



# ***Educating Young Children***

Learning and teaching in the  
early childhood years

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## **EDITORIAL PANEL**

Sarah-Jane Johnson  
Jeanie Watt  
Marion Mori  
Nebula Wild  
Sharon McKinlay  
Kate Shapcott  
Archana Sinh  
Kate Constantinou  
Sue Webster  
Angela Drysdale

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## **Address all correspondence and advertising enquiries to**

Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA Inc.)

20 Hilton Road, Gympie Qld 4570

Ph: 0418 157 280 Fax: 07 5481 1148

e. [info@ecta.org.au](mailto:info@ecta.org.au) w. [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au)

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## **Photographs**

All photographs are attributed to the author unless otherwise noted.

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### *From the President*

*Kim Walters*

Welcome everyone, to the first edition of *Educating Young Children* for 2017. I would like to welcome Marion Mori as editor to our journal and wish her all the best for 2017 as she and our editorial team continue to strive to produce this excellent high quality journal. In this journal, long standing members of the team reflect on our past editor Lynne Moore's huge contribution.

Articles for the journal are sourced from ECTA members, conference presenters and leaders in the early childhood field and provide our members with current information to enrich their professional development. I invite you to submit an article or join the editorial committee. Please contact Marion on [journal@ecta.org.au](mailto:journal@ecta.org.au). All submission requirements and guidelines can be found on our website.

This journal, a copy of which will be stored as a PDF in the Members Centre of our website, provides professional development opportunities for all members. The Members Centre of our website has three webpages, each with direct links to resources available only to members. The links are only available after members have logged into the site using their username and password. The Members' Centre houses links to PDF copies of past *Educating Young Children* journals (since 2006), webinars (and past Videolinq recordings) (since 2009) along with annual and regional conference presenter notes, handouts and PowerPoint presentations (if made available by presenters).

Organisational members should contact their ECTA contact person for their organisation's password and username for the website. If you require your username and password resent email me at [kim@ecta.org.au](mailto:kim@ecta.org.au). The information in the Members Centre is especially valuable

for our members in rural and remote areas who struggle to find opportunities to engage with topics of particular concern to early childhood professionals.

Members can access the recording of webinars the day after they are presented, via the Online PD section of the Members Centre of the website. Members who view the recordings should enter their time spent doing so into their CPD in a similar fashion to the professional ECTA journal readings you complete. Log-in details are available by emailing [info@ecta.org.au](mailto:info@ecta.org.au).

Our webinar series continues throughout the year and the semester one program is available in the online calendar section of our website. Register now for *Mathematical thinking through design play* by Sue Southey, Wednesday 19 April, 6–7:30 pm and *Playing with grammar in the early years* by Beryl Exley, Wednesday 17 May, 4–5:30 pm.

The State Coordinating Committee continues to prioritise supporting regional and remote members and ECTA groups in 2017. We are keen to know how we can best support our existing groups in Mackay, Townsville, Cairns, Fitzroy (Rockhampton), Biloela, Capricorn Coast (Yeppoon), Gladstone, Cooloola (Gympie), Hervey Bay, Toowoomba, Logan and Brisbane North, all of whom support members in their areas. Our Sunshine Coast group needs three ECTA individual members to take on the positions of office bearers so that the group can support early childhood professionals on the coast.

Please contact Jo Young, our ECTA Regional Groups Coordinator, at [joanne@ecta.org.au](mailto:joanne@ecta.org.au) for more information on establishing a new group or connecting with an established group.

If you have not been receiving eNEWS, email us with your current email address. You can also check your SPAM folders and set ECTA as a trusted sender. Organisational members should firstly contact the ECTA contact person for their organisation, as they should be receiving and then forwarding eNEWS on to all early childhood staff.

The ECTA State Coordinating Committee has funded a regional tour by last year's Conference keynote presenter, Julie Cross. The tour has been a huge success and has allowed Julie's message to be heard across the state. *'Keep your sparkle on everyone'* and remember, change requires action on your part.

Registration for our ECTA Annual Conference is now open via our website. Several workshops are nearing capacity, so to avoid disappointment do not delay. Register now. This year's conference will be held on 24 June at Sheldon Event Centre, in the grounds of Sheldon College, 1 Taylor Road, Thornlands, Brisbane. The conference is once again shaping up to be another high-quality event with forty-two workshops to choose from on the day. All

information about the conference can be found on the ECTA website [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au).

ECTA has contacted Kate Jones, the Minister for Education, regarding reports from our members that there has been a regression of allocated Prep aide time in some schools. We applaud those principals who realise that one dedicated full-time teacher aide per Prep classroom is vital for a smooth, positive, seamless transition into the school setting. Teacher aides in Prep classrooms work in partnership with teachers to collaborate on planning, learning and assessment. Their contribution is invaluable, both during the transition phase and throughout the year, as it supports children's learning and development, especially those with additional needs and those who require additional support to reach their full potential. If aide time has impacted your teaching and the children's learning, please send feedback to [president@ecta.org.au](mailto:president@ecta.org.au). All feedback sent to ECTA is confidential and all identifying details are removed by me personally.

Good luck for the coming year.

Kim

# 42nd ECTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## 24 June 2017

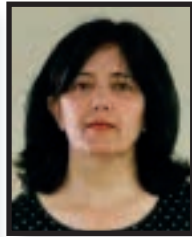
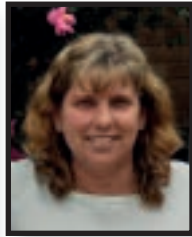
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### *A tribute to Lynne Moore – Editor, Educating Young Children Journal*



*Angela Drysdale, Sue Webster  
and Archana Sinh on behalf of  
the editorial committee*

This year, 2017, marks a significant change for *Educating Young Children*, as Lynne Moore will no longer be at the helm of the journal. Lynne has played a significant role in the development of the journal since 2002 and it is for this that we wish to pay tribute.

Lynne joined the editorial committee as a highly experienced educator, who began her career in early childhood as a director in community kindergartens and preschools. Her experiences have included completion of a Master of Education in Early Childhood, and roles as lecturer and mentor of students at universities and TAFE institutes, program manager of early childhood studies, community resource officer

with the Department of Communities, regional facilitator for the State-wide Training Strategy and early childhood consultant with C&K. Passionate about early childhood and quality experiences for all children, Lynne was also instrumental in the development of the C&K curriculum, *Building waterfalls*. Lynne's expertise continues to be recognised in the early childhood sector, as she moved from C&K to early childhood project officer to the Queensland Education Department (now the Department of Education and Training), where she works today as Project Officer – Indigenous Priorities. In this capacity she is still advocating for quality education for all early childhood students.

It was her wealth of experience and Lynne's reflective, thoughtful approach and leadership style that led her professional pathway to become as editor of EYC in 2006. In this time she has always regarded the journal as reflecting the voices of educators, that is, a journal 'for educators by educators', educators who in 'some way touch children's lives with the same passion and dedication that we know to be the hallmark of our profession'. She saw the contents of the journal as, 'the stories, conversations, articles and reviews shared in the pages of the journal reflect the lived experiences of early childhood educators and professionals as they are touched by children and their families' (2011, vol. 17 no. 3). The journal for Lynne was an eclectic mix of information, capturing the depth, diversity and richness of the early childhood profession.



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As a leader in the early childhood field she is aware of research and current practices in early childhood education. Her visit to Reggio Emilia in 2010 inspired her to reflect on practices and view her professional world with different eyes. In this edition of the journal we have reprinted the article Lynne wrote in 2011 about her visit to Reggio. It is as relevant today as it was then.

Lynne possesses a forthright commitment to the education of young children as she believes 'every child has the right to education and care that respects their cultures, languages and capabilities to the fullest. Early childhood educators should never underestimate the potential of their influences in affecting the life chances of our youngest citizens. Every moment counts' (2012, vol. 18, no. 1).

As an educator, Lynne embraces the role of families in partnership with educators as they travel together on a child's educative journey. As she eloquently stated in 2013, 'Families are a child's first educator. Indeed, they are fundamental to delivering a holistic and successful early learning program' (vol. 19, no. 3).

Lynne is passionate about working in the early childhood community as she states, 'There is nothing more satisfying than being in the presence of an early childhood educator

implementing their craft – masterfully guiding the learning, development and wellbeing of young children and transforming ordinary moments into moments of wonder that captivate imaginations and enrich learning' (2015, vol. 21, no. 2).

She is unrelenting in her dedication and commitment to early childhood education: 'This is an exciting profession with much to celebrate. We are each drawn by our own passion for the very best for children and their families. I am proud to be an early childhood professional and look forward with optimism to the future' (2014, vol. 20, no. 2).

The community of the Early Childhood Teachers' Association would like to thank Lynne for her tireless work and dedication to the EYC journal. As an association we will miss Lynne's leadership, insights and organisation, but we know she will continue to be a valued and respected member of the early childhood educators' community.

We would like to conclude this tribute with the words Lynne used to describe her life as an early childhood educator: 'As I sit at my computer writing these words I can't help but reflect on my life as an early childhood professional. I use the word life because to me, it is much more than work' (2007, vol. 13, no. 2).



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# Glimpses of Reggio

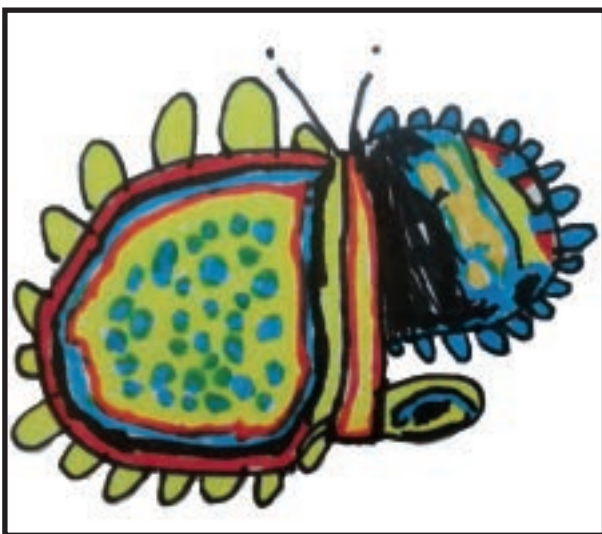
*Lynne Moore*



The early childhood programs of Reggio Emilia are a 'pedagogical experiment' that has involved the whole community over 40 years. A system of systems and interconnections embedded within the municipality – every part of the system contributes and everyone is a player – children, parents and educators.

In Reggio, children are valued as citizens of the community. The image of the child is one with enormous potential and rights. Their education is promoted through the development of all of their languages: expressive, communicative, symbolic, cognitive, ethical, metaphorical, logical, imaginative and relational.

Here, the educators have dared to think about children as having a scientific way of thinking – a child that perseveres and tenaciously realises their ideas – the child as a competent human being. For children every day is new and surprising. By their nature they are unknown beings.



Bug

### The nido (nest)

The magic of the 'nido' is inherent in the desire to build spaces for children 0–3yrs as places of peace where children are educated in peace. To create 'small communities' – children, adults, families – all involved in the process of growth and research through everyday real work with children.

Space in the 'nido' is arranged to welcome adults and to support and sustain their expectations for their children. There is great importance in the relationship between children, teachers and families. The environment is suited to the people who inhabit it – a place of pleasure.

The whole 'nido' is open to the children. Children are allowed to take risks – to measure themselves. Adults support children to get to 'know' materials so the danger in the materials disappears. Adults work with families so they understand how the centre views children and the materials. All adults share in the education of children. Meetings with families are in groups.

Each 'nido' has a central area – piazza (metaphorical of Italian Piazza) and small interior courtyards or winter gardens. Transparency is achieved through the use of glass to look out, connect people across spaces, break down isolation of the space and connect with the outside neighbourhood.



The centre is a whole – a fabric of relationships woven together by educators who:

1. hold together the organisation of the day
2. construct a day that has a sense of evolution and development
3. work with uncertainty and improvisation.

At the same time they bring together a cohesive group of adults and children. Some things are planned that are concrete and practical e.g. the use of time, where the adults will be and use of space. There is also a part of the day that is immaterial and can't be planned. Very small children have very sensitive relationships with the objects, materials and worlds around them. They enact the unexpected and to do so desire time – long/lengthy times.

## Becoming a group every day

Each day is viewed through the child – their confidence and belonging – the importance of reciprocity and exchange and the power of early relationships. There is belief that children desire in their everyday lives to find structure and organisation that is reassuring for their wellbeing and pleasure.

The children amplify and transform their relationships and construct the identity of the groups – as they reach out to know and grow together. The adult creates the dynamic. Partnership between home and centre is embedded in the environment. The educators speak of a language of intuition in the relationship, knowing when to go slow, when to go quickly, when to be spontaneous – responding to children in the moment.

The environment does not preclude an opportunity from which children can choose. Adults require the ability to wait for relationships between children to evolve. They allow themselves to be guided by their intuitions and sensibilities and by the spontaneity in their actions.

The adults will have already imagined possibilities in the environment. They have worked together and have discussed what might happen. Nothing happens by chance, there is strict organisation. But not rigid structures or frameworks that are stronger than the child. The adult stands by the side of



*To have links and bonds with others - to become, be and act as a group*

children and sometimes behind them.

The intention is that of constructing pathways of relations – to create situations which favour the possibility of forming relationships. Trying to imagine the best resource for that child at that moment – it could be a resource, another child or the educator themselves.



*Photographs courtesy of Bronwyn Thomson*

The children, in a harmonious way, come together. At this age it is believed the dyadic relationship is particularly favourable for their learning – making it possible for child to build self-esteem, combined with the desire to express themselves and communicate with others. To have links and bonds with others – to become, be and act as a group.

A child who is capable of building hypotheses equals the qualities of the educator working by their side – an adult also capable of building hypotheses producing many attempts and activating many possibilities. Educators amplify the discoveries of children. They notice their curiosities – they notice what they notice. Teachers research together with children, always beginning with a question.

Uninteresting objects become interesting when used in relationship with other things. Teachers wear a 'lens' for seeing new opportunities. Adults work with the materials to see their potential and the possible ways children

*The educational project of Reggio Emilia reminds us that we must look forward to the future with a sense of possibility – to be capable of producing innovation ... and the ability to see beyond the horizon ...*

might use them. This helps them to see the unexpected ways in which materials can be transformed, used and presented.

Professional development belongs to the educational practice of the educator and is dependent on the curiosity of the individual. A diffused pedagogical system based on the principle of collegiality encourages educators to work in teams and listen to different points of view. They are part of a network of colleagues who make suggestions and provide constructive criticism with the goal to find common shared values.

It is believed that a plurality of points of view leads to plurality of opportunity to better understand children.

## Sometimes we invest in good things

In Reggio they dared to think differently about children and their education – and have found a way for education to have 'strategic value' – nationally and internationally.

Through 'Reggio Children' – International Centre for the Defence and Promotion of the Rights and Potential of all Children – the 'Reggio approach' is sustained and promoted through professional development, consultancy, seminars, study meetings in Italy and abroad and publication of books and audio-visual materials.

Their education is an experiment deeply rooted in the historical, social and cultural roots of the city of Reggio Emilia. Everywhere you see the culture of the wider community – the Art, the attention to detail, the dialogue, the relationships, the history, the light, colour, serenity and the slow – the everyday of the life of the children, families and educators.

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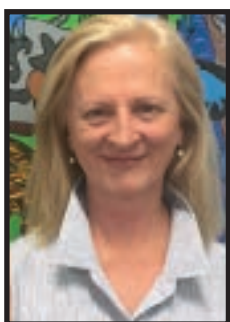
### Visual arts in early childhood

*Art is fundamental to human existence. Across time, in every place, people have used and still use art to describe what is important to them culturally, historically and emotionally. Art is necessary.*

*But what place does arts practice have in an early years setting?*

*The educators we spoke to about their own visual arts practice with very young children place it at the heart of early learning. The thinking they've shared here comes from a place of passionate advocacy for art as an essential element in a holistic approach to learning. They ask us to consider just how deeply a positive relationship with art can affect the whole child.*

#### Carolyn Peisker



I have been teaching for about 35 years(!). I was a classroom teacher for the first twenty or so years. On our year level we did afternoon rotations – I taught art to all the classes on my year level, and other teachers taught other subject areas. My

principal at Wellers Hill State School organised for me to become the teacher who looked after classes in non-contact time, and I became the visual art specialist for the school.

