



# ***Educating Young Children***

Learning and teaching in the  
early childhood years

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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**

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## **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](http://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.

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### *From the President*

*Kim Walters*

ECTA membership during 2015 reached record levels. The ECTA Facebook page has continued to gain popularity. It now has over 1900 LIKES. Our reach has been over 3700 for a single posting. If you have a Facebook account, please LIKE us at [www.facebook.com/ectaqlld](http://www.facebook.com/ectaqlld).

#### **ECTA advocacy**

Throughout 2015 committee members represented ECTA membership at the state and federal level by attending forums and making submissions regarding:

- Development of Service/Funding Models Options for EC Services in Qld
- DET Strategic Plan 2015-2019
- Queensland's tobacco laws - Smoking in ECEC settings
- Child Protection Mandatory reporting laws for ECEC (Law Reform Commission and State Government) and
- Public Health (Childcare Vaccination) Immunisation Bill.

We attended early childhood stakeholder consultation meetings in relation to Prep early entry starting age, the Early Start Suite of Materials, NQS Emergency Closures, ASQA Strategic Review of ECEC training, the Child Protection Act, the ECEC Workforce Action Plan 2016-2019 and the College of Teachers EC teacher registration.

We have met with the Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, Education Minister Kate Jones, Director-General DET Dr Jim Watterston and Deputy Director-General ECEC Gabrielle Sinclair, along with Regional Directors ECEC.

ECTA representatives attended the College of Teachers Awards, the University of QLD

Teaching and Learning for Excellence Awards, the JCQTA Presidents Dinner, the Solid Partners, Solid Futures Annual Forum, the Better Together Forum, Early Years Conference, Great Start, Great Futures Rockhampton and the Teacher Education Industry Advisory Group event.

ECTA opinions have been included in many news articles and programs. We continue to work on the strategic plan and upgrading the ECTA website.

#### **Regional groups**

ECTA Regional Groups now operate in Fitzroy, Capricorn Coast, Cairns, Mackay, Townsville, Gladstone, Biloela, Hervey Bay, Cooloola (Gympie), Logan, Brisbane North and Toowoomba. You can contact your local group via email at [groupnamerg@ecta.org.au](mailto:groupnamerg@ecta.org.au) e.g. [herveybayrg@ecta.org.au](mailto:herveybayrg@ecta.org.au)

During 2015 and continuing into 2016 regional groups utilised ECTA funding to facilitate the hugely successful Louise Dorrat tour. Contact [ectagroups@ecta.org.au](mailto:ectagroups@ecta.org.au) if you are interested in having a regional group established in your area. Each year groups may apply for up to \$1500 funding along with support to attend the Annual Conference.

#### **Professional development**

This year we introduced Webinar internet based professional development. This tool will provide networking and professional development opportunities to support members throughout the state regardless of their location. I would like to thank CQ University and TAFE Videolinq for their support of our Videolinq program.

I would like to thank Joanne Young who continuously updates the website professional development calendar with PD opportunities

and the regional group pages. I would also like to thank the committee members for assisting in the eNEWS publications each month.

If you haven't visited the Members Centre of the website I recommend it to all. To enter you will need your username and password which is always included in your eNEWS. If you would like to join the web weaver team contact [website@ecta.org.au](mailto:website@ecta.org.au). If you can't locate your username and password email ECTA.

### Your committee

At the AGM, held on 11 November 2014 via Videolinq, all of our state committee and most of our subcommittee members renominated for their positions. I believe this is a clear sign of their enjoyment in their roles and their passion for early childhood and in particular their commitment to ECTA. I would like to thank all ECTA members who volunteer on our state coordinating, journal, web and conference and regional group committees for their time and dedication to ECTA during 2015. Without their support ECTA would not be the strong professional organisation that it is.

ECTA welcomes graduates into the profession each year through Grad Packs which are distributed through participating universities and TAFE institutions to all graduating early childhood students throughout Queensland. I would like to thank Noeleen Christensen who once again volunteered her time to compile and distribute the ECTA Grad Packs this year.

I would like to acknowledge the professionalism, dedication and support of Angela Le Mare who has stepped down as proofreader for our journal. Angela was in this role from 2005 and also helped with conference proofing. We welcome Jeni Lewington to the role for this edition of *Educating Young Children*.

Contact Lynne at [journal@ecta.org.au](mailto:journal@ecta.org.au) for more information on joining the journal committee. The submission of articles from colleagues in the early childhood field is a vital component to the journals success.

### Annual conference

Thank you to ECTA Annual Conference co-convenors and Life members Toni Michael and Robbie Leikvold and the conference

committee who once again provided members with a high quality conference. This year Dr Jim Watterston, Director General DET, opened the conference. Toni Michael, who has been an integral part of the committee for many years, announced her retirement this year. Toni's dedication and professionalism in the role of conference co-convenor has been very much appreciated.

This year four remote and regional support grants were awarded to individual members to attend the ECTA Annual Conference. ECTA was pleased to support Moniek de Kievith (Cairns), Cathy Jene (Cooktown), Pauline Keene (Rockhampton) and Gemma Spencer (Weipa) with conference registration and up to \$500 for travel and accommodation costs. I encourage all members living more than 300 km from the conference venue to apply for funding next year.

Organisation for next year's conference to be held at Sheldon Event Centre on Saturday, 25th June 2016 is well under way with the confirmation of Julie Cross as our keynote speaker. For up to date information visit the ECTA website [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au).

It is pleasing to see expressions of interest from ECTA members across the state to present at the conference. If you would like to join the conference committee to support the facilitation of next year's conference, please contact [conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au](mailto:conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au).

2016 membership invoices were emailed to all ECTA members in late October and early November. Fees are due by the end of December. Those re-joining before the end of February will be able to register for the Annual Conference weeks before the public via a personalised email invitation sent in March. ECTA membership runs from 1 January to 31 December each year.

Please enjoy the enclosed DVD which has recordings of two masterclasses by Justine Walsh and Nicole Burke *Outdoor play spaces* and *Tables do we need them* recorded at the 40th Annual Conference this year.

Please contact me at [president@ecta.org.au](mailto:president@ecta.org.au) anytime if you wish to discuss ECTA or your involvement in one of the committees.

Kim



## From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

This bumper issue of *Educating Young Children* is jam-packed with practical advice. A must for your holiday reading. So let's delve in.

Start by dipping your toes in the water with Kathryn Forgan-Flynn as she takes you on a wondrous journey into nature-based learning and beach kindy. Then, alongside Cate Collopy, reflect on the value of art-making for unlocking creativity and a sense of play. Play in its many forms also features in Deidre Tate's provocative story on learning environments that set children up for success.

In conversations we talk with parents about their hopes for their child's first day at school. An essential read for all teachers of Prep.

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*Kids connecting with nature* is the focus for environments. In this delightful article, Sam Coleman espouses the value in getting your hands dirty, integrating outdoor gardens and food production, with classroom teaching and basic life skills.

In partnerships, a collaboration between the Department of Education and Training and Griffith University is investigating effective pedagogies in the early years. Dr. Mary Lincoln explains why teachers need a rich array of age-appropriate pedagogies to be effective in supporting children's transition to school.

Also in partnerships, Rekha Prasad outlines the key elements required for successful cross-cultural communication and interpersonal skills. For more on this topic, flick through to Laura Broadbent's article on cultural competence, and really ask yourself 'Are you doing enough?'

Laurie Kelly returns with great wellbeing tips to maintain your sanity. Then settle back as Deborah Harcourt transports you to the hills of Northern Italy to explore the key principles of the 'Reggio Emilia Approach'.

Next, Jo Broadbent takes a brave stance on play-based pedagogy in Prep. Can you?

To enrich your curriculum, Tracy Galuski takes a look at technology in the classroom, Desley Jones promotes the benefits of music and Sue Southey returns with more on children's mathematical skills, this time through design play.

To finish Sue Dengate provides expert advice on food intolerances and behaviour and Roushini Devi leaves you with eight easy tips to keep you and your children energised the whole day long.

Lastly, we bring four new media reviews from your colleagues in early childhood.

Enjoy your holiday season.

With best wishes from the editorial team.

# Our beach kindy

*Kathryn Forgan-Flynn*



Kathryn Forgan-Flynn has been a teacher, director, lecturer and mentor within the community-based, not-for-profit, early childhood field for over 20 years. Kathryn has a strong commitment to ensuring that each child's individuality is respected. Children should have time to play in a natural setting that fosters greater collaboration and a sense of wellbeing. Kathryn completed her Master's degree focusing on leadership within early childhood. This supported her in advancing her beliefs that early childhood education should focus on nature-based learning and play as the central driving force in a risk benefit environment.

Early in 2013, I introduced the concept of nature-based learning to the team at Condyl Park Kindy. To explore this fully we engaged in face-to-face and online discussions, researched and read as much as we could manage and then some, and utilised active reflection techniques. We came to the conclusion that we wanted to provide a stronger connection to the land, providing an avenue to allow for risk-taking behaviour and to share with children the beauty that we had experienced as children in a place free of constraints. Though our conversations with families we identified that a vast number did not go to the beach or venture outdoors on weekends, they were just too busy doing other things. These became our goals for venturing down the path towards Beach Kindy.

### Our goals

At the time we did not think that we would end up at the beach. Our initial intent was to find and utilise a bush setting that could meet our goals, as well as:

- have running water
- have a toilet (the concept of having to take turns at emptying a portaloos was just too much to comprehend for many of us)
- have mobile phone service
- not be too far away from the kindergarten
- be accessible to emergency vehicles



*Nature-based learning at Condyl Park*

- have areas of interest and balance (we thought this was important though this soon changed when we spoke with our children).

We also wanted to make connections within our local community, the wider environmental community and the educational community. We felt it important to document what we were doing, how we were feeling and the exciting connections that we were about to make.

*Most importantly we wanted to engage with all our families sharing how excited we were in the learning we were discovering, the journey we wanted to take and the wonderful benefits we knew our children would experience.*

The energy would ebb and flow within the team throughout the year at the many

challenges we would face. The discoveries that would suddenly present themselves and the generosity of people in sharing their knowledge and time saw some strong relationships develop.

At the beginning of 2014, we set a timeline for Beach Kindy with a deadline of term four for commencing at the site. The timeline included developing partnerships, gathering research, engaging in formal training, developing and delivering workshops for families and, most importantly, engaging the children in what was to take place, gathering their perspectives and feedback.

### Research

Research became paramount. We used findings by the National Heart Foundation of Australia and Exercise and Sports Science Australia. The inaugural *Active Healthy Kids Australia Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth* (2014) found that 80% of 5–17 year olds are not meeting the Australian physical activity guidelines of at least 60 minutes of exercise each day. This supported the anecdotal evidence we had collected regarding children's experiences outside of kindy. We utilised knowledge from the European Forest School movement. This form of schooling, developed over 50 years ago in Scandinavia, has become an international movement. Sara Knight (2013) highlighted that forest schools are a way of facilitating learning outdoors.

*Forest School is an inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialized approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland learning.*

We collected and discussed research around risk-taking behaviours and how these have reduced significantly over the last decade; as has parent understanding of fear around children playing independently outdoors. La Trobe University, in October 2014, produced a research paper specifically around this issue citing parental fears around 'stranger danger'

and changes in daily family life. This research enabled us to collect a body of evidence that would support in sharing what we wanted to do and why. Many of our Australian colleagues have been down this path, though we are yet to discover anyone who has engaged in a beach site.

### Partnerships

Relationships are the cornerstone to such a project. Ours included:

- Reef Check Australia
- USQ through the support of Dr John McMaster
- Ranger Jenna from Fraser Island Parks and Wildlife (she visits the service each term and discusses with children flora and fauna in that season and how to live sustainably)
- Mary River Valley Habitat group
- Nature Play Australia
- Members of the Butchulla Tribe, the Traditional owners of this land.

We also engaged in staff training as well as offering to our families some outside workshops and information sessions run by Niki Buchan



Beach kindy

from Inspired Early Childhood. We also ran information sessions for our families. Included in these presentations was a risk assessment as well as a risk benefit assessment.

### Families

Families were very positive. There were a few questions regarding safety, but the biggest concern was that we were not taking anything with us, apart from each child's back pack, extra

water and a first aid kit. We invited our families to come with us, to drop into the site and to have lunch with us or have grandparents or family friends or relatives visit and share their local knowledge.

Initially we wanted families to drop off and collect from the site, but after much consultation the kindy paid for a bus to collect children from kindy and bring them back at the end of the session. Upon reflection, this was beneficial in that the build up to Beach Kindy commenced with the bus arriving. We had the same driver over the term which allowed the children, staff and families who came with us to develop a connection.

## Children

We developed Beach Kindy bags that we would take each time we went; these came directly from our risk assessments. We also discussed with our children what they would need in their bags and they too developed a list to share with families.

Another important component was to go to the site prior to the visit and take pictures of the area to discuss with the children where the boundaries would be and to discuss and write up what the agreements would be at the site to keep everyone safe. We also shared these with families and encouraged them to visit the site with their children. When we did go to the site, each time we would reiterate where the natural boundaries would be, but if a teacher was with you it was OK to go further. Negotiating the expectations involved the children in recalling their experiences at the beach, and to also use the learning from our own Ranger Jenna who shared her knowledge of plants and wildlife at the site.

Our beach visits were different each and every day, be it low tide with wide open spaces to investigate rock pools and walk 'way out to the end of the sea' or high tide with time to climb, explore and create hiding spaces in the trees along the foreshore. Children spent time by themselves, in small groups and collaborating in larger groups, they were in charge of their day, when they ate, how wet they were getting or the time they needed to explore and play. The sense of freedom and relaxation was evident as was the learning that each person engaged in. We discovered animals and plant life. Once back at kindy children researched the correct names



*Children spend time by themselves*

of the animals we had found and photographed. Each group developed a scrapbook to record this investigative learning, making links to our curriculum and to share with families who were unable to attend. This, too, saw families visiting the site on the weekends so children could share their knowledge and ownership of the space.

