

Kathy Hatcher

KU Chatswood Community Preschool, NSW



One of the most challenging professional issues Kathy has faced is the recent enrolment of 100 new families with limited or no knowledge of English. The families represented more than 20 different nationalities.

This required cultural awareness, additional time to respect previous experiences and to encourage families to set goals for their child to learn English while valuing the home language.

Kathy believes that no matter the challenge, collaboration and commitment can make a difference. In this spirit, she worked hard to meet the challenges. One of the initiatives born out of this was the 'Pay It Forward' program for orientation that used the knowledge and passion of existing families to support new incoming families, particularly enrolments from families with limited knowledge of English.

In this now highly successful program, existing children in the centre supported the newcomers by participating in a 'stay and play' program at the end of the year. The initiative has created new opportunities for existing families to support new families, as parents and children get to know others in their new community, resulting in warm,

friendly connections commencing from orientation. Kathy says that this initiative has allowed everyone to feel connected and valued as well as helping them realise that they have plenty to contribute.

With 23 years of teaching experience under her belt, Kathy has travelled some distance as an early childhood teacher. She says this has shaped and informed her capacity to make decisions as a leader, mentor and teacher.

In future, Kathy aims to develop the 'Pay it Forward' program into a NESA-approved professional development module that could be made available to the sector.