**My visual arts practice with children is inspired by ...** all sorts of things. I absolutely love my job. I love to see the children develop skills and knowledge and to see the transference of these skills and knowledge into other areas. I love that everyone can experience success. I love that it gives students life skills and coping mechanisms. I love that sometimes it's a therapy for those who need it.

**Art is important to my practice because ...** it can be used to send a message. It is a visual form of literacy and can add value to other areas. Sometimes it can act as the glue that holds everything else together. The creative aspect of art is important too. These days art can be lots of things – it can be a sensory experience and involve the spectator in the actual art experience or piece, as well as being a

more traditional piece of sculpture, architecture or fine art. You don't have to be a good drawer to be good at art!

**The visual arts bring to my educational program ...** higher order thinking skills, problem-solving, communication, understanding of culture and history, creativity, lots of things!

**In regard to the visual arts I am challenged by ...** trying to fit everything into the time that I have. I would love to be able to teach all year levels but I don't have the time to fit them all in.

**I would like to see ...** every school with a visual art specialist.

#### Kyren Hammon



I work as a group leader in a metropolitan long day care centre. I have just returned from a self-funded In Depth Study Tour of Reggio Emilia in Italy.

**My visual arts practice with children is inspired by ...** Reggio

Emilia. My one-week In Depth Study Tour of Reggio Emilia in Italy was inspirational. It was very hands on and that is the Reggio philosophy. Art is not limited to paper, pens,



paint, clay etc. It involves working with light, sound and movement; that's also art. I learnt so much about myself during the week, about how I learn and interact with others. Reggio teaches us that there are lots of different ways of participating in a collaborative project.

## **Art is important to my practice**

**because ...** it involves all parts of the curriculum; language, music, dramatic play, cognitive development, maths and science are all included in that space.

**The visual arts bring to my educational program ...** the inclusive aspect. Regardless of who you are, you can contribute. At Reggio they don't call it 'additional needs' but 'special rights'; these children are very much involved. You don't have to be great at drawing, just join in, or sit and watch – participate in different ways. Everyone, at every age and stage of development, is involved in a Reggio Emilia project. You can add ideas, collaborate, help younger children. There is a lot of scaffolding with less able children, children helping each other. All voices are heard.

They do a lot of group projects. Many of their major projects last over the whole year. The play spaces and attendance groupings are organised so that if you start something you know you can come back to it tomorrow.

Even when children are playing by themselves, they don't call it 'solitary play' but 'single play'. The other children will enter into that play space to check on the child playing alone; there is still give-and-take with other children.

Children are very involved in the Reggio documentation. They take photos and their words are recorded on Dictaphones. The curriculum is led by the children's interests. Everyone is included. The teachers have dedicated time set aside for collaboration.

**In regard to the visual arts I am challenged by ...** the importance of teaching people, not preaching to people; how to show, not tell; how to incorporate the Reggio philosophy into an educational system that doesn't understand it or want to know about it.

**I would like to see ...** an early childhood revolution, starting with the small things at grassroots level. It comes down to the importance of services having consultants coming in and

showing them how to run a high-quality program. High-quality interactions with children, really listening to children: that is central. In the Reggio Emilia approach they're not children; they're people. They have just as many ideas as adults and often their ideas are more important.

## **Judith Leuenberger**



I have retired from teaching, after more than 30 years, to pursue my own art-making. I have worked all over the world and across all age groups.

**My visual arts practice with children is inspired by ...** nature!

Organic forms, vistas – perspective. Children's eyes open to the beauty of organic forms and they understand their world by learning to observe what's around them. When you draw, for example, you have to look very closely and you begin to understand what you're seeing in new ways.

## **Art is important to my practice**

**because ...** it supports expression in colour, shape and line. It helps explore feelings.

**The visual arts bring to my educational program ...** an opportunity to add symbols of cultural and historical importance, via the great masters, for example. Visual arts allow us to explore the big ideas that have run through human experience over time and across space.

**In regard to the visual arts I am challenged by ...** young children who already have a sense of themselves as incapable! I would like to think that the very young are the most likely of us all to just immerse themselves in art unselfconsciously, but sadly that's not always the case.

**I would like to see ...** much more involvement with the arts in the widest context possible: walls covered with beautiful work as inspiration and invitation for children to respond to. They can create stories about artworks – become involved in a real way with beautiful work. Also, more opportunities for whole-body experiences with art that encourage children to explore their own feelings about what they are experiencing.

## Patricia Darlington



I have worked as the school age care educator at Goodstart Harristown for the past three years. During this time I have used the My Time, Our Place learning framework to guide my practices. I recognise the value that the visual arts bring to

open communication for school-aged children.

**My visual arts practice with children is inspired by ...** their interests, wants and abilities. School-aged children can clearly communicate what they would like to do. They often follow their interest and ideas or those of the group. The children can perform mini plays and puppet shows based on their interests.

**Art is important to my practice because ...** it gives me a good insight into the children's thoughts and ideas. It helps me to understand the children and their abilities

better. It also provides a great communication point as we discuss their artwork through open conversations.

**The visual arts bring to my educational program ...** a starting point to investigate the interests and ideas of the children. Children are more likely to express themselves through art and drama than anything else. This form of communication helps me program and plan using their interests and ensures my program is both engaging and inviting for the children.

**In regard to the visual arts, I am challenged by ...** new ideas on how to include all children so that no-one is left out, as I find that some children are not interested in doing plays or artwork.

**I would like to see ...** more things available to the school children for creative art and more props for their plays and puppet shows. I would also like to see the visual arts utilised more throughout the service, for example, the schoolies doing a show or play for some of the younger rooms.



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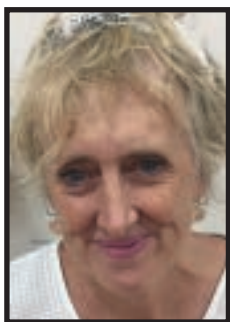
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## Wendy Cumes-Rowell



I am a primary education art specialist, currently teaching children of various ages from Prep upwards. I have a passion for fine arts, having studied art and digital Design for many years. I've worked as a graphic designer for television at

both Channel 7 and the ABC. I have a particular interest in art history, and bringing this alive for children. I love sharing what I've learned.

**My visual arts practice with children is inspired by ...** generations of women who have gone before me. My mother and grandmother were creative women. They lovingly passed on not only a passion for sketching, drawing and painting, but also a sense of play, humour and awareness of the environment. I grew up with women who helped me discover my connection with nature and myself. They are the role models on whom I base my practice.

I believe that more children these days are growing up without that sense of connection or belonging. If I can rectify that through my art practice and give them a piece of the puzzle to take home, then I know I'm contributing to a better future.

**Art is important to my practice because ...** I believe it is intrinsically linked to the fibre of our being. Without art, we have an empty culture, history and philosophy. We have a diminished sense of identity.

Art encourages play, discovery and imagination, the criteria for magic.

Children are pure, sensitive beings waiting for you to lead by example, potential explorers waiting for you to guide them through worlds that will stimulate their senses.

Their eyes widen at the way colours blend randomly with the smudge of pastels between their fingers. They shriek with excitement when salt and water soak up the swirling watercolour kaleidoscope before them.

But, for me, the most exciting part of my practice is when my students begin to converse with each other during the process.

**The visual arts brings to my educational program ...** depth. My classes are primarily driven by art history as a way of connecting to all areas of education. Art weaves itself through the fibre of our existence. Studying famous artists, both contemporary and historic, helps children understand many concepts far beyond the appreciation of a completed piece of work.

We discuss colour theory and the ability colour has to make you feel a certain way, promote an idea for a business or alter someone's appearance. The recognition of feelings and psychology are also important. We discuss the personal struggles and adventures of various artists and talk about why they create their work.

The children learn to see the value that a small detail has to the whole. They discover that there are no 'mistakes' in art, just as there are no mistakes in life. Every action is about learning and progressing and building confidence. There is no 'better than'. Each work is a metaphor for improvement of self.

Children now live in a challenging, rapid-paced world where technology permeates their senses with explosions of sound and colour. I try to slow this process, to encourage time to think and react. This is best achieved within the frame of a traditional, tactile expression of themselves. If I'm able to provide an anchor, a base from which they can identify who they are, they can then move courageously through the world.

**In regard to the visual arts I am challenged by ...** the brick wall of ignorance I come across within systems unwilling to recognise the value of the arts. The creative arts are greatly underestimated in the Western world and massively underfunded. Fortunately, many artists stubbornly continue to challenge these notions and some do find ways of working within the system. That is the nature of a true artist: to constantly question and seek a way.

**I would like to see ...** more community involvement in public art. It needs to be made more accessible, whether that takes the form of live art performances, children's art workshops or guided community art projects. I do not believe there is one person – adult or child – who isn't creative in some form or another.



# ***Embrace art in the classroom Discover art is not scary Become capable and confident***

***Debra Bryant***



Debra Bryant is the creative director of Tiny Art – a Brisbane-based art school for children aged two to twelve years. Debra has a BA in Visual Arts in Fine Arts and a BA in Education. With over 14 years' experience teaching the very young right up to secondary, Debra has enjoyed practising her own art making and sharing her passion for art making and appreciation with others. Debra's goal is to instil in children, at an early age, the idea that everyone can 'do art' and to teach skills and knowledge that can be used throughout their lives.

### **Importance and benefits of art for children at an early age**

Art making and appreciation should be encouraged at an early age. The benefits of art are endless. Art develops: confidence, self-expression, creative thinking, problem solving, language development, academic performance, fine motor skills, social and emotional skills, relaxation and enjoyment. Art can be linked to other learning in and out of the classroom and can complement the journey from childhood through to adulthood.

### **The physical environment**

When considering and creating an environment for children in which to create art, try to offer various places and spaces. This will provide loads of fun and inspiration. Here are some ideas to keep things interesting:

- Stand at an easel.
- Sit on the floor.
- Lie on tummies.
- Lie on backs under a table looking up – tape paper under the table surface and draw looking up.
- Cover a table with a sheet and create a secret area underneath.

- Create on different surfaces – use the surfaces as a background (rubblings for an interesting start).
- Paint or draw outside *en plein air*.
- Create in different places outside and inside, such as the art gallery, beside the herb garden, in book corner or next to the shoe rack.
- Try close-up or distance drawing of still life.
- Give children another perspective of life and art by adding them to their art.
- Take photos and draw from them.
- Create collaborative art in close proximity – in pairs or groups.
- Sit on a chair and use a drawing board on their lap.

### **Timing**

Be aware when to engage children in an art experience. If children are tired or hungry, or a project is dragging on, they may lose interest. It may be wiser to cut the activity short or change to another task and attempt the learning experience another time. Timing will soon become second nature.

## Routine

Whatever your schedule, try and create a designated time for creating so children see it as part of their regular routine. Involve children in the process of setting up and create a rotation of child 'monitors' to assist at different stations for example, to wash brushes, wipe tables, put away aprons. Take photos of the children doing these set tasks and place a photo each station. This will remind children of tasks and engage them in the appreciation of setting up and packing away an art experience.

## Achievable arts activities and rich learning experiences for children aged five and under (discover media and techniques)

Young children thrive on experimentation and enjoy discovery. Here are some ideas for thinking outside the box.

### Paint without brushes

Feed children's imaginations by giving them a range of tools to explore, paint and make marks with. This provides sensory experiences, develops fine motor skills, encourages problem-solving and inspires creative thinking. Paint with the following tools to create texture, colour and layers:

- Newspaper – scrunch, fold, twist
- Bubblewrap
- Make your own texture stamps – use pegs to grab items and dip in paint, e.g, sponges, leaves, grass, cardboard, spaghetti
- Wrap rubber bands around cardboard and dip in paint and then print (these could also be pressed into clay and playdough).
- Paddlepop sticks
- Cotton tips
- Cardboard – fold, rip, scrape
- Fingers
- Cotton wool
- Plastic bottle tops – roll, stamp
- Mix sand in paint
- Mix flour in paint



*No mess painting*

### No-mess painting

These activities are great for colour mixing and are great for the 'clean' creators who don't like to get messy!

- Place paint in zip lock bags and tape to the table and then move paint with finger tips.
- Place two primary colours in one bag and allow children to experiment by mixing the colours to make secondary colours. This can also be done by placing a sheet of paper on the table, adding two or more colours of paint and then a sheet of plastic on the top. Tape down the sides and have fun by squishing and squeezing the paint. Children can use: fingers, cotton tips or paddlepop sticks to mix, draw and make marks on the plastic.

### Play with clay

When given a piece of clay children instinctively squeeze, poke and pinch it. It is a fantastic



*Play with clay*

medium for children to experiment with making marks and changing the clay's response. Clay can be played with on its own or tools can be used to mark and poke or collage the clay.

- As a group or individually – poke, squeeze, flatten, pinch, make holes, break, twist, knuckle or roll the clay.
- Use tools to make marks in the clay – plastic knives and forks, paddlepop sticks, toothpicks, old toothbrushes.
- Press collage items into the clay – e.g. buttons, beads, pipe cleaners, sticks.

## Threading

Threading is great for developing fine motor skills as children love the bright colours of wool, string, beads and buttons.

- Thread beads and buttons on pipe cleaners.
- Bend and twist pipecleaners and poke them into styrofoam shapes to create sculptures.
- Thread wool, string, ribbon and material strips through hessian pieces and let them hang.

## Create with collage

Scissors are great for children when creating with paper for collage but also offer different ideas to encourage creativity:

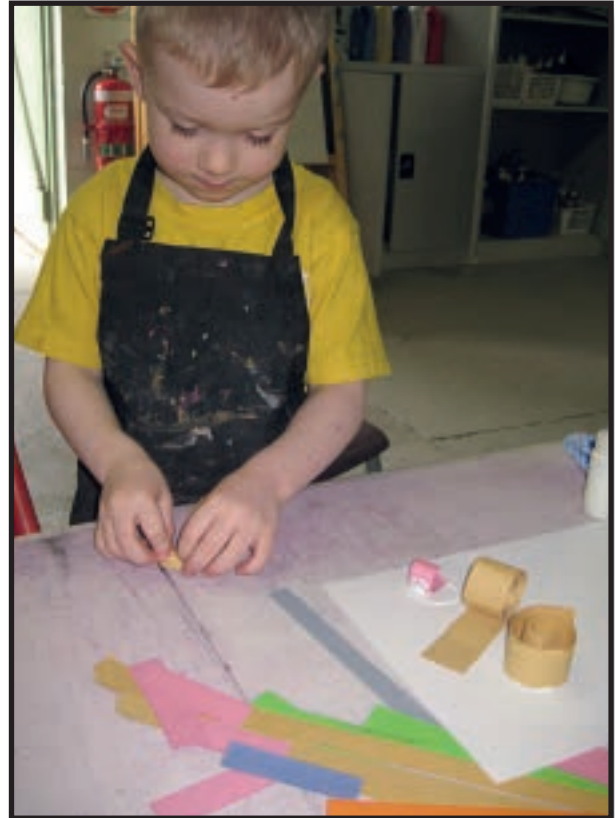
- Tear, rip, fold, twist, scrunch, layer, curl, roll, glue and roll paper.