## Learning

As a team of educators, children and families, we feel very strongly about sharing with others how we trust our children and how we engage in natural spaces. The possibilities are unlimited; the benefits for the children make this well worth the time and energy invested. We also want to document the ongoing learning and how the children engage in this learning to see if there is a flow-on effect at formal schooling.

The learning we experienced individually and as a team has allowed us to grow and evolve.

***The way we believe children learn; their competence and most importantly, the trust that we can place in them to self-assess and to keep themselves safe through collaboration and communication has transformed our teaching and how we work alongside families.***

Giving each child the time and ability to connect with nature, to trust in themselves and to have time to engage and explore not only ensures that curriculum outcomes are achieved but individually children are respected and appreciated for what they bring to our kindy community.

The report on the Beach Kindy Trial (2014) is available on our website: [www.condyparkkindy.com](http://www.condyparkkindy.com)

# Child's play

*Cate Collopy*



Cate is a professional artist and vocational education arts teacher in Creative Arts Therapy. Over the last ten years she has facilitated hundreds of workshops in creative arts and reuse to children across the education sector from K – 12 as well as to countless educators in the early childhood sector. Cate's artwork has a strong environmental focus concerning waste behaviour and how we use/dispose of materials. In this story Cate reflects on the workshops she presented at the 2015 ECTA conference.

When I plan professional development workshops for early childhood educators there are two key outcomes that I pay attention to. The first is to offer hands-on experiences in creative art techniques that are relevant and useful and that translate into practical creative opportunities in the classroom.

The second is to assist participants to unlock their own creativity and to help them connect to the qualities of play. This is achieved through immersion in experiential art making where emphasis is placed not only on the end product, but also in the art making or creative process itself.

Such experiential encounters in play rouse participant's sense of curiosity, and immerse them in the process in such a way as to be experimental with the materials at hand. Once unlocked, playfulness and curiosity are aroused and participants generate creative ideas and solutions. In a professional development context, alongside others, there is also the outcome of creative collaboration.

In his ECTA conference keynote address, Paul McGhee made many references to the value of playing and the relationship between play and learning and the play continuum. He talked about the need for educators to keep in touch with their own sense of play and discussed ways for maintaining a playful frame of mind. In a

creative professional development workshop, I focus on visual art as a place where education and play meet.

### Monoprinting

Monoprinting is a method of printmaking using found materials to create unique patterns and scraped surfaces on paper. Single one-off prints are made using a variety of methods and materials to create a



surface rich in markings and texture. In this workshop participants explore different patterns and textures using a range of printing plates, before printing onto paper, as well as how to acquire cost effective materials.

Outcomes for educators are many. What I observe is a genuine immersion in playful experimentation. Participants speak of the 'timelessness' they feel, and are amazed at the relative ease and accessibility of the materials and techniques. Out of this playfulness comes a wealth of ideas and creative collaboration.

### Environmental weaving

In this workshop, participants use found materials from nature as inspiration for a weaving activity.

Participants also learn about sustainability by using found and natural materials to create their environmental art pieces.

Keynote speaker Paul McGhee also talked about the need for educators to keep in touch with their own sense of play for managing mood and keeping a positive and playful frame of mind for their own self-care. He spoke of a spirit of fun and again I draw on art making for its direct impact on our health and wellness, and creative development.

*When we put marker, pastel or paint to paper the resulting feeling is marvellous, because for most people creating visual art makes you feel good.*

Art making in all its forms has a direct impact on our creative development as well as on our health and wellness. Each art form, including

visual art, has its own language and at times we can express ourselves through visual art in a safe way without having to articulate verbally. The positive feelings that creative art presents and the confidence that it builds is especially important for children.

In working with groups of children I often notice that they will freely give up the object that they have made after the activity is over. For them, often it is the enjoyment of creating, and the positive input that surrounds it, that is the rewarding experience. For both the adult educator and the young child, art making for both its playful and immersive process and unique product is an intrinsically enjoyable practice.

The outcome is to ignite and stimulate the educator and to bring them back into the classroom as an energised and creative individual ready to think on their feet and engage fully in creative art making, play and guided learning for their group.





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# ***Play-based learning environments aid transition and set children up for success***

***Deirdre Tate***



Deirdre Tate is a Prep Teacher and Precinct Co-ordinator at St Rita's Catholic Primary School, Victoria Point. Deirdre has always been aware of the value in embedding oral language processes in an interactive environment to stimulate children's cognitive development. This desire to improve children's oral language led Deirdre to become involved in the set-up and organisation of *Early Learning Redlands* (an AEDC response group) and co-present the *S.P.E.A.K.* program (a partnership with Redlands libraries and local schools). Deirdre believes that educating the community about developmentally appropriate pedagogy in the early years will improve children's disposition towards life-long learning.

Consider two Prep classrooms. In one the children sit at desks in neat rows. The school day is divided into large chunks of time devoted to structured reading, writing and teacher-directed tasks. Play is restricted to break times only and is not connected with classroom projects. The main voice in the classroom, is the teacher's. Assessment is in the form of testing and happens frequently. The reading program is centered on a levelled reading scheme and children are grouped by levels. Simple 'take home' readers form the home connection to ensure children are practising after school, along with sets of sight words to memorise for testing back in school.

In the other classroom desks are arranged as learning centres. The children move from one to the other and in and out of a co-constructed role play area. Play, in its many forms, takes place both inside and outside the classroom and throughout the school day and is intentionally related to what the children are learning. The main voice in the classroom is the children's. Assessment is ongoing, based on observations, discussions and challenges. The reading program is centered on good quality texts written by recognised children's authors. The home connection is designed to ensure that children develop a love for reading while practising reading strategies in the form of games.

To a parent, the first classroom may initially appear preferable. The controlled environment and the regimented teaching seeming to indicate academic focus and higher achievement. However, what if we consider:

- Stimulating experiences are important to develop learning pathways in the brain and that a psychologist could have concerns about the levels of anxiety placed upon four- and five-year-olds when subjected to constant testing in an environment that does not allow for flexibility.
- Children learn language by listening to and using it, and that a speech pathologist could have concerns about the minimal level of opportunities to speak and respond.
- Children learn through being engaged and active, and that an occupational therapist could have concerns about the lack of movement throughout the day.

As a teacher and a parent, I have seen examples of both classrooms, here in Australia and in other countries. From my experience, and my studies, it is evident that the early years of school establish skills, knowledge and dispositions towards learning. The superior motivation children display when learning through a play-based approach, makes it easier for teachers to shape experiences so that each

child reaches curriculum goals. Tapping into children's natural curiosity and desire to explore, question and investigate the world around them provides rich opportunities for observational assessment.

At St Rita's, we use evidence-based teaching practices that encourage children to learn through questioning, exploring, investigating and interacting. Through our involvement in community groups like Early Learning Redlands – an Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) response group comprising occupational therapists, speech pathologists, Medicare local, child care centres, C&K, Department of Education and Training, Queensland Health, parents and grandparents – and co-presenting initiatives like Speaking Promotes Education And Knowledge (S.P.E.A.K.) with Cleveland State School and Redlands Libraries we aim to improve oral language in the community so that all children in the Redlands can better access the curriculum when they come to school.



*Tapping into children's natural curiosity*



*Play in its many forms*

According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (2011) 'the greater the discontinuity between the early childhood and care environment and school ... the more difficult the transition will be for children'. By recognising the importance of focusing on the whole child and providing the optimal learning environment for this particular stage of development transition becomes less of a concern and children are set up for success.

### References

Rosier K & McDonald M 2011, *Promoting positive education and care transitions for children*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Canberra.

### *Starting school: a parent's perspective*

*Starting school is a big step, made easier and more motivating if the social and emotional wellbeing of the child is healthy. In this conversation Educating Young Children asks parents and teachers to share strategies to prepare for this exciting time in a child's life.*

#### Julienne and Alex



Hello I'm Julienne. My child has been attending C&K QUT Kelvin Grove kindergarten and, in 2016, will be starting Prep at Wilston State School.

**On the first day of school I would like to see ...** interesting easy activities that will engage the children so that they are not so nervous about going to 'big' school.

**I will know my child is happy at school ...** by the stories he tells me, his enjoyment/pleasure around what he is learning, the new friends he has made, and stories around liking the classroom and his teacher.

**I talk to my child about ...** how fun it will be to be learning so many different things and I mention the extra activities that the school he is going to do around swimming and the library time (he loves both things).

**Our family is getting ready for school by ...** reading – a lot of reading – at least two sometimes three books a night as well as silly and fun word and counting games. We talk to the boy who lives next door, Josh, who is in Prep (who loves it) and ask him what he likes about school and who his friends are.

**My child is excited ...** about new climbing equipment at school and learning new things.

#### **TEACHER TIP: The first day**

Talk to your child beforehand about the procedure for the first day. If you feel your child is going to be upset, arrive as close to starting time as possible. Talk to your child in the classroom and leave him/her with the teacher. Don't be upset if there are a few tears – this is quite natural. Children settle down quickly when their parents leave and they become involved in the activities in the classroom. Ensure that your child knows exactly where you are going to meet him/her or his/her going home arrangements.

#### Ikuno and Arisa



Ikuno Fox is a current Prep parent at Wellers Hill State School and a future 2016 Prep parent.

**On the first day of school I would like to see ...** a happy face on my daughter. I would like to have a chance to talk to the teacher and other parents. I would love to see my daughter make the effort and have the opportunity to talk with other children on her first day.

**I will know my child is happy at school ...** when she comes home and tells me she had a good day and tells me all about what she did in class and with her friends.

**I talk to my child about ...** what goes on at Prep, the things that happen and the things that might happen during her day.

**Our family is getting ready for school by ...** talking about school in a positive and encouraging manner. We also talk about the friends in her Kindy class who will also be attending the same school so that she knows who she may see there and can be friendly with. My daughter also has the opportunity to see the classrooms and school environment as I volunteer already in a Prep class with my older daughter.

**My child is excited ...** to go to school with her sister. She is also excited to start Prep so she feels more grown up. She is very excited about the prospect of wearing a school uniform. She loves dressing-up in her uniform even at this early stage.

## TEACHER TIP: Talk to your child

Talk constantly to your child about attending school. Talk about different aspects, being careful not to place too much emphasis on academic expectations e.g. learning to read and write and having to work hard to learn. Often children will come home disappointed on the first day because they have not learnt to read. It's not long before children learn they work hard – let it evolve!

## TEACHER TIP: Eating at school

If your child is not used to eating from lunch boxes, practise at home both opening the lunchbox and unwrapping food. Both these activities require refined fine motor skills. Offer variety in the lunch boxes to ensure your child eats. This will help with their emotional wellbeing too. Talk about the process for tuckshop. Include plenty of water – first term in Queensland is very hot.

## Yasir and Rayan



Rayan attends the kindergarten program at Eco Kids Trade Coast Central at Eagle Farm, where Archana Sinh is the Kindergarten Teacher. Rayan's Dad, Yasir, agreed to share his

thoughts about his son's transition to school next year. According to Yasir, Rayan shall attend Ascot State School in 2016.

**On the first day of school I would like to see ...** him meet some of his friends from kindergarten. Of course, I would like to see him wave goodbye to me without tears in his eyes. As a parent I see starting school as the first step into the years of education ahead. I believe the initial years lay the foundation for schooling. For me selecting the right school is paramount. Personally, I prefer a smaller school where each student gets individual attention. In the first few years it is more about gaining self-confidence and preparing him for the future.

**I will know my child is happy at school ...** if he talks about his school and friends. On the other hand, if he answers with a 'nothing' and a frown I will know he is not yet happy. Not happy generally means he is still in the process of making friends.

**I talk to my child about ...** When I come home from the office I always start the conversation by asking how his day was and what he did during the day. Being a boy (and my son!) he normally summarises the whole day in one sentence and wants to start playing. But

## TEACHER TIP: Know your new school

Attend functions throughout the year e.g. open days, orientation days and parent information nights. Refer to the school as your child's new school. Drive past the school whenever you can. Point out important areas to your child e.g. toilets, playground, eating areas and the tuckshop. Try to meet the teacher and teacher assistants. Talk to them about their expectations for children starting school. Be aware teachers may change year levels from one year to the next.

there are those father-son moments when he talks about his friends, the games he played and his favourite cartoon characters.

**Our family is getting ready for school by ...** talking to him often about his new school and how much fun it is going to be. We took him to the school to have a look and simply planning to do some shopping for his school accessories builds excitement for him.

**My child is excited ...** about the prospect of meeting friends from kindergarten and getting a new school bag and accessories.

## Lucina and Helena



Lucina Leven's daughter Helena has been attending C&K QUT Kelvin Grove since she was a baby and is currently in the kindergarten room. Helena's brother Tom

also attends the service.

We are both excited and nervous about Helena starting school. As an open, outgoing and caring girl, she is ready to embrace this new stage. It's emotional as I realise she is now no longer 'a baby'. She has such a wonderful kindy teacher, who she thrives under, but I worry her experience to date is based on having such an intuitive and warm teacher who so suits her personal style. If she gets a less warm and 'old fashioned' teacher, it will be a shock to her. I worry about my toddler son, who will miss his big sister at kindy.

**On the first day of school I would like to see ...** empathy for parent and child. I want Helena to feel welcomed, respected and involved. I want her to feel secure and excited at this new stage in her life.

