








Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the early childhood years

Volume 21

Number 1, 2015

Journal of the Early Childhood Teachers' Association Inc.

PUBLISHED BY
Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA Inc.)
20 Hilton Road,
Gympie, Qld. 4570

Copyright © 2015
ECTA Inc.
ISSN: 1323:823x

EDITORIAL PANEL
Lynne Moore (Editor)
Angela Drysdale
Archana Sinh
Sue Webster
Nebula Wild
Sarah-Jane Johnson

PROOFREADING
Angela Le Mare

ECTA JOURNAL LIAISON
Lynne Moore
e. journal@ecta.org.au

DESIGN
Graphic Skills Pty Ltd

PRINTING
Cornerstone Press

The ECTA Coordinating Committee and the EYC Journal Editorial Panel wish to acknowledge the contributions of the children for the illustrations used for the journal cover and other ECTA printed material.

Address all correspondence and advertising enquiries to
Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA Inc.)
20 Hilton Road, Gympie Qld 4570
Ph: 0418 157 280 Fax: 07 5481 1148
e. info@ecta.org.au w. www.ecta.org.au

Journal contributions
Articles and ideas for possible inclusion in the journal, following review by the editorial panel, are welcomed. See inside back cover for submission guidelines.

Advertising rates (GST inclusive)

	1 Issue	2 Issues	3 Issues
Full Page	$451.00	$407.00 per issue	$363.00 per issue
Half Page	$269.00	$242.00 per issue	$214.50 per issue
Quarter Page	$181.50	$148.50 per issue	$121.00 per issue
Eighth Page	$121.00	$88.00 per issue	$71.50 per issue

Inserts
$200 for an insert to be included. Written notification of intent is required, as there is a limit on the number of inserts per issue.

Dates for contributions

No 1	Last week in January
No 2	Last week in May
No 3	Last week in September

Advertising policy
ECTA Inc. reserves the right to determine the suitability and quality of any camera-ready artwork supplied by advertisers. Advertisements in *Educating Young Children* (EYC) are the responsibility of the advertiser. While EYC makes reasonable efforts to ensure that no misleading claims are made by advertisers, responsibility is not accepted by EYC or ECTA Inc. for statements made or the failure of any product or service to give satisfaction. Inclusion of a product or service should not be construed as an endorsement or recommendation by ECTA Inc. Advertisers should comply with the Trade Practices Act 1974.

Copyright ©
No part of this journal may be copied or reproduced in any form without written permission. To the best of the editors' knowledge all details were correct at the time of printing.

EYC subscriptions
Subscriptions to the journal are included in your ECTA membership. Single back copy issues can be purchased for $15 plus postage (GST inclusive).

EYC disclaimer
The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the ECTA Inc. or the editorial panel.

Editorial policy
The material published in the journal will aim to be inclusive of children in Australia wherever they live, regardless of race, gender, class, culture and disability. The journal will not publish material which runs counter to the wellbeing and equality of all children and their families, and those who work with them.

Registered Teachers - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements
Registered teachers are advised to note the Queensland College of Teachers endorsed position on professional reading, accessing online resources and viewing video-streamed materials as contributing to their CPD requirements for renewal of teacher registration. The endorsed position can be viewed on the ECTA website www.ecta.org.au from the *Educating Young Children* link.

Online access to journal
Educating Young Children is also available online via EBSCOhost and Informit databases.

Photographs
All photographs are attributed to the author unless otherwise noted.

Contents

Editorial

From the President ..... Kim Walters 2

From the Editorial Panel ..... Lynne Moore 4

Stories

Maths Extravaganzas for the early years ..... Heidi Clauscen 7

Living the Hai life ..... Sarah-Jane Johnson 9

Conversations

Preparing for a successful future ..... Gabrielle Sinclair 11

Environments

Creating inspiring early childhood environments ..... Suzie Wood 12

Partnerships

Cairns regional group conference a success ..... Moniek de Kievith 15

Feature Articles

Integrating digital literacy in the early childhood classroom ..... Adele Amorsen 17

Exploring places and spaces: Australian Curriculum Geography in the Prep-Year 2 context ..... Caroline Hollis and Debra Ybarlucea 20

Linking fine and gross motor skills to the curriculum ..... Natasha Rogers and Julie Wright 24

Art music the littlies love! Using recorded music appropriately and creatively ..... Kath Lloyd 27

Self-regulation: the what, the why and the how ..... Desley Jones 29

Demystifying sensory processing ..... Danielle Bull 32

Yoga for kids: healthy bodies, healthy minds ..... Tracey Lenarduzzi 34

Media Reviews

YIKES, Stinkysaurus! ..... Amber Smith 37

Elephants Have Wings ..... Eris Roberts 38

Moo Hoo ..... Sue Webster 39

The Snow Womble ..... Year Two St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School 40

From the President

Kim Walters

This year ECTA will celebrate 40 years, that's four decades, of providing high quality practically based professional development for early childhood educators across the State.

We are proud of our strong tradition supporting members no matter where they work 'across the State'. Since the beginning, regional groups have been a feature of ECTA and we continue to provide funds to support our regional groups to coordinate events in their local area.

Through the years technological advances have made other means of support possible. We now provide videoconferencing, a website and Facebook page with a move to webinars in the near future.

Our Facebook page continues to grow in strength. We now have over 1330 likes on the page. If you haven't already done so, please LIKE us on Facebook. The page can be found at www.facebook.com/ECTAQLD or search for *ECTA - Early Childhood Teachers' Association.*

The ECTA Annual Conference continues to be a major event for early childhood educators in Queensland.

Over the past several years, we have funded office bearers from across the state to attend the conference and help facilitate the day. This has provided invaluable support for the conference committee whilst at the same time building capacity in our regional groups as office bearers use skills learnt for local professional development.

It is with sadness that I announce Toni Michael will be leaving the conference committee which she has steered for many, many years. It is due to the dedication of colleagues like Toni and the many committee members that work with her and have preceded her as conference convenors (such as Pam Fulmer, Debbie Gahan and Gail Halliwell), that our conference has received the respect and admiration of early childhood professionals and other teacher associations across Queensland.

It has been under their leadership, guidance and determination to focus on practical professional support for teachers that the ECTA Annual Conference has flourished and grown from strength to strength.

It was therefore with interest that I read a reflection on the first ECTA conference held on 21st and 22nd August 1975, during the then August holidays. The two-day event was broken into six sessions across six different venues. The Thursday program comprised: Marshall Road Preschool – display of resources; Holland Park Preschool – panel discussion 'Preschool of the future' with Gerald Ashby, Director of Preschool Education and Noel Tanzer, Chairman of the Children's commission; and Mt Gravatt South Preschool – puppet workshop. Friday's program included: Bardon Preschool – display of teacher-made equipment, and good ideas; Moggill Road Preschool – panel discussion 'Preschool Education: The American Scene' with Dr Eleanor Kirkland, Lecturer in ECE at California State University and Ms Charlotte McCarty, Laboratory School in ECE at University of Delaware. (Both were lecturing at Kelvin Grove Collage of Advanced Education at the time.) Finally, at Jindalee Preschool, – carpentry workshop and

'Working with parents' discussion with Gail Halliwell. The event was followed by the AGM in the evening.

It is pleasing to see that throughout forty years we have continued to value the sharing of practical topics by educators for educators and informative sessions on current practice by leaders in the field.

In the September 1975 Newsletter Gail Halliwell gave a recount of the event and reflected on her session 'Working with Parents'. Gail's reflections on her workshop are still relevant today, especially as we focus on transitions between before school settings and school. Gail wrote:

> *… parents have a number of motives for becoming involved in education or not becoming as the case may be, and these motives must be respected; also teachers have a variety of reasons for wanting to involve parents in education. It is important that teachers analyse their own motives so that they can utilize different techniques for involving parents more effectively; and that teachers try to understand what parents want from parent involvement.*
>
> *An attempt to match parental motives and teacher motives has, I believe, more chance of success than haphazard copying of the latest fashionable way to get parents into the preschool.*

The evaluation summary of our first conference stated:

> *The results indicate that teachers derived a great deal of satisfaction from mixing with one another and feeling free to discuss their problems and to share ideas.*

The valuing of networking opportunities remains a focus of today's conference with an extended lunch break giving opportunities for delegates to connect with colleagues.

ECTA committee and members working in prep and lower primary classrooms across the state have welcomed the review of the Australian Curriculum and agree with findings that the curriculum is overcrowded and needs to be less so, especially in the early years of schooling. We look forward with interest to the new and improved curriculum which will be released in August this year. This will combine history, geography, civics and citizenship and economics and business into a single combined humanities and social sciences subject for primary schools. There will be a reduction of quantity of content to add more depth and less breadth.

We also await the government's response to the Productivity Commission's inquiry report on Childcare and Early Childhood Learning. This report, which was released on 20 February 2015, looks at where we are now with Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Australia; what we want in the future; and how we might go about achieving that in a way that better supports children's learning and development needs and the workforce participation of parents.

I am looking forward to meeting regional group office bearers and delegates at the conference which will be held on 27th June 2015 at Sheldon Event Centre, in the grounds of Sheldon College, Taylor Road, Sheldon. Sheldon is 40 minutes south-east of Brisbane Airport.

With 32 practical workshops to choose from, the 500+ delegates are sure to find presentations to inform and inspire their pedagogy. I encourage everyone to go to the ECTA website and look at the presentation outlines and biographical statements of each presenter.

Kim

Kim Walters ECTA President
0418157280 kim@ecta.org.au

From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

The *Educating Young Children* team congratulate ECTA on reaching the 'big four-O'.

It seems fitting this issue of EYC is jam packed with 'forty' pages that celebrate the knowledge, expertise and achievements of early childhood educators. That's a page for each year!

What would birthdays be, without 'extravaganzas' and 'secrets'? We begin with two great stories from Heidi Clauscen and EYC member Sarah-Jane Johnson. The first extending thinking about ways of teaching mathematics. The second opening our eyes to possibilities and new horizons abroad.

Super is like a good education.
You'll appreciate it in the future.

QIEC Super Pty Ltd ABN 81 010 897 480, the Trustee of QIEC Super ABN 15 549 636 673, is Corporate Authorised Representative No. 268804 under Australian Financial Services Licence No. 238507 and is authorised to provide general financial product advice in relation to superannuation.

qiec super
first in our class

Looking forward, Deputy-Director General Gabrielle Sinclair, outlines the government's commitments to early childhood education and care in Queensland. Read how 4 'Ps' - partnerships, potential, perspective and planning - are shaping a successful future.

A beautiful photograph sets the scene for Suzie Wood's inspiring examination of early childhood environments. Drawing on historical and philosophical influences Suzie provides three easy steps to assist you in creating an inspiring environment for children.

Seven feature articles offer a wealth of information to enhance your curriculum. Adele Amorsen questions what it means to be literate in the 21st century and Caroline Hollis and Debra Ybarlucea explore places and spaces through Geography in the Australian Curriculum.

Continuing the focus on curriculum Natasha Rogers and Julie Wright examine the importance of gross and fine motor skills in supporting academic learning. Kath Lloyd in 'music littlies love' promotes the value of art music in enriching educational experiences for young children. While Desley Jones provides practical advice to support children's emotional regulation.

Danielle Bull demystifies sensory processing and Tracey Lenarduzzi shows how yoga for kids can lead to healthy bodies and healthy minds. Finally, four new media reviews bring this bumper birthday issue to a close.

I would like to end by reminding readers that since 'life begins at forty' the best of ECTA is yet to come. I do hope you will continue to journey with us.

