a Certificate II in Emergency First Response & a Certificate III & IV in Aboriginal Primary Health. She graduated from the Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) and received a Diploma of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and is currently studying a Bachelor of Applied Social Sciences. Samantha is a representative on the Closing the Gap Policy Partnership, advising the Government on language.



Vanessa Farrelly

Vanessa is a full-time Administration Officer for the Pertame School. Vanessa has 5 years experience coordinating the Pertame School, after training in language immersion from the Global Indigenous Language Caucus in New York. She received the 2019 College of Indigenous Futures Student Award in recognition of outstanding academic performance within her Undergraduate degree in Applied Social Science. She also received the Beryl Price and Lowitja Institute post graduate award, and was a 2021 AMP Changemaker.



Pertame Language Nest

Practice, Principles & Learning Outcomes



"Children's use of their home languages underpins their sense of identity and their conceptual development. Children feel a sense of belonging when their language, interaction styles and ways of communicating are valued. They have the right to be continuing users of their home language" - (The Early Years Learning Framework, 2022)