**I will know my child is happy at school ...** when she continues to be the happy and confident girl she currently is – always

**TEACHER TIP: Helping your child recognise their name**

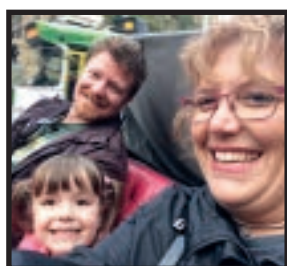
Encourage your child to recognise names, especially his or her own. Look at the letters, model writing the word at home and display your child's name around the home. Check school expectations with regards to writing the name. Label school bag with photo tag. Cover schoolbooks with the same design paper (go for something unusual) so your child will recognise his or her book by the cover immediately. Use computer generated name labels so your child recognises the 'sameness' of his or her name.

eager to go to kindy and full of happy tales when she returns home.

**I talk to my child about ...** her feelings. I am very big about communication and always try to listen/cue in to my children's emotions. I ask her to describe how she feels and what makes her happy, sad or excited. I try to prepare her for change by building up to what is coming up.

**Our family is getting ready for school by ...** talking! Reading books on first days at school. Drawing what school looks like. Driving past the new school and talking about school children as we drive past them and see their uniforms etc. I explain to my son that he will be a big boy at kindy soon, then joining Helena at her school. We talk to friends she knows at dance who are in Prep this year. We think about the new schedule for the day and what she might do and learn. Also some challenges that she might need to prepare for i.e. school is more structured than kindy.

**My child is excited ...** about her new uniform, making new friends and going to a new location.



**Zoe, Brandon and Charlotte**

**On the first day of school I would like to see ...** lots of well-organised teachers who know exactly who will be in their class, who are

warm and welcoming, who can appreciate our apprehension and nerves, and who instil a sense of comfort and security not only in my child but also in me!

**TEACHER TIP: Read stories to your child about starting school**

Reading stories not only prepares your child for learning to read but also gives you the option of choosing books that deal with the topic of starting school, such as *I Don't Want to Go To School* by Christine Harris and *Grandma McGravey Goes To School* by Jenny Hessel.

**I will know my child is happy at school**

... if she looks forward to going to school each morning, if she speaks with energy and enthusiasm when describing her day or an upcoming event, when she can tell me about her classmates and what she likes to play with them and when she knows the routines and people she will encounter while at school.

**I talk to my child about ...** the importance of listening, learning new skills, carrying her own school bag and unpacking/packing it herself, being kind to her classmates, the importance of following instructions and how she will learn to read and write (which she is very excited about). But we also talk about the differences and things she will need to cope with that won't be the same as kindy – like having to be confident she can wipe her own bottom (!) and knowing when to ask for help instead of expecting people to be watching over her all the time. And we talk about her relationships with other children, not allowing bullying but also not being a bully.

**Our family is getting ready for school by**

... talking about [Charlotte] being a 'big girl' going to 'big school', encouraging her to be more independent and also to help out more around the house (e.g. setting the table) and encouraging her social skills development.

**My child is excited ...** about learning to read and write, about seeing her kindy friends at her new big school (although that's assuming she is accepted at the local school, otherwise everyone will be new to her), being a 'preppie', but interestingly she is also excited about 'coming back to visit'. She sees former kindy kids (siblings of current children) return to her childcare centre when it is pick-up or drop-off time and that really makes an impression on her. She has indicated she wants to come back and visit her teacher just like these kids do.

**TEACHER TIP: Uniform and school bag**

It's a good idea to find out if your child will need to change clothes during school e.g. for swimming or sport. Practise changing, especially for clothes with buttons. For school or sports shoes – practise tying laces. At the beginning of the year, velcro sports shoes are handy but encourage laces later in the year to develop the skill. Practise using the new school bag. A lot of planning and organisation is required to hold the bag, find the right equipment, make decisions, remove and return equipment and close the bag.



# 41<sup>st</sup> ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2016

For more information visit via [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au)

## **Keynote Address: It's about YOU!**

This presentation is about nurturing the hearts and the souls of delegates. It is about re-connecting people to their passion and reminding them of why they choose to do what they do, inviting them to take ownership for the bigger vision of the impact that they make every-day. It is about connecting to the place inside of them that will leave them feeling inspired and empowered to deliver the information and knowledge gained with passion and ownership. Delegates will be entertained, they will laugh, may cry a little and they will be challenged. They will be taken on a lively, feeling, soul nurturing, and sometimes confronting journey, that will rouse their senses, stir their emotions and challenge them to take action.

**Keynote presenter: Julie Cross**, is not your 'run-of-the-mill professional speaker'. In fact she prefers to describe herself as a 'passionate speaker', and that is part of what makes her so memorable, and her presentations so incredibly powerful and life-changing. An experienced speaker with 18 years on various stages educating, energising and entertaining people from all kinds of walks of life and professions, Julie has an innate ability to connect with all her audiences. Julie is all about inspiring an audience to feel her message rather than just hear it, she re-energises individuals and empowers them to take responsibility for the way in which they have chosen to make a difference... through their work. She doesn't just deliver information into their heads she also nurtures their hearts and souls. We are more aware now than ever before that the link between personal and professional development can no longer be ignored and if we work on the people behind the job they do then self-leadership is instilled and workplaces reach peak levels of performance.

## **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 the 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)

### *Kids connecting with nature*

*Samantha Coleman*



Sam is a stay at home mum and founder of The Seasonal Table, a seasonal food and gardening website and blog. Alongside this Sam works at St Margaret's School helping to coordinate their kitchen garden program. Passionate about health and nutrition, Sam completed a certificate in child nutrition which proved to be a turning point in her beliefs to further help kids become better educated in healthy eating habits.

In today's world we seem to be programming our kids to a world of structure and routine and to a frenetic paced lifestyle. Down time almost seems taboo; allowing our kids time to roam is a thing of the past. Whilst I'm a believer in routine, I'm also a believer in allowing children the time to be 'free range', that is, a connection to a life free of programming. A time where children have an opportunity to connect or reconnect with nature and to engage full use of their senses. To experience this, there is no better place than in a garden.

A more alarming reason to encourage our kids back into the garden is that Australia is ranked one of the most overweight developed nations and our obesity rates in the past 20 years have doubled. It astounds me that we live in one of the most unpopulated countries,

our climate so enticing, our food supplies for the most part are plentiful and the quality of produce outstanding, and yet we have that statistic hanging over our heads. Has our fast paced, programmed lifestyle allowed us to let go of some fundamental basics. Do we rely too heavily on foods of convenience, fast foods, pre-prepared meals? How many times a week would you hear people say they are too busy to cook? How many mums actually make the food for their children's lunch boxes? Nutrition Australia claims children's attitudes towards food are shaped during the early childhood years. They maintain the best way to encourage children and steer them into healthy eating is to educate them.

The value of food education is endless. It teaches children to make their own good choices and enhances their sustainable

learning outcomes and humane food practices. It demonstrates how they can contribute to a more sustainable future for their generation and the generations to come. It also promotes physical activity.

Kitchen garden programs in schools



*Weekly harvesting and tidying in the garden*





*Styling the food and taking photos for advertising the market stall*

are on the rise. These programs successfully integrate outdoor gardens to enhance classroom learning, food education and basic life skills. More schools are seeing the long term benefits of garden education.

St Margaret's School program's purpose is to integrate an organic garden into the primary curriculum. Working alongside the school's Sustainability Committee, the program's goal is to enhance sustainable learning outcomes for their students. The Maggie's Garden Project has four main objectives, environment, health, social and food. To further support our garden we have included a worm farm, water tank and composting bins. All of these have been included into our weekly garden club education.



*Integrating an organic garden into the curriculum*

and teachers as we come together working to provide the school community with their own produce. So much love and attention has gone into the creation of the garden. Through the garden and its requirements we are creating a sense of community and ownership, giving



children a time for togetherness, a time for forgetting our fast paced lives and engaging all our senses in the moment.

Teaching them to take their own food from garden to plate is such a privilege. Each week I



There is nothing more rewarding than teaching children the benefits of a kitchen garden. Each Friday I watch our garden club community laugh, nurture and persist with our kitchen garden.

I watch the joy it brings the children



*A time for togetherness*



After the vegetables are harvested the students prepare and price the vegetables to sell to the wider school community at their market stall. Profits made from the stall are used to buy plants for the garden



*From garden to plate*

take a new group of enthusiastic gardeners and each week the outcome is the same. We work together as a team, problem solving, getting our hands dirty, caring for our plants and harvesting or re-planting. All of us, young and old, with same objective, to grow our own food and become more self-sufficient.

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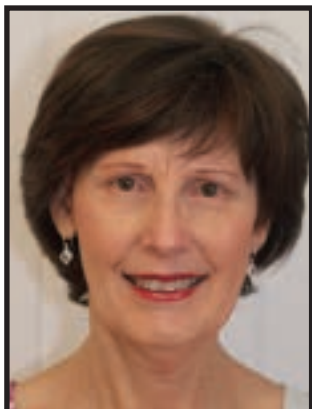
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### *Early years pedagogies*

*Dr Mary Lincoln*



Mary is the Director, Early Learning Pathways with the Department of Education and Training. She has extensive experience as a kindergarten and early years of schooling teacher and has maintained a key focus on working with community partners to improve outcomes for children. Mary is currently leading Queensland's implementation of the Australian Early Development Census, the supporting successful transition to school state-wide initiative and refocusing age appropriate pedagogies in the early years of schooling.

Establishing a solid foundation for learning and development in the early years – socially, physically, emotionally and cognitively – supports a successful transition to school and increases the likelihood of students staying in school, engaging in further education, and participating in work and community life as adults.

*Children develop their learning capacities through activities that engage and stimulate high levels of concentration, interest and enjoyment.*

This can be achieved through teachers adopting pedagogies that balance children's academic, social, emotional, physical, cognitive and creative skills. In delivering effective pedagogies, teachers consider the development, experience and characteristics of the learner, select appropriately from a broad range of pedagogical approaches, and then tailor the delivery accordingly.

#### **Supporting successful transitions**

Many children transitioning to school have experienced play-based teaching approaches based on the *Early Years Learning Framework* in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings.

*Sharing understandings and building on early childhood education and care teaching practices and experiences strengthen continuity can make a significant difference to a child's early school experience.*

Effective pedagogy and practice is one of the five action areas outlined in the Department of Education and Training's *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool*. This document provides a framework for schools to identify, plan and implement transition strategies and practices that meet the needs of their community.

#### **Best practice approaches**

It is important that schools are using best-practice approaches to teaching and learning in the early years of school. This year the Department funded Griffith University – under the guidance of Associate Professor Bev Fluckiger – to conduct a pilot project with 46 Queensland state schools across three regions to lead the way in refocusing on evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning in the early years. The *Age-appropriate pedagogies in the early years project* is based on the key characteristics of effective early years teaching and learning as identified in international research. A summary of the research findings



*Supporting successful transitions: school decision-making tool*

and an explanation of the key characteristics are available in the *Age-appropriate pedagogies for the early years of schooling Foundation Paper* on the Department's website.

***Research shows that teachers in the early years need a rich array of age-appropriate pedagogies.***



*The characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies*

Bev Fluckiger says the research literature is very clear that age-appropriate pedagogies are necessary in the early years of schooling to engage young learners, achieve effective learning outcomes, and set children up for

long-term success in the 21st century.

The project began in April with schools implementing action research projects during Terms 3 and 4 in 2015. Participating teachers are being supported to promote active, learner-focused and creative learning experiences in their Prep programs. Dean Hardy, teaching Principal from Chilligoe State School, said that his:

*school community is very excited to be part of this project and parent feedback surrounding classroom operations and curriculum delivery has been extremely positive. Age appropriate pedagogies allow for a balanced approach as best practice in order to ensure maximum student learning outcomes are achieved.*

Gabrielle Sinclair, Deputy Director-General Early Childhood Education and Care, said that learning from the pilot project will inform how the Department takes this important work forward into more schools next year.

**Further information** about the *Age-appropriate pedagogies project* is available on the Department's website <http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/about/successful-transitions/age-appropriate-pedagogies.html>

### Cross-cultural communication

*Rekha Prasad*



Rekha Prasad is a Program Facilitator for the EMBRACE Culture in Kindy program at Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS). Rekha has spent the past 24 years in Australia and has worked in the area of Cultural Diversity with the Multicultural Child Care Unit, SA, the Multicultural Communities Council of SA, TAFE, SA and the University of South Australia. Before migrating to Australia she worked in Indian universities in the area of family studies.

Cross-cultural communication is the ability to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds and develop successful relationships by understanding their ideals, principles and standards. It is also about expanding our own awareness of how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves so that our practices and conversations are understood (DuPraw & Axner 1997).

According to *Belonging, being and becoming: the early years learning framework for Australia* (2009), cross-cultural communication is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. It is an integral component of cultural competence (ibid., p.16).

In 1991, Anne Stonehouse predicted that children will work with, go to school with, be friends with, live next door to and form permanent relationships with people from cultures different from their own. This prophecy has already come true for Australia where we know that six million people were born overseas and more than 260 languages are spoken (excluding Aboriginal languages). Australia is also home to over 1.5 million children of immigrant families, representing almost 33% of all children in Australia (Katz & Redmond 2009).

#### **Challenges for families**

Families may have moved to Australia by choice or by chance. They may have come as migrants,

refugees, asylum seekers, students or as visitors. In any case, the new environment presents people with various challenges which may include changes in climate, housing, food, languages, currency, friendships, jobs and taboos.

*One of the most difficult things a person must face, when living in a different country is learning a new language.*

Not being able to speak English in Australia can make life difficult, and also leave people feeling very lonely and frustrated. Language barriers can contribute to unemployment, underemployment and also make everyday activities like accessing community services, shopping and just being able to talk to people very difficult. If children don't speak English, they may struggle with school work and making friends. As an early childhood professional myself I have observed children with language barriers struggling to communicate their basic needs in child care centres and kindergartens. I have seen their confusion in these unfamiliar environments and the difficulties they experience participating in activities and making friends.