Lynne

40th ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference

Saturday 27 June 2015

For registering and more information visit via *www.ecta.org.au*

Keynote Address: Lighten Up! Humour is FUNdamental to providing quality education and care to young children

This keynote is always entertaining and fun, but substantive, as well. It focuses on how keeping your sense of humour helps early childhood educators and child care providers provide quality education and care day after day—even on the tough days. Part of this program emphasizes the notion that a good sense of humour is an essential survival skill for teachers and care providers. A sense of humour is shown to provide the resilience needed to cope with the challenges that young children sometimes offer.

Keynote presenter: Paul McGhee *is currently President of The Laughter Remedy in Wilmington, Delaware, in the USA. His scientific contributions to the field of humour research make him unique among those who currently work as professional speakers discussing the importance of building more humour into your life. He has published 15 books and many scientific articles on humour and is internationally recognized for his contributions in three distinct areas:*

1) Scientific research on humour and laughter, including the development of children's humour.

2) Practical applications of humour in corporate and healthcare settings - including the only research-supported program for improving humour skills.

3) Substantive, but entertaining, keynotes and workshops on humour.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

State, Private and Independent School Teachers and Aides, Community Kindergarten and Pre-Prep Professionals, Childcare Professionals, Family Day Care Professionals, Outside School Hours Care Professionals, University and VET Early Childhood Educators, Early Childhood Education Students, and Community Members involved with Early Childhood Services (health, education and welfare)

Presentations will be relevant for professionals working with children 0-8 years of age across all sectors. Links to NQF, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and specific age range for each session given.

Full day registration from only $205

VENUE: Sheldon Event Centre, Sheldon, Brisbane, QLD, Australia
(Within grounds of Sheldon College)

Masterclass & Workshops

Check website for up-to-date list of presentation options

HUGE SELECTION OF PRESENTATIONS RELEVANT TO ALL SECTORS

All delegates attend the keynote and two presentations plus optional lunch session (age range applicable noted)
a masterclass can take up to 150 delegates

AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS

- Building a caring community of learners through music by Desley Jones *(2.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Building children's resilience in this risk-averse world by Louise Dorrat *(all) Masterclass*
- Care of babies: what's changed? How do we support new mothers? by Julie Neild, Kathryn Woodcock & Carmel O'Connell *(0 to 1.5 years old)*
- Declutter your diary - maximise your time and energy by Jane Taylor *(0 to 8 years old)*
- (Design + Play) 2 = more mathematical thinking by Sue Southey *(age range applicable 3.5 to 4.5 years old)*
- Documentation – bring back the joy! by Rhonda Livingstone *(0 to 4.5 years old)*
- Easy starters: composting, resource and water recycling by Kiri Combi *(2.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Food intolerance affecting behaviour by Sue Dengate *(0 to 8 years old)*
- Introducing the principles of the Reggio Emilia Educational Project by Prof. Deborah Harcourt *(0 to 8 years old)*
- Learning to use humour to cope with stress: the 7 Humour Habits Program by Paul McGhee *(0 to 8 years old) Masterclass*
- Literacy: practical ways to support young readers and writers by Angela Ehmer *(4.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Monoprinting by Cate Collopy *(3.5 to 8 years old)*
- Tables: do we need them? by Justine Walsh & Nicole Burke – Journey into Play *(all) Masterclass*
- Thinking Play in Prep and lower primary classrooms by Michelle Scheu *(4.5 to 7.5 years old)*
- Through the eyes of a teddy bear: how to nurture cultural competence by Laura Broadbent *(all)*
- Transition from kindergarten to school: sharing information by Robyn Whiting *(3.5 to 5.5 years old)*

PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS

- Animal attraction: worm farming, guinea pigs, chickens by Kiri Combi *(2.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Are your Prep students ready to start learning to read and write? by Evelyn Terry *(2.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Beach kindy project by Kathryn Forgan-Flynn *(all)*
- Building instrumental skills and music literacy in early childhood by Mark Griffiths *(3.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Building literacy skills in a Geography context: Prep - Year Two by Caroline Hollis & Robyn Whiting *(4.5 to 8 years old)*
- Challenging behaviours? ASD in the early years by Peter Melrose *(1.5 to 8 years old)*
- Environmental weaving by Casselle Mountford *(3.5 to 8 years old)*
- Music and storytelling in an inclusive environment by Louise Dorrat *(2.5 to 8 years old) Masterclass*
- Outdoor play spaces by Justine Walsh & Nicole Burke – Journey into Play *(0 to 8 years old) Masterclass*
- Play-based pedagogy in Prep … Yes we can! by Jo Broadbent *(3.5 to 5.5 years old)*
- Relationships, wellbeing and mental health: reinforcing the links by Desley Jones *(all)*
- Supporting learning and development for babies and toddlers by Caroline Fewster *(0 to 3 years old)*
- Teaching young children to manage their emotions by Dr. Kaylene Henderson *(0 to 5 years old)*
- The playful brain: development of young children's humour by Paul McGhee *(all) Masterclass*
- Using iPads & IWBs in early years classrooms by Rebecca Trimble-Roles *(4.5 to 8 years old)*
- Who needs a second language? by Ronit Baras *(all)*

OPTIONAL LUNCH SESSIONS

- Cross-cultural communication by Rekha Prasad *(all)*
- Delegation for de-stress, development and delight by Sally Foley-Lewis *(all)*
- Early childhood in Queensland, what has changed and what is to come by Gabrielle Sinclair *(0 to 5.5 year olds)*
- Maintaining sanity in times of change by Laurie Kelly *(all)*
- Your time to shine: simple steps to boost unlimited energy by Roushini Devi *(all)*
- What do you do if you don't like your A&R rating? by Director, Assessment and Quality Improvement DETE *(0 to 4.5 years old)*

The Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA) provides professional learning and collegiality for early childhood professionals working with children 0 - 8 years of age across all early childhood education and care settings.

Register online from 16 March 2015

www.ecta.org.au

Maths Extravaganzas for the early years

Heidi Clauscen

Heidi Clauscen is a support teacher for literacy and numeracy at Strathpine State School in the Brisbane Region. She embraces a multisensory approach to learning when working with students with learning disabilities. Heidi supports teachers, parents and auxiliary staff to adjust their planning and modify their teaching strategies to suit the children's preferred learning styles and academic abilities.

Maths Extravaganzas are designed to be engaging for students by bringing reality and abstraction together to develop students' visualization of mathematics concepts. By analysing school-based assessments and other departmental systemic data along with class teacher input, particular mathematical concepts and processes are identified for further investigation.

Once key concepts and processes have been identified, teachers can collaboratively design 'hands-on' activities. At this stage of planning, critical thinking about differentiating various developmental levels is opportune. Providing differentiated instruction so that all students can work at their own pace in an environment that is instructionally inclusive, is one of the key components of a Maths Extravaganza. Maths Extravaganzas also present teachers with an opportunity to observe student learning in a unique environment.

Maths Extravaganzas are different from maths groups or numeracy blocks by taking a multi-age differentiated approach to the day. Students from two grade levels work together and move around the maths activities. Students may choose to work independently or with a group of friends. Students are self-directed and decide which activities they wish to work at and the time taken to complete an activity. This encourages independence and self-regulation. Activities are assigned a monetary value which is displayed as a pictorial representation of a coin. Activities identified as critical for student participation are given a greater monetary value than other activities. Students collect a money token when they complete the activity. At the end of the session, students calculate the total of their collected 'coins' and buy an item at the 'Thrift Shop'. Teachers can source items for the Thrift Shop, through newsletter donation advertisements or from donations from local businesses in the area.

To continue with the Extravaganza theme, students are asked to vote for their favourite activity at the end of their session. This data is collated and results are announced at assembly with names being pulled 'out of a hat' to receive additional prizes. The day is recorded by students taking photos and creating a Moviemaker presentation that is also viewed on assembly. This is an Extravaganza that no one will want to miss!

Steps to creating your own Maths Extravaganza

- Identify focus concepts and processes that need to be targeted through data collection
- Look at mathematics activities and relate to explicit real world examples

- Design activities that are as hands-on as possible, incorporate student interest and accommodate developmental levels and associated language
- Use and showcase school and community resources
- Collaboratively organise timetable and structure of the day with administration team so that all staff can be involved (e.g. specialist teachers and support officers)
- Check availability of venue!
- Engage support of local businesses and community
- Ask others for support with set up, Extravaganza Day event, pack up and assembly preparation and presentation
- Enjoy the smiles and affirmations from the students that mathematics is AWESOME!

Sample Extravaganza activity

Time Teasers

Language: time, days, weeks, clock, yesterday, today, morning, afternoon, night-time, before, after, next, slow, fast, early, late, minute hand, hour hand, minutes, hours, number symbols, Roman numeral symbols, numbers to 12, digital or calculator number symbols, am, pm.

Level 1

Match one analogue clock with another. Match one digital clock with another.

Sort and compare time pieces (variety of analogue, digital, pendulum clocks, egg timer, sand glass timers) into groups: wrist watches, wall clocks, bedside clocks, cooking timers or analogue time devices, digital time devices and other time devices.

Read and select three clocks that show the time on the hour. Put those clocks in order by hour time.

Pick five clocks and order from earliest time to latest time as displayed on the clocks.

Level 2

Match the time on an analogue clock with a digital clock (hour, half and quarter minutes).

A bus took some students to camp. It left the school at 10:00am. The bus trip took one and a quarter hours. What time did the bus get to the camp?

We left school at 3:00pm. It took 3/4 hour to walk home. Show on the analogue clock face the time we arrived home.

Resources: variety of real world clocks and time measuring devices, geared clocks, replica digital clocks, number line representing min/hours.

Living the Hai Life

Sarah-Jane Johnson

Sarah-Jane Johnson is a Year 1 teacher at Yew Chung International School in Shanghai, China. In addition to her experience as an early years primary teacher, she has worked as a lawyer in Queensland. Sarah-Jane is currently developing her interest in early childhood multilingualism and the 'global classroom' through teaching abroad.

This morning I rode my foldable bike down tree-lined streets to the metro station. With red, icy cheeks, I took off my gloves and flexed the blood back into my fingers before folding my bike up and shoving it into a bag. It then sat on the floor next to me as I read my novel on the train to the other side of Shanghai to start my day. This has been my morning routine for the past six months.

It was only a few years ago that I had heard about the teacher's 'best kept secret' – international teaching. After spending my 20s compartmentalising study, travel and work, I was looking for something that neatly amalgamated them all. My school in China offers the lifestyle, but has it been worth the move?

I am contracted to the school for two years, which is standard for teaching contracts across the industry. The school determines my salary on a pay scale that correlates to my level of experience. Every year, I move up the scale and my salary increases accordingly. It's an attractive sum though, to be frank, it's really the benefits that boost my savings account.