## Link activities to everyday learning; explore themes and activities based on children's interests

If a child expresses a particular interest in a subject, and other children embrace the idea, explore it further and discuss:

*'Jack found a caterpillar in the garden. Let's look at caterpillars on the interactive whiteboard. Let's look at the life cycle of the caterpillar. WOW they change into butterflies! Let's look at artists who created butterfly artworks and create a butterfly in a garden artwork. What do we need? Paint? How do we make antennae?*

Children and their teacher can bounce ideas off each other, problem solve, and create an activity together, giving inspiration to the teacher to think about what materials they have



*Creative collage*

to use and what is on hand. With a child-led activity you may not always have the items you wish to use at hand, so improvise, and come up with a new idea – e.g. use paddle pop sticks instead of pipe cleaners. Collect, re-use and recycle everyday items such as cling film, foil, boxes, bubble wrap. Cut it up, sort it and store it for later use.



*Creative collage*





*Van Gogh sunflowers*

### Use external resources for inspiration

View Pinterest on the interactive whiteboard with children for inspiration. Adapt and modify to suit your needs. Create a 'Kindy board' with the kids, pin weekly and revisit when looking for an art project.

### Talking to a child about their art

It can be tricky sometimes to find the words to talk to a child about their creations. Here are some helpful tips to talk with a child about their art.

- **Make encouraging comments.** Describe what the child is doing as they create. Introduce new words to build vocabulary and understanding. Comment on colours and the types of lines being made. Ask children to describe to you what they are doing and bounce off that conversation, e.g. 'Tell me about your artwork?' and other open-ended questions. Stir imaginative thinking with questions such as 'What sound do you think this animal would make?' and 'What does the paint feel like?' Open-ended questioning will allow children to use their imagination and help gain skills which will allow them to express their ideas visually and orally with confidence.
- **When to step in.** When a child gets frustrated, lacks confidence, or needs

direction, ask questions about what they are making, materials they are using, and techniques they are trying. Try to avoid touching the child's artwork if demonstrating a technique. Work together or on a separate piece. Encourage children to offer a different perspective or idea for using media and show you a technique you had never thought of – this allows for shared experiences and learning from the child.

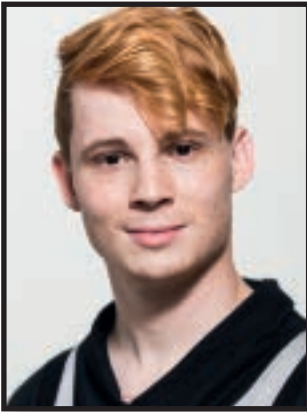
### Drowning in children's artwork? Ideas on how to store it.

If you are inundated with many artworks made with love from children and not quite sure what to do with them, here are some ideas that can be used in the early childhood setting and can also be shared with children's parents. Show children that you value their creativity by using thoughtful ideas:

- **Display child's creations.** Frame children's favourites. Have a dedicated 'art' frame, wall or space that can be rotated once a week/fortnight/month with the new favourites. Ask children to provide a description of the artwork and scribe for them. Display this next to the artwork.
- **Save artworks as keepsakes.** Put them in a display folder or scrapbook. Write down the child's age and their description of each artwork. Do this activity together once a month and share the task of gluing and taping. This in itself is a fun activity to share.
- **Share artworks with family and friends.** Ask a child to choose to whom they would like to give them so they can save them for a birthday or Christmas gift.
- **Be functional.** Use some artworks as a birthday card, or wrapping paper for a family member or a friend's birthday. This is thoughtful and original.
- **Take photos** of children's artworks and display them in an 'art photo album'. This way if an artwork is damaged you still have a photo of it. This can work really well when the child has constructed a sculptural box or Lego piece. Capture it forever before it is crushed or falls over.

# *The power of live theatre: how experiencing live dance performances can enrich children's lives*

*Jacob Williams*



Jacob Williams is a graduate of the Queensland University of Technology. Jacob is currently Queensland Ballet's Education Executive, working with students and teachers across various contexts within Queensland. Between 2014 and 2016, Jacob was also privileged to work with Moorambilla Voices Company where he collaborated with the Song Company, TaikOz and independent artists to create a multidisciplinary performance in regional New South Wales.

*Dance has the profound power to enrich and transform lives, connecting with people of all ages and backgrounds. It is an art form that allows for the expression of individuals, communities and cultures, a defining aspect of being human.*

Participation in dance within a school, kindergarten or child care context provides children with opportunities to share and communicate personal ideas, emotions, experiences and imaginations in a social environment. Dance promotes the development of cognitive, physical, social and emotional capacities (Hanna 1999; Kaufmann 2006). It can have a transformative effect, motivating and encouraging children who struggle to engage with longstanding traditional curricula (Meiners & Garrett 2015).

The *Australian Curriculum: The Arts Learning Area – Dance Subject* places an emphasis on children as active makers and creators of artworks, linking three out of the four content descriptions for years Foundation – Year Six more closely to the Making strand, incorporating choreographic, rehearsal and

performance activities (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2015). The remaining content description links to the Responding strand incorporating analysis, appreciation, interpretation and critiquing activities. Importantly, both strands are intrinsically connected, together providing children with knowledge, understanding and skills as artists, performers and audiences (ACARA 2015).

Though attending a live dance performance is traditionally seen as a passive mode of engagement, as opposed to interactive, there are a range of benefits to the experience, where



*Sheldon College Ballet Moves In-school Workshop by Ali Cameron*



*John Paul College Thomas Dixon Centre Immersion Experience by Christian Tiger*

audiences are seen as actively 'unravelling the layers between illusion and reality; decoding the staging, technique and craft of what they see; and engaging empathetically through the imagination and kinaesthetically through the body' (Reason 2013, p. 97). If supported effectively, audiences of children are able to analyse and reflect on their decoding, enhancing and extending the cultural experience which can continue to resonate throughout their lifetime (Barker 2006; Reason 2013).

## Empowering young audiences

Last year, 2016, marked the premiere of Queensland Ballet's *Little red riding hood*, in collaboration with Queensland Performing Arts Centre's Out of the Box festival for children. This production launched the Company's My First Ballet series, where ballets are specifically choreographed for children aged three to eight. Careful consideration had been made to ensure that during this ballet, performers carefully led children into and through an imaginative journey, reassuring first-time theatregoers that the theatre is a safe place where the performers and audience can all pretend together (Friedman 2010). This enabled children who were still drawing the line between reality and play to involve themselves in the performance mentally and emotionally without reservation (Friedman 2010). Once the theatre is established as a safe place, experiencing live dance performances can be highly enjoyable for young children.

## The live performance experience

A range of pleasures are available to children audiences who experience live performances including:

- kinaesthetic empathy – experiencing dance through the individual's own sense of movement and postural change (Martin 1963)
- admiration of virtuosity – which is enhanced by the possibility of performers making live mistakes (Reason & Reynolds 2010)
- kinesthetic responses to music – responding positively to the music of a dance performance. Young audiences in particular have been shown to enjoy the listening process, becoming more attentive, focussed and engaged during musical story conditions, sometimes humming and singing along (Wolfe & Noguchi 2009)
- escapist motivations – providing the opportunity to indulge in the suspension from reality and succumbing to their imaginations (Reason & Reynolds 2010)
- aesthetic experience – providing audiences with a multisensory experience, activating a full range of communicative mechanisms and potentially engaging multiple senses simultaneously – language, visual, aural, olfactory and tactile (Whitmore 1998).

Describing the experience and exploring the variables that affect how children respond to a live performance can help educators design and deliver effective pre- and post-show activities that actively support young children.



*John Paul College Thomas Dixon Centre Experience by Christian Tiger*



Meg Upton (2010) describes some of her observations of children attending a live theatre performance. Though the research was conducted on a class of Year 12 drama students, her insights may also be applicable to early childhood and primary school students. These observations include:

- Students usually attend the theatre in class groups, experiencing the performance as an individual as well as with their group.
- The group provides the references for the production that form a collective and shared memory.
- A student's memory, their understanding of a theatre performance and their ability to articulate these aspects, is constructed through a range of individual and shared cultural and experiential frames.

Upton (2010) then explores these five different frames and how they affected student audiences' experience of live theatre.

- Frame 1: The role of culture – how the child's school, classroom and family cultures help shape children's attitudes to theatre and development of a personal aesthetic.
- Frame 2: Prior experience – how prior live performance experiences can influence children's expectations of future experiences.
- Frame 3: Knowing versus not knowing – the tension between preparing children for the live performance experience (and thus creating expectations) versus privileging the experience itself. However, not preparing children through pre-show activities may cause an inability to connect with or even see the movements being performed and follow the performance (Reason & Reynolds 2010).
- Frame 4: The theatre experience – aspects such as encountering other people, being in a new environment (usually a large theatre space), the realness or liveness of the performance and the potential for performers to make mistakes all affect students, who may become either more self-conscious or excited (Reason 2006).



*Premier's Reading Challenge Workshop by Christian Tiger*

- Frame 5: The role of the curriculum – the language and frameworks that students may be required to use to respond to the performance becomes a lens through which they view the performance.

## **Reason's framework to support the live performance experience**

Though there are a range of benefits for children experiencing a live performance, greater facilitation is required to ensure that these cultural experiences are enhanced and extended, rather than being piecemeal and tokenistic (Reason 2013). When creating activities to support children, as educators we must ask ourselves:

- What do the children take away afterwards?
- What readings do the children make?
- What emotional responses do the children have?
- What connections do the children see?
- How reflective, considered or impulsive are their responses?

## **Activities should then aim to:**

- Avoid educationalising perceptions of the art form, instead allowing children to engage more deeply on critical and creative levels (Reason 2007).
- Establish resonances that endure beyond the immediate live dance experience – engaging them intellectually, imaginatively and emotionally (Reason 2007; Reason 2008).

- Perceive the children as experts in their own experiences (Reason 2007).
- Provide opportunities to reflect on the messages and meanings so children can remember and synthesise their raw encounter into a more consciously articulated experience (Reason 2007; Reason 2013).
- Allow children to play with their experiences, taking the performance forward for themselves and deepening their knowledge and ownership (Reason 2007; Reason 2013).
- Encourage diverse responses (Matthews 1980).
- Provide opportunities for children to develop capacities to think critically and make clear judgements about their own aesthetic preferences (Reason 2013).

## Queensland Ballet's approach to supporting childrens' live performance experience

Prior to the performance educators should discuss with children:

- What to expect at the theatre and any previous theatre experiences, and the similarities and differences between a live performance and a movie/TV show.
- The roles of the audience and performers and how both are important in delivering the live performance. Just as the audience can see and hear the performers, the performers can see and hear the audience.
- That they can clap when they enjoy something – in a ballet performance it is customary to applaud when the dancer takes a bow.
- That they should try and let themselves to be taken on a journey, to another time and place and to enjoy the movements, music, sets and costumes.

## After the performance educators should discuss with children:

- Their first impressions – what part/characters did you like/dislike?
- Descriptions – what did you see, hear, feel and smell?

- Analysis – why were these aspects (characters, props, lighting, etc.) used? How did this impact the experience?
- Evaluation – after considering all of the aspects above, did you like/dislike the performance and why? Would you recommend the performance for someone else?

The benefits available to children when experiencing live dance performances require careful facilitation to ensure that these cultural experiences are enhanced and extended. This requires a shift in perspective, acknowledging young audiences are experts in their own experiences and designing and delivering effective pre- and post-show activities which help children prepare for, and deconstruct, the performance. Only then will the cultural experience continue to resonate throughout a child's lifetime, inspiring and enriching them so that they are able to reach their potential (Eisner 2004).

## Further resources

For example activity ideas that assist early childhood and primary school children to unpack and extend a live performance experience, Queensland Ballet offers a variety of teacher resource kits, available for free at [www.queenslandballet.com.au/learn/teacher's-resources](http://www.queenslandballet.com.au/learn/teacher's-resources).

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Eatons Hill Thomas Dixon Centre Immersion Experience by Christian Tiger



# Creating change with the Six Core Needs

Annie Garner



Annie Garner has worked as a primary teacher and, more recently, as an early childhood educator in a kindergarten setting for the last ten years. Annie has a deep interest in understanding human behaviour and how this affects our choices and wellbeing. To further enhance this understanding, Annie has studied to be a life coach. Understanding human behaviour and how individuals make decisions has been integral to the way in which Annie works with children and their families. She is passionate about sharing this knowledge with others.

The Six Core Needs were first attributed to the work of Anthony Robbins. An understanding of these needs not only allows us to understand ourselves better, but it also allows us to understand others, and thus improve our relationships with everyone we know. It allows us the ability to create change in our life.

Understanding the Six Core Needs can be used in countless ways. For this article, I will focus on four areas which affect us as educators:

- understanding yourself
- understanding your relationships
- appreciating the needs of the families you work with
- understanding the children you work with.

In early childhood education we refer to a number of theorists and theories to help us better understand the children we work with. We use frameworks as lenses through which we view children's development and capabilities. In much the same way, the Six Core Needs is a framework that gives us a unique lens. All six needs must be met resourcefully and on a regular basis for us to live a truly happy and fulfilled life.

### So what are the Six Core Needs?

**Certainty** – the need for safety, stability, security and comfort. Too much certainty can be self-destructive and can lead to a need

*When educators understand these universal needs we are better able to appreciate the expectations of our families.*

to control the environment. A perceived loss of control can lead to anxiety. In its most unresourceful state, a need for certainty will keep people stuck, afraid of moving forward and afraid of change. This can lead to lack of growth, boredom and ultimately depression. The most resourceful type of certainty is certainty in oneself: developing the courage to deal with uncertainty and change. The best way to do this is to develop great routines and habits which support, sustain and nurture you.

**Variety** – the need for uncertainty and adventure. Variety is much like the four seasons: it is essential for growth. People who embrace too much variety and uncertainty can sometimes be seen as self-absorbed and unreliable, the ultimate thrillseekers. We can meet our need for variety through hobbies and pastimes, having a variety of friends, learning new things and finding the courage to challenge ourselves.

**Significance** – when our need for significance is met we feel unique, special, important, respected or needed. It gives us a sense of belonging

and often provides us with a sense of purpose. Significance, as with all the needs, can be met resourcefully or unresourcefully. The unresourceful 'getter' of significance may do so through violence, control, bullying or belittling others. The resourceful 'giver' of significance makes other people feel important and special. They use their leadership skills for the benefit of others.

**Connection** – the need for love or the strong feeling of closeness with someone or something. The most important connection is the connection with yourself. All other healthy relationships follow once you truly love and value yourself. Resourceful connections nurture us. Unresourceful connections will drain us and create anxiety. Stress will occur when a challenging relationship is going nowhere. Unresourceful connections can be created with things, such as drugs and alcohol, rather than people. Unhealthy addictions are unresourceful relationships that replace relationships with people.

**Growth** – can occur physically, emotionally, intellectually or spiritually. It is an expansion of our capabilities and our understanding. True growth only occurs when we share our learning. In this way, we connect with and contribute to others. Growth will only happen when we embrace uncertainty and move beyond what we are familiar and comfortable with.

**Contribution** – when we meet all the other needs resourcefully, we can focus on contributing to others. We ask this of ourselves: 'How can I give back and benefit others?' Through contribution we leave a legacy.

The first four core needs make up our personality. The last two have been labelled as the needs of the spirit. Ironically, while they are considered needs, they are, to a certain extent, elective. Many people aspire to them, knowing that through growth and contribution we achieve sustainable happiness and self-actualisation. Some people will decide growth is too hard or they will choose to remain in the same circumstances, thus meeting their need for certainty and stifling any chance of growth. For an educator this would be unthinkable.

Every individual, irrespective of culture, gender, age or socioeconomic circumstances, has the same set of needs. The difference is in the

importance we place on them and the ways in which we choose to meet them, either resourcefully or unresourcefully.

***The Six Core Needs can be used as an essential framework to view children holistically. It is particularly valuable during times of change in a child's life.***

The birth of a sibling or a change in the family dynamic will often leave a child with a deep sense of uncertainty, a reduced sense of significance and a loss of connection. As an educator, knowing these needs for certainty, significance and connection are not being met consistently, and to the standard the child requires, is potent and will enable you to adapt your communication and curriculum accordingly.