#### **Cultural adaptation**

The key to understanding the process of entering a new culture or increasing your

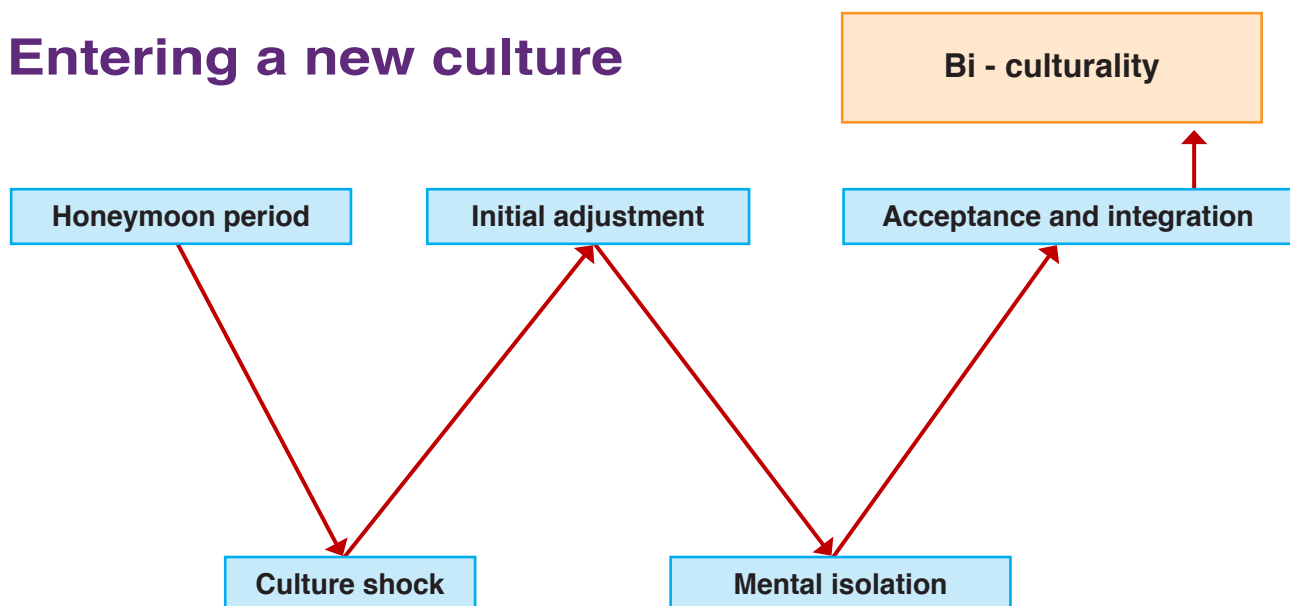
cultural adaptability is to build your cross-cultural communication skills. Acculturation is the process through which people adapt in the face of cultural change (Harter 2012). It is remarkably predictable in spite of its complexity. Cultural adjustment generally occurs in phases, each with specific emotions and characteristics. The process generally follows an up and down curve beginning with euphoria, then sinking into culture shock, then finally recovering to accept and enjoy a new culture.

Understanding the phases and characteristics of acculturation can help educators to communicate with parents and children and

embed cultural diversity perspectives into their service.

The phases of acculturation are honeymoon, crisis, recovery, adjustment and acceptance. Each phase comes with its own set of emotions and cultural shocks. An individual has reached the acceptance phase when they accept bi-culturality as a way of life (see diagram). However, phases may vary and may not occur in the sequence for all individuals. Successful integration of the individual is only possible when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity (Berry 1997).

### Entering a new culture



*Entering a New Culture - Adapted from W-Curve Model of Cultural Adaptation (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1963)*

#### The main elements of cross-cultural communication

There may be times when a person's speech and body language is difficult to understand. However, analysis of behaviours and situations show that the following four elements are usually present (Australian Multicultural Foundation 2010):

**1. Verbal communication** is what we say and how we say it. This includes accents, tone of voice, volume, rate of speech and

slang. Language barriers can emerge when one speaks too quickly, uses Australian slang or jargon, provides too much information or uses patronising speech. Demeaning emotional tone of voice is another aspect of language that can lead to misunderstandings. Limited English ability can be a communication barrier in Australia.

**2. Non-verbal communication** is what we say when we are not talking. Body language or non-verbal communication is a large

component of communication. Our facial expressions, interpersonal space, gestures, posture, touch or eye movements can project subtle messages before we speak. A lack of awareness of one's body language can convey a negative message or create misunderstandings.

3. **Communication styles** refer to how we prefer to express ourselves. The way we communicate has a big impact on how we get on with people and get the things we want. Good communication skills can help us avoid conflict and solve problems. These skills are also important for making friends and maintaining healthy relationships. The main styles of communication include aggressive, passive or assertive (Edleman & Remond 2005).
4. **Values, attitudes and prejudices** are more complex and include our deep beliefs and feelings about our own identity, about the world around us, our perceptions of right and wrong and how we judge other people. It is important to be clear about our own cultural background and how it defines and limits our world view.

## Assisting families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Effective communication between culturally and linguistically diverse families and service providers is an essential aspect of quality service provision. If you are working with families where English is not their first language, you should try to communicate simply, by using affirmative greetings and short sentences. Once you have identified the language spoken by the family, use translated material if available and use a telephone interpreter service if appropriate. Organise consequent meetings with an interpreter for complex matters. The use of accredited interpreters empowers both the service provider and the individual and imparts accurate information to families. Services can use phone or onsite face-to-face interpreting services. In order to support the kindergarten participation of children from non-English speaking families, the Queensland Government is funding free access to Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) for kindergartens. Phone 131450 toll free, from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday in Queensland.

## Conclusion

It is important that early childhood professionals, who are the pedagogues for our children, understand the acculturation process of all families in their service. This understanding will help them with their own cultural adaptability, cross-cultural communication and their interpersonal skills. The use of interpreter services for culturally and linguistically diverse families who require linguistic support will help educators to not only ensure smooth dissemination of information, but develop a deeper understanding of the children in their care and help build better relationships with families in their service.

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# ***Maintaining sanity in a world of change: assisting your brain to 'help' not 'hinder' your progress***

***Laurie Kelly***



Laurie speaks both nationally and internationally on current knowledge of how the mind works to maximise the impact of teaching and create an openness factor in our approach to change and new learning. Laurie has a reputation for having an uncanny ability to communicate on a level that everyone can appreciate and is passionate about the importance of the information he shares. He has delivered a number of regional workshops for ECTA throughout Queensland as well as many workshops and conferences for front line staff working in the various early education centres throughout Australia.

*A passer-by noticed a workman struggling to fell a tree. The longer he watched, the more he realised the workman was using a blunt tool, and just sawing and sawing away, and making very little impression on the tree. He said, 'Excuse me, but you seem to be really doing it the hard way. Your blade is blunt and worn out. Why not stop and sharpen your saw?' The workman replied, 'Stop? I can't stop! I haven't got time to stop and sharpen a saw. Can't you see the thickness of this tree?' and he continued on sawing and sawing and sawing ...*

Everybody loves a good story, but there's nothing to love about stories, behaviours or actions that are circular, achieve nothing and go nowhere.

In this busy age, we need to learn to work efficiently and smarter, not wastefully and harder. We need to stop, take some time out and really look at how we are spending our precious 'life moments'. We need to make sure that they count, are worthwhile and positively progressive; not wasteful, hindering or missing opportunities.

Part of this is allowing our brains some time-out. Remember swotting all night long before

a big exam? At some point, the 'jug' was full and everything poured into it from that moment on, just washed on out and down the sides. It didn't stay in and you simply wasted your time. Your brain, on an all-night 'knowledge binge', is like a jug – the information you take in through your eyes, literally oozes immediately out of your ears, as the brain rejects it, because it's full. It needs 'time-out' to sort, assimilate, file, empty and prepare for the next 'info binge'. It's like your stomach – there is a limit to how much it can take in, in one sitting, before it is full and needs time to digest and clear the contents.

***To maintain sanity in a world awash with information and immediate demands, you need to learn to use your brain in the most effective way possible.***

### **Wellbeing tip**

Imagine that the wheel, below, is, in fact, a life raft. The idea is to keep air in all six compartments because if any one were to get spiked and lose its air, the other five would keep you floating. If, on the other hand, you had all



Visual Symbol for Balance Wheel

the air in one compartment only – like ‘work’ – and that compartment got punctured, you and your life raft would rapidly deflate & sink.

A great way to check your ‘spread of air’ is to place this symbol of the life raft into your calendar dates for the next two weeks, with the aim each day of ticking the spokes where you did something deliberately to inflate with air. That means that walking from the front stairs to the car does not count in the physical, but going for a walk at lunchtime does. Even having a lunch break away from your desk is an excellent way of putting air into your physical compartment. It is a physical ‘change of state’ and assists the chemicals of the brain to relax and make the necessary connections using the neocortex brain as an ideas incubator.

Some days, one activity will cover off on a few areas all at once. At the end of two weeks have a look at the patterns. If there is one spoke that is not getting too many ticks it just means you need to make a conscious effort to get some air into this area. Make sure you do, to help you maintain sanity in a world of change.

The Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) annual festival *Clancestry, A Celebration of Country* will run from **30 November to 6 December 2015**, across QPAC and in The Courier-Mail Piazza in Brisbane’s Cultural Precinct at South Bank.

*Clancestry* has cemented its place on Queensland’s arts and cultural calendar encouraging people from all over Australia to connect with and take pride in the arts and culture of First Nations peoples.

To view the full festival program visit

<http://www.qpac.com.au./clancestry/>



# *Nothing without joy: The key principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach*

*Deborah Harcourt*



Professor Deborah Harcourt is Professor of Early Childhood at the Australian Catholic University. She has worked in the field of early childhood education for the past 27 years in Australia, Singapore, China, Malaysia, India, Indonesia, UAE, UK and Sri Lanka. Deborah began her career as a preschool teacher, working with three- to five-year-old children and then moved to the University sector. She is currently working with researchers in Sweden, Italy and Australia who are interested in researching with children on a range of topics. She has a particular interest in the Reggio Emilia Educational Project and its impact and potential for influencing early childhood education in Australia.

Reggio Emilia is a prosperous city in the hills of northern Italy, renowned for its Parmesan cheese and Parma ham. It has also been recognised as one of the world's leading innovators and provocateurs of early childhood education, with its signature educational philosophy known as the 'Reggio Emilia Approach'. For over 50 years, the educators in the infant and toddler centres and preschools of the municipality have challenged traditional attitudes to young children and their learning. By positioning children as sophisticated thinkers and communicators, supported by curious and invested educators, the documentation of long-term projects has become the vehicle for bringing that learning in to sharp focus, internationally.

Underpinning the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia Approach sits a set of key education principles (Rinaldi 2013) which help guide and encourage educators, children and families. These are important reflective elements for educators outside of Reggio Emilia to explore and debate in order to inform further thinking and action. These principles require ongoing collaborative dialogue among educators, policy makers and funding bodies in order to be given significance in new contexts, with different educational landscapes, parameters, requirements and foci.

### **The hundred languages**

This is a metaphorical term used by Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia Approach, to describe the ways in which children access materials and resources to investigate, test and propose new understandings about the world around them. Through the use of verbal and non-verbal modes of communication using traditional and non-traditional tools, children express themselves and develop connections between ideas, contexts and theories. The use of investigative materials such as clay, light and mirrors, as well as recycled and repurposed resources, have become synonymous with this approach.

### **Participation**

There is a strong focus on developing relationships between children, educators, families and the educational program (supported by the hundred languages) to ensure that many viewpoints are considered. The educators in Reggio Emilia actively plan for strategies that support participation, which may include how small groups are structured; when parents will be invited to contribute to, and discuss, the educational program; what the role of the educator/s might have in an experience; or how children might respond to materials

and resources. The practice of sustained shared thinking is at the core.

### Listening

Carla Rinaldi, President of Reggio Children, often proposes that educators in Reggio Emilia not only listen with their ears but with all of their senses, with their hearts and minds, and even listening with their skin! Listening is an active attitude that requires educators to be mindful of how children, educators and the environment interrelate and make sense of what is occurring (Rinaldi 2006). This aids educators in not only understanding children's learning, but also more deeply understanding their own teaching. The listening is then made visible to others through the process of educational documentation.

### Learning as a process of individual and group participation

Children are actively encouraged to debate and exchange ideas with other children and the educators as they engage in purposeful play. They are able to loan and borrow, the competences needed to explore and develop ideas and theories that support their own and others' learning. Using



*Using multiple languages to express numeracy understandings*

the hundred languages, children bring a range of dimensions to the inquiry being constructed, which include learning with real emotion; looking at learning through an aesthetic lens; exploring with spirituality or mindfulness; and 'being in dialogue' with others and the materials.

### Educational research

What really sets the Reggio Emilia Approach apart from other ways of 'seeing' early childhood education is the primacy given to inquiry: not just the investigations by the children, but those professional questions that the educators propose which assist them in developing new knowledge and understanding about: the craft of teaching; children's learning and development; and the constructions of contemporary childhood. The notion of adult-directed and child-directed inquiry sits in harmony (and in parallel) as part of the rigour of professional practice, not one that has to be a choice of one or the other.

### Educational documentation

As core to teaching practice, educational documentation gives value and significance to the subjects that the educators, children and families deem important about a particular line or lines of inquiry. It makes visible, not only children's learning, but also examines the strategies that educators are using to support and guide children's learning. It captures the cycle of planning and implementation; the evaluation and assessment processes; highlights the decision-making practices; and follows the narrative of learning as it unfolds. Most importantly, it is a shared document that offers the protagonists an opportunity to exchange and debate viewpoints.