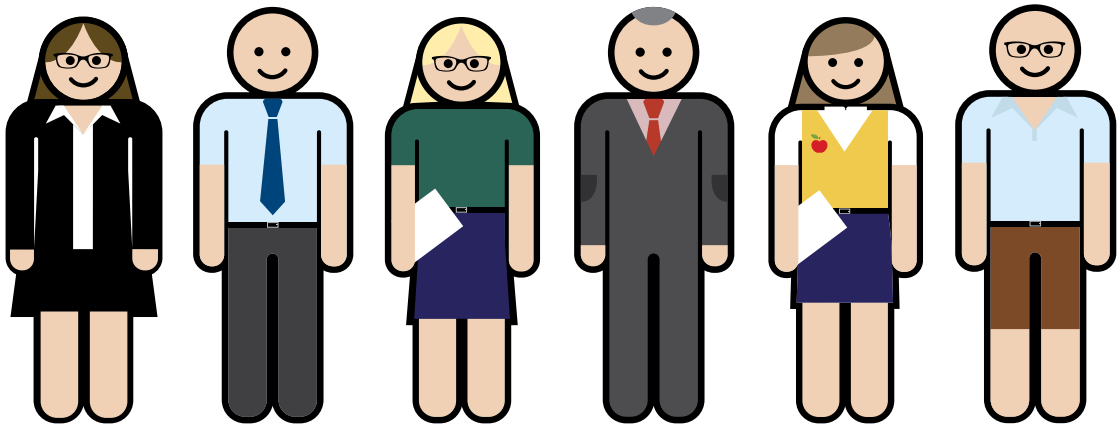
Amongst other things, I receive round-trip airfares back home, health insurance, housing and a gratuity payable at the end of my contract. If I had a school-aged child, I would also receive free tuition. The school offers a fully-furnished flat in close proximity to the campus, although I opted to find my own housing on the other side of town, simply because I have friends in that area. In this case, they offered me a capped housing allowance to help cover my rent. Without friends and a support network, I would recommend staying close to the school.

It is no secret that landing your first international teaching job is difficult and stressful, particularly if you take the standard route of attending job fairs (some schools only recruit through these fairs). I applied directly to the schools I was interested in and was then interviewed several times via Skype. Apart from my teaching capabilities, the schools were interested in my resilience. This is crucial because, no matter how much you have travelled the world, you will experience culture shock.

So the question still lingers; was the move worth trading in my sunglasses for a pollution

mask? The money alone does not justify the personal disorientation I sometimes feel as I adjust to my new life. It is asking my 5-year-old students how to bargain a good price for fruit; it is my Chinese colleague telling one of our students to line up quietly 'mate'; it is feeling like a rockstar when I understand the old man on his scooter next to me groaning about the taxi that just cut him off. These are the little things that keep me here. These are the experiences that make the decision to move abroad a resounding yes.

Join Queensland's own members own health fund, TUH



Visit tuh.com.au, call 1300 360 701 or pop in to see us at the ECTA Conference.
Eligibility criteria applies.

TUH It's my health fund
MEMBERS OWN HEALTH FUND

Preparing for a successful future

A message from Gabrielle Sinclair, Deputy Director-General, Division of Early Childhood Education and Care, Department of Education and Training

In April 2014, Dr Jim Watterston, Director-General, Department of Education and Training, replaced the Office of Early Childhood Education and Care with a new Division of Early Childhood Education and Care. To raise the importance of the early years new senior positions for early childhood education and care were created in each of the Department's seven regions. So as the new Division approaches its first anniversary what, if anything, has changed?

There are 4 Ps to frame the story of our journey.

The first P is **potential**. Every child has a right to reach their full potential and we are working hard to use evidence-based research to inform our practice, planning, priorities and policy advice.

Integrated and culturally appropriate parenting support programs and play-based inquiry in Prep are two strategies in line with the Government's commitments and best practice for successful lifelong learning.

The next P is **partnerships**. We started with great partnerships. Building on these, we have delivered professional development in remote communities and supported principals and teachers to reach out and connect with every service, family and community to build successful transitions. The power of these partnerships will mean every child is ready for school and school is ready for each child.

The next is your **perspective**. As a major partner in early childhood education and care, if you haven't seen an improvement in how we deliver, fund, regulate and support innovative early childhood programs and services for Queensland children, we will listen more closely and do better.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the generosity of educators, teachers, principals and families who have shared their knowledge, aspirations and personal stories to guide our performance so far

We plan to make a real difference to the first 8 years of every young child's life - with your expert help.

Gabrielle Sinclair

Gabrielle has been in the Queensland Public Service for more than 20 years.

Gabrielle started her professional career as an early childhood teacher and has undergraduate degrees in Teaching and Education, a Master's degree in Education and an Executive Master's degree in Public Administration.

Gabrielle is Deputy Director-General and leads the new Division of Early Childhood Education and Care in the Department of Education and Training. Since 1999 Gabrielle has held Senior Executive positions in a number of departments including Infrastructure and Planning, Local Government and Sport and Recreation, and Corrective Services.

Creating inspiring early childhood environments

Suzie Wood

Suzie has been a part of the early childhood journey for over 30 years across three states. She has enjoyed long and various experiences with children and educators while managing services, lecturing, leading various projects and being a TAFE teacher. She holds a strong belief in professional identity and national professional standards for all early childhood educators. Suzie inspires and develops educators' self-belief as a professional through her consultancy service Nurturing Professional Excellence. Currently, Suzie is Vice President of Early Childhood Teachers' Association.

History reveals an evolution in educators' thinking around the importance of the environment in influencing children's learning. The guidance of the National Quality Framework, emphasising the engagement of children with natural and built environments, has heavily influenced the decisions made by educators across Australia.

Environments are a public statement of a teacher's beliefs. They reflect their thinking, their image of the child and their teaching values.

Loris Malaguzzi stated:

> *a space has to be a sort of aquarium that mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes and culture of the people who live within it (cited in Duncan et al, 2010, p81).*

You may be asking where these influences have come from. Traditional influences were born from well-known pioneers such as Montessori, Steiner and Froebel. Whether or not you agree with their philosophical base, it must be agreed that they laid the foundations for creating environments that gave children a place of their own. Froebel, in the late nineteenth century, described the materials in the learning environment as a 'gift' (or invitation to learning) and introduced objects that allowed children to manipulate. The Montessori approach depicted the creation of an environment which had order, was aesthetically pleasing and encouraged sensory exploration. This influence can be seen today in many contemporary early childhood settings. Steiner education has a strong influence

in the arts, natural environment, creativity and well-being and how the environment impacts on the program offered.

Contemporary researchers such as Maluguzzi (associated with the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy) and Weikart (significant to the High Scope curriculum) not only influenced modern day educational programs but also sharpened our focus on the importance of environments. It is well-known by educators who affiliate with

the Reggio philosophy that the environment is seen as the 'third teacher'. This has refocused educators' attention to the materials and spaces children work in and with, and transformed the educational practices of professionals.

Before creating an environment consideration needs to be given to your own philosophical base and the way you believe children learn.

Questions to ponder include:

- What type of environment will be created?
- What are my beliefs and values about how children learn?
- How will my professional philosophy be reflected in the space?

Steps to creating an inspiring environment

One thing I have noticed over many years of working alongside educators is the need for educators to understand the layering process. The layering process is essential to the development of an inspiring and engaging space. Sandra Duncan, in her book *Inspiring spaces for young children*, talks about seven principles which support the development of spaces:

1. Nature inspires beauty
2. Colour generates interest
3. Furnishing defines space
4. Texture adds depth
5. Displays enhance environment
6. Elements heighten ambiance
7. Focal points attract attention.

So, in thinking about these principles, how can a place of wonder be created?

Step 1 - define the space

Defining the space will give parameter to the experiences offered. Ensure the starting point begins with a natural canvas. This can be a large or small space in the indoor or outdoor environment. Always contemplate the size, shape and placement of the space.

Practice considerations:

- Take photos or video of the way the children currently use the space.
- Analyse the photos or video with children and colleagues.
- Create a sketch of the room or outdoor space and configure the area. Remember not to always create symmetrical spaces. Angles and platforms can create different dimensions.
- When organising individual experiences consider the need for privacy so the child can concentrate and focus, as well as the placement of furnishing to allow for social opportunities.
- Make a list of the materials you will need.
- Start to create the space.

When planning spaces always ask:

- What is the purpose of this space?
- How will the children engage with the materials in this space?
- Is the space safe but allows for risk taking?
- Does the space create the right mood for the experience?
- Is there a focal point of interest and how will the educator introduce this?
- Are the materials adaptable and changeable, allowing for flexibility?
- How is there interconnection between the indoor and outdoor environment?
- How will you involve children in the design?
- What materials and resources are required to support the creation of the space?
- How will the schedule of the day impact on the use of the various learning spaces?

Step 2 - create order

Creating order in the environment gives a message that all of the equipment has a place in which it belongs.

Practice considerations:

- Create visual order by layering the spaces with containers, baskets, boxes and other storage items.
- What is the purpose of the space and which learning domain will this space suit?
- Use authentic, open-ended materials in the spaces which will engage children to participate in the learning.
- Thoughtful storage and display of materials will convey a natural sense of order as well as beauty. Remember the principle 'less is more'.

Step 3 - add aesthetics

Nature provides open-ended opportunities to create, investigate and wonder.

Nature not only provides an infinite supply of materials, but alsoexperiences that can be integratedinto all learning domains. It conveys a sense of calmness and tranquillity for both children and adults.

Many people believe modern commercial materials and contemporary house decorations are the requirements of creating an inspiring environment. Unfortunately, this often does not achieve the results intended by the designer.

Aesthetics includes aspects which heighten the senses and brings an individual into the space. Remember aesthetics create the mood of the environment. Consideration must be given to sight, sound, smell and touch, as this relates to the way a person feels when interacting in the space. A room which is full of visual noise is loud and intimidating and will not create a feeling of being relaxed to learn.

The space should be filled with natural elements. Not only are natural items great learning tools but they also enhance the space with beauty.

Open-ended, authentic materials, most recently called loose parts theory, open up to possibilities of wonder and investigation for children to manipulate, design and create. These parts can be moveable within the whole environment and be adapted by children across all key learning domains from the arts to a literacy or maths program.

Use colour, light and sensory objects to support the focal point for learning in the space, enhancing children's curiosity and desire to investigate. Creating a focal point which attracts the eye and promotes curiosity, is a key to the last component of creating a space. A focal point can be an interesting object, something from nature, the built environment or pops of colour which draw the attention of a child into the space. Remember, the focal point has a purposeful intention in its application in the learning environment.

It is important that educators of young children model an appreciation of beauty and aesthetics. Using authentic materials from the real world encourages children to re-enact and integrate their own knowledge into their play with natural and authentic play props.

Encourage children to marvel at beautiful and special things.

Educators need to step back and critically examine the quality and quantity of commercial materials on their wall. This will determine whether they actually contribute to children's learning or whether they ultimately silence children.

We should respect children as active, curious learners with ideas to communicate. Visible information must have a purpose and demonstrate children's learning as they engage in 'working out the world' (WOW) moments.

Practice considerations:

- Consider the wall space in the environment and how this space will be used to engage children in reflective thinking.
- Use items as focal points for learning.
- Use pops of colour to attract the eye.
- Use sound and music to heighten the impact of the learning space.
- Create beauty using simple, natural and authentic elements.

Remember

Early childhood environments should be inviting and cultivate children's curiosity, wonder and imagination. (Curtis and Carter, 2011)

References

Duncan, Sandra, DeViney, Jessica, Harris, Sara, Rody, Mary Ann and Rosenberry, Lois, 2010. *Inspiring Spaces for Young Children* Published by Gryphon House.

Tarr, Patricia, 2004. *Consider the Walls* Beyond the Journal, Young Children on the Web, May.

Curtis, Deb and Carter, Margie, 2011. *Reflecting Children's Lives: A Handbook for Planning Your Child Centered Curriculum*, Published by Redleaf Press.

Cairns regional group conference a success

Moniek de Kievith

Over 80 delegates enjoyed the ECTA Cairns Regional Group conference *Keeping the Balance: Learning Life and FUN!* on the scenic Cairns Esplanade.

The conference simultaneously kicked off the ECTA-sponsored Maggie Dent tour. Maggie Dent is an author, educator and parenting and resilience specialist with a particular interest in the early years and adolescence. Maggie is a passionate advocate for the healthy, commonsense raising children in order to strengthen families and communities. She has a broad perspective and range of experience that shapes her work, a slightly irreverent sense of humour and a depth of knowledge based on modern research and ancient wisdom that she shares passionately in a commonsense way.