For educators, knowing we all have these needs, allows us to appreciate what it is that families are looking for. They need to have **certainty** in staff, long-serving staff, and a belief that the educators are confident, well-informed and will always have their child's interest front and centre. This is also where a predictable yet flexible routine comes in. Families need to know there is **variety** in learning experiences and activities. They need to know that they are **significant** and that their child will be considered significant, unique and special. Prospective families are looking for **connection**: connection with educators and a sense of belonging to the centre. To really allow families to see a service in the best possible light, an emphasis will be placed on **growth**, particularly professional growth and, lastly, an understanding of the importance of **contributing** to a child's potential and sense of possibility as well as contributing to the wider community.

The first step in creating change with the Six Core Needs is to identify how you are meeting your needs. Are you meeting them resourcefully or unresourcefully, consistently or inconsistently? If you engage in any behaviour that you know is not beneficial to you, the questions you must ask yourself are: what need is it meeting? and how could you meet this need more resourcefully?

# *Children's oral language development and early literacy practices*

*Adele Amorsen and Melinda Miller*



Adele Amorsen

After many years as a language, literacy and communication lecturer in the School of Early Childhood at the Queensland University of Technology, Adele Amorsen now works as a member of the Prep teaching team at St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly. She has a keen interest in the changing nature of children's oral language development and how this is affecting their literacy learning at the grassroots level in classrooms.



Melinda Miller

Dr Melinda Miller is a lecturer in the School of Early Childhood at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. She lectures in the area of child development, with a specific focus on children's speech, language and cognition. Melinda's current research considers joint verification processes for speech and language delays between before-school and formal school sites.

Strong oral language skills and the ability to communicate effectively provide the foundation for learning in all curriculum areas. A well-developed knowledge of oral language and its uses enables children to manage and direct their own activities as learners and to operate successfully in formal classroom settings, where language is used in increasingly abstract ways. In relation to early literacy practices, oral language skills provide the foundation for sound literacy development and are the prerequisite to written language. The reciprocal relationship between children's spoken and written language means that oral language skills will have an impact on early and later achievements in learning to read and write (Morrow & Tracey 2007).

The development of oral language occurs from infancy, with rapid development in the early years.

*Most of what children know about language they will learn by age five, despite the complexity of oral language learning.*

Throughout the school years, there is expansion of children's ability to master speech sounds, use correct grammatical structures and enhanced vocabulary and communicate with a range of people in appropriate ways. Simultaneously, children's competencies in literacy expand to include reading and writing in increasingly sophisticated forms (McLeod & McCormack 2015). Combined, all of these skills align with the five key components of oral language as a system:

- phonology (the rules for putting sounds together in a language)
- morphology (the internal structure of words e.g. plurals, suffixes, prepositions)



- syntax (the structure of sentences that govern word order)
- semantics (the meanings associated with words)
- pragmatics (the appropriate use of language in different social situations).

At school entry, most children have a vocabulary of 4000–5000 words, have control of most grammatical structures, use talk for a range of purposes and can adjust their talk to suit particular contexts. However, approximately 7% of children entering formal schooling will experience language difficulties. Without intervention and ongoing support, children with language difficulties at age five are likely to continue experiencing difficulties throughout schooling and life (Association for Childhood Language and Related Disorders 2016). While some children require intervention via additional external support, all children in early years classrooms require explicit instruction in oral language through a range of teaching and learning strategies across the day.

### Errors in children's oral language

If teachers are able to identify and respond to common language difficulties, then they can structure learning in ways that support individual children. This is particularly important for reading and writing skills, given that oral language provides the foundation for early literacy practices. While it is not necessary for teachers to know all of the technical language for common errors in children's speech, it is critical to build well-developed strategies for responding to errors in curriculum planning. Errors in children's oral language that translate to reading and writing include, but are not limited to, phonological substitutions and overregularisation errors.

### Phonological substitutions:

- Replacing liquid sounds (e.g. r) with glides (e.g. w). *For example, 'rabbit' becomes 'wabbit'.*
- Replacing fricatives (e.g. th, sh) or affricatives (e.g. ch) with stop consonants (e.g. d, t). *For example, 'this, that and there' becomes 'dis, dat and dere'.*
- Replacing a consonant cluster with a single consonant. *For example, 'club' becomes 'cub'.*



Adele and Ben

- Deletion of final consonants. *For example, 'hat' becomes 'ha'.*
- Deletion of an unstressed syllable in a word. *For example, 'banana' becomes 'nana'.*

### Overregularisation errors:

- Applying plural 's' unnecessarily. *For example, 'mans', 'foots', 'teeths'.*
- Applying the regular verb ending 'ed' in place of using an irregular verb. *For example, using 'goed' instead of 'went', 'falled' instead of 'fell', 'broked' instead of 'broke'.*

Some errors in children's speech will be age-appropriate and part of typical developmental sequences, while others require correction so that they do not continue into higher grades and affect children's learning. Here, we present a case study of a child in Prep to highlight how language difficulties can have an impact on learning to read and write, and to show how individual programs of support can be structured for children who display errors in oral language at school entry.

### Case study

This case study focuses on Henry. When Henry entered the Prep year he was able to communicate well with peers and adults, and he quickly established relationships for play and classroom interactions. However, he began the year with a number of underdeveloped articulation and grammar skills. As the year progressed and the curriculum placed increasing demands on Henry to record his thoughts in written form and to engage in reading longer,



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more complex sentences, his underdeveloped oral language skills became problematic.

When speaking, Henry employed a number of sound substitutions, including /w/ for /r/ ('wabbit' for 'rabbit', 'cwab' for 'crab') and /w/ for /l/ ('wion' for 'lion', 'wong' for 'long'). When writing, Henry reproduced the sounds he could hear in his spoken language (*rock* would begin with a 'w' and *let* would begin with a 'w'). During focused work on phonics, Henry had difficulty with the placement of articulators (tongue, teeth, lips, roof of mouth) to produce sounds correctly. This resulted in the use of phonological substitutions, as listed above (/w/ for /r/ and /w/ for /l/). In addition to sound substitutions, Henry used immature grammar patterns ('we goed to the park'; 'she put she's lunchbox in there'; 'them kids aren't coming inside'). In relation to reading, Henry's lack of knowledge and his use of non-standard grammar made it difficult for him to predict and use simple repeated language structures in texts, including early readers.

### **Differentiated learning: developing a program for Henry**

In Term One, the teacher (Adele) and teacher aide began a dual-focus program for Henry around articulation and grammar. With support, Henry completed several sessions a week with the teacher aide on articulation of sounds for /l/ and /r/, and several sessions to support standard use of grammar. The articulation sessions began with discussion and practice of teeth and tongue position for required sounds. Henry then worked through a range of games and activities

for repeated rehearsal of the sounds in isolation, then within words and finally within the context of a sentence.

Grammar sessions involved games and activities around correct use of pronouns and tense. The teachers also frequently modelled correct grammatical structures in everyday classroom and playground interactions. In addition, great care was taken to ensure the teachers' language was simple and clear, while providing opportunities to extend and advance Henry's language development through rich oral language experiences. These included opportunities to develop vocabulary knowledge through Henry's interest areas. At the same time, the teachers built his background general knowledge by involving him in increasingly complex conversations around identified topics of interest. In small group work, the teachers partnered Henry with competent peers so that he could hear and use language and grammar in a range of contexts. In general, there was greater emphasis on early oral language, with increased opportunities to chant rhymes and poems, sing songs and clap patterns, and engage in targeted phonemic awareness activities. A sample of individualised goals for articulation and the resources sourced for Henry's program are provided below.

### **Resources sourced for Henry's program**

- <http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?p=1991> as an initial articulation screener
- <http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?p=2113> for /r/ sound support



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- [http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?page\\_id=55](http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/?page_id=55) to use pictures to make games and activities for articulation work
- <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/grammar-practice?page=0%2C2> for grammar games

In early years classrooms, it is the teacher's role to insert explicit instruction on oral language through a range of teaching and learning strategies across the day. Within formal and informal learning on oral language, teachers have many opportunities to model language, expand children's existing skills, give language

feedback and value what individual children bring to the task.

### References

Association for Childhood Language and Related Disorders 2016, *Helping children to speak and find their voice*, accessed at: <http://www.childassoc.org.au/>.

McLeod, S & McCormack, J 2015, *Introduction to speech, language and literacy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Morrow, L & Tracey, D 2007, 'Best practices in early literacy development in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade', in LB Gambrell, LM Morrow and M Pressley (eds.), *Best practices in literacy education*, 3rd ed, Guilford Press, New York, pp. 57–82.

Henry's Term One articulation goals			
Goal (SMART) Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely	Strategy/ intervention	Time frame	How I will monitor
Copy sound for /l/ after teacher modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain and model teeth and tongue position for /l/</li> <li>• Break /l/ words into initial + vowel and final sounds for modelling</li> <li>• Use singular images with modelled pronunciation</li> </ul>	Weekly lesson with teacher aide (Monday)	<p>Video initial session and then video at monthly intervals</p> <p>Anecdotal records of particular sounds/ words that are difficult or successful</p>
Create /l/ or self-correct to /l/ sound independently in isolation and in sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide /l/ picture cards in pairs for Henry to work into a spoken sentence</li> </ul>	Twice weekly lesson with teacher aide (Tuesday and Friday)	<p>Video initial session and then video at monthly intervals</p> <p>Anecdotal records of particular sounds/ words that are difficult or successful</p>
Use the /l/ sound correctly and independently during daily writing sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use desk card with /l/ picture as prompt during writing</li> <li>• Writing with a buddy to check the words that have the /l/ sound</li> </ul>	Daily reminder before and during independent writing	Written anecdotal notes on daily writing samples



# *Developing the core skills required for literacy learning through play at Kindy*

*Evelyn Terry and Dr Fiona Jones*



*Evelyn Terry*

Evelyn Terry is a speech-language pathologist with over 25 years' experience delivering speech therapy within an educational context. She has a special interest in providing workshops for teachers in the areas of early literacy and early language development. Evelyn's practitioner research has focussed on the development of appropriate, effective, curriculum-based speech therapy services within education.



*Dr Fiona Jones*

Dr Fiona Jones is an occupational therapist with a special interest in supporting primary school-aged students to reach their developmental potential within educational settings. Fiona is a lecturer at The University of Queensland in the Occupational Therapy Division and a member of several national advisory boards.

Children like to play. Play engages children and makes learning fun. Children learn by 'doing' through play.

To create effective play-based learning for literacy, teachers require a knowledge of the core skills upon which literacy and language learning are built. These skills normally develop in a sequence. The core skills required for literacy learning fall into four areas – motor learning, visual learning, phonemic awareness and oral language.

***Targeted teaching and consolidation of skills does not have to happen at a desk.***

Teachers can plan play activities for the introduction, development and individual consolidation of the core skills. Children who have developed the prerequisite skills in all these

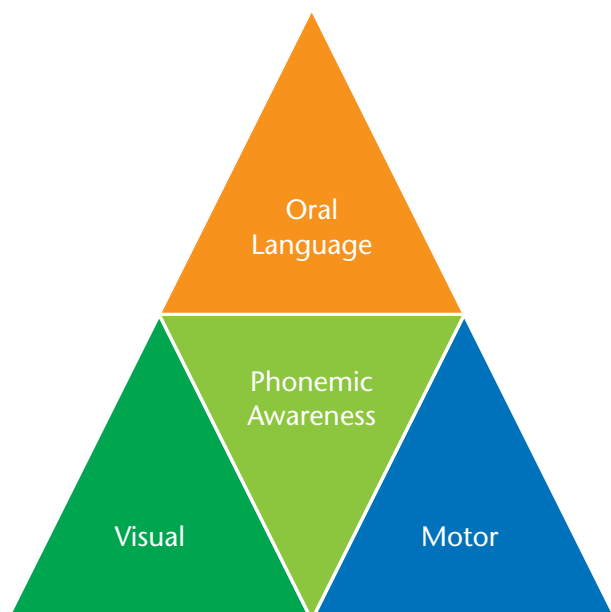
areas will more easily be able to learn literacy. Instead of fragmented development, children will have a solid core of skills on which to build. These skills form the base for the development of reading and writing.

▲ **Oral language** refers to the child's ability to understand what is said to them as well as their ability to generate language.

▲ **Phonemic awareness** refers to the identification and manipulation of sounds, which underpins the development of sound-letter correspondence and the processes of reading and spelling.

▲ **Visual processing** refers to the child's ability to understand and interpret what they see.

▲ **Motor skills** relate to coordinated muscle movement.



### ▲ Oral language

Children learn language through consistent exposure to language. They learn the sounds of the language and the words of the language. Children learn how to put words together to convey meaning.

Adults in the child's environment need to be aware of providing consistent exposure to new words as well as providing opportunities for the child to use the new words in functional contexts.

*Children who use a new word will learn that word better than if they had simply heard an explanation of the meaning of the word.*

#### **You can help by:**

- playing 'I Spy', but use clues such as 'I am thinking of something that is in the kitchen ... It is used for pouring ...'. Add more clues as needed.
- modelling the correct term. For example, when a child has a tennis racquet and says 'I have the bat!', you model the correct term, 'Yes, you have the racquet ... a bat is used in cricket. In tennis we use a racquet. Can you say that new word ... racquet? That's right, it is a tennis racquet.'

To put words together to form sentences, a child needs to learn the structure of a sentence

and grammar. Common grammatical errors during early childhood education include:

- getting the words in the wrong order – 'Daddy car go'
- confusing pronouns – 'Me hungry' for 'I am hungry'
- using incorrect verb forms – 'goed' for 'went'.

Structured learning activities can occur anytime and anywhere, as long as the teacher knows what they are targeting:

- Puzzles provide an opportunity to model targeted grammatical structures such as pronouns and verb tense: 'I found \_\_\_\_', 'He found \_\_\_\_', 'She found \_\_\_\_', 'I picked up a \_\_\_\_'.
- In the sandpit, you can lead the conversation in order to model and consolidate the use of a variety of grammatical structures, for example, irregular past tense *made* – 'I made a track for the truck ... what did you make?'

Children put sentences together to form stories. Story or book time can be used as a starter to develop a child's knowledge of stories and question words, such as who, what and where. *Mr Gumpy's outing* can be used to tell a story using sequences and to focus on the word 'who'. The teacher could:

- read the story to the children
- discuss who got into the boat.

The children can then:

- draw a character who got into the boat and glue it onto a large drawing of a boat. This can then be used as a prop to retell the story





- be guided in their play to reflect and tell 'Who got into the boat before you? after you? Let's remember who got into the boat ... let's make our own story'.

▲ **Phonemic awareness** refers to the sound-based skills that underpin the development of spelling and reading. To spell a word, a child needs to:

- break the word into syllables
- be aware of the sounds in the word and hear similar sounds, for example, rhyme
- be able to identify each sound.

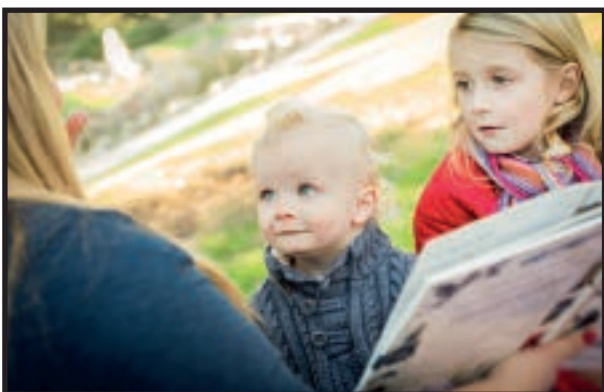
Reading requires sound blending, that is, saying the sounds joined together with no break in airflow, for example, 'c-a-t cat'.