### Progettazione

The Reggio Emilia Approach does not have a prescribed curriculum framework focusing on predetermined outcomes. However, the strength of this approach lies in the ethic of care taken when planning and designing the launch of new ideas or proposals for inquiry. Great deliberation is taken over the questions that will be offered, the environment that will support and encourage learning, the relationships that may have the potential to develop as children move through their own

and others' zone of proximal development, and the type of professional inquiry that might be realised through the project.

### Organisation

The educators in Reggio Emilia spend a great deal of time and effort in preparing for their work with children. Nothing is conducted in an ad hoc manner; rather they give very deliberate and collaborative consideration to the organisation of the work being proposed. The context for potential learning is defined and the importance of the element of time is a fundamental part of the tenets and choices made by the educators. The organisation of work also gives consideration to the unique relationship between the municipality and Reggio Children. This involves a complex system of choices and shared responsibilities between all levels of stakeholder engagement (Rinaldi 2013).

### Environment, spaces and relations (context)

The notion of 'the environment as the third teacher' has made its way in to the lexicon of numerous early childhood education systems across the world. In many ways, this has drawn attention only to the physical environments of the infant and toddler centres and preschools of Reggio Emilia, resulting in an interpretation of aesthetically pleasing environments—often without substance. This concept has now been broadened by the educators in Reggio Emilia to 'the context as the third teacher' to embrace the critical importance of not only the physical environment, but also the importance of relationships, time and emotion.

### Professional development

To support the multidisciplinary nature of the staff in the infant and toddler centres and preschools of Reggio Emilia, and to illuminate the inquiry nature of their work, ongoing professional development is viewed as both a right and a duty of each individual educator (Rinaldi, 2013). Professional development is given the highest priority within every day professional activity, through the critical reflective practices of observation and documentation. In addition, regular staff meetings focus on in-depth discussion and debate of the projects, inquiry and subsequent learning experiences.



*Supporting participation of infants in routines*

### Assessment

Assessment is focused on the ongoing contribution made through giving meaning and value to the process of the educational experience as it unfolds. The assessment process includes the children's learning, the professionalism and strategies used by the adults and, as a result, examines the quality of the programs. It is seen as an opportunity to recognise and negotiate the meaning and the intention of the educational project with others, and is considered part of a broader public debate about early childhood education.

We have much to learn from our colleagues in Reggio Emilia. Imagine an Australian early childhood education context where educators have faith in themselves to respond with authenticity to children's ideas and interests, where educators trust children to be captivated by things worth knowing about, and where educators believe that parents are informed and constructive members of a collaborative learning team. What a joy that would be!

### References

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### Recommended readings

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- Project Zero and Reggio Children 2001, *Making learning visible: children as individual and group learners*, Reggio Children, Italy.

# Cultural competence in the early years: Are we really doing enough?

Laura Broadbent



Laura Broadbent has a passion for human rights and social justice. Specialising in primary and early years education, Laura has provided professional development to hundreds of in-service and pre-service teachers, assisting them to bring a global perspective to their curriculum and pedagogy. Laura has worked in a number of educational settings around the globe including France, England, Canada, Thailand, New Caledonia and Australia. She is currently using her passion for teaching and learning to develop engaging, hands-on workshops for early years educators.

Multiculturalism, diversity, cultural competence and inclusion are buzz words that pop up in the field of education time and again, and most of us, as educators, have a general idea of what these mean. We show our support for these ideals by dressing up in Peruvian cultural dress on *Harmony Day*, creating a paper maché dragon for *Chinese New Year* and rolling sushi because Yuki has just come back from a trip to Japan. These activities are fun for children and add a touch of intrigue and the 'exotic' to the classroom. Yet somehow many of us are still left with that nagging feeling that maybe, despite our good intentions, we have missed the mark. Maybe our students now think that all Peruvians wear ponchos, that all Chinese have dragons hanging in their homes and that the Japanese only eat sushi! Have all our good intentions gone out the window by accentuating differences and perpetuating stereotypes? Moreover, have we just achieved the opposite of our aim and shown ourselves to be culturally incompetent?

### Culturally incompetent? Who me?

Very often when it comes to teaching about other cultures we focus on the overtly observable aspects of that culture: festivals, food and fashion. And whilst learning about these things can bring valuable learning experiences to the classroom we must begin

to engage children with the less visible aspects of culture. *I know right now you are probably wondering 'what is she talking about?' Bear with me.* I want you to imagine an iceberg: the top poking out of the water and the big heavy bottom supporting it from underneath. When talking about culture this is an analogy that



Cultural iceberg

is commonly used. The tip of the iceberg denotes the visible aspects of a culture such as language, art, music, food and dress. However, all of these are underpinned by less visible aspects such as values, attitudes, beliefs, gender roles, expectations, and notions of beauty, self, cleanliness etc. It is the unobservable aspects of culture that drive the observable. It is these aspects that our learners need to be exposed to if we are to engage with cultures on a deeper level. If we don't, we risk representing cultures in a one-dimensional, stereotypical and tokenistic way.



Connecting with cultures

### **Turning cultural incompetence into cultural competence: Case study of a Canadian in Cape York**

As educators we cannot be experts on every culture, but we can use teachable moments as they arise to help our students make connections with others' cultures in deep and meaningful ways. These moments can be transformative for both learners and educators alike. Let me give an example.

When I first arrived in Australia from Canada I had the opportunity to accept a position in a preschool in Cape York. Knowing very little about Aboriginal culture it was the perfect opportunity to sweep away my media-induced, preconceived ideas and learn something new. Many of my students, I soon discovered, despite living alongside several Aboriginal communities, also knew very little about the local culture. And so, with the introduction of *The Rainbow Serpent* dreaming story as a stimulus, our journey began.

Dreaming stories provide an insight into a complex spiritual belief system. For educators, they represent both an historical window into the past as well as a contemporary tool for engagement with Aboriginal culture.

*Through sharing these stories we are able to explore the values, attitudes and beliefs of a culture both ancient and current.*

For me, these stories help me understand Aboriginal culture while providing an opportunity for my learners to explore their own self-identities, values, attitudes and beliefs.

In our sharing circle (soon to be 'yarning circle') we discussed our own connection to the land, beliefs about creation and ways in which we could, in our local context, reconnect to the environment: its flora and fauna. But the learning didn't stop there. We wanted to learn more about culture, more about beliefs and more about knowledge. As you can imagine, our list of questions to explore was a kilometre long. Without detailing the whole exploration, highlights included: making connections with different Aboriginal preschools on the Cape, inviting local Elders into our preschool, hunting for bush tucker with an Indigenous guide, building veggie patches and learning to care for injured local wildlife.

### **From my journey to yours**

With so many cultures to explore you may wonder where to begin. Start with the cultures in your classroom and in your local community (the Australian Census will give you the breakdown of your local area).

*Make connections with local cultural groups for meaningful exchanges. Invite parents and grandparents to be part of your explorations.*

When reaching further afield there are a number of resources to help you bring the global to the local:

- Global literature can help you introduce your students to the lives of other children around the globe. Focus on positive aspects of their lives that your students can relate to. Allow students to develop their own inquiry question to pursue. Check out the boutique library of the *Global Learning Centre* at [www.glc.edu.au](http://www.glc.edu.au) or talk to your local librarian for suggestions.
- *Thinking globally: global perspectives in the early years classroom*, produced by the Australian Government and AusAID, is a fantastic resource full of ideas for early years teachers.
- Most big non-government organisations have fantastic resources for teachers on their websites – Oxfam, World Vision and Australia's Global Education Project website [www.globaleducation.edu.au](http://www.globaleducation.edu.au) all host amazing collections of lesson plans, videos, photographs and graphic organisers to help you bring a global perspective to your classroom.

### A few final thoughts to consider

- Culture is not static. It is variable, dynamic and multi-faceted. Acknowledge differences within cultural groups just like within Australia. We have similarities, but we are not all the same.
- Allow students to talk about difference, as frank as their questions may be. Don't shy away from 'Why is his skin brown?' or 'Why is that lady in a wheelchair?' To not respond or to brush off their comments teaches students to view difference negatively (Browett & Ashman, 2011, p. 52).
- Explore concepts that are common across cultures. Love, friendship, caring, sharing and playing: these are universal concepts and can provide a link for children to relate to one another.
- Extend knowledge beyond the visible aspects of culture. This is key to being able to understand and communicate effectively with others.

- Identity starts with our own cultural background. Acknowledge and have awareness of your own culture and the various identities that make each of us who we are.

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Selfridge, R & Sokolik, S 1975, 'A comprehensive view of organizational management', *MSU Business Topics*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 46-61.

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For more information, go to:

<http://opengecko.com/interculturalism/visualising-the-iceberg-model-of-culture/>

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*Thinking globally*

# *Play-based pedagogy in Prep ... yes we can!*

*Jo Broadbent*



Jo Broadbent has worked in a variety of early childhood settings including as lead educator in child care, teacher/director in community kindergartens and most recently as a Prep teacher at Rochedale State School. In 2014, Jo developed and currently coordinates the *RNET: Early Years Network* which focusses on making strong positive connections with local early childhood services to foster school readiness and promote positive transitions from Kindergarten to Prep. Jo is passionate about the 'readiness' approach to learning in Prep and uses this philosophy to guide her current practice and advocacy in the school setting.

When I first began teaching Prep in 2008, the educational landscape and learning expectations were considerably different to what they are now. Back then, the Prep year was inherently child-centred and underpinned by developmental principles. It reflected the play-based pedagogy and strong early childhood philosophy that had driven preschool education in the many years previously.

At this time teaching and learning was guided by the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines* (EYCG), which was 'based on active learning for children through real-life situations, investigation and play' (Early Years Curriculum Guidelines 2006). Prep classrooms were characterised by ongoing social interactions, active investigations, inquiry, discovery and problem solving. Opportunities for children to engage with the more formal aspects of literacy and numeracy were offered through blocks of 'play' time. Children's ideas were valued and extended upon to support individual development and growth across all learning areas resulting in rich, meaningful engagement with the curriculum.

It is my view that with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum a substantial shift in thinking and practice began to occur, significantly impacting the nature of teaching and learning in Prep. According to the Australian Curriculum website, 'the

curriculum focuses on learning area content and achievement standards that describe what students will learn and what teachers will teach' (F-10 Curriculum 2015, Assessment, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority). This restructuring of curriculum has shifted the focus in Prep away from its traditional developmental foundations towards a performance based model characterised by data collection and student outcomes. My conversations with teachers reveal that many Prep teachers are abandoning child-centred pedagogy in favour of more formal approaches in an effort to manage the ever increasing workload and expectations of guides-to-making-judgements, C2C, reading level data, writing assessments, report cards, overcrowded curriculum and pressure from school leadership.

So, in this new Prep environment, how do we achieve a balance between meeting the expectations of the Australian Curriculum and delivering a program that engages children in meaningful and purposeful ways? From my experience, the answer lies in three important elements:

- understanding play-based pedagogy
- knowing the curriculum and identifying intentional learning opportunities
- integrating curriculum content with children's interests and learning needs.

When considering these points, it is important to remember that there are always times when implementing the curriculum requires more formal approaches.

*In my classroom, the key is balance. For me, creating an environment that balances the performance aspects and the highly engaging nature of children's play is the ultimate goal.*

The Assessment, Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) repeatedly outlines that:

*The Australian Curriculum does not specify how the content must be taught. The final decision lies with the teacher in accordance with the needs of individual students and the requirements of the school.*

Thus, play is a completely valid context for learning.

### **Understanding play-based pedagogy**

As early childhood educators, we know that play is an inherently natural way for young children to learn. Moreover, it creates a platform that allows teachers to integrate child-centred perspectives into their programs while still achieving specific learning goals and curriculum expectations (Shipley 2008). Play-based pedagogy involves giving children opportunities to make choices, direct their own learning and participate in collaborative decision-making processes. Making this a reality in the classroom requires intentional planning and strategies on behalf of the teacher to:

- design thought-provoking physical spaces to promote exploration, investigation and inquiry



*Planning and creating the Magic Hat Shop based on a literature study of the story The Magic Hat*

- provide blocks of time for children to develop their play and investigate their ideas – this may also involve time to continue working on play over multiple days
- document play experiences and allow children time to reflect upon and share their learning with others
- act as an active participant who observes, facilitates, extends play sessions and plans specific follow-up learning activities to meet curriculum learning goals.

### **Knowing the Australian Curriculum**

Being knowledgeable about, and able to articulate the content of, the curriculum is a key element in successful implementation of play-based pedagogy in Prep.

*Knowledge empowers teachers to identify intentional learning opportunities and advocate for their pedagogical decision making.*

For example, a teacher notices a small group of children building a race track with blocks. To a parent or non-teaching team member, this may appear to be simply 'playing' but

to the knowledgeable teacher, it presents an opportunity to facilitate learning across a range of subject areas. The following table demonstrates the abundance of learning possibilities inherent in 'building a race track'.

## Making the curriculum work for you

When networking with other teachers I often hear comments such as 'I don't have time to add play into my program' or 'I've got too much content to cover'. Admittedly, there is a vast amount of content in the Foundation Curriculum. However, play-based pedagogy provides teachers with a vehicle to meet curriculum goals in an engaging way, as described in the following learning experience.

Play-based pedagogy in the Prep classroom creates an engaging environment through which Australian Curriculum content can be delivered. It allows teachers to take advantage

of children's interests and questions and use them to facilitate a deeper understanding of curriculum intentions. Play doesn't have to be an add-on to our already busy workload. It can be a meaningful part of what we do every day.

## References

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Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2006, *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*, viewed 15 June 2015, <http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/981.html>

Shipley, D 2008 *Empowering children: Play based curriculum for lifelong learning*, 4th edn, Nelson Education, USA.