Maggie delighted delegates with the conference keynote *Real kids in an unreal world*. In this keynote address, Maggie took participants through her ten building blocks to resilience, a model that resonates with anyone who works with families and helps our world to raise healthier, happier, more resilient children. This keynote was also linked to the Early Years Learning Framework – all five outcomes.

This positively uplifting keynote reaffirmed the important role we have as early childhood professionals and the place for play in the curriculum.

Maggie in action

In true Maggie Dent style, all delegates shared many laughs and loosened up for the day ahead.

The day continued with a series of workshops split into two sessions. This was an opportunity to get hands-on experience and knowledge from experts in the field of early childhood. ECTA Vice-President, Sue Southey, returned to Cairns after her successful contribution in 2012 to present two new workshops. The first workshop entitled *Under construction – building play as a tool for learning* examined intentional teaching strategies to engage children in high level thinking skills as they collaborate in building and construction play. Sue's second workshop entitled *One, two buckle my shoe – multi sensory music as a springboard for numeracy* focused on using musical games and rhymes as an ideal way to build foundation concepts in numeracy, patterning and concepts about space an shape using multi-sensory learning techniques.

Desley Jones, with over 25 years of experience in early childhood education, also presented two workshops. The first entitled *Once upon a time* explored the role of make believe play in the development of language and literacy. Her second workshop entitled *Supporting children's self-regulation: a strength-based alternative to behaviour management* was an opportunity to reflect on understandings of self regulation and to share practical strategies as a positive alternative to behaviour management.

Other workshops included Barb Powell on *The use of visual supports to promote behaviour and improve learning outcomes*. This session included the use of social stories, timetables and schedules as well as visual systems to support parents.

Linda Bates presented S*mooshies and swooshies to promote positive behaviour and improve*

learning outcomes. This workshop talked about the development of art programmes in kindy; techniques that can be adapted for use by young children; the importance of observation; and developing an appropriate vocabulary. It was supported by photographs of kindy children at work. At the end of the session, everyone was given the opportunity to contribute to a group screen print and lino print to take away with them.

In an interactive workshop titled *iPaddling – using apps for creating*, Deborah McGuinness provided participants with an opportunity to explore a range of apps that can be used in an early childhood setting.

In the afternoon delegates were treated to another Maggie Dent presentation. In her closing address entitled *Really surviving teaching – staff resilience*, Maggie explored stressors, protective factors and learning how to de-stress and relax. She also explored 'warning signs' and included strategies to build ability to cope with the unique challenges of a teaching career – long term. Maggie validated that it is all about the children and not to lose sight of this in today's political climate, despite overwhelming changes and expectations in education.

The conference ended with a fantastic array of random draw prizes donated by over 40 local businesses, which meant that every second person walked away with a prize! There was also the opportunity to network poolside with colleagues afterwards.

What delegates had to say

Thanks for allowing us to laugh at ourselves.

I have learnt so much true to heart.

Thank you for bringing stress to the forefront and giving techniques.

Wow! loved every minute of it, so inspirational, a real perspective on life and early childhood.

Just sensational; a wonderful conference.

Many thanks need to go to the combined efforts of the ECTA Cairns Regional Group conference organising committee. Their extensive planning and volunteer contributions are what made this conference such a great success.

Cairns Regional Group conference delegates

Integrating digital literacy in the early childhood classroom

Adele Amorsen

Adele is a literacy lecturer in the School of Early Childhood at Queensland University of Technology. She has a keen interest in the integrated use of digital tools in the classroom, to engage and support young learners. Adele has 15 years of early childhood classroom experience; three young children of her own; and a special interest in how young children are engaging with and using digital tools to support their literacy learning, both in the home environment and the early years of schooling.

What it means to be literate has changed dramatically in the last 20 years and continues to change rapidly. Our ever increasing engagement with a range of technologies sees us using our digital literacy skills for everyday work, study and leisure activities. This is clearly reflected in the daily lives of many of our students.

Australian curriculum documents reflect this change by recognising the importance of ICT and digital literacy in students' school life and broader community life. In the Australian Curriculum:

> *students develop ICT capability as they learn to use ICT effectively and appropriately to access, create and communicate information and ideas, solve problems and work collaboratively in all learning areas at school, and in their lives beyond school. The capability involves students in learning to make the most of the digital technologies available to them, adapting to new ways of doing things as technologies evolve and limiting the risks to themselves and others in a digital environment (ACARA, 2013).*

A quick scan of the Australian Curriculum content descriptors highlights the many and varied contexts in which teachers need to support young children's knowledge and skill development in digital literacy. This work begins in Prep. For the important years prior to Prep, the key skills and knowledge in this area are highlighted in the *Early Years Learning Framework* (2009).

Beyond Australia's national frameworks and policy, international communities also recognise the essential nature of digital literacy skills and knowledge. The National Council of Teachers of English outlines a number of key skills as part of their definition of 21st Century Literacies. They indicate that active, successful participants in this 21st century global society must be able to:

- develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology
- build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so as to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought
- design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes
- manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information

- create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts
- attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013).

The goals of school education in the coming ten years will need to address these skills, in addition to curricular goals around content learning (Kong et al. 2014). Educators are left in no doubt as to the place of digital literacy knowledge, skills and competencies in their classrooms, but how are these to be integrated successfully into busy classrooms?

In an already crowded curriculum, it can appear that incorporating these digital literacies into early childhood classrooms is yet another complex role for teachers to take on. While it is complex, it is also essential.

To be literate today requires an intricate combination of traditional and 'new' literacy skills that educators need to not only recognise, but also plan to integrate into their teaching and learning.

The Australian curriculum, via its content descriptors, provides us with broad guidance around the type of skills required, but allows us to interpret and manifest these in various ways. Indeed, a visit to several early childhood classrooms across Australia would demonstrate an enormous variance in the teaching and learning of digital literacy skills. Some teachers have embraced the challenge and can easily embed exciting opportunities in digital literacy into their English programs. Others are still staring quizzically at their interactive whiteboards.

It is important to note at this point, that there are a number of barriers to efficient use of digital literacy tools and processes in classrooms. These include:

– teacher education and professional development
– adequate hardware and software
– appropriate access to reliable internet connection
– the notion of the digital divide. (There are many children who do not have access to digital technologies in their home life and come to school with limited experience and exposure.)

But, as is often the case, schools and teachers are creatively problem-solving around some of these issues to meet their responsibility of helping to develop digitally literate students. Teacher education and professional development should require teachers to master a range of skills with digital resources, but also with the constructive and interactive learning processes required for 21st Century skills. This can and does require a shift in vision and attitude for some teachers (Kong & Song, 2013). Some teachers are circumventing hardware issues with the use of their own devices (laptops, digital cameras and iPads) often loaded with free downloadable software and programs.

Those with a deep commitment to social justice, consider the digital divide part of their responsibility and aim to ensure that all children are provided with the opportunity to access a range of digital tools and technologies in the classroom.

At present, many teachers are regularly using school computer labs for skill and drill games and activities. These certainly have some value and can assist children to become proficient and fluent with the tools of technology. Others are taking a more integrated approach where technology is used to broaden and enhance the learning. For example, publishing children's written work using software such as Powerpoint or Photo Story 3 allows children opportunities to create, critique and evaluate multimodal texts. Activities such as blogging and publishing work in suitable online spaces, broadens the learning further. In these instances children are afforded opportunities to build cross-cultural connections and design

and share information for wider communities. Any opportunity to extending learning and experience beyond the classroom, using a range of digital contexts, allows children to build relationships, share knowledge and problem-solve collaboratively.

Contemporary classrooms require a complex interplay of traditional and new literacy skills. Schools and teachers may wish to consider these critical questions as they plan for the integrated use of digital technologies in classrooms:

– How is the use of technology enhancing the learning?

– Which of the 21st Century digital literacy skills are being demonstrated and exercised here?

References

Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority 2013. *Information and Communication Technology Capability.* Retrieved March 12, 2014, from http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/information-and-communication-technology-capability/introduction/introduction

Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments. 2009. *Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.* Barton: ACT: Author.

Kong, S. C., & Song, Y. 2013. A principle-based pedagogical design framework for developing constructivist learning in a seamless learning environment: A teacher development model for learning and teaching in digital classrooms. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 44*(6), E209-212.

Kong, S. C., Chan, T.-W., Griffin, P., Hoppe, U., Huang, R., Kinshuk, Looi, C. K., Milrad, M., Norris, C., Nussbaum, M., Sharples, M., So, W. M. W., Soloway, E., & Yu, S. 2014. E-learning in School Education in the Coming 10 Years for Developing 21st Century Skills: Critical Research Issues and Policy Implications. *Educational Technology & Society*, 17 (1), 70–78.

National Council of Teachers of English 2013. *The NCTE definition of 21st Century Literacies*. Retrieved March 12, 2014, from http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/21stcentdefinition

Some tools for integrating digital literacy into an early childhood classroom.

- ***Scootle*** – Learn, teach and collaborate using digital resources to support the Australian Curriculum http://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/p/home
- ***iPads*** – Use iPads as part of small group literacy rotations http://www.ipads4teaching.net/ (Tips, tricks and resources for teaching and learning with iPads) http://trevorcairney.blogspot.com.au/search/label/iPad (for app reviews and use)
- ***Apps*** – load apps onto iPads for a range of uses from modelled reading through to independent construction of a range of texts e.g. Story kit (edit and customise familiar stories), Felt board (manipulate felt cut-outs for storytelling), Sock Puppets (create your own digital puppet show), Scribble Press (write, illustrate and create your own books), Chicktionary (word creation games), Puppet Pals (create and record digital puppet shows)
- ***Blogging*** – Use classroom blogs for a huge range of learning including literature response, posing questions for students to answer, reflecting on a classroom topic or excursion or experiment. See other classroom blogs and connect with other blogging classrooms at http://theedublogger.com/check-out-these-class-blogs/ **Note:** Queensland state schools are requested to blog in a secure environment via Learning Place>Edstudio.
- ***Photo Story 3 for windows*** – This free downloadable software can easily be used by young children to create a wide range of presentations using photographs, written or narrated text, music and special effects - a great way to create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts.

Exploring places and spaces: Australian Curriculum Geography in the Prep-Year 2 context

Caroline Hollis and Debra Ybarlucea

Caroline is a project officer at the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. She is currently working on the development of advice and guidelines for Civics and Citizenship. Caroline has 20 years of experience teaching across primary and secondary schools in Queensland and is particularly interested in helping teachers build assessment capabilities across learning areas in Prep-Year Six.

Debra Ybarlucea is a Prep teacher at Holland Park State School. Over the past year, Debra has implemented the Australian Curriculum: Geography in a Prep and Year Two setting. Her main focus has been to engage the students with the new curriculum in a rich and meaningful way. Debra taught in a range of classrooms from Prep to Year Three, including multi-age, in Brisbane and North Queensland schools over the last 13 years.

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum: Geography provides an important opportunity for children to develop their curiosity about their personal world and explore the geography of their lives and their own places. This article draws on *P-10 Geography: Australian Curriculum in Queensland (ACiQ)* which is a valuable planning resource developed by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority to assist schools to understand the curriculum and meet the learning needs of their children.

Understanding Australian Curriculum: geography in Prep – Year Two

The content of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* is organised into two strands: Geographical Knowledge and Understanding and Geographical Inquiry and Skills. The two strands should be taught in an integrated manner.

To develop children's geographical understanding, the curriculum embeds key concepts. In Prep to Year Two the focus is on the concepts of place, space, environment and interconnection. The following table shows the sequence of developing geographical concepts in Prep - Year Two.