Syllables can be taught and consolidated by children through action activities such as:

- Pretending to be dinosaurs and doing big heavy stomps for each beat in a word.

**Steg a sau rus**

**Di no saur**



The moving object and the words can reflect the theme you are focussing on across your curriculum.

Rhyme identification depends on children having the concept of speech sounds being similar or different. To develop this ability, children need to know what sounds are and then be able to link sounds that are the same. Consolidation of rhyme can commence when the children can, with support, identify rhyme. They can play with it by:

- thinking of a 'word that rhymes with \_\_\_\_'. This is especially good with their own names, for example, Jim/him, Claire/bear. They can then draw a bear called Claire.

Identifying the first sound in a word and sound blending can be taught and consolidated when sharing big books. When you are reading the story and you come to a page that has an illustration on it:

- pause and say the initial sound of an illustration. The children identify the illustration with that first sound
- pause at the beginning of a word and say the word broken up into sounds, for example, d-o-g. The children say the word, then you read the sentence with the word they supplied.

This process can be applied to puzzle time, painting, play dough, blocks etc., as long as the teacher is aware of the skill to be reinforced.

▲ **Visual processing** requires the child to be able to process what they see. The visual skills required for learning and literacy include:

- visual perception – a person's ability to understand what they see and being able to use that information
- visual motor skills – being able to copy accurately for drawing and writing.

Children need to be able to follow along a line, from left to right, in order to read. You might like to use your finger or cover part of the page or activity when reading, to help children learn this skill. They also need to be able to:

- identify differences between objects that are similar





- picture a complete image when only given part of a picture (e.g. seeing half of a picture of a dog, and being able to guess that it is a dog), which is important for sight words
- know left and right (important to avoid reversing letters and numbers)
- find the objects hidden in the picture or around the room
- recognise letters, shapes and objects despite changes (such as a change in font, size or direction)
- remember what they see.

Children also need to be able to control the pencil for drawing and writing. Children need to be able to draw the following shapes before starting school and learning letter formation:



### Activities that target visual skills include:

- matching the two halves
- finding items hidden around the room
- mazes
- dot-to-dots
- ball games
- drawing and colouring
- building with blocks and copying block patterns
- cutting with scissors

- using materials to make shapes (e.g, toothpicks, paddlepop sticks)
- tracing, copying and drawing (between glitter-glue lines or sticks, in the sandpit, painting)
- threading and lacing cards.

▲ **Motor skill development** is important for learning and literacy readiness. Gross motor skills relate to the big movements and control needed to be able to sit with a stable posture at a desk. Fine motor skills give the control needed for writing and drawing.

For the purpose of this article, motor skills have been split into four key components, as follows.

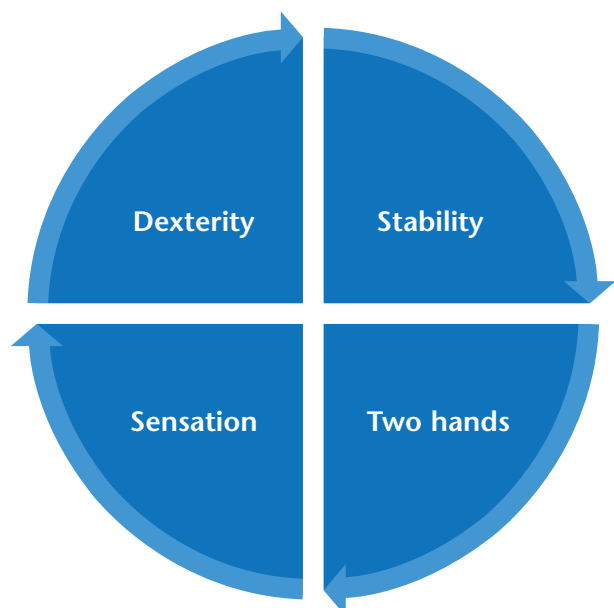
### Stability

Children need strong muscles and a stable posture to sit up tall and hold the pencil correctly. Stability starts from the big muscles in the core of your body, through the shoulders and out to the hands. Children can develop stability through activities such as:

- obstacle courses
- crawling or kneeling on hands and knees
- digging in the sandpit.

### Two hands

Children need to develop hand dominance (a consistently preferred hand, with the other hand working in a supporting role) and be



able to use both hands for different activities at the same time. For example, children with well-developed 'two-handed' skills will be able to hold the paper still with one hand, and write or draw with the other. They need to be able to cross their right hand over to pick things up from the left, and vice versa, without moving their body or twisting from side to side. Children can develop their skills by:

- threading
- hammering
- Hokey Pokey
- animal walks.

### Sensation

A person needs to know what movements their hand is making – without looking! – in order to be able to draw and write efficiently. This body awareness is needed to be able to learn to write letters and write them quickly and accurately.

Sensory play is an extremely important component of early childhood development. It allows children to learn about what their bodies are doing.

*Sensory play that focusses on children learning where their fingers are and what movements they are making is an important precursor for writing letters quickly and accurately.*

Some sensory play activities focussing on fingers include finger painting and drawing in different substances, such as shaving cream, sand, finger paint. Musical instruments and activities



involving squeezing and pinching (e.g. tongs, tweezers, playdough) are also excellent.

### Dexterity

These are the small, coordinated movements of the hand to help control the pencil. Children need to be able to pick up small objects, move items within their hand, pinch items between their thumb and index finger and move their wrists and coordinate their fingers. This may include:

- using pegs and tweezers
- posting coloured matchsticks into the corresponding coloured hole (see picture for example)
- posting coins into a moneybox.

### Pencil grasp

Developing an appropriate pencil grasp is important for writing at school; however, it is important to note that:

- The average age a child develops a mature pencil grasp is five years, six months.
- Children will change pencil grasps frequently, and not necessarily in a certain order.
- If the task is harder or new, they will typically change to a less mature grasp to give them more control (such as adding extra fingers).

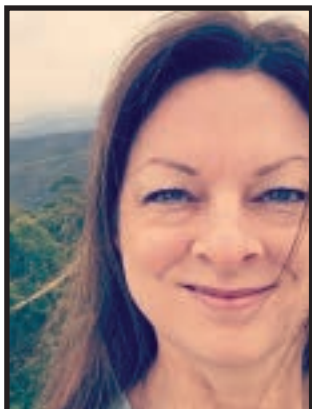
Developing their fine motor skills will help with the natural progression of pencil grasp development. Focus on grasping the pencil in one hand, between the fingers, with the thumb up and allow the rest of the development to happen with increased skill.

These four components summarise the normal development of the core skills required for early literacy learning. A strong foundation in these skills, developed through play, sets children up to meet the literacy requirements at the commencement of Prep.

*Knowledge of what needs to be developed enables you to plan your activities to target the development of specific skills according to the individual child's needs. You can plan the development and consolidation across the day, the term and the year.*

# *The explicit teaching of vocabulary*

*Deb Lawrence*



Deb is currently the Deputy Principal at Mountain Creek Primary School but is best known for her role as a Principal Education Advisor for the Australian Curriculum: English. She has spoken nationally for the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) and the Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA), and also internationally at various New Zealand reading conferences.

There has never been a more important time than now to make it a priority to plan for deliberate vocabulary instruction. In any classroom, a high percentage of students suffer from 'word poverty': the inability to effortlessly and confidently choose, use and comprehend tiered words for a purpose. There is a growing trend of students who use less than half the number of words expected for their age (Tuck 2009). Traditionally, teaching focusses on the implicit learning of vocabulary through the explicit teaching of reading, writing, spelling and oral language activities. Now, it is time to explicitly teach vocabulary instruction as its own area of literacy to avoid more students falling into the arena of word poverty.

Recent research reveals that vocabulary knowledge is an important factor in contributing to reading comprehension (Pressley 2000), and plays a significant role in improving comprehension. Stahl (2005) describes vocabulary knowledge as: the knowledge of a word implies a definition and implies how that word fits into the world. This definition suggests that instruction in vocabulary involves more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. Vocabulary is also acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through the explicit instruction of specific words and word-learning strategies.

### **Vocabulary instruction versus word study**

*Vocabulary instruction* can be defined as a series of steps specifically taught so that students develop 'word learning strategies' to comprehend the meaning of new words encountered and use those new words to support their overall literacy development. (Diamond & Gutlohn 2006)

*Word study* is learning about how each word is constructed through the layers of orthography. Students understand how letters and sounds blend in a particular order to produce a word that has meaning or where parts of words have originated from to explain the spelling of a particular word.

The three cueing systems (semantic, syntactic and graphophonic) are still highly relevant and help to support professional understanding when constructing meaning about the above terms.

### **Building word wealth and eliminating word poverty**

A daily plan will support intentional teaching of new words within the components of an effective vocabulary program (Graves 2000). A vocabulary program must include:

1. wide or extensive independent reading to expand word knowledge
2. instruction in specific words to enhance comprehension of texts containing those words



3. instruction in independent word-learning strategies
4. word consciousness and word-play activities to motivate and enhance learning.

An important reading skill is to know and control cognitive and metacognitive strategies to develop and use a wide vocabulary. Students need to be taught how to use morphological and context strategies to help them work out unknown words. For students to be able to do this, word-learning strategies should include intensive, explicit teaching in word study

### Get excited about words

The first step to engaging student learning is to get excited. A 'word-of-the-day' strategy ignites students' interests and curiosity. For example, teach new vocabulary for a new unit of work or re-teach words from a previous unit. Students share their word-of-the-day with the class and add it to a class board.

The next step to engage students is explicitly teaching a new or unfamiliar word. Word-learning strategies include:

1. using context to unlock the meaning of unknown words (contextual analysis)
2. using word parts (morphemic analysis) to unlock the meaning of unknown words
3. using the dictionary and related reference tools
4. developing a strategy for dealing with unknown words (goal setting)
5. teaching students to adopt a personal approach to building their vocabularies (Diamond & Gutlohn 2006).

*Teachers need to develop 'word consciousness' as a daily routine with students to improve the learning of new words.*

### Lesson planning for word-learning strategies

When lesson planning for word-learning strategies, the starting point involves pre-reading the text before reading it with students.

Teachers anticipate the challenges of the words in the text that the students will read:

1. pre-read the text
2. make a list of difficult vocabulary
3. plan an engaging way to interact with challenging vocabulary that teaches the strategies
4. set a learning goal. For example, today We Are Learning That (WALT) good readers use word-learning strategies to decode new vocabulary
5. display success criteria. For example, I know I have learned today's goal when I can show my teacher how I use the five word-learning strategies and investigate what the words mean in context.

### Which words to teach?

Research suggests that teachers should choose high-frequency words with multiple meanings (or Tier 2 words) (Beck 2002). These words need to be important to learn and frequently appear across a variety of subject areas. They should be 'mature' words. Students can build rich representations of the words and can make connections to other words and concepts (Beck 2002) The following is an example of which words you would focus on in the sentence, 'The servants would never comment on this strange occurrence'.

Tier 2 words	A student's normal choice
servants	helpers
comment	say
occurrence	thing, happening

There are thousands of engaging activities to build vocabulary. The following activities also teach word-learning strategies.

### Classroom activities to explicitly build a student's vocabulary

#### Oral language activities

'Interview a word'. Students are given a word for an upcoming unit. From a list of prewritten questions, students ask and answer those questions in pairs. For example:



- How many letters does your word have?
- Does your word have a blend?
- Is there a little word inside?
- What does your word mean?
- Can you use it in a sentence?

'Take a book walk' supports the development of three areas: oral language, vocabulary and retell (Child Care Providers Resource Network

Step 1	The teacher provides a description, explanation or example of the term
Step 2	Linguistic: Students restate the description, explanation or example in their own words
Step 3	Non-linguistic: Students construct a picture, pictograph or symbolic representation or act out the term
Step 4	The teacher extends and refines understanding of the word by engaging students in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in vocabulary notebooks
Step 5	Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another
Step 6	Involve students in games that enable them to play with the terms and reinforce word knowledge

(Marzano & Simms 2013)

2013). Each page of a chosen book is mounted to a board. Underneath each board is a bucket of items that are important to the story. The students walk to each numbered board. A helper reads the text, and each student collects one of the items in the bucket. When they come back to class, the students order the items and orally retell the story.

### Structured lessons with PowerPoint

Choose a text and create a list of challenging vocabulary. Find real pictures to match the words. Make up and tell a story to match the words. Students can 'turn and talk' about what has been shared with them and what they have learned. As a memory activity, students list the new vocabulary.

### Picture talk

Print a picture to match an essential word to a story. For this example, the text *Schumann the shoeman* (Danalis & Danalis 2009) was chosen. Students connect with and understand the word *cobbler*.

Students respond to stimulus questions such as:

- What can you see in the picture? Let's label it.
- What do you already know about what you see in the picture? Who makes shoes?
- What might you learn more about if you read a book containing this picture?
- What type of text does this picture come from? How do you know?
- What do the following phrases from the book mean? For example, 'promenade the footpath' and 'like clouds to walk on', in the context of shoes.



### Five-word activity

This activity is adapted from an online tool called 'vocab foldable' (Candler 2016). It is similar to using the Frayer model (Lupiani 2016). These resources engage students in learning about words and being conscious of what we know about them.

Process:

1. Pick five words from a text you will read.
2. Choose topic words that will present a challenge.
3. (Students do not see the text.) Ask students to show their knowledge of each word.
  - Write a synonym.
  - Define the word.
  - Write the word in a sentence.
  - Use the word in a sentence as a cloze.
  - Sketch the word.
4. Teachers explicitly teach how to use the work sheet.

Provide a proforma for students to keep a record of their work. After completing that task, ask students to make a prediction about what they think the text is going to be about. Show them the front cover. Discuss. Go back to the record sheet and add new ideas or change original definitions. Now read the first page of the text. Highlight the new vocabulary on the page. Go back to the original record sheet and add more ideas about the five key words. Extend this activity to include some comprehension questions about the text containing the new vocabulary.

### Word knowledge

Select words to engage students in word investigation activities. This strategy aids comprehension. Lesson ideas (WGBH Educational Foundation 2002) using the book *Click clack moo, cows that type*, and using the words *note* and *farm*:

- **note** – has more than one meaning. It can be a noun or a verb. Compound words include notebook, notepaper, notepad
- **farm** – list/discuss what students know about farms. Discuss different types of farms. Farm can be a noun or a verb. The

word farm can be morphed – farms, farmer, farming, etc. Compound words include farmhand, farmhouse.

In conclusion, the critical feature of an effective comprehension program is explicit and systematic vocabulary instruction. The activities listed above will support the explicit and systematic vocabulary instruction required to improve reading comprehension.

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# ***Exploring grammatical mood in the early years: statements, questions, commands and offers***

***Beryl Exley***



Beryl Exley is an experienced classroom teacher who is now lecturing in English curriculum within the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology. Beryl recently co-authored *Playing with grammar in the early years: learning about language in the Australian Curriculum: English* (Exley & Kervin 2013). She also manages the Facebook page 'B.E. a grammar ACE' that provides tips for teaching grammar in the Australian context.

Have you ever thought about the way we use statements, questions, commands and offers in our day-to-day interactions? These four language resources are examples of grammatical mood:

- statements – providing information or marking remarks
- questions – enquiring or requesting information
- commands – getting things done by requesting information or asking for goods and services
- offers – offering to provide goods or services (Derewianka 2011).

***The way grammatical mood is used and understood varies across social and cultural groups, and across time and place.***

Those immersed in a particular social or cultural group may be so comfortable with the use of grammatical mood that they may not realise how people from other social and cultural groups use these same grammatical resources to create different understandings. Let me provide an example.