Building a Race Track	
Foundation Learning Area	Australian Curriculum content description
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use interaction skills including listening while others speak (<i>conversations about the race track</i>)</li> <li>Deliver short oral presentations to peers (<i>sharing completed track with the class</i>)</li> <li>Understand that texts can take many forms (<i>making plans and signs, researching books</i>)</li> <li>Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas (<i>labelling plans and making signs</i>)</li> <li>Produce some lower-case and upper-case letters using learned letter formations (<i>labels and signs</i>)</li> <li>Know that spoken sounds and words can be written down using letters of the alphabet (<i>labels and signs</i>)</li> </ul>
Maths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish understanding of processes of counting (<i>counting cars, ordinal numbers</i>)</li> <li>Use direct and indirect comparisons and explain reasoning (<i>comparing size and length blocks</i>)</li> <li>Describe familiar 2D shapes and 3D objects in the environment (<i>building with blocks</i>)</li> <li>Describe position and movement (<i>positional language – where the car went</i>)</li> </ul>
Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The way objects move depends on a variety of factors, including their size and shape (<i>experimenting with different cars on the track</i>)</li> </ul>

## Jo's story

It began with a simple provocation ... a student approached me one morning and said 'Mrs Broadbent, I want to learn about the desert. There are pyramids in the desert you know'. With that simple statement, a three week learning adventure began. I often refer to these as 'learning adventures' because you never really know what you are going to discover along the way!

I have been lucky enough to have visited Egypt myself, so I began by showing the class photos of my holiday. This created a concrete connection for the children with my real world experience and instantly engaged them. As a class, we brainstormed our prior knowledge and soon it was very clear that pyramids, mummies and museums were going to be centrepieces of this adventure. I also used this opportunity to introduce some new ideas such as hieroglyphics and papyrus to begin expanding the children's knowledge and vocabulary. With the brainstorming done, it was my turn to link the class's interests to the curriculum content descriptions using a mind map.

The next phase involved collecting resources and creating a flexible sequence of how the learning could unfold. Many changes were made along the way but it was important to have some kind of direction and logical sequence. Throughout the



Brainstorming knowledge

learning adventure we engaged in a variety of amazing experiences that supported children's curriculum knowledge. These included creating an Egyptian museum in the classroom filled with mummies and clay statues, becoming mummies by wrapping each other in toilet paper, building the Great Pyramid and Tutankhamen's tomb with blocks, investigating and making 3D shapes, using hieroglyphs to write our names and decode sight words, researching in books and on the internet, counting using an abacus, mapping, sharing our learning with our Year 5 buddy class and making papyrus to write our names on. Along the

way, we documented our learning and collected formative assessment data using photographs, video recordings, drawings, anecdotal records and annotations of children's conversations and responses. It was a fantastic learning adventure!



Creating an Egyptian museum in the classroom



# *Classroom technology: making choices for young children*

*Tracy Galuski*



Dr Tracy Galuski is an Assistant Professor for Early Childhood Studies at Empire State College. She shares her experiences as a teacher, administrator and mother to illustrate topics related to child development, classroom environments and child care administration in her online courses.

Early childhood professional practices are deeply rooted in the pedagogy of developmentally appropriate practice. While this pedagogical approach offers opportunities for appropriate uses of technology, early childhood programs lag substantially behind in embracing and integrating the potential benefits of technology (Parette, Quesenberry & Blum 2009). By carefully examining the appropriate use of technology in early childhood settings, child care program administrators and teachers can position themselves to make good decisions about its use, first receiving adequate training and support, and then moving to effective classroom integration.

### **Technology in an early childhood setting**

While a laptop computer once represented the leading edge in technology, technology today refers to devices, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets, and products, such as websites, games, and interactive stories (Plowman & McPake 2013). Twenty years ago, young children might have taken turns in a computer center on a couple of desktop computers. They most likely played games with a focus on skills, such as addition, subtraction and letter recognition. In contemporary early childhood classrooms, a small group of children might dictate a story on a tablet as a

team or use an internet browser to search for architectural images. The entire class might gather around an interactive whiteboard to watch a video clip about the topic for the day, or video chat with a sister school in a foreign country.

As these emerging technologies and social networking continue to transform mainstream culture, concerns over screen time dominate discussion among early childhood professionals. The pervasive presence of electronic media in the lives of young children means they spend a rising number of hours per week in front of screens, from televisions, computers, smartphones and tablets to handheld game devices and game consoles (Common Sense Media 2011). In this context, teachers struggle to determine whether additional screen time in the classroom is warranted. In 1996, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provided an initial position statement for early childhood professionals. Despite this, Simon, Nemeth and McManis (2013) found that some educators remain concerned about how technology fits with developmentally appropriate practice. Therefore, it is useful to frame this discussion around the widely accepted position statement.

### Providing the framework

The NAEYC position statement on technology in the classroom proposed seven guidelines for using technology with young children. This position statement sets the foundation for work with young children and serves as an excellent starting place for early childhood educators seeking to integrate technology into their programs. More recent is the joint position statement on technology from the NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center's (FRC). This statement, readily available on the NAEYC's website offers

#### NAEYC position statement on technology in the classroom

1. NAEYC believes that in any given situation, a professional judgment by the teacher is required to determine if a specific use of technology is age appropriate, individually appropriate and culturally appropriate.
2. Used appropriately, technology can enhance children's cognitive and social abilities.
3. Appropriate technology is integrated into the regular learning environment and used as one of many options to support children's learning.
4. Early childhood educators should promote equitable access to technology for all children and their families. Children with special needs should have increased access when this is helpful.
5. The power of technology to influence children's learning and development requires that attention be paid to eliminating stereotyping of any group and eliminating exposure to violence, especially as a problem-solving strategy.
6. Teachers, in collaboration with parents, should advocate for more appropriate technology applications for all children.
7. The appropriate use of technology has many implications for early childhood professional development.

(National Association for the Education of Young Children 1996)

additional principles and recommendations to guide the appropriate use of technology and interactive media as tools in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age eight (NAEYC & FRC 2012).

### Planning and curriculum

Before technology is purchased and integrated into a program, administrators and staff should carefully consider how technology fits into the larger picture of national, state, and local curriculum and standards. Haugland (2005) argues that teachers need to assess how software contributes to the broader goals or standards identified by the school, district and state. Next, teachers, administrators and parents should evaluate how it serves the overall program goals and pedagogy. Finally, individual teachers should determine which curricular area(s) technology can address and which standards or goals within the curricular area(s) can be achieved through the use of technology. The pedagogy and curriculum together should be the driving force behind any instructional use of technology (Ntuli & Kyei-Blankson 2010). Through this process, teachers can make thoughtful use of computers and other technologies in the classroom so that they do not replace children's experiences of other objects and materials but, rather, expand the range of tools children have to seek information, solve problems, understand concepts and move at their own pace (Bredenkamp & Copple 2009). Planning from the big picture to daily activities takes time but is an important process.

### Supporting teachers with professional development

Once program leaders and staff have considered their curriculum and the wide variety of available options, teachers need opportunities for relevant professional development and training in technology use. Parette and Stoner (2008) report that professional development is critical to help early childhood teachers develop operational and functional competences in using classroom technologies effectively. This is supported by NAEYC & FRC (2012) who acknowledge that in addition to professional development opportunities, teachers need examples of accepted practice to develop the technology and media knowledge, skills and

experience. Such training, including how to evaluate and adapt technology over time, should occur at the onset of using technology in the classroom and on a continuing basis.

### Allowing choices

Once it has been decided how technology fits into the overall curriculum and pedagogy, the practical aspects of its use and integration needs to be considered. Educators typically provide opportunities for children to make choices as they move through learning centres such as blocks and building, dramatic play, or science and nature, at their own pace. Haugland (2000) argued that children should have the same ability to make choices in computer usage. Technology could be placed in a designated area, for example, two computers in a technology corner or tablets in the writing center for the children to keep journals. Similar to other learning centers, children need time to experiment and explore technology and teachers should intervene only when children appear frustrated or reach an impasse with the technology or each other (Haugland 1999).

*Children should be allowed to make choices about technology use as they move through learning centres at their own pace.*

### Focusing on the process

When opportunities for open-ended art are made available, children learn through the process of creating. They might explore different mediums such as clay, paint and collage materials, and develop a project without a specific outcome in mind. Similarly, Badgett and Snider (1995) recommend open-ended software programs that give children a sense of control over their environment and pride in accomplishment. Technologies, such as some computer games and applications, offer children opportunities to create their own projects. These open-ended activities support cognitive development. Accordingly, Bredekamp and Copple (2009) explain that developmentally appropriate use of technology allows children to actively talk about what they are doing, document their learning and move at their own pace. Educators should focus on the process and developmental

outcomes as the children explore and engage socially with technology and one another.

### Providing opportunities for assessment

Typically, assessment of children in an early childhood classroom is ongoing and frequently takes the form of portfolios. If technology is added to a classroom to address specific curricular needs, it is important to develop methods to monitor and document students' progress using technology and to identify instruction that occurs when using computers (Ntuli & Kyei-Blankson 2010). Teachers should continue to assess whether the chosen technology meets the specific purposes for which it was intended and track how it is used by the children.

### Conclusion

Children are exposed to technology in many aspects of their lives, and it can no longer be avoided in early childhood programs.

*When technology is integrated into early childhood programs using developmentally appropriate practices, professionals are positioned to improve program quality and embrace the potential of technology.*

Making informed decisions that ensure that the chosen technology fits with the pedagogy and curriculum, and providing training and support to ensure smooth implementation allow for positive experiences for all involved.

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## Join the ECTA team

ECTA is looking for volunteers to join the *Educating Young Children* editorial team. Whether you are an early childhood educator or a university student looking for work experience, this is the perfect fit. We are looking for people who can help us with any of the following:

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# *Building a caring community of learners through music*

*Desley Jones*



Desley Jones is director of Ballymore Kindergarten in Brisbane. Desley has a degree in education and an honours degree in psychology and was a 2011 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. Desley's framework for intentional teaching for relationships – *Creating a Caring Community of Learners* – was accepted for presentation at the Infants and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing Conference (IECSEW) held in Canberra in 2013. In addition to teaching full-time, Desley presents workshops and writes articles for educators.

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*... early relationships are viewed as both the foundation and the scaffold on which cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social, and moral development unfold. (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000, p. 349)*

Brain research tells us that overall neurological development, the 'cornerstone' of all aspects of development, thrives when parents and caregivers nurture healthy relationships (Nagel 2012, p. 157). Positive relationships not only support self-awareness, social competence, secure attachment, temperament, empathy, conscience and behaviour but also support a strong beginning at school and overall academic achievement. They are as important to school success as a child's IQ.

*From Neurons to Neighbourhoods* (as cited in Nagel 2012) identifies the following features that positive relationships require:

- reliable support to build confidence and trust
- responsiveness to build a sense of agency and self-efficacy
- protection from harm and unforeseen threats
- affection to build self esteem
- opportunities to experience and resolve conflict co-operatively
- scaffolding of new skills and capacities
- reciprocal interaction; and
- mutual respect.

In practice, what would this look like?

At Ballymore Kindergarten, philosophical underpinnings and intentional teaching decisions are based on a framework for understanding relationships in a group setting. The framework – *Creating a Caring Community of Learners* – is based on six elements that are the foundation for the curriculum. The six elements are:

1. **Respect and empathy** – acknowledging children's feelings and experiences as the starting point for intentional teaching.
2. **A supportive base** (focus on calm) – knowing how the physical, social, emotional and psychological environment supports children to face challenges both in the group setting and beyond.
3. **Expectations and self-regulation** – helping children to recognise, understand and manage emotions, behaviour and thinking.
4. **A sense of agency** – maintaining a 'strengths based' view of young children, using play to give children a sense of worth and competence, and developing respect for themselves and others.
5. **Problem solving** – enhancing emotional and social wellbeing across all areas of the curriculum, by empowering children.



*Group singing*

6. **Communication** (talking and listening)
- considering the complexities of communication to help children develop a consciousness of others and to be respectful communicators.

Group sessions, whether for discussions, story or music, are an essential part of this curriculum.

Group sessions are valuable for:

- developing a sense of belonging
- building a consciousness of, and connectedness to, others
- experiencing shared sustained thinking
- providing opportunities to practise emotional and social skills (e.g. listening, turn-taking, sharing humour, self-regulation), and executive functioning skills (working memory, inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility); and

- observing adults as they model a range of social situations in a positive way.

Music also has the potential to calm, connect, challenge, delight, validate and change – with significant impacts on a young child's development and learning. To be effective, music sessions need not be long or overly stimulating. Nor need they be delivered by a trained musician. Some of the most powerful musical moments often involve simple songs that can be shared at anytime and anywhere. Such songs are not only easy to use whenever needed, but when we rely on our own singing, rather than a CD or iPod, songs can easily be adapted – to sing fast, slow, with new words the children suggest or with changes to actions.

## How do music experiences support the six elements of our relationships framework?

Sharing music with young children can offer some of the most satisfying and collaborative teaching experiences. Music holds a unique place in supporting positive relationships in early childhood settings.