In this article, the emphasis is on developing children's understanding of, and engagement in, the concepts of place and space through the development of the geographical skills for inquiry.

Developing geographical concepts: place and space

In the early years of schooling, children begin to explore places that they are familiar with and they belong to. They begin to become aware of, and interested in, more distant places. Some of the ways to develop children's understanding of place include investigating:

- where places are – locating familiar, unfamiliar and distant places on maps and globes
- what places are like – describe the features of familiar and unfamiliar places
- the meaning of places to people – explore why places are important and what places are used for
- taking care of places – looking after places that are important.

It is through the exploration of places that children start to develop the concept of space, beginning with the concept of location of

Table 1: Developing geographical concepts Prep – Year 2

	Prep	Year One	Year Two
Place Places are described by location, shape, boundaries, features and environmental and human characteristics.	People live in places	Places have distinct features	People are connected to places
Space Spaces are defined by the location of features of places that form distributions and patterns.	The arrangement of spaces in familiar places	The location of features and the arrangement of spaces for different purposes	Distance and location of the features of places
Environment Environments are recognised by how places vary in terms of natural features.		Weather and seasonal patterns	Natural features of places and how these are perceived by different people
Interconnection Children learn how they are connected to places throughout the world.			The factors that influence connections to other places in Australia, countries in the Asia region, and across the world.

observed features. This knowledge of location and spatial arrangement is required for children to use maps as a representation of places.

> *In studying places children build up their mental maps of their locality and other places that they encounter through developing their locational knowledge* (Catling, S 2013).

Children develop a deeper understanding of places and the spatial arrangements within them when they:

- use spatial applications such as Google Earth, to observe the location of features of places and explore their spatial patterns and arrangements using a 'bird's eye view'
- build models of places using everyday construction materials. Children can 'rearrange' features on their models which is a building block to using maps.

Developing geographical skills for guided inquiry in Prep to Year Two

Geographical skills are described in the curriculum under five sub-strands that represent the stages of a geographical inquiry. As children develop geographical skills they are guided through a process of inquiry to develop critical thinking skills.

1. **Questioning** - Children in the early years pose geographical questions to assist them make observations and collect data and information about familiar places. When taking children into the school grounds or local area, geographical questions may include:
   - What can you see?
   - What can you hear?
   - What do people do in this place?
   - How can we look after this place?
   - What is different between two of these places?
   - What is similar between two of these places?
2. **Collecting data** - Children's curiosity about the real world is developed through the exploration of places. It is, therefore, vital that children engage in learning outside the classroom and undertake fieldwork as a key element in their learning.

> *Fieldwork is any study undertaken outside the classroom, and could be within the school grounds, around the neighbouring streets, or in more distant locations* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2014).

Possible data collection techniques for fieldwork in the early years include: observing, discussing, comparing and drawing features and their locations and interviewing people. Children describe the features of places by using their senses of sight, smell and touch.

It is not always possible to take children outside, but it is possible to bring the outside world into the classroom, through the use of photographs, film, maps and spatial technology. Children can be engaged through taking digital photos; discussing observations of what they see and hear; and draw features on picture maps.

3. **Representing data** - It is through observing, recording and describing the features of places that children locate the position of places on pictorial maps. Stories that relate to place characteristics, include fairy tales such as *Three little pigs, Little red riding hood* and *Three billy goats gruff* can be used as the basis of drawing maps to visualise the story. Oral stories told by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander People can also be useful.

Representing places on maps can help children to develop:

- understanding of the features of the local area
- observational and representational skills
- translating mental ideas into concrete objects and onto paper
- verbal communication skills in describing their local places
- understanding of a birds-eye view of places.

4. **Interpreting and communicating** - Children develop the geographical skills of interpreting and communicating in geography through the exploration of texts. Children need to engage with a range of geographical texts including annotated maps, photographs, tables and graphs. It is essential that children are given opportunities to develop their text knowledge (for interpreting) and word knowledge (for communicating).

Children develop text knowledge in geography by:

- understanding the conventions of using and creating maps that include pictures or symbols to represent features and places, directions and a title
- using maps to locate places. Use Google Maps, for example, to locate home, school, shopping centres on maps and draw the route taken to travel between these places
- taking and using photographs to record observations, pose questions and draw geographical conclusions
- reading and creating graphs and tables to represent data. This links with Year Two Australian Curriculum: Mathematics that requires students to collect data to create lists, tables and picture graphs.

Children develop word knowledge in geography by:

- using simple geographical, locational and directional terms including far, near, above, close by. In the early years, this can be done during story time, mathematics lessons and outside obstacle courses
- using question starters such as 'Who', 'What', 'Why', 'When' and 'How' to pose questions about places
- using the five senses and descriptive language such as big and small to pose questions, make observations and describe features of places
- collaborating to create a word wall of geographical words that can be added to as the children encounter them.

5. **Reflecting and responding** - Geography develops active and informed citizenship when children reflect on ways they can take care of important places in the school or local area and suggest possible actions that could be taken to improve a place. For example, after walking around the school, a discussion of the need to care for places can be conducted. Questions may include:
    - Which places in the school grounds do you like the best?
    - Which places in the school do you use most?

- Which places in the school always look neat and tidy?
- Which place in the school needs the most care?
- How are these places looked after?
- Which places in the school could be improved?
- What could each of us do to look after these places in the schools?

Conclusion

The introduction of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography in the early years* provides a structured way of exploring places at a personal and local level through the concepts of place and space. Using an inquiry approach Geography develops skills of observing, collecting data, representing data, interpreting, communicating and reflecting and responding. Children build their word knowledge to describe features, direction and location of places. The development of geographical concepts and skills helps children make meaning of their world and develop an interest in more distant places, aided by spatial technologies.

Resources:

The ACiQ provides curriculum advice and guidelines that includes: sequencing teaching and learning, assessment categories, techniques and conditions and making judgments on children's work using the achievement standard. These resources are available at <http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/13653.html>

References

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), viewed May 2014 from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/humanitiesandsocialsciences/geography/implications-for-teaching-assessment-and-reporting>

Catling S 2013, *Teaching primary geography for Australian schools*, Moorabbin, Hawker Brownlow,

The State of Queensland (Queensland Studies Authority), P-10 Geography Australian Curriculum and resources, viewed May 2014 <http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/26025.html>.

Linking fine and gross motor skills to the curriculum

Natasha Rogers and Julie Wright

Natasha is an occupational therapist based at Woody Point Special School. She has a keen interest in early childhood and provides regular support and programs for children with disabilities or suspected disabilities and their teachers in Early Childhood Developmental Programs (ECDP) and Prep classrooms.

Julie Wright is an Advisory Visiting Teacher, Early Childhood Education and Speech Language Impairment in the Gympie area. Julie commenced working with the Department of Education in 1982. She has worked as a pre-school teacher, Early Special Education Advisory Teacher, Inclusion Teacher and Prep teacher. Julie supports children, teachers and families in ECDP, Prep and those transitioning from Kindergarten with disabilities or suspected disabilities.

Despite the many benefits of being active, research has shown that many young children are failing to meet the recommendations for physical activity. Sedentary behaviours and the use of small screen recreation have increased in recent years and contribute to delays in fine and gross motor skills for children. These delays are becoming more evident within most classrooms.

While collaboration with an occupational therapist is not always possible the following information will give support to teachers in understanding, informal assessment and intervention for students with fine and gross motor difficulties.

The intent is to provide ideas with links to literacy and numeracy that can be included in an early years program. Suggestions are practical and can be incorporated within the five contexts of learning - focused teaching and learning; play; real-life situations; investigations and routines; and transitions

Foundation skills to learning

Foundation skills for academic learning are made up of fine and gross motor skills as well as cognitive, sensory, social and language components.

If there are gaps in foundation skills the child will find formal learning more difficult and be more likely to have delays in academic areas in comparison to peers who have a 'solid base' for learning.

Gross motor foundation skills

- Shoulder stability: allows arm to be held in different positions while forearm and hand perform tasks.
- Trunk control/posture: ability to move the body in response to stimuli and to interact with the environment.
- Motor planning: organising and executing accurate movement patterns required for functional tasks
- Body awareness: awareness of where your body is in space and how each part moves and relates to each other.
- Spatial awareness: understanding the location of objects in relation to oneself.

- Coordination: controlled use of muscle groups to produce an accurate and desired movement.

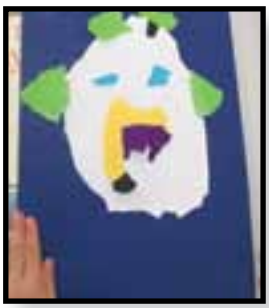
Fine motor foundation skills

- Thumb opposition: turn and rotate the thumb so that it can touch each fingertip of the same hand.
- Finger isolation: the ability to move each finger one at a time.

- Pincer grasp: enables a child to pick up small items using the tip of their thumb and index finger.
- Bilateral co-ordination: using both sides of the body at the same time in a controlled and organised manner.
- Midline crossing: to reach across the middle of the body with the arms and legs crossing over to the opposite side.
- Hand-eye co-ordination: the ability to control hand movement guided by vision.
- Hand and finger strength: refers to strength of the small (intrinsic) muscles of the hand.
- In-hand manipulation: the ability to move/reposition objects within the hand without assistance of the other hand.

Identifying skill gaps in the classroom

From this paper tearing task it is evident that there are differences in the precision of work by these students. This task would require the use of:



- bilateral coordination
- crossing the midline
- thumb opposition and pincer grasp
- finger isolation
- motor planning
- shoulder stability
- body awareness
- trunk control
- coordination.

Below are writing samples from the same students, again there are obvious differences in the work produced.

These samples demonstrate how gaps in foundation skills can carry over into curriculum-based tasks. This writing activity includes the above mentioned skills as well as the additional demands of:

- pencil grasp
- spatial awareness
- sitting tolerance
- literacy demands (e.g. labelling, expressive language, concepts of print, handwriting, phonics).

Some students require additional opportunities to develop these foundation skills to access the curriculum.

Linking to the curriculum

We identify three classroom

opportunities to incorporate fine and gross motor skills within the curriculum: obstacle courses, daily rotation activities, and transition times. Literacy and numeracy elements can be interwoven within these opportunities. Below are some examples of how obstacle courses, rotation activities, and transitions can have a curriculum focus and also support fine and gross motor development.

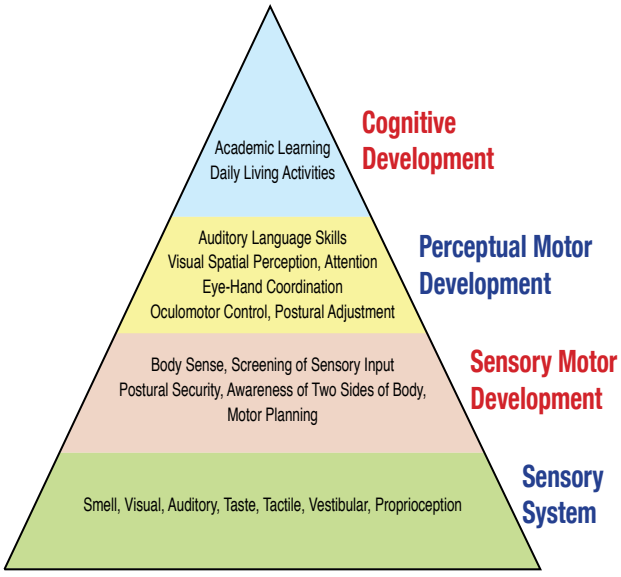
Obstacle courses

Rotation activities

Transition activities

Learning is most effective when multiple sensory systems are involved. People generally remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see and 50% of what they see and hear (Treichler D G 1967).