One day I was hosting my sister's German in-laws at my home in Brisbane. They are wonderful guests, generous and delightful company. They are fluent in their mother tongue and in English, which is quite sobering for me, a mere monolingual speaker. We have visited each other multiple times, such is the pleasure of our relationship. On this occasion, we were about to embark on an excursion to Southbank Parklands. I had two young children dressed and toileted, morning tea was packed, handbag on my shoulder, sunglasses on my head and keys in my hand. I said, 'Would you like to go now?' Think about all the gestural clues I was offering. How do you read this scenario? My German guests read my utterance as an open question. They responded, 'A cup of tea would be nice'. For their part, they thought they were being enormously helpful by responding to an invitation to provide input into the day's plan.

On the surface, my utterance had the structure of a question. If I had written the utterance, it would have had the tell-tale question mark. As an oral utterance, it had the tell-tale inflection at the end to stimulate interaction. Yet, my intent was to communicate something else – a command that we are all leaving so please follow me to the car. In terms of function, my

command was masquerading as a question. And there lies the confusion when I unwittingly used a particular pattern of language interaction in a cross-cultural context. The confusion is related to neither vocabulary nor syntactical structure; the confusion is about how language functions to make meaning in this instance of use. I'd used an indirect way of interacting rather than using the more straightforward command. It's not wrong *per se*; I thought I was being polite and gentle.

If we think about the social and cultural uses of students' home languages, we see the need for carefully scaffolding patterns of language interaction. Let us turn to the Australian Curriculum: English (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2016), in particular the Language sub-strand 'Language for Interaction'. This is where 'students learn that the language used by individuals varies according to their social setting and the relationships between the participants. They learn that accents and styles of speech and idiom are part of the creation and expression of personal and social identities' (ACARA 2016). This sub-strand promotes the language knowledge of all students, including

students who speak a language or dialect other than Standard Australian English. This sub-strand also foregrounds the way language use interfaces with personal and social identities. Three of the content descriptions in the Foundation – Year Two stage talk specifically to grammatical mood (see Table 1).

*One way to open up the discussion around different social and/or cultural patterns of language interaction is to share scenarios from the children.*

My earlier example is a case in point. Another option is to share carefully selected examples of children's literature. One book I like is *The bear said please* by Queensland author and illustrator Jacque Duffy (2014). Duffy's book narrates the experiences of a perpetually hungry but likable bear who journeys into the woods to find some honey. He climbs to the top of a tree and, without asking, attempts to take some honey. Angry bees sting the bear while proclaiming, 'Not saying please is very bad!' (Duffy 2014). Pages 15 (see Figure 1) and 16 (see Figure 2) carry the dialogue that warrants discussion.

Table 1: Grammatical mood in Foundation – Year Two

Year level	Content description	Sample elaboration/s
Foundation	Explore how language is used differently at home and school depending on the relationships between people (ACELA1428)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learning to ask relevant questions and to express requests and opinions in ways that suit different contexts</li> </ul>
Year One	Understand that there are different ways of asking for information, making offers and giving commands (ACELA1446)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learning the difference between questions and statements, requests and commands</li> </ul>
Year Two	Understand that language varies when people take on different roles in social and classroom interactions and how the use of key interpersonal language resources varies depending on context (ACELA1461)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exploring the differences between giving a presentation and talking to friends</li> <li>exploring culturally specific greetings and expressions of politeness</li> </ul>

Table 2: Points of discussion from *The bear said please* (Duffy 2014)

Utterance	Grammatical mood	Points of discussion
Hmmmm	Statement because it's a remark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This remark can mean many things. In the context of this use, it seems to be the bear's way of showing that he is thinking.</li> </ul>
I should use my manners more!	Command because it's providing an instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's a self-command. The bear is commanding himself to use his manners more.</li> </ul>
Sorry	Statement because it's a remark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>But it's more than a statement, it's also to 'offer' an apology and to 'request' forgiveness. The seemingly simple remark of 'sorry' is actually a fulsome and complicated interaction.</li> </ul>
May I have some honey please?	Command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While this utterance has the guise of a question, it's not asking for information. It's a polite form of command.</li> </ul>

## *Children learn that accents and styles of speech and idiom are part of the creation and expression of personal and social identities'*

Table 2 provides some points of discussion for these four utterances, but please do not limit your points of discussion to those I have listed. You and the children might extend the discussion in really interesting ways that recognise everyone's socially and culturally bound ways of making meaning with text.

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### Acknowledgement

Thanks to Jacque Duffy for permission to use images from *The bear said please*.

Figure 1 (Duffy 2014, p. 15)

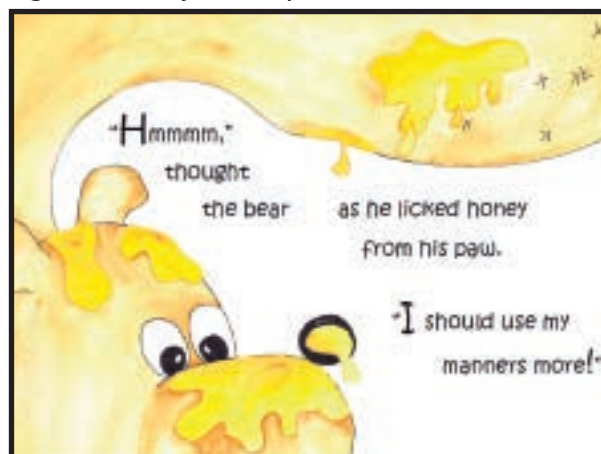


Figure 2 (Duffy 2014, p. 16)





# *Playing with numbers: it is more than just counting!*

*Judith Forster*



Judith has worked as a preschool teacher, advisory teacher and numeracy adviser for the Year Two Diagnostic Net. Recently she was a curriculum writer specialising in early childhood mathematics, contributing to the production of teacher resources such as the Year One Numeracy Learning statements, Preschool Curriculum Guideline, Outcomes Mathematics Curriculum and the Essential Learnings. She has also written pre- and postgraduate courses for universities.

‘Learning mathematics creates opportunities for, and enriches the lives of, all Australians. It develops the numeracy capabilities that all students need in their personal, work and civic life’ (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2011).

Understanding, fluency, reasoning and problem-solving are the four proficiency strands that drive learning in the Australian Curriculum: Mathematics. Teachers who understand these proficiencies provide educational programs to build strong foundations in mathematics.

### **What does building understanding about number look like?**

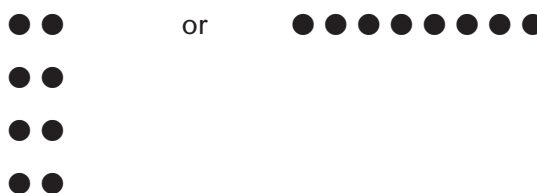
Children ‘build understandings of number when they connect related ideas, represent concepts in different ways, identify commonalities and differences, describe their thinking mathematically and when they interpret mathematical information’ (ACARA 2011).

The focus on number should be on developing understanding. Children need to go beyond counting by rote and using number in their play. Children know that one number name is assigned to one object (one-to-one correspondence) and that the counting sequence is always the same, regardless of the order in which the objects are counted

(irrelevance of the order of the count). They need to know that each number has a position in the sequence (position of number). For example, eight is between seven and nine; seven and nine are neighbours of eight; seven comes before eight, and nine comes after eight; eight is close to ten; it is closer to ten than it is to five.

Teachers must provide opportunities for children to explore the quantities (cardinality) of single-digit, two-digit and three- or four-digit numbers. Children also need to know that the last number counted is the quantity of that collection (how many in that collection?).

Through play, children need time to build their understandings about number by investigating different representations of the same number (equivalence). They need to know that a collection of objects can be rearranged to look different while the quantity does not change (number conservation). For example, the quantity eight may look like this (just two examples provided):



In this visual example, children may see the arrangement of eight, on the left, as either  $2 + 2 + 2 + 2$  (reading each row from top to bottom) or  $4 + 4$  (viewing it vertically as two rows of four ones, reading from left to right) or  $4 + 4$  (viewing it as two sets of four, cut horizontally across the middle of the arrangement, reading it from top to bottom in a different way). Teachers need to check how children are viewing the collection before imposing an adult view of an arrangement.

Children need to look for smaller numbers within a collection by subitising (seeing a small group and knowing how many without counting). For example, with a collection of eight: *Tell me if you can see small groups of numbers* (maybe – five and three look like the domino pattern). During these experiences children may choose to record their quantities using number symbols and number words.

Every situation in the classroom has opportunities to either add or subtract. For example, *Take another sandwich/friend/block, now you have \_\_\_\_; you started with two sandwiches/friends/blocks and you ate one / one went away / you used one, now you have \_\_\_\_ (child's response) left.*

Children see patterns in arrangements of collections and move their thinking to multiplication (groups of). They see four groups of two, for example, or two groups of four as equivalent to eight. The mathematical language they use moves from counting, to identifying groups of for multiplicative thinking. During their play, children can divide or share a collection. For example, eight objects shared between two children, each gets four (two groups, each group gets four objects – partitioning division). They can share eight objects into groups with two objects each for sale in a play shop (make groups with two objects in each, four groups, each has two objects – quotienting division).

Using numbers for labelling is different because a quantity is not readily visible, for example, labelling tables for morning tea and ignoring the number of children placed at each table. Children see personal identification numbers (PINs), postcodes, house numbers and barcodes in their environments and can investigate and use these through their play. Understanding numbers lifts the burden of recall of rote learning.

### What does building fluency with numbers look like?

Fluency in mathematics is demonstrated when children choose 'appropriate procedures: carry out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately: and recalling factual knowledge and concepts readily' (ACARA 2011).

When children think flexibly about the quantity of numbers, they will confidently split a number to make calculations easier by using the *make to ten, make to a decade* strategy. They can select the most efficient and appropriate arrangement of a collection to solve a problem, such as adding eight objects and four objects. One example is to select six and two as equivalent to eight so that the six can be added to four to make ten and then add two, and the total is twelve.

Communicating with children encourages them to share different strategies for the same solution and supports them to select from a range of appropriate strategies.

Children need support to transfer strategies to new encounters with number, for example, *try using your \_\_\_\_ strategy and see if it works*. They need opportunities to use counting patterns when calculating, for example: eight add four. Children could split four into double two and then use skip-counting by twos, counting on from eight to ten to twelve.

### What does building reasoning with numbers look like?

Mathematical reasoning involves the use of an 'increasingly sophisticated capacity for logical thought and actions, such as analysing, proving, evaluating, explaining, inferring, justifying and generalising' (ACARA 2011). Children build their reasoning through careful questioning that asks why they think it is so, how they came to a conclusion, or whether their idea will work for other numbers.

Through their play, children analyse representations of quantities in different arrangements and prove that they are the same number (equality), search for common elements, spot patterns and explain relationships.

Teachers can model making conjectures such as *I wonder if nineteen could be represented in rows of two ...* and work collaboratively to find out





### Questions

*Dr Joe Ireland*



Doctor Joseph Ireland (Dr Joe) is an experienced touring science education specialist in Brisbane, Australia. He received his doctorate from the Queensland University of Technology in 2011, thus becoming a 'real' scientist as well. He works with teachers to create fun, effective and educational science experiences for students. His approach energises teachers' pedagogy, while following strands of the national science curriculum, and allows students to learn through inquiry.

After a sense of wellbeing, and being loved, the most important thing a child can have is permission to ask questions. Whether these questions are verbalised or not, when people have the ability to ask questions they can question nature and her inhabitants and begin to create a series of rules for interacting and predicting behaviours.

Questions come naturally to children. Many a parent will attest to a barrage of unceasing questions that seem to roll forth from children – sometimes endlessly. When overwhelmed, the well-meaning parent may even try to end the blitz with an eventual 'It just *is*, OK!' I know I have.

I suppose we all know better answers in our heart: 'We can find out together!' and 'Look it up online' or even 'Not just yet, I'm watching TV' may all be acceptable answers at one point or another. Sometimes, of course, we feel we know the answer and regularly indulge in that most pleasurable of parenting activities – sharing facts we've heard from science.

***A whole lot of answers we use in our culture come from science, or from something claiming to be science – a beautiful thing that is nothing more or less than a very careful way to answer questions.***



*Testing ideas is what makes science 'scieny'*

### How to promote scientific thinking and questioning in the early years

- During an engaging activity, write down student questions on a great big piece of paper. For instance, in spring take them for a walk to the local 'bee tree' and let the questions flow!
- Have a question book and leave it open, or a page in their books or a poster. Maybe during an 'Under the sea' unit have a great big poster and let students pin up their questions whenever they arise.
- Have a wonder corner where the children can redo activities in their own time. When studying life on earth, borrow some real animal skeletons from the Queensland Museum loans service and let students play with and explore them, enriching their own learning in their own way.

Whether science is the royal road to truth is a question you may have to answer yourself. But how does science come by so many great answers to young children's questions?

### Everything is open to challenge

Arguably, the most important tool in science's kit is that it gives itself permission to test every claim that comes its way. Nothing is taken for granted and everything is open to challenge. Of course, some ideas are more open to challenge than others; some ideas are brand new and relatively untested, while others yet stand proud after many centuries of prodding. Postmodernism has also helped us realise that science, much like any human endeavour, is subject to human prejudice and error. Sometimes better ideas take a long time to be accepted because they are unusual or unpopular, or they confront cultural sensitivities. The hope is that good ideas will win out in the end if science is allowed to do its thing.

### Testing ideas is what makes science 'sciency'

In every field of science, volumes of literature, decades of history and uncounted millions of



dollars have gone into honing and sharpening the concept of 'testing ideas'. I believe if, at the end of a science lesson, our students are left with the idea that science is about testing things, then we are on the right track. Testing our own ideas isn't simple; we soon discover how easy it is to make mistakes in measurement, how important it is to never base a knowledge claim on a single piece of evidence, and how other people are a vital part of our own learning about the world.

*I fully believe that as children are empowered to test their knowledge claims – which they might otherwise leave untested – they become better and wiser people, more ready to take on the knowledge economy's endless onslaught of marketed material and much, much more.*





### Without new questions, science will die

Arguably, those who give up questioning their world and how to act within it may also lose the light of their curiosity, to the point where it is extinguished. To me, having the permission and power to ask questions is sacred, and not only helps us to know our world, but has helped create one of the greatest social movements of all time: science. But science isn't finished yet – and unless we keep asking questions we don't even know what it will become!

Now we come to one of the most important answers to any question in life or in science. An answer so profound and important that it *cannot*, it must not, ever be lost from the modern account of what science is and what science knows. This answer is so foundational, it is the very basis of all that science is and all that science has accomplished. An answer so profound that it is a perfectly valid answer to any question a young child might ask, and infinitely preferable to 'It just is'.

And that answer is 'I don't know'.



Explosion science!

# *Building digital construction zones for young learners*

*Kristine Kopelke and Sally Gower*



*Kristine Kopelke*

Kristine Kopelke is the coordinator of the Contemporary Learning Hub at Meridan State College, where she works as an early phase and primary ICT specialist. She has over 15 years' experience exploring the potential of digital tools and pedagogies in K–12 contexts. Kristine has a Master of Education degree and has received the International Society of Technology in Education Making IT Happen award.



*Sally Gower*

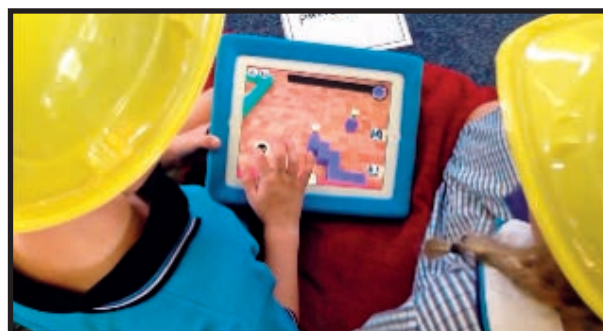
Sally Gower is a leading early years educator currently teaching Prep at Meridan State College on the Sunshine Coast. An early adopter of digital technologies, Sally has created an amazing classroom space where digital technology is used ubiquitously to make learning interactive, engaging and challenging for young learners.