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Element of Relationships Framework	Musical experience	Connections
Respect and empathy	Hello songs <i>Humpty dumpty</i> transition	Acknowledging group members Naming other children
Supportive base	<i>My pigeon house</i> <i>Warm kitty, soft kitty</i>	Calming songs
Expectations and self-regulation	Freeze games BINGO <i>Down by the banks of the hanky panky</i>	Songs that require inhibitory control
Agency	<i>Stir up the pudding oh</i> <i>I've got this clapping feeling</i> <i>Seven steps</i> <i>Criss cross</i> <i>Well there was jaws</i>	Songs that incorporate children's ideas Songs that elicit a response from others e.g. surprise and delight
Problem solving	<i>Snail snail</i> <i>Grey ponies</i> <i>Hi my name is Joe</i>	Songs that encourage thinking e.g. how to work together and how to put actions to a song
Communication	<i>Bee bee</i> <i>Willaby wallaby woo</i> <i>Do you know the muffin man?</i> <i>When I was one</i> <i>If you're happy and you know it ...</i>	Songs that focus on listening, rhyming, consciousness of others and reading emotions

# Building mathematical skills through design play

Sue Southey



Sue Southey is Co-director at Springwood Community Kindergarten. She is a member of the ECTA State Co-ordinating Committee. In 2009 she was a state finalist in the NEITA Inspirational Teaching Award and in 2013 she received the Inspirational Teaching Award from the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland. In recent years Sue has worked as a sessional academic at QUT, Griffith University, as a team member of the K-10 resources team at the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, and a teacher on the eKindy team at Brisbane School of Distance Education.

Open-ended materials make up a large part of the resources that we use in our early childhood learning environments. These are usually presented to children in ways that allow them to interact in creative and playful ways. Children's interaction with objects stimulates a range of responses from sensory exploration to creating, designing or storytelling. In this article, I am focussing on how children work with open-ended materials to create designs and how this design work supports children's mathematical thinking.

### What is design play?

The Online Oxford Dictionary (2015) defines *design* as a purpose or planning that exists behind an action. In this case arranging or design indicates that the child is doing more than just using their senses to explore objects, but instead the child is organising objects in intentional ways. This intentional design occurs as children notice and respond to attributes of the objects as they play. Design occurs in many forms of play including block building, construction, collage and arranging and printing. In this form of play the child thinks intentionally about how objects are placed in relation to each other, often with the intent of creating aesthetically pleasing arrangements. This phenomenon is similar to Gura's observations of children's block play with project blocks in the Froebel Blockplay Project. She noted that:

*when children are free to invent such arrangements [of blocks], they seem to gain as much satisfaction from organizing their blocks in non-utilitarian ways as when pursuing more definite goals. The appeal seems to be both mathematical and aesthetic. (Froebel Blockplay Research Group 1992, p. 75).*

This design play differs from play where the child uses objects to represent ideas, other objects or people. In dramatic or pretend play children 'imagine' attributes of objects that do not actually exist but are created by the child to fit the narrative of the play. In design play the child is responding to the attributes they can see and touch.

### Other kinds of design play

As children design, they are exploring the manipulation of objects in space. Design, however, does not just occur in manipulative play. When children print or create with collage, they are creating designs by exploring relationships between shapes and space. This is in contrast to children's drawings or paintings, since typically when they draw, children



move quickly into representing objects and people to develop narratives about their pictures. Whilst this is highly valuable play, it does not provide as many opportunities to build children's awareness of mathematical concepts.

### How mathematical thinking evolves from design play

Design play provides 'brain food' for children as they create unique arrangements of objects. Children create their own rules about how objects will be placed. These show up as features in their designs such as making lines, enclosing space, matching length, creating patterns, arranging items symmetrically or placing objects in a series.

Educators who are aware of the mathematical meanings inherent in children's design work are able to make connections to mathematical concepts such as symmetry, counting, patterning, naming shapes, tessellation, comparing attributes, data collection and measurement.

### Practical aspects of design play

There are practical aspects that support children to engage in high level thinking as they design using open-ended materials. These include managements of time, space, routines and materials as well as ways in which educators interact with children as they play.

Typically, design play makes use of loose parts, manipulatives and recycled materials. These objects can be tailored to the needs of the children in the group. Dinosaurs and hardware items will often inspire boys to design. Culturally significant items can be added to reflect the individual needs of children in the group. Educators need good storage systems to ensure that sets are accessible, well maintained and in good condition. The materials should be presented in organised ways so that children are able to make choices about what they use. For example, when using a hammering set, the plastic tiles should be sorted into colours or

shapes so that children think about the objects they are using rather than using a 'lucky dip' approach.

To avoid chaos, children need to be taught how to



independently access and tidy away their design materials. Ideally, an adult present during the play supports the development of mathematical language as children design. However, this is not always possible. Alternatively, children can photograph their own designs so that educators and children can reflect on their projects without necessarily being present during the play. In many cases, it is possible to infer children's mathematical concepts from looking at their designs.

### The role of relationships in design play

Children can work either independently or collaboratively on their designs. Working together increases the likelihood of shared conversations and joint problem solving. Some children, however, find that they are very particular about the arrangement of objects in their designs and prefer to work alone. In either case it is important to allow time and possibilities for extending the play over several sessions.

Informing parents about the value of this play, particularly the mathematical thinking, often reduces their concerns about the numeracy skills required for formal schooling.

Number work that evolves from children's own designs has much more meaning and relevance for the child.

Children are more likely to be inspired to count large numbers of items from their own design work rather than counting tasks imposed by adults. Parents also experience how enthusiastic children are about mathematical thinking that evolves from design play.

### Summary

In early childhood settings we frequently provide open-ended materials in the hope that children will engage in creative and personally meaningful play. However, a closer regard for how children actually engage with these materials provides rich opportunities for gaining mathematical knowledge, skills and dispositions in our early childhood settings.

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# Food intolerances affecting behaviour

Sue Dengate



Sue Dengate is the author of the best-selling Fed Up series published by Random House Australia. Sue became interested in the effects of food additives after the birth of her first child 30 years ago. Since then, Sue has focused on the effects of food chemicals on children's behaviour, health and learning ability. In 2001, Sue completed a round-the-world 'supermarket tour' to compare the use of food additives in 15 countries. Her ground-breaking study about the behavioural effects of a common bread preservative was published in a medical journal in 2002. Sue, helped by her husband Dr Howard Dengate, a food scientist, runs the Food Intolerance Network through the website [www.fedup.com.au](http://www.fedup.com.au). Sue was an Australian of the Year finalist in 2009.

Penny (not her real name) was confused by her three-year-old's behaviour. Although normally calm and agreeable, Isabella sometimes acted up and Penny didn't know why. 'She gets loud and excited, runs around, makes silly noises and won't listen to me', she wrote.

Isabella's most recent outburst happened after she ate a packet of healthy-looking snacks. In the past, Penny blamed sugar, but Isabella hadn't eaten any sugar – and research (Wolraich et al. 1994) has shown that sugar is not associated with children's behaviour.

Like most parents, Penny knew that food additives can be linked to children's behaviour (see Box 1). At home she served mostly whole foods and she knew to read ingredient labels. The trouble was, Penny thought a product with no apparent artificial ingredients should be safe.

### Labelling has changed

Food labelling has changed since the publication of a University of Southampton study (McCann et al. 2007) showing that normal, healthy children can be affected by food additives. From July this year, products with artificial colours in the European Union (EU) must carry a warning label 'may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children'. The warning won't be used in Australia, but many manufacturers have realised that parents would prefer to avoid harmful additives.

In an attempt to make their products seem additive-free, some manufacturers have resorted

### Signs of food intolerance in young children

- grumpiness, moodiness, oppositional defiance
- long or frequent tantrums
- head banging, headaches
- restlessness, overactivity
- difficulty settling to sleep, night waking, night terrors
- grizzly, anxious or unhappy temperament
- reflux, constipation and/or diarrhoea, 'sneaky poos'
- asthma, stuffy or runny nose, frequent colds
- eczema or other itchy rashes

to tricks. One that works well is to use names such as sunset yellow and sodium benzoate instead of numbers such as 110 and 211.

Another trick is an additive-free claim on the front of the packet. Many parents look no further than a 'no artificial colours or flavours' sticker, forgetting that a product with this label can still contain preservatives or flavour enhancers.

Most parents know to avoid MSG (flavour enhancer 621), but may be unaware of the newer flavour enhancers (627, 631, 635) that have been designed to boost the effect of MSG up to 15 times.

As well, products with an 'All natural, No MSG' claim on the label may contain some form of

MSG - known as free glutamates – such as yeast extract, hydrolysed vegetable protein, autolysed yeast or even just ‘flavour’. In 1996, a proposal in the USA that would have required all forms of free glutamate to be identified on packet labels was withdrawn due to industry pressure. Although a ‘no MSG’ claim on foods with free glutamates is considered misleading overseas, you’ll see it on labels here.

### ‘Natural’ can be a problem too

Few parents are aware that naturally occurring chemicals in healthy foods can cause a problem for some children too, especially if eaten every day or in large doses.

Foods high in natural food chemicals, called salicylates, include most fruit – especially citrus, berries, dried fruits and fruit juices; some vegetables such as broccoli and tomato-based sauces; herbs and spices, especially rosemary or herb extract used as a preservative; medications such as Nurofen or salicylate based teething gel, and strong fruit flavours in medicinal syrups or vitamin supplements. Foods high in natural chemicals, called amines, include cheese and chocolate.

Parents rarely realise that their children are affected by additives, salicylates or amines unless they eat a large dose in a short time, for example at Christmas or Easter, or until they reduce their intake. This is because when food chemicals are eaten frequently the effects fluctuate and can build up very slowly.

### Cutting down

Some families see improvements by following these hints: switch to preservative-free bread,

avoid nasty additives (see box 2), drink water as the main drink, limit fruit to two pieces of fresh fruit a day and avoid fruit-flavoured, tomato-based or strongly flavoured products. Some of the safest items for lunchboxes include home-made additive-free sandwiches (for example, preservative-free bread and preservative-free cream cheese), red or golden delicious apples, plain crackers such as Arnott’s Salada biscuits, unflavoured plain sweet biscuits such as Arnott’s Arrowroots or Teddy Bears, home-made pear muffins and oat bars or – as a treat – plain unflavoured chips.

One mother wrote:

*I cut back my five-year-old daughter’s intake of fruit to about a quarter of what she normally had. Within days we saw dramatic changes. Her behaviour evened out ... she was more sensible and obliging, less aggressive and defiant, and altogether much more pleasant to live with.*

If cutting down isn’t enough, a three-week trial of an additive-free diet low in salicylates, amines and glutamates – and sometimes dairy foods and gluten as well – followed by food challenges under the supervision of an experienced dietitian can be the quickest way to identify offending food chemicals. (ask the Food Intolerance Network for contacts [www.fedup.com.au](http://www.fedup.com.au).)

For little Isabella, the culprit turned out to be a strongly flavoured snack sold in health food aisles with a ‘no artificial colours, flavours or MSG’ front of packet claim. ‘We buy those because they are so healthy’, said Penny. She was relieved to learn that that Isabella’s problem was a reaction to food instead of her daughter’s natural temperament – ‘I thought she was just like that’ – and could be easily changed.

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### Additives to avoid

**COLOURS:** 102 tartrazine, 104 quinoline, 110 sunset yellow 122 carmoisine, 123 amaranth, 124 ponceau 127 erythrosine, 129 allura red, 132 indigotine 133 brilliant blue, 142 green S, 143 fast green FCF 151 brilliant black, 155 brown HT 160b annatto (natural)

**PRESERVATIVES:** 200-203 sorbates, 210-213 benzoates, 220-228 sulphites, 280-283 propionates, 249-252 nitrates, nitrites

**SYNTHETIC ANTIOXIDANTS:** 310-312 gallates, 319-320 TBHQ, BHA, BHT

**FLAVOUR ENHANCERS:** 621 MSG, 627 disodium inosinate, 631 disodium guanylate, 635 ribonucleotides, HVP, HPP, hydrolysed/autolyzed, plant/vegetable/wheat/soy protein, yeast, yeast extracts, ‘flavour/s’

# ***Your time to shine: simple steps to boost unlimited energy***

***Roushini Devi***



Roushini has over 30 years experience working with children, youths, adults, seniors and the wider community. She is currently presenting interactive shows for children 0–5 years, an accredited program for Prep to Year Seven, *Bollywood Fun & Fitness* for active after school, vacation care excursions and interactive workshops for various organisations. These popular programs have given Roushini opportunities to work around Australia and internationally. She considers the most effective way to share and teach any new subject to any age group is by making programs interactive and adaptable for participants to get involved and learn by having fun and play.

No matter who we are, the modern, fast and busy lifestyle places massive demands on us. Whether it be balancing our work and personal lives, coping with the rising cost of living or dealing with people and environments our energy is sapped. Many of us find ourselves exhausted rushing from one part of our lives to the next, keeping up with must have technologies. This can affect our health and wellbeing and lead to worry and stress. To further deplete our natural energy level, we mindlessly supplement real energy with quick pick-me-ups like caffeine, sugar-loaded drinks and snacks.

### **How to keep yourself and children energised the whole day long**

#### **1. Know your energy cycle**

When possible, do the trickiest, most complicated, brain draining activities when your energy level is high. Learning something that will require a lot of concentration, following instructions or working with others is best done in the morning. Around 2 pm, which is when most people's energy dips, we are less patient and creative and this works against achieving goals. This is the time to introduce relaxing activities. A great idea that can be implemented with the children.

#### **2. Create the perfect space**

Create a space that feels, sounds and smells great. Personalise your space with fun pictures

of yourself and children. Look at the positive personality of each child and create an individual poster using photos a motivational quote. For example, 'Ben, your beautiful smile brings sunshine to our classroom'.

#### **3. Do 'The Deskercise'**

'Deskercise' involves low-key stretching exercises that release tension and unblock energy. Invest in an iPod filled with your and the children's favourite feel good, uplifting songs. Get up and try some of these: neck rolls, shoulder shrugs, wrist rolls, facial massage, ankle circles, giving each other high tens (using both hands instead of high fives) and giggling. These exercises are an instant energy booster and can help prevent tense muscles, and being overtired, stressed and knotted. Practise every day and save costly treatment at the chiropractor or massage therapist.

#### **4. Up the water intake**

Water hydrates us, especially our brain. Make a habit of drinking water the whole day long. Encourage children to do the same and always have a waterbottle handy. For coffee drinkers, for every cup of coffee, add an extra two glasses of water to your daily intake. When you are dehydrated, you lack energy and focus, which derails your creativity and productivity.

### 5. Better food habits

Eat a good breakfast, lighter lunch and even lighter dinner. Ideally eat five small meals a day. Avoid junk food. Inform parents about what are appropriate, healthy and energy fueling foods for school.

### 6. Breathe

Deep breathing interrupts the stress response and can be a powerful way of recharging yourself and regaining a more natural rhythm. Deep breathing can relieve headaches, relax shoulders, stop racing thoughts, increase energy and turn restlessness into calmness. Involve the children in a breathing session for a few minutes every day. You will see the difference in their behaviour. Become mindful about breathing and encourage the children to do the same.

### 7. Step outdoors

Getting outside for at least 20 minutes twice

a day helps provide essential energy. Exposure to the outdoors can also aid in getting a good night's sleep because the light helps regulate your body clock.

### 8. Be positive

I have found that our emotions actually have a huge impact on whether we feel energetic or drained. Avoid people who suck your energy through negativity and the constant need for your attention and time. Surround yourself with positive people who are buzzing with feel-good vibes, are living in the moment and are full of love, gratitude, excitement, enthusiasm, joy, hope, passion and satisfaction. Talk to children about what being positive or negative does to our energy levels. Compliment and present weekly awards to the most positive student of the week. The classroom will be full of positive energy in no time.

#### There are six energy profiles:

1. **Physical** – you can influence your own personal physical wellbeing through good nutrition, fitness and understanding of your own health. This directly affects your emotional and intellectual wellbeing and has long-term health benefits. The mind, body and soul are interlinked and as you improve your physical body, your brain will function more efficiently and you will find yourself able to cope more easily with an abundance of energy.
2. **Emotional** – your emotional state has a direct bearing on your energy levels. Each of us has a finite amount of emotional energy – a resource we need to replenish as much as we can. It is possible to experience wonderful positive emotions, such as happiness and love. However, each positive emotion has its opposite and many of us can have negative emotions such as worry, fear, stress and anger.
3. **Intellectual** – is about having the energy to use your brain. Brain stimulation on a daily basis is very important for our mental health. The more you read, have stimulating conversations, play board games or do puzzles, the more active your brain will stay. Stimulate your brain by learning new, exciting and fun ways of doing the same activity in different ways or try to learn something new like language, dance or the arts.
4. **Creative** – creativity is the use of our minds for inspiration, ideas and imagination. Whatever your interests or hobbies, invest time now to enjoy them. We all have creative skills. However, at some point most of us feel we are too old or it is too late to continue being creative beings. Change your mindset, overcome the mental blockage and with the help of your 'inner child' have a go, be inspired and embrace your creative skills.
5. **Personal** – your personal energy is based on you, living as your authentic self. What does this mean? Do you live by your values and beliefs? Do you spend time doing what you really love doing? What is it that makes your heart sing? How much time do you spend in positive encounters? Understanding self and taking time out for you is an important step in freeing your personal energy. Be happy with who you are. Stop comparing yourself with others. Surround yourself with people who make you feel good about yourself and who make you feel successful and loved. Do the same for others. Take responsibility for your own feelings, actions and patterns of behaviour. Forgive, let go and release past negative stories and patterns. You will gain positive energy.
6. **Spiritual** – my understanding of spirituality is that it encompasses having clearly defined values, maintaining compassion and empathy for oneself and others, and feeling a sense of purpose that there is more to life. You will have your own understanding of spirituality. Be open to learning and new, different ways to relax, meditate and bring calmness in your life. Listen to your inner voice and spoken words – concentrate on positives, adopt an attitude of feeling lucky and live in the moment.

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**Reviewed by:** Sue Webster

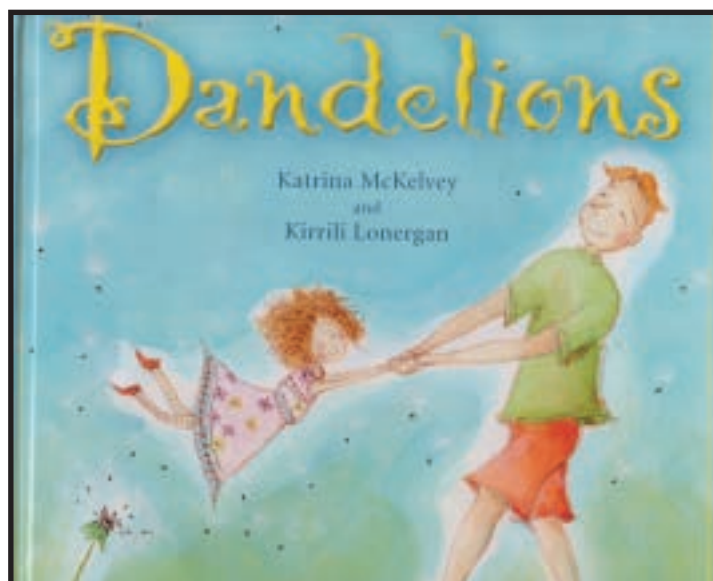
What a delightful book! I must admit that I had tears in my eyes as I finished this story. There was so much that I adored about this book I do not know where to begin. Maybe it is because Father's Day has only recently passed that I had fathers on my mind but I found this story one that I would use with my own children or class at any time of year.

This seems to be Katrina McKelvey's first picture book but she has nailed it! The story is simply this – a little girl runs out of the house as her father inadvertently mows over the dandelion plants that she has been waiting to flower and turn into puff balls. Devastated, she describes why she loves dandelions so much even though her dad says they are just weeds. Her father then goes about rectifying the mistake and sharing a beautiful afternoon with his daughter. You will have to read the beautiful resolution! The writing describes the most delightful afternoon that a father and daughter could share and explores forgiveness.

This wonderful story is accompanied by very special illustrations that take the story to another level. The exquisite watercolour illustrations of father and daughter and dandelion puff balls in flight fill your imagination.

This book celebrates love between fathers and daughters as well as the resilience of nature. I would recommend it for teachers and parents of children aged between 4 and 8.

Enjoy – you will not be disappointed.



**Title:** **Making mindful magic**

**Author and Illustrator:** **Lea McNoulty**

**Published By:** **Tien Wah Press**

**Publication Date:** **1 November 2015**

**ISBN:** **9780994255204**

**RRP:** **\$14.95**

**Reviewed by:** **Sue Webster**

A first self-published book by Lea McNoulty, *Making mindful magic*, is an interesting book about an interesting topic.

Mindfulness is discussed more at the moment than ever before. I have attended seminars covering it and discussed it with friends. What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness to me is about being aware of my current thoughts, feelings, actions and sensations – of being aware to what is occurring right this very moment to me and around me.

We all rush through each week, each day, and each moment. So how delightful to have a book that can help parents and educators teach children to stop and think about what they are doing and to just 'be'. To live in the moment.

Lea McNoulty's book aims to bring mindfulness into a child's everyday life. It is a cleverly written book that you can pick up any day and choose a page to read to a child and 'do' – sit quietly – follow a bird – take as long as you can ...

Each idea is accompanied with a short poetic verse.

Each double page presents a different scenario that encourages you to think and gives you a suggestion of something to do that can encourage mindfulness in your child's day.

Each verse is illustrated with full colour artworks created by Lea herself, adding beautifully to the calmness that this book brings as you flick through deciding on the one page to use/think about/present today.



At the back of the book there is also a guide for parents and teachers with ideas to make the best use of the book.

An ideal book for home or school to help see the magic in the ordinary.

Visit [www.makingmindfulchildren.com](http://www.makingmindfulchildren.com) for free articles and resources to learn more about mindfulness.

In Lea McNoulty's own words ... every day or so 'open this book, connect with a page and do it'.

In the words of Buddha some two thousand five hundred years ago ... 'With mindfulness strive on'.

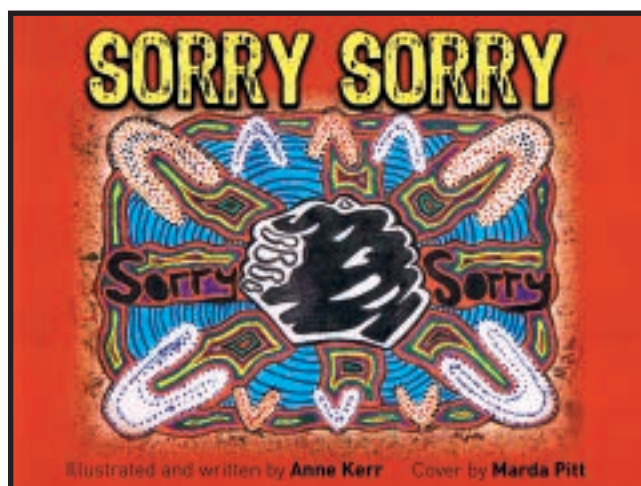
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Sorry sorry</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Anne Kerr</b>
<b>Illustrator:</b>	<b>Anne Kerr</b>
<b>Cover:</b>	<b>Marda Pitt</b>
<b>Published by:</b>	<b>Boolarong Press</b>
<b>Year of Publication:</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>ISBN:</b>	<b>9781925046687</b>
<b>RRP:</b>	<b>\$15.95</b>
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	<b>Julie Jones (Co-director C&amp;K The Gap Kindergarten)</b>

This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of the arrival of Europeans and its devastating impact on Indigenous Australians, their land and the animals. The book uses age appropriate language and has sparked many meaningful conversations with children, educators and families at our kindergarten. Some families told us that the book provoked conversations at home as their child retold the story to them. 'That's not fair!' has been a common reaction when reading the book to different groups at kindergarten. The concepts of sharing, caring and being fair are interwoven throughout the story and these are concepts that children can easily engage with and understand. The final message is one of hope, that by working together as a team we can understand each other better.

'This is a new journey. A journey together where it is important to share, be fair and to care' reads the final page.

Anne Kerr has been a kindergarten teacher for over 25 years and it shows in the accessible language she uses. The cover page by Marda Pitt, a Tjungundji woman, with the handshake at its centre representing friendship lends itself to discussions with children about working together and being friendly.

*Sorry sorry* has been an invaluable resource at our kindergarten as we learn and work together with children on the journey of reconciliation with Australia's First Peoples. This is a fantastic book not only for educators but also for children and families. At the end of the book are many practical ideas for using the *Sorry Sorry* book for educators, as well as suggestions for how to create a journey map. It is a book that can be returned to time and time again with its sensitive and simple storytelling.



**Title:** Everyone's got a bottom  
**Author:** Tess Rowley  
**Illustrator:** Jodi Edwards  
**Published by:** Family Planning Queensland  
**Reviewed by:** Little Zebra Childcare Centre Kindergarten

We were very lucky to have BJ from the Inclusion Support Agency in Rockhampton select us to review *Everyone's got a bottom* (2007). The story is told by a boy called Ben who lives with his mum, dad, brother Jack, sister Emma and cat Soxy and talks about the differences between boys' and girls' body parts.

We always enjoy reading new books and *Everyone's got a bottom* did not disappoint with the bright and colourful illustrations on every page, especially of Baby Emma and Soxy the cat. Most of our children thought Emma and Soxy were their favourite characters!

'I liked the cat,' said Amaya.

'I liked the baby,' said Chloe.

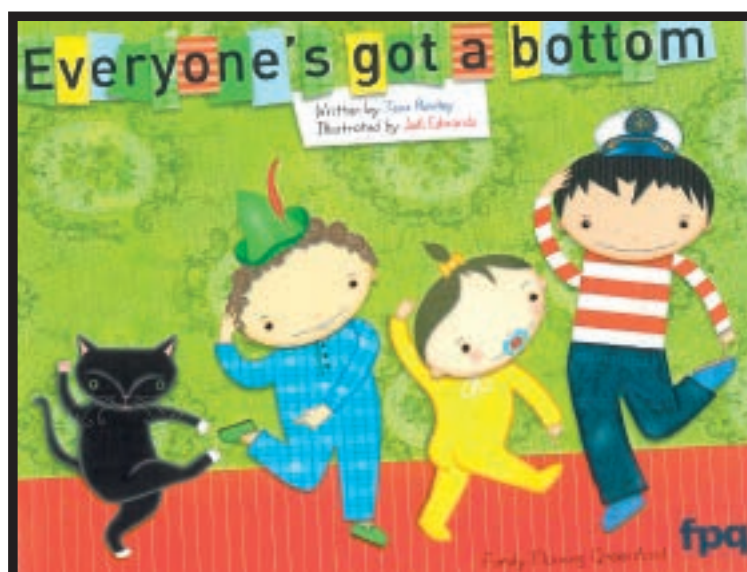
There were some really important lessons that we learnt from this book like taking care of our bodies and that our private parts are for us ('Don't touch other people's bodies,' said Havana) and that no one else should be touching them.

'Don't touch other people,' said Ethan.

If somebody does touch us we can talk to an adult we can trust such as our mummies, daddies and grandparents at home ('I can talk to my Aunty too,' said Elizabeth) and our teachers at Kindy.

From our head to our toes, we can say what goes.

This book was a great book to listen to.



## 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'.
- Use a single space after full stop.
- Use single quotes.
- Use an en dash between spans of numbers.
- 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, .... The preferred style for the *ECTA Journal* is the author-date system (pp. 188–208 of the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers, 6th ed.*).

Example of in-text citations: This approach (Smith 1995; Tyler 2002) suggests ...

Example of book referencing: O'Hagan, M 2001, *Early years practitioner*, 4th edn, Harcourt, London.

Example of journal referencing: Bredekamp, S 2006, 'Staying true to our principles', *Educating Young Children*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 21-4.

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](mailto: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.