By incorporating fine and gross motor skills into the curriculum we are not only supporting students to develop a strong foundation for learning but are also targeting a range of learners to help 'learning stick'.



References

Treichler, D. G. 1967. Are you missing the boat in training aids? Film and Audio-Visual Communication, 1, 14-16, 28-30, 48.

Art music the littlies love! Using recorded music appropriately and creatively

Kath Lloyd

Kath is an early childhood music specialist, with a particular interest in interpersonal development. Kath believes that singing is a child's first language, the voice being their first instrument. When nurtured in the early years, music, as an innate form of communication and expression, can help build the whole child in all areas of their development: socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, cognitively as well as musically. It enriches teaching programs and enriches lives, in the classroom and beyond.

I'm a big fan of music, my tastes and associations widely eclectic. From indie folk and hip hop on my car radio, to funk-driven washing-up sessions, singing along to musicals whilst vacuuming, and the Indian ragas which soothe me through tax-return time, background music is my mood enhancer of choice. It can generate the appropriate level of energy to help me focus on the task at hand, whilst actually making the process enjoyable! In the context of the child care centre environment this is equally relevant - bright and energetic age-appropriate popular music during play time, and soothing lullabies and relaxation music at rest time. As a wonderfully varied medium, music can be such a helpful tool!

Whilst popular music does hold a valid and valued place in our lives, when it comes to initiating enriching educational experiences for the children in our care, one really can't go past 'Art Music' for quality input.

This is music that is generally classically composed, performed at a high standard by professional musicians, has stood the test of time, and *provides clear opportunities for focusing on the foundational elements of musicianship*.

Drawing from a wide variety of Art Music recordings, it is infinitely possible to actively engage young children in activities which will have them:

- exploring contrasts of Dynamics (soft vs loud), Tempo (slow vs fast) & Pitch (high vs low)
- experiencing the difference between Beat and Rhythm
- demonstrating the shape/melodic contour of the music
- differentiating an individual melodic thread within a tapestry/wall of sound
- recognising the melody of well-known songs
- following directions to gain an understanding of form and patterning
- expressing mood, emotion, drama, imagination and story-telling
- cultivating listening skills, self-discipline and self-regulation
- learning how to Stop! Knowing when to Start!

Choosing Repertoire

When deciding which version of a piece to use, look for examples that aren't too heavily orchestrated.

Children are often overwhelmed when faced by a dense barrage of competing instrumental polyrhythms.

Sparse arrangements are more easily cognitively-digested by young children, for example, discerning and responding to individual melodic threads. It is also important to be aware of the emotional impact a piece may have, and pre-empt where possible potential negative reactions by pre-planting a positive storyline in the children's imaginations. For many, this will be their first conscious experience of exposure to an abstract piece of music, and sometimes the imagery provoked can be confusing and even frightening. For example, the slow and low piano part in *The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods* may feel dark and trepidatious, sparking a fearful response. These feelings can be easily turned around by suggesting that perhaps it is a lovely cool, shady and restful forest that we are walking through, carefully and quietly so as not to disturb the cuckoos in their nests.

The example mentioned above is one of the many wonderful pieces included in Camille Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals.* I highly recommend this musical suite of fourteen movements as a wonderful resource to acquire and share with your children. Each movement is short, represents different animals, easily captures the imagination and will be readily responded to.

You are only limited by your own imagination as to how you might initiate and direct accompanying activities that are not only fun but provide an enriching musical experience.

To follow is one of my all-time favourites, and my *suggestions* of how this particular movement might be used and adapted to suit varying ages and abilities.

As initially stated, I personally believe that all sorts of music can prove to be of benefit in all sorts of situations, to both children and adults alike. However, as educators of the very young, it is so important that we specifically provide opportunities for the children in our care to experience and appreciate music that is of the highest possible quality. These should not be just as a background accompaniment to life, but as focused activities that encourage active engagement, conscious thought and authentic expression.

Aquarium: *Carnival of the Animals,* by Camille Saint-Saens Experience: mood, imagination and contrasting melodic polyrhythms.	
Babies	Lie on their backs on a comfortable mat. Carers hold either end of a large piece of light-blue translucent/chiffon fabric, soft to the touch. Parachute the fabric over the babies matching the style and tempo of the music. Let the fabric occasionally gently 'sweep' the babies' skin to create a cross-sensory association of touch and sound.
9 - 18 months	Sit under the parachuting fabric, playing with soft toy sea-animals.
18 months - 3 years	Free dance with ribbons as darting fish (small, fast movements with hands) or swaying seaweed (large, full-bodied, slow movements).
3 - 4 years:	Express the 'shape' of the music by extending the imagery e.g. bubbles going up, trickles coming down. Let the children initiate what sea animal they might be.
4 - 5 years	Lie down on their backs with eyes closed, the children volunteer what they 'see' whilst listening to the music. Create a story, mime the imaginings. Discuss the contrasting polyrhythmic melodies played by the piano (fast) and strings (slow).

Self-regulation: the what, the why and the how

Desley Jones

Desley has over 25 years' experience in early childhood education and is director of Ballymore Kindergarten in Brisbane. Desley is a recipient of a NEiTA ASG Inspirational Teaching Award. She was nominated for the award by kindergarten parents in recognition of her emphasis on children's social and emotional wellbeing in her educational program. In addition to teaching full-time Desley presents workshops and writes journal articles for educators.

Self-regulation: what is it?

> *Children experience ups and downs when they are trying to manage their feelings and behaviours ... helping them to find ways to balance this is called self-regulation (KidsMatter).*

Berk (2001) describes self-regulation as the capacity to use thought to guide behaviour. She asserts that the self-regulated child follows rules, makes deliberate decisions, well-reasoned choices and decisions and takes responsibility for his or her own learning and behaviour. Early childhood is a crucial period for its development. It is a time when children learn to overcome impulses by thinking before they act.

Self-regulation is one of many terms used to refer to emotional regulation. Others include: emotional control, affect regulation, effortful control and emotion management. According to Nagel (2012, 153-54):

> *emotional regulation ... is the process where children increasingly gain greater control of the behaviours that allow them to achieve functional goals.*

Nagel also identifies that the neural mechanisms underlying emotional regulation may be the same as many that underlie cognitive processes, including higher-order thinking processes such as sustained attention and working memory.

The importance of these higher-order thinking skills and their relation to self-regulation is investigated together with their impact on social emotional development and learning in a Working Paper produced by the Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011). Executive functioning skills include:

- working memory (the capacity to hold and manipulate information over short periods of time)
- inhibitory control (the skill of mastering and filtering thoughts and impulses to resist

temptations, distractions and habits and to pause and think before acting)

- cognitive or mental flexibility (the capacity to nimbly switch gears and adjust to changed demands, priorities, or perspectives, and to apply different rules in different settings).

These skills are essential to 'the deliberate, intentional, goal-directed behaviour that is required for daily life and success at work.' (Harvard University, 2011, 1)

Importance of self-regulation

Acquiring these early building blocks of executive functioning is one of the most important but challenging tasks of early childhood. These skills assist children to learn to read and write, to remember the steps in mathematical problems, to take part in class discussions or group projects, to enter into and sustain play with others, to plan and act in ways that make them good students, classroom citizens and friends, and to establish a foundation to study, sustain friendships, hold a job and manage in a crisis. These underlying skills are 'distinct from, but foundational to, school readiness and academic success.' (Harvard, 2011, 4)

Fostering self-regulation

Self-regulation develops as a result of development and learning. It is linked to a range of cognitive abilities including language capacity and it takes time to develop. In terms of brain development, Nagel (2012) highlights the interconnectedness between the cerebrum (the portion of the brain that plays a role in complex adaptive processes such as learning, perception and motivation) and the limbic system which is widely assumed to play a role in emotion. Nagel (2012, 154) suggests:

> *This is one of the reasons why children may have temper tantrums in the first couple of years of their lives; increasing independence collides with emotional and verbal immaturity.*

According to both Nagel and the Harvard University Working paper, the most essential elements of environments that foster self-regulation are **positive relationships** and the

scaffolding of children's development of their regulatory abilities.

> *Enhancing the development of executive functioning skills (and subsequent self-regulatory abilities) involves sensitive, responsive caregiving and individualized teaching in the context of situations that require making choices, opportunities for children to direct their own activities with decreasing adult supervision over time, effective support of early emotion regulation, promotion of sustained joint attention and the availability of adults who are not under such pressure that they cannot make time for children to practice their skills (Harvard, 2011).*

Nagel recommends particular attention be given to:

- security, structure and routine
- adult-child relationships that demonstrate the principles of scaffolding – guiding children from complete dependence on adult support to a gradual assumption of the 'executive' role for themselves
- the establishment of a framework for scaffolding which includes routines, cues for behaviour, breaking big tasks into smaller chunks, thus helping children to use executive function skills to the best of their abilities

- the use of reasoning and explanations as a strategy for compliance rather than continuously reverting to power and control, which according to Nagel may derail emotional regulation (2012, 156-7).

When children feel respected, valued and acknowledged; when they experience a secure, supportive environment which encourages them to generate ideas, engage in personally meaningful experiences and see themselves as highly effective problem-solvers; and when the communication in the centre is one of caring, talking and listening, then a substantial foundation is laid for the enhancement of young children's self-regulatory abilities.

In considering more specific strategies to enhance self-regulation, preference needs to be given to those approaches which incorporate an understanding of children's cognitive (i.e. executive functioning skills) and language development and its role in emotional regulation.

Such strategies include, but are not limited to:

- describing emotions and physiological responses
- calming experiences
- encouraging private speech or self-talk
- discussing expectations, reasons, consequences
- pre-empting positive behaviour
- providing descriptive feedback as an alternative to praise
- problem-solving and conflict resolution
- reframing situations
- making reparation.

Make-believe play

Special mention should also be made of the role of make-believe play in children's development. In social pretending, preschoolers engage in lengthier interactions, are more involved, draw more children into their activity, and are more cooperative. In view of these findings, it is not surprising that four and five year olds who spend more time at socio-dramatic play are advanced in intellectual development and are judged more socially competent by their teachers. Furthermore, pretend play fosters a diverse array of specific cognitive and social skills, which contribute to these broad-based outcomes. (Berk, 2001, p119)

Make-believe play provides opportunities for encouraging:

- a strong sense of agency for young children
- social activity
- mental flexibility including switching gears and seeing different perspectives
- inhibitory control through natural consequences (if you want to be part of the game, you may have to comply with the group rules of the game)
- problem-solving and a focus on goals
- using working memory in the recall of details for the game
- language use in planning and playing
- sustained attention over hours, days and even weeks
- scaffolding as children operate above their usual level in purposeful activities
- sensory input through building spaces, music, roles, props.

The development of self-regulation is a complex interplay of several areas of development. In supporting self-regulation, those working with young children require a holistic view of children's development together with a strong understanding of the role of relationships and the importance of high-quality environments in children's development and learning.

References:

Berk, L. E. 2001, *Awakening Children's Minds*. Oxford: University Press

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University 2011 B*uilding the Brain's "Air Traffic Control" System: How Early Experiences Shape the Development of Executive Function: Working Paper No. 11*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

KidsMatter. How self-regulation difficulties affect children. Retrieved from: http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/sites/default/files/public/KMEC_C4-201205- 03_selfregulation-difficulties.pdf

Nagel, M. C. 2012 *In the Beginning: The brain, early development and learning*. Camberwell, Aust: ACER Press.

Demystifying sensory processing

Danielle Bull

Danielle is an occupational therapist with a particular interest in early childhood. Danielle passionately believes that the early years of schooling are the most important in a child's life. Positive early school experiences can only be achieved through good preparation, smooth transitions to school and supportive learning environments. For more information go to: www.paediatricot.net

What is sensory processing?