At a construction site in Queensland, workers don their hard hats and review the notes for the next stage in their latest construction project. After a quick review of what needs to be done, the workers begin gathering the materials needed to complete the project. Some materials are counted and loaded onto vehicles, while others are carried and placed into position by the workers. Like most construction sites, it is a busy environment where workers give and receive instructions and collaborate in order to get the job done.

The description of the construction site above is one that could be used to describe most construction sites in Queensland on any given day. However, the construction site we are describing is one where the workers are aged four and five, the vehicles are programmable floor robots and the site is in a Prep – Year One composite class at Meridan State College. The site is part of a new innovative play space

where digital tools are found on the same shelves that house the standard blocks and construction materials that would usually facilitate construction-based play in an early years learning context.

This play space is being trialled as part of the Play, Wonder and Learn project. This project explores how digital technologies and contemporary pedagogies can be used to create interactive learning environments in the early





phase. It is a core project of the Contemporary Learning Hub at Meridan State College.

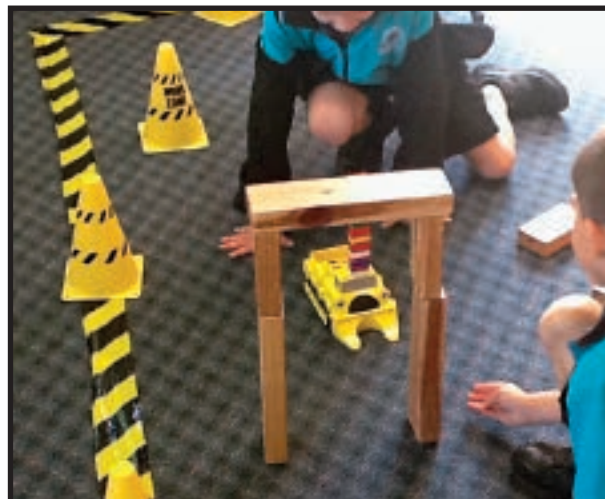
*A fundamental belief of this project is that children should be given opportunities to become confident and involved learners with the digital tools and technologies that shape their world beyond the classroom.*

The construction zone play space is in the classroom of experienced Prep teacher Sally Gower. Within Sally's classroom, digital technologies are ubiquitous. They are brought into play and used when and where it makes sense and are used to support, challenge and engage young learners. For the past two years, Sally has embraced the idea of engaging students in a construction-themed play space where students can draw on digital tools to resource their learning. She has built on the initial design concept for the space and has created a highly engaging space that is constantly evolving in response to the needs, interests and ideas of children in her class.

This article will provide an overview of some of the digital technologies that children are engaging with as part of their engagement within this play space and other learning contexts in the early years. It aims to dispel the myth that the use of digital technologies is about engaging students in 'screen time' and to provide practical examples of how you can leverage digital tools for learner engagement and to enable children to develop positive dispositions for learning including curiosity, cooperation, persistence and creativity.

### **Building positive dispositions towards programming with Bee-Bots**

Through the Play, Wonder and Learn project, we recognised early on just how engaging and versatile Bee-Bots can be. Bee-Bots are programmable floor robots that are specifically designed for use with young children. They can be programmed to move in 15 cm increments and turn at 90-degree angles. Students are encouraged to use Bee-Bots to move around the construction zone or to go on adventures on commercially available or student-produced Bee-Bot mats. Another great activity is to build Bee-Bot



roads with road tape. Students then use felt pens as a non-standard unit of measure to work out how many times they need to push the forward button to move the Bee-Bot along the road.

### **Counting on Constructabots**

Constructabots are a favourite tool in the construction zone and are used by students to transport a range of materials throughout the zone. Students give and receive instructions to deliver set quantities of Lego bricks to different locations within the zone. They count the quantity as they stack the Lego bricks on top of the Constructabot. Students who have experience with Bee-Bots can seamlessly move to Constructabots as they both have the same buttons to make them move.

### **Overcoming obstacles with Sphero**

One of the popular tools in the construction zone is the Sphero, which is a robotic ball that can be moved and programmed via apps on iOS and Android devices. Students collaboratively build obstacle courses within the zone and then take on the challenge of moving the Sphero through them. As students work on this task they engage in problem-solving and give and receive instructions. This supports students to develop their oral language, in particular their instructional and positional language.

### **Building virtual environments with Toca Builders**

One of the screen-based activities within the construction zone involves the students



using the Toca Builders app, which has been developed by Toca Boca. Toca Boca is a global leader in creating app-based play experiences for children and has a large selection of quality apps that are designed with the goal of enabling children to play for the sake of playing. Toca Boca describes itself as a studio that believes in the power of play and aims to develop apps that enable play without rules, levels or pre-determined outcomes.

At Meridan and in the schools we work with as part of our Play, Wonder and Learn project, we embrace and use many of the Toca Boca apps with our students. In the construction zone, students engage in building in Toca Builders. In this 3D environment, students use blocks to create buildings and places and then view them from any perspective. While students are encouraged to engage in free play using Toca Builders, they also work on design briefs that Sally has provided or that children in the class have written and placed in the work folders. One of the advantages of building in a digital space, such as Toca Builders, is that the work children do is never packed up. Thus, they can return to their play and the buildings and spaces over a series of weeks or months to continue evolving their designs.

### **Creating homes for digital toys and robots**

As the construction zone gains momentum in a classroom, new digital toys and robots arrive unexpectedly and need new homes to be constructed for them. One of the popular arrivals last year was a Little Live Pet mouse,

which scurried into the classroom. On its arrival, students compared and contrasted the features of their guest with the features of a real mouse and discovered that their Little Live Pet mouse was more like a robot as it had batteries, a switch, wheels, a speaker and tiny buttons. The mouse also changes direction when it bumps into an object. This began a conversation about sensors and led to students talking about where they find sensors in the world beyond the classroom. Students were very keen to make their mouse a home out of the construction materials in the construction zone and have since made little homes for a second mouse and other digital toys. They are currently working on designing and constructing homes for their new robots, Dot and Dash.

This construction zone concept has been a huge success in Sally's classroom and is one that continues to sustain student interest and evolve with student input and direction. As we discover new digital tools and resources, they are placed in the zone and are used purposefully and playfully in the environment. All of the digital tools and activities we have described provide students with opportunities to develop positive dispositions for learning, including cooperation, persistence and creativity. This case study has demonstrated that, with the right vision and by using appropriate age-based pedagogies, learning with digital tools in the early years can be about so much more than screen time. We encourage you all to get creative, start building and empower your learners.



# *Literacy through literature: why invest in a literature-rich teaching program?*

*Lee Denton*



Lee Denton (BEd, MEd, DipTeach) is an experienced educator and school administrator with over 30 years' experience working with educators, parents and community organisations throughout New South Wales and Queensland. Lee's experience includes over ten years' classroom teaching across all school-aged groups and explicit literacy experience as a Reading Recovery teacher and through the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) program.

'Grandma, please may I take a book with us to the restaurant? If the meal takes a long time I want something to do.' These words came from my granddaughter a few weekends ago.

Wouldn't this be the wish of all of us in education? For a child to enjoy reading is the most wonderful gift we can give them. Some parents read every night to their children and nurture a love of literature from the time they are babies, but not all children are so lucky.

Those who enjoy reading, and are read to on a daily basis, experience a higher volume of books before they start school. The more they read, the better they get at it. It is not complex, but it is the key to a higher literacy yield.

The Australian Curriculum reminds us that literature includes a broad range of forms including narratives, poetry, plays and a wide range of multimodal texts such as film. Because of this variety, literature can be suitable for any age or ability group.

The importance of good quality literature – books with humour, clever plots, interesting characters, useful information and rich vocabulary – cannot be overemphasised.

### **Read for pleasure**

To read or be read to in a cosy chair or a warm bed as we settle down for the night creates a

positivity towards books that continues for a lifetime.

*It is a relaxing escape from daily problems, and it fills leisure moments. Making time for recreational reading and using high-quality literature help to develop enthusiastic readers and improve achievement. (Block & Mangieri 2002, in Roe & Ross 2006, p. 33)*

For those children who do not experience this at home, it is imperative that we supply books such as *Press here* by Henre Tullet in the classroom. *Press here* ensures enjoyment and interaction with the book. We do not want passive readers. If I don't enjoy it, I won't read in my own time – I will only read when an adult makes me!

### **Read to improve literacy standards**

*A study of second-, third-, fourth-, and sixth-grade classrooms by Block, Reed, and deTuncq (2003) indicated that students benefited from twenty minutes of daily literature reading instruction. The researchers claim that reading literature resulted in increased reading ability, improved attitudes toward reading, and increased reading rate. (Roe & Ross 2006)*

Beautiful books such as *Sad the dog* by Sandy Fussell provide the avenue for discussing rich



vocabulary – better words than *said* and better words than *sad*.

### Read to build experience

As children read a variety of books, new worlds open up to them. A window into farm life for a city child is possible through books such as *Banjo and Ruby Red* by Libby Gleeson and Freya Blackwood.

### Read to provide language patterns

Books such as *I'm a dirty dinosaur* by Janeen Brian and Ann James show children examples of the use of rhyme and rhythm. If children have experienced nursery rhymes where the last words rhyme (e.g. Humpty had a *fall* from a *wall*), these will help them predict the last word on each page as they read about the dirty dinosaur having a *dirty snout*, which he *shakes about*.

### Read to develop thinking skills

Careful questioning techniques may assist young readers to think beyond the literal level of the text. Can they infer (think about what they know and find evidence in the text) or evaluate (decide who is their favorite character or which part of the story they like best etc.)?

### Read to help children deal with their problems

As egocentric as young children are, they often are unaware that other people have problems

too and talking to others or reading books where children have similar issues as them can be a great comfort and assistance. *Two nests* by Laurence Anholt is the story of two birds that have a baby. The parents decide to split as they squabble and there is *not enough room for them both in the nest* but as the story continues, the reader sees that they both still love the baby bird and help it learn to fly.

### Read to develop visual literacy

As described by Giorgis et al. 1999 (in Roe & Ross 2006), illustrations are an integral part of the text and help the reader become aware of line, colour, space, shape and design. Some illustrations complement or reinforce the story, and some even may take the child beyond the words on the page.

### Read multicultural literature to help value people from different races and cultures

In our multicultural world children eat food from different cultures, but are they exposed to literature from other cultures? *Big rain coming* by Katrina Germein is an Indigenous text where the language and experiences, together with the illustrations, create the world of outback Australia.

### Read to integrate the curriculum

Literacy permeates all subjects taught: *100th day worries* by Margaret Cuyler outlines different





ways of making 100 through a story where the love of her family helps a little girl put together her own collection of 100.

### Readers' repertoires

*A Literature companion for teachers* by Lorraine McDonald has penned the use of connections with the term *repertoire*. Repertoires assist the reader to make meaningful connections between their own knowledge and experiences and the text being read.

### Personal repertoire

What memories are stimulated by the texts being read? This of course will be tempered by a child's age and experiences.

### Social repertoire

What family situations, interest clubs and friendship groups can the child make connections with through the book?

### Cultural repertoire

What are the similarities and differences between the child's and others' experiences in books? Expressions used, flora, fauna, landscape and celebration differences may be explored.

### Literary repertoire

This includes exposure to a variety of text types (including nursery rhymes and fairy tales) and identification of author's style.

### Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Australia

An important initiative that results in children who live in 'at risk' areas being sent a free picture book each month until they start school, Imagination Library has been set up with joint funds from United Way, state and local governments and Rotary.

The results are similar to those in other parts of the world where the Imagination Library is operating. Children are enjoying, reading and talking about books. Hopefully this early introduction to books helps children develop a love of literature, which will help set them up for success when they start school.

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# ***The essential nature of fundamental movement programs for supporting inclusion policy in the early school years.***

***Sally Hannah***



Sally Hannah graduated from The University of Queensland with a Bachelor of Human Movement Studies (Education) and has been working with motor development as both an exercise physiologist and HPE teacher for the last 30 years. With the increasing number of students presenting to Prep and Year One with motor development delays, Sally has worked to produce and create motor programs that promote motor development and classroom learning readiness.

An increasing number of children are presenting as cognitively ready for school but appear to have poor motor development and are socially and emotionally immature. Age has traditionally been used as a basis for beginning school but age alone no longer appears to be a sufficient indicator of classroom readiness. Classroom readiness should be reflected in all four of the learning domains (cognitive, emotional, social and physical) and children should be given plenty of opportunities and experiences to explore these domains (particularly through play) before starting school.

There has been a plethora of research on the functions and benefits of perceptual or fundamental motor programs dating back to the early 1950s (Gessell 1956; Klomp 2012; Piaget 1952), but there have been few in-depth reports on the significance of perceptual motor programs or fundamental movement programs for the 2014 Australian Curriculum.

As schools respond to the new national curriculum and adopt a more inclusive policy, there appears to be an ever-increasing number of students in the early school years presenting with an extraordinary scope of developmental immaturities. Teachers, who have little training, are challenged by students who have a range of

disabilities and age-related delays. Fundamental motor programs, which respond to the diversified motor-skill level at school entry, can help both students and teachers by assisting the development of classroom functioning and the ability to receive and process learning.

Research indicates that fundamental movement programs not only provide the physical requirements for early school years but also have significant positive results in all four educational domains (Hands 2012; Johnstone & Ramon 2011; Pirie 2011). Motor development itself can be used to predict a child's rate of social development, including social status (Wang et al. 2014) and more positive self-image (Johnstone & Ramon 2011).

According to the Australian Early Development Consensus (AEDC), the proportion of children who are 'developmentally vulnerable' in terms of physical health and well being has dramatically increased from 5.1% in 2009 to 8.4 % in 2015. Many early childhood and Prep teachers are concerned about the number of children who are physically, emotionally and socially immature. Director of Prep at St Peters Lutheran College in Brisbane, Kellie McBurnie, has seen a steady rise in the number of children who are presenting to school with poor motor



skills. This is having a direct affect on the children's classroom readiness and, in turn, their ability to learn.

Poor gross motor and fine motor control, low fitness levels and social and emotional immaturity have given rise to an increasing number of children who are struggling to be class ready and facing learning difficulties, often requiring learning support. This lack of motor skills, poor fitness, strength and digital hypermobility appear to be affecting all aspects of growth, including the ability to engage in extracurricular activities.

Music teacher Naomi Faulkner, for example, has noticed that when she started teaching cello to children in 1994 about 10% of her students would have had some difficulties in learning to play. Today she feels at least 80% of her students have difficulties with core strength, hypermobility or poor hand grip and therefore struggle to play an instrument correctly. She believes that only one in six students 'displays the muscle strength, tone, and hand functionality that allows them to manage the tasks required when playing the cello'.

Often too much emphasis is placed on getting a child cognitively ready for preschool. Parents are enrolling their students in pre-reading or pre-writing courses but not preparing their children to be physically capable of coping with the demands of school life. Dr Kristy Goodwin (2014) established some recommendations for school readiness. She states that 'children who enter school ready to learn, make more academic gains than their

under prepared peers' (Goodwin 2014 p. 3). However, she believes that children learn best through play and not pre-reading and pre-writing courses and that all developmental domains are interrelated. Dr Goodwin says that 'besides being mentally ready for school, children must have both fine motor and gross motor skill development. The ability to manipulate thumbs and fingers and be able to crawl, creep, skip, hop, kick, strike, catch, roll, tumble and cross the midline are all essential elements in preschool readiness' (Goodwin 2014, p. 9).

My personal observations of Prep students over the last few years has shown that even though Queensland children are starting Prep on average six months older, there appears to be a considerable increase in the number of students who are struggling to cope with daily school life. There is an urgent need for motor programs, which can equip children with the physical fundamentals to cope with classroom life and learning.

A child who is ready for school should be able to:

- hop on either foot
- walk on heels
- walk on tiptoes
- balance on one leg
- sit and turn their heads without falling off chairs
- look up without falling over
- run a short distance (100 m) without stopping
- sit cross-legged on the ground
- roll over (log roll)
- jump from both feet and a single foot
- walk alternative legs up and down stairs
- skip or gallop or move in a rhythmical sequence
- leap
- change movement to different tempo – dance
- balance on a low beam

- climb up and over and through
- crawl and commando crawl
- walk in a straight line (heel to toe touching)
- walk in a zigzagged line
- walk with straight legs
- jump over small heights
- perform different types of walks (duck walk, frog leaps, bear walk)
- sit upright in a chair ( no slouching)
- be able to hold posture to complete tabletop work
- hold a pencil and draw picture with control, stability and stamina.

These skills are developed as the result of many opportunities and experiences must be provided. Professor Beth Hands (2012) states that 'movement skills are mastered through lots of opportunities to practice, ideally in a simulative and challenging yet supportive environment and by receiving quality instruction and feedback' (p. 14).

Wendy Pirie (2011) discovered that there did appear to be a strong correlation between motor programs and being physically capable to perform at school. Short attention spans, fidgeting, and inability to sustain physical tasks or to sit at a desk were related to poor fitness, core strength and balance. Trouble with fine motor skill and poor writing or sequencing issues can be identified with poor body rhythm, coordination and difficulty with directionality and laterality (Pirie p. 57).

In 2010, ACARA established the guidelines for the introduction of the new Australian Curriculum and the incorporation of the 'all-inclusive' policy. It stated that 'curriculum ... for all Australian students that promotes excellence and equity in education', (ACARA 2013, p. 1) and:

'Priority is also given to motor skills development, physical activity and the development of safe and healthy personal practices through the teaching of health and physical education. Equally, all students in these early years will have the opportunity to develop their sensory, cognitive and affective appreciation of the world around them through exploratory and creative learning' (p. 6).

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* made it unlawful for any setting to discriminate

against a person on the basis of disability.

This supported much greater integration and, eventually, total inclusion and equality for all. Inclusive education involves the full inclusion of all children in classrooms. The Australian Curriculum's all-inclusive policy was introduced to ensure all students had a fair and inclusive education, but this policy has been coupled with extensive difficulties for schools, teachers and children. The added demands that have been placed upon teachers are at times not fully addressed. Teachers are struggling to cope with the diversified classroom and assistance programs are limited. To truly support an all-inclusive policy, teachers require not only more training but also extensive support programs, to help guarantee that each of our children has an equitable amount of time and services provided for their education, irrespective of their ability level.

While it is questionable as to whether improving fundamental movement skills will have a direct influence on academic performance, there is no doubt that motor programs certainly assist in developing a child's receptiveness for learning. Students who participate in motor programs, irrespective of their individual physical capability levels, benefit from better fitness levels and stronger coordination skills, are more focused in a classroom and have improved social and emotional skills. Students who have poor or underdeveloped motor skills are at an immense disadvantage.

### Conclusion

All children should be provided with different opportunities to learn from as many varied stimuli as possible. Perceptual motor programs and fundamental motor programs can provide an alternative pathway for motor development and provide much needed support programs for school learning. As our classrooms have become more diversified, with the application of the national curriculum's all-inclusive policy, the implementation of any motor programs in the early school years has become more applicable. Besides assisting in gross motor development, building core strength and increasing fitness levels and coordination, motor programs have helped develop children's self-esteem, coordination and confidence and assisted in classroom readiness, emotional development



and peer socialisation – supporting positive impacts across all four educational domains.

“Due to the changing environments children operate within prior to school entry, we are seeing a dramatic fall in the number of students able to cope with a rigorous prep program.”

Kellie McBurnie, Director of Prep, St Peters Lutheran College

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## 42<sup>nd</sup> ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference 8:15–4:30 Saturday 24 June 2017



Registration and more information via [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au)

VENUE: Sheldon Event Centre, 1 Taylor Road, Sheldon, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

**Keynote: Building brain capacity: the implications of the new paradigm in neuroscience - Pieter Rossouw**

**The forty-two workshops listed below are offered in one of three time slots – AM, Lunch (optional) & PM. All details are on the website including outline, applicable age range of children taught by delegate, teaching standards & presenter biographies.**

(Re)learning lessons from the playground for health	Literacy is more than ABC
Abecedarian Approach Australia (3a) Simple strategies to improve interactions with ch'n	Making sense of sensory processing
Behaviour 'Management': is children's behaviour ours to manage?	Mapping the assessment landscape and finding direction
Brain development in early years: implications for educators	Music for sharing and caring: making connections and cultivating supportive group dynamics
Bring out their best: growth mindset alternatives to behavioural consequences	Nature-based pedagogy in early and primary education
Bringing leadership into focus: looking through multiple lenses	Outdoor education, the reality of doing it.
Building capacity through agency and engagement	Popcorn and animals make my muscles strong!
Characteristics of Age Appropriate pedagogy in before school settings	Practical strategies for working with families from refugee backgrounds in early childhood
Characteristics of Age Appropriate pedagogy in school settings	Promoting oral language competencies in the digital age - action research works!
Circle to the left: simple and sensational songs and circle games for your group music time	Putting creativity and innovation into the Australian Curriculum – launching an organic pedagogy
Content, context and curiosity in the Australian Curriculum: HASS	Sustainability - connecting with the land through music and dance
Creative ways to share yoga with children	Sustaining ourselves for a sustainable future
Developing sensory processing through drama	Talking transitions: connect, communicate, inspire
Digital technologies in the early years	Teaching mindfulness at school, tips and tricks
Emotional distress and the young brain: using a practical brain-based tool	Techniques for relieving tension
Engaging curious minds in mathematics	The importance of Interaction versus Interruption with children's play cycles
How NOT to annihilate the play: respectful interactions with children	The neuroscience of fun and laughter - implications for early childhood
I Did it! Supporting children to challenging themselves	Transforming the education support classroom
Inclusion from the Torres Straits: weaving, singing and yarning together	Unpacking the acronyms
Inclusion: a nine tool framework to make it happen	We are not all friends but that's OK: Building positive relationships in early childhood
Language of learning through drama	Weaving magic in the teaching of English in Prep to Year 2

**Title:**           **Are you sitting comfortably?**

**Author:**       **Leigh Hodgkinson**

**Illustrator:**   **Leigh Hodgkinson**

**Published by:**   **Bloomsbury**

**ISBN:**         **9781408864821**

**RRP:**         **\$25.99**

**Reviewed by:**   **Julie Jones**

*Are you sitting Comfortably* takes us on the journey of a little boy who is trying very hard to find a comfortable place to sit and enjoy reading his book. A place that is 'Somewhere comfy. But NOT buzz-buzzy. And not all growly, itchy, FUZZY.' After exploring many options of where he DOESN'T want to read a book the little boy comes to the realisation that the most important thing is to enjoy reading the book with others, 'It doesn't matter where you sit ... a book is best anywhere ... a book is best when you SHARE.' *Are you sitting comfortably* reinforces the beauty of books as a shared experience, which for young children is usually enjoyed cuddling up to a parent or sitting with a friend sharing the story together.

The simple, humorous language would make this book very appealing to children, particularly those aged five years and under. The use of rhyme is conducive to having children predict what words are coming up next and joining in the story. Fun could be had coming up with more rhyming words and places that would NOT be comfortable for sitting and reading a book. The detailed illustrations with their intricate use of pattern are exquisite and support the words beautifully.



**Title:** Sir Dancealot

**Author:** Timothy Knapman

**Illustrator:** Keith Robinson

**Published By:** Bloomsbury

**ISBN:** 9781408846995

**RRP:** \$15.99

**Reviewed by:** Marion Mori

Sir Dancealot is a hero whose name says it all. Brave of heart and nimble-toed, his reputation for wearing out marauding monsters in a series of energetic dance routines has, up to now, been enough to keep things pretty quiet at his place. That is until he meets his match in an ice-dancing dragon, who forces him to dig deep and look at his situation from a new perspective.

Visually the book is attractive and familiar, if a little unoriginal. The text ebbs and flows with the rhyme and to fit the action as it unfolds; the varying font size and shape drew our beginning readers in and helped them recognise familiar words and punctuation after just a couple of readings.

Many of the dance routines described in the story – and the disco shirt Sir Dancealot wears under his armour – went over the heads of our kindergarten group though. This meant they missed a lot of the humour too; I guess this is cultural rather than just an issue with age. There was still enough in the story for them to engage with and it appealed to boys and girls equally. They especially liked the skating – it looked like fun – and they liked how it ended.

Despite their difficulties with some of the vocabulary, our children responded positively to the unlikely friendship that develops in the story, and we had a long and interesting conversation about the similarities between Sir Dancealot's approach to the dragon and our own ways of resolving conflict and initiating friendships.

This book won't become one of our longstanding kindergarten read-aloud favourites, but the children have been taking it off the shelf regularly to look at on their own and I would recommend it as light-hearted way of initiating discussions about respect and relationships.



**Title:**           **Introducing Teddy**

**Author:**       **Jessica Walton**

**Illustrator:**   **Dougal MacPherson**

**Published by:**   **Bloomsbury**

**ISBN:**         **9781681192116**

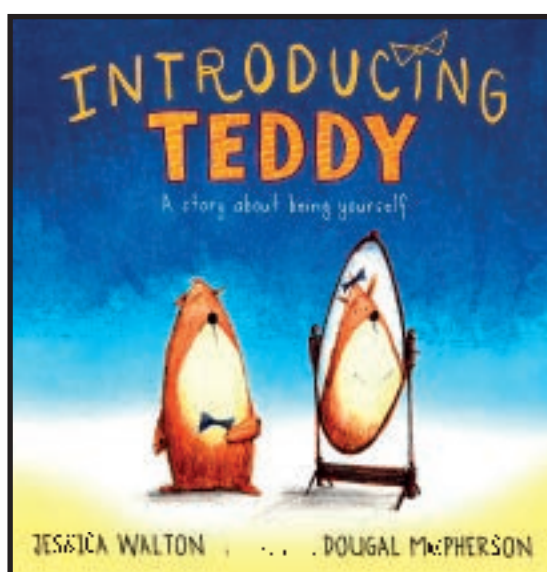
**RRP:**          **\$24.99 HB**

**Reviewed by:**   **Julie Jones**

*Introducing Teddy: a story about being yourself* is a book that explores friendship, acceptance and gender identity in a gentle and simple way that young children would be able to understand. The book begins with Errol and his teddy Thomas, best friends who enjoy playing together. Errol becomes concerned when Thomas the teddy becomes sad and no longer wants to play. Thomas is worried that Errol will no longer be his friend if he tells him why he is sad but is reassured by Errol who says that he will *always* be his friend. Thomas goes on to say ... 'I need to be myself, Errol. In my heart, I've always known that I'm a girl teddy, not a boy teddy. I wish my name was Tilly, not Thomas.' Their friendship continues and they are also joined by another friend, Ava, reinforcing the message of acceptance and friendship. As Errol says, 'I don't care if you're a girl teddy or a boy teddy! What matters is that you are my friend.' By continuing to play many of the same games that they played before Thomas became Tilly, reassurance is provided that life goes on, with friendships maintained.

The author, Jessica Walton, was inspired to write this story to help explain to her son why her dad had transitioned into a woman. With its beautifully depicted message of friendship, kindness and acceptance of differences, I would recommend this book to early childhood educators and to all families with young children with its focus on valuing yourself and others, differences and all! For families with transgender experiences, I can imagine it being an invaluable resource for exploring gender identity and transition with young children.

A special mention must be made of the illustrations by Dougal MacPherson; they have a whimsical appeal and the facial expressions are just wonderful.





**Title:**                **Understanding early childhood education and care in Australia: practices and perspectives**

**Edited By:**        **Joanne Ailwood, Wendy Boyd, Maryanne Theobald**

**Published by:**    **Allen & Unwin Book Publishers**

**ISBN:**              **9781743318607**

**RRP:**               **\$55.00**

**Reviewed by**      **Kate Shapcott**

The title of this book is an accurate description of the contents; practices and perspectives in early childhood education and care in Australia. The book is clearly and consistently organised into three parts. Part one: Historical, theoretical and philosophical perspectives; Part two: Perspectives and practices in ECEC policy and provision; and Part three: Perspectives and practices in teaching and leadership. Each part contains four or five chapters which have been contributed by a variety of EC academics and practitioners from around Australia, including many from Queensland. There are useful biographies of the contributors and each chapter is enhanced by *Questions for further thinking* and extensive referencing.

For those entering the early childhood sector, especially long day care, family day care and prep, this book will give you a comprehensive introduction to the whole gamut of current thinking and approaches within this very diverse field. For those already working within it, many chapters will help to further extend knowledge and understanding of what is a dynamic and complex educational environment.

As a practising kindergarten teacher in long day care, I found many of the chapters very helpful either by providing a current overview of trends and approaches that I have observed over the years or by providing new information and references that I can use in my current work environment. For example chapter 7 'Cultural safety for Indigenous children in early childhood education and care' by Margot Ford provided me with perspectives and links to resources that I can use in my daily teaching. Chapter 12 'Professionalism for early childhood educators' by Louise Mary Thomas summarised key discourses on professionalism in a way that helped me to clarify the different approaches that I have encountered in my working life.

If you are upgrading your qualifications, mentoring a student or interested in furthering your professional understanding of the field, this book will be a valuable resource.



**Title:**           **The great sock Secret**

**Author:**       **Susan Whelan**

**Illustrator:**   **Gwynneth Jones**

**Published by:** **Exisle Publishing**

**ISBN:**         **9781925335248**

**R.R.P:**         **\$19.99**

**Reviewed by:** **Jeanie Watt**

Do you know what happens to the odd socks that disappear out of the washing basket?? Sarah does. And she doesn't want her mum to find out.

The fairies and elves have found lots of uses for them.

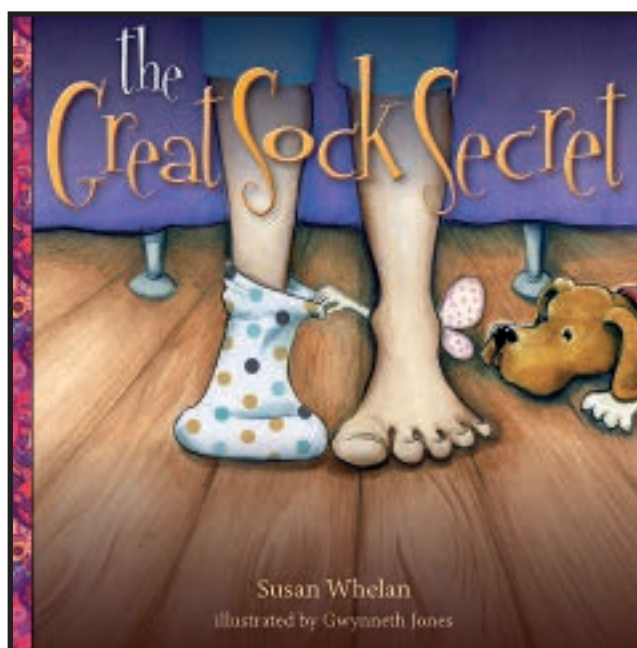
This whimsical story is all about ensuring that mum does not find the socks. Sarah does not want the fairies and elves to loose their sleeping bags, towels, tug-of-war rope, and even shower curtain!

The colourful, but simple, illustrations enable children to search for the fairies on each page – and find out what mischief they have got up to.

This book would be enjoyed by a young audience of three- to five-year-olds.

What was the best part of the book? Luciana – 'When mum found the matching socks at the end, so she did not take any of the socks away from the fairies!'

This book is the second book written by Susan Whelan. Her first book, released in 2015, is titled *Don't Think about Purple Elephants*.



## 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.