'Sensory processing', 'sensory integration' or 'SI' are all terms often bandied around by health professionals. So what does it mean? Basically, our central nervous system is constantly being bombarded by sensory information through our seven senses (auditory, visual, vestibular, tactile, proprioception, smell and taste) both internally and externally.

Sensory processing is the ability to organise and interpret the information which we receive through our senses so that we can cope with the daily demands of our environment.

When children can do this efficiently and effectively, it enables them to be able to interact appropriately with people and the environment, and display appropriate motor and behavioural responses. Rather than spending their time trying to interpret and process masses of incoming information, they can focus on the task presented to them.

How does it go wrong?

Issues can develop with sensory processing when a child cannot inhibit sensory input. They are unable to block out irrelevant information or they are unable to register enough sensory information from everyday events.

One of the occupational therapy pioneers in this field A. Jean Ayres referred to it as a 'traffic jam in the brain' which stops children from being able to interrupt and filter sensory information appropriately.

Recent studies by Ahn, Miller, Milberger and Mcintosh, 2004 on kindergarten children suggested that one in twenty children were effected on a daily basis by a sensory processing disorder.

Another study by Ben-Sasson, Carter, Briggs-Gowen (2009) found that one in six children between the ages of 7-11 years were displaying sensory processing indicators of dysfunction that were impacting on everyday life.

How does it present in children?

Signs and symptoms can vary in children and depending on which sensory systems are affected will depend on signs and symptoms displayed in the classroom environments. Children with sensory processing difficulties may fall into two broad classifications over-sensitive and/or under-sensitive.

Over-sensitivity

When a child cannot ignore irrelevant sensory input, or if they are processing too much sensory information, they typically display the following behaviours:

- highly distractible
- short attention spans
- easily annoyed
- irritated
- overwhelmed

- emotional
- perceive nontoxic stimuli as toxic or threatening
- avoid certain stimulus or situations.

Under-sensitive

The under-sensitive child registers sensations less intensely than another child. An increased amount of stimulation is needed to achieve typical levels of alertness and concentration.

A child that is under-sensitive may display some of the following behaviours:

- miss cues that other children catch easily
- may respond slowly to unspoken directions
- misinterpret nonverbal cues
- appear as if the 'lights are on but no one is home'
- need a 'bomb' to get them moving or focus their attention
- low registration to sensory stimuli
- sensory seeking type behaviours.

It is important to understand that for some children they can be both over-responsive and under-responsive in one sensory system, may be over-responsive to one kind of sensation and under-responsive to another, or may respond differently to the same stimulus depending on the time and environment, changing back and forth. Confusing I know!

Sensory processing difficulties can occur in just one of the senses or across the senses.

What do I do if I suspect a child has a sensory processing disorder?

A child will have great learning difficulties if they cannot self-regulate their sensory needs. Often children know what sensory input they need but they do not always choose the most appropriate strategy.

When a child's functional ability is compromised i.e. it stops them from being able to do the things they need to do, as educators it is our responsibility to help that child gain help and assistance with self-regulation strategies.

If you suspect a child in your care or classroom is presenting with sensory dysfunction, the best thing that you can do is refer them onto a paediatric occupational therapist. As part of the assessment process, the paediatric cccupational therapist may recommend observing the child in their classroom environment as well as asking you to complete a sensory profile.

It's important to note that your observations are invaluable to the therapist and, the more information you can provide to the therapist, the greater understanding and the better picture they will be able to paint with regards to the child.

Sensory profiles are generally completed by both parent and teachers/carers as children can present differently in various environments. It is not uncommon for some children to be able to hold it together in one environment i.e. school and not in another i.e. home. Or sometimes some children are unable to hold it together in either environment.

Once the classroom observations are completed and profiles are scored, then ideally it's best to come together as a team to discuss the appropriate plan of action for the child.

Sometimes an occupational therapist may suggest a sensory diet is needed for the child to help them cope with the demands of their day. A sensory diet is a planned activity schedule that provides appropriate sensory strategies for the child throughout the day. A sensory diet is personal to the needs of the child and will help them to stay focused and organised.

The best approach to dealing with a child with sensory processing disorder is a team and collaborative approach where regular lines of communication can occur between teacher/carer, family and therapist.

References:

Ahn, R. R., Miller, L. J., Milberger, S., & McIntosh, D. N. 2004. 'Prevalence of parents' perceptions of sensory processing disorders among kindergarten children'. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 58*, 287–293.

Carter, A. S., Ben-Sasson, A. & Briggs-Gowan, M.J. 2009. 'Sensory Over-Responsivity in Elementary School: Prevalence and Social-Emotional Correlates'. Journal of *Abnormal Child Psychology* 37: 705–716.

Yoga for kids: healthy bodies, healthy minds

Tracey Lenarduzzi

Tracey is an experienced teacher and certified yoga teacher who offers academic tuition and yoga to children and adults, with a focus on special needs. Tracey is passionate about working with all children, particularly in helping them to develop strategies to assist with anxiety and emotional self-regulation. She is also very interested in the impact of yoga on the brain and the opportunities it offers in supporting young children's learning and ability to focus.

Today's society seems to grow faster, and crazier, by the minute. Exposure to an ongoing barrage of images, sounds and movement can leave the body and mind feeling over-stimulated and exhausted. And that's on a good day!

Today's kids are no exception to this sensory overload, especially when the pressures of families and schooling are added into the mix. There is no doubt that stress and anxiety are on the rise, particularly so for our young ones. Additionally, many children are now living a lifestyle that is highly sedentary in nature, contributing to health issues, poor self-concept and anti-social behaviours. Yoga provides an opportunity to bring kids back into their bodies and minds.

How can yoga help?

Yoga has a major impact upon children: physically, mentally and emotionally. It has been shown to improve many aspects of health and wellbeing, including:

- oxygen flow (assisting concentration and learning)
- strength and flexibility
- fine and gross motor skills
- muscle tone and length
- balance and co-ordination
- social confidence and awareness
- emotional regulation
- self-belief and assertiveness
- sleep patterns
- general confidence and positive state of mind.

Yoga postures are performed with the synchronisation of breath. Developing an awareness of breath is vital in helping children to self-calm and stay healthy in both body and mind. In a society where respiratory conditions, attention disorders, emotional trauma and general stress levels are increasing daily, the use of breath is more critical than ever before. Breath inhalation provides energy and stimulation, increasing heart rate and circulation. Breath exhalation invites calm into the nervous system, allowing the heart rate to steady as the body relaxes.

Teaching breath awareness to children

Very young children should practice breath awareness by inhaling and exhaling through the mouth. However, once children reach around six to eight years of age, focus can change to inhaling and exhaling through the nose. Awareness is best taught through games and fun activities.

Blowing feathers:

- Place a feather in the children's cupped hands and ask them to use their breath to make it 'dance'. Breath needs to be slow and gentle so that the feather doesn't fly out.
- Ask the children to blow a feather up into the sky and use their breath to keep it floating high.
- Have races, blowing feathers along the floor or tables.
- Ask children to lie on their back, hold a feather over their mouth and blow it up into the sky – how long can they keep it there?

More ideas

- Blow bubbles – guide children to decide what type of breath works best – fast or slow?
- Balloon breathing – first demonstrate the breath using a real balloon, then tell the children to pretend their belly is a big balloon. Can they make it blow up big and strong? Tell them to breathe out and watch it disappear.
- Have the children lie down on their backs and place a soft toy on their bellies – tell them to watch it go up and down as they breathe.

- Blow a pinwheel – make it go fast and slow.
- Play humming games – tell the children to take a big breath in and then 'hum' it all the way out. Place their hands on their ears so they can feel the vibration as their lips tickle.
- Practice the lion breath – have the children kneel down with their hands on their knees. Tell them to take a big breath in, stick their tongue out, open their eyes wide and roar. This is a great breathing practice to help with frustration and anger.

Always remember to chat with the children during the activities. Language is so important in helping to develop the children's understanding of breath and its connection to the body and mind. As young children may find it difficult to communicate their understanding, it is helpful if you share your personal perspective with them. Talk about how your breath makes you feel big and strong or calm and relaxed. Explain how your breath keeps you healthy as it moves all around your body.

Additional benefits of yoga for children

The physical benefits of yoga are obvious and can be seen in improved strength, tone, flexibility and balance. However, there are many more reasons why yoga is so beneficial to children, some of which may not be so obvious.

When children share yoga they learn:

- to feel inside their bodies, what parts tighten and what parts release
- to use their bodies to self-calm and regulate their emotions, and how to use their breath to complement this process

- to stay healthy as their muscles lengthen and tone, their bones grow strong and they develop their sense of balance and co-ordination
- important social skills, how to interact with others in a way that is positive and affirming
- to listen, both to instructions and to each other, before taking action
- to motor-plan and problem-solve as they think about how they are going to move their bodies into the next physical posture
- to take risks and have a go, knowing that it is safe to do so
- to believe in themselves and to know that they are worthwhile.

Finally, they learn that they are just one piece in a massive puzzle of human connection, and that, when they unite together with another human being, they feel a sense of solidarity, ultimately leading to an understanding of compassion.

Helpful Links:

Popular yoga poses for children:

http://www.namastekid.com/learn/kids-yoga-poses/

Free classroom resources:

http://www.kidsyogastories.com/kids-yoga-poses/

Yoga education resources:

http://www.overthemoonstudio.com/index.html

Kids' Meditation – Brahma Kumaris (very visual)

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCBC8B3DF340508E0

Title: YIKES, Stinkysaurus!

Authors: Pamela Butchart and Sam Lloyd
Published by: Bloomsbury Publishing
ISBN: 9781408837078
RRP: $14.99
Reviewed by: Amber Smith

What a gorgeous book! It is the tale of a very smelly dinosaur and his dinosaur friends who set out on a mission to get him into a bath for a wash.

Its descriptive words allow the children to really connect with how stinky he must be.

This story was read to Year One, Two and Three students with special needs (ASD/ID).

They loved the bright colours, the limited but informative text which kept the story moving and the happy ending.

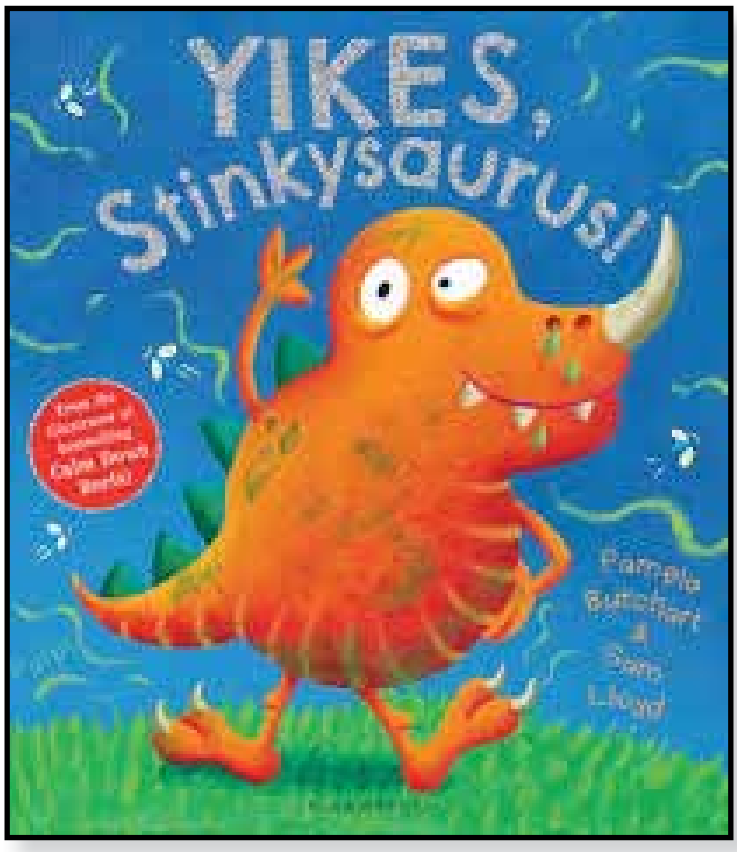
It is a rhyming story which correlated with the Prep and Year Two learning focus.

The students said their favourite part of the story was when all the dinosaurs hid, then pushed Stinky into the bath! They also laughed when T-Rex was laid flat on his back after Stinky's smell had knocked him over!

The students were attentive and keen to know what was on the next page. They answered basic questions readily, and predicted the rhyming word on the second reading.

They understood the content and could identify with having runny noses, daily bathtime, and the importance of teeth cleaning. The story led to an impromptu personal hygiene discussion.

Overall, an engaging and fun read for the early years.



Title: Elephants Have Wings

Author: Susanne Gervay
Illustrator: Anna Pignataro
Published by: Ford Street Publishing
ISBN: 9781925000399/405
RRP: $16.95 paperback
$29.95 hardcover
Reviewed by: Eris Roberts, age 6 years
St Margaret's Prep

At home I have a lot of elephant books and toys and everyone at school knows how much I love them! Elephants are kind animals and only eat vegetables, unlike sharks. I was excited when I saw the book cover as elephants fly in my dreams too.

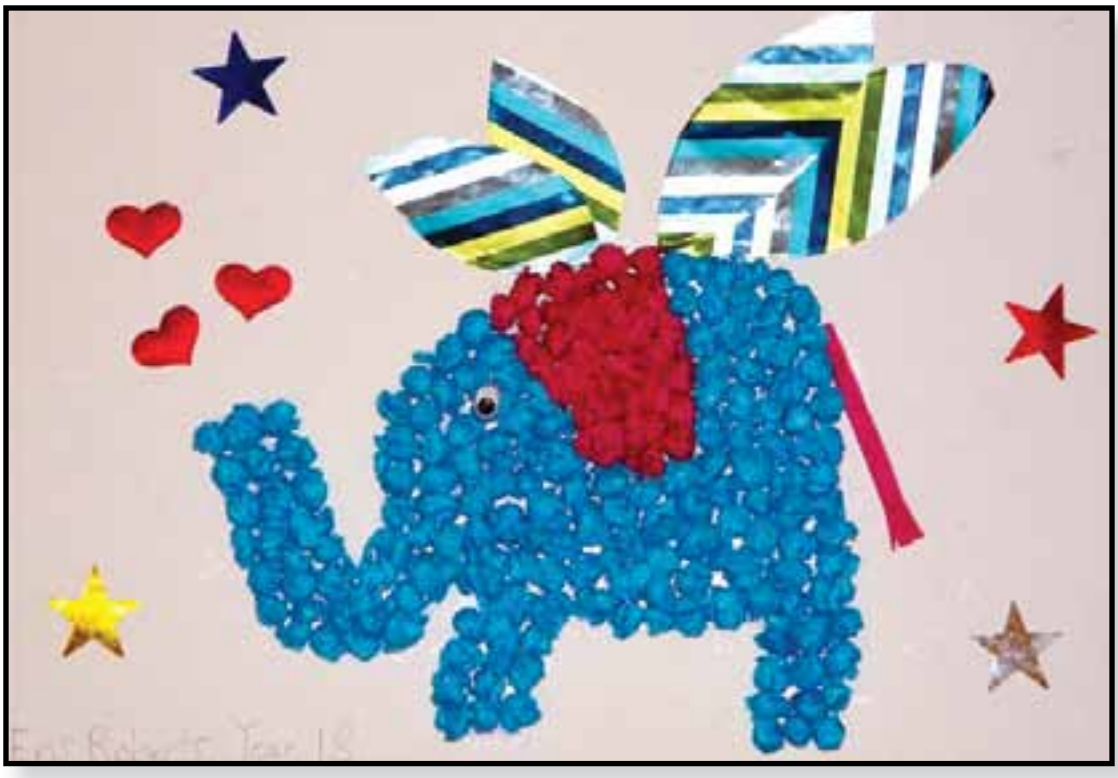
The pictures are fun as they are made of paper shapes and not just drawings or paintings like other books.

I didn't like the part when the kids were arguing and the round picture with the monkey faces was scary – I thought the children might turn into monkeys.

My favourite part of the book is at the end when the elephant flies up into space to see the moon and the stars. She shows the brother and sister that the world is a beautiful place and not all the same – just like people.

You don't have to like elephants to enjoy this book. It is a good story and teaches us not to fight, to listen to others and that we are all different.

It is not a long book so you can read it at bedtime.



Title: Moo Hoo

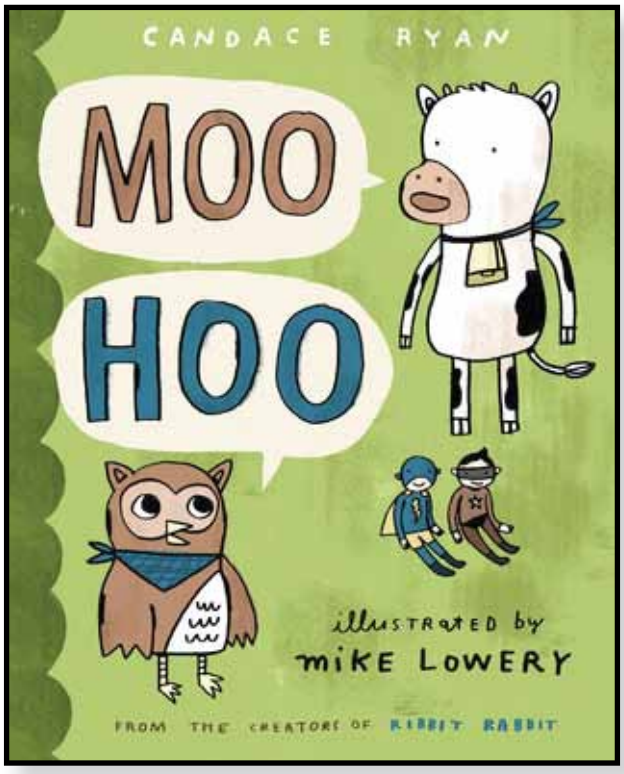
Author: Candace Ryan
Illustrator: Mike Lowery
Published by: Bloomsbury Publishing
ISBN: 978-1-4088-2522-8
RRP: $13.99
Reviewed by: Sue Webster

I was lucky enough to be the reviewer of Ryan and Lowery's first book, Ribbit Rabbit (2011), so was first to put up my hand to see their next offering.

I was not disappointed. Moo Hoo is another carefully crafted book with a simple rhyming text that engages the young reader/listener. This is a lovely book to read to three- to six-year-olds as the tale follows Cow and Owl as they find a new friend.

Cow and Owl love superheroes and are lucky enough (though they do not realise it at first) to find another friend who loves superheroes as much as they do! There is even a cameo appearance by Frog and Rabbit from Ribbit Rabbit when Cow and Owl are searching for Roo. The illustrations are a delightful combination of screen-printing and digital techniques that create cartoon-like illustrations. The colours appear in broad areas and are of muted tones that highlight the bold text.

Moo Hoo cleverly explores the acceptance of new friends and new experiences. A great book to read aloud to old and new friends.



Title: The Snow Womble

Author: Elisabeth Beresford
Illustrator: Nick Price
Characters: Orinoco, Bungo, Tomsk and Uncle Bulgaria
Setting: Wimbledon Common
Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC
ISBN: 9781408834244
Reviewed by: Year Two St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School

We listened to the Snow Womble and we all liked it except Ruby. This is a list of why we liked it:

Milly — *I liked it when the Wombles built a snowman, Uncle Bulgaria.*

Mackenzie — *I liked it when Uncle Bulgaria pretended to be a snowman.*

Caitlin — *I liked it when Tomsk crashed into the snowman.*

Jaime — *I liked it when Bungo and Orinoco collapsed when the snowman talked.*

Mariana and Scarlett — *I liked it when Orinoco tasted the snow.*

Sophie and Kalista — *I liked it when Orinoco slept and dreamt of ice cream.*

Cate — *I liked the illustrations.*

Ruby — *I didn't like Tomsk because I thought he was silly.*

Guidelines for writers

The EYC editorial panel welcomes articles and ideas for possible inclusion in the journal.

One of the journal's strengths is in the variety and individuality of contributions. These style guidelines should help you to prepare your contribution in the EYC 'style'.

Style

We like to maintain a uniformity of approach within the journal. Here are some examples of the preferred 'house' style.

- Use Australian spelling in preference to American.
- Write numbers up to twelve as words; figures are used for numbers 13 upwards. (For example: one, eleven, 18, 200.) Exceptions are where numbers appear in a table, list or refer to a measure. (For example: Anne was seven years old when she walked 5 kilometres to school.)
- Use the following examples to help you write dates and times:
  15 February 2006, 1900s.
  She left at 7.25 am in order to catch the seven-forty train.
- Usually, you would write amounts of money in numerals. (For example: 20c or $0.20, $120 and $88.15.) Words may be used in approximations such as 'he made millions of dollars'.
- Use italics for titles. For example: *The Australian* rather than 'The Australian'.
- Aim for a style that is free of jargon or slang (unless this is relevant to your contribution).
- Don't assume that your audience has prior knowledge of your topic. For example, it is possible your readers will not be familiar with an acronym that you use every day. You should use the full reference the first time, followed by the acronym in brackets as shown here: Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA).
- Advertorial should not be included.

Referencing

If your contribution concludes with a list of references, you should check these carefully as the editor may only pick obvious typographical errors. A search on Google usually brings up any reference you do not have to hand.

Maybe you need help with referencing. If so, you should find the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers (6th edn)* very helpful. The editor uses this manual and also the *Macquarie Dictionary*. This is the preferred style for the ECTA Journal.

Example of referencing for a book: O'Hagan M 2001, *Early Years Practitioner*, 4th edn, Harcourt: London.

Example of referencing for a journal: Bredekamp S (2006) 'Staying true to our principles', *Educating Young Children*, Vol 12 No. 2, Spring 2006, Australia.

Direct quotations within your article should be in italics and referenced with name of author and the source.

Specific terminology

We are presently compiling a standardised list of frequently used terms. Examples are:

- day care (rather than daycare or day-care)
- child care (rather than childcare or child-care)
- preschool (rather than pre-school)
- the Preparatory Year or Prep (rather than prep)
- Year One, Year Two/Three (words rather than numbers)
- 'the staff members are' (instead of the awkward singular noun 'the staff is ...')
- five-year-olds (i.e. age with hyphens)

The journal committee reserves the right to undertake some minimal editing or rewriting in order to maintain conformity of 'house style'. If an article is provisionally accepted, but fairly major changes are required, we will contact you to discuss this.

Length of contribution

- Article: 1200 words • Book review: 300 words • Regular article: 650 words

Form of submission

Your contribution should be submitted via email to info@ecta.org.au Photographs may be submitted digitally – minimum 3 megapixels on the highest resolution. Art works should be scanned. Photographs require a release agreement. A hard copy should also be included.

Author release forms must be signed and a hard copy forwarded to ECTA 20 Hilton Road, Gympie, Qld. 4570. Where original artwork or material has been submitted it will be returned at the contributor's request. All contributors will be sent a copy of the journal.

ECTA

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION