ECTA

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the early childhood years

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of all the lands that we live on, work on and travel through together. We pay our respects to their elders, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the spiritual connections, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. We recognise their strength and resilience and their long history of caring for and educating children here. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this region. We recognise the importance of continued connection to culture, country and community to the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

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

Advertising rates (GST inclusive)

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

Dates for contributions
No 1   Last week in January
No 2   Last week in May
No 3   Last week in August

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

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

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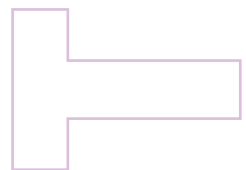
Kim Walters

From the President

ECTA continues to be proactive in advocating for our members and quality practice in the early years, birth to eight years of age. Recently (late July), ECTA's response to reports of parents accessing tutoring to prepare two-year old children for prep were included in an article in the Sunday Mail.

The article included exerpts from ECTA's Statement on the Audit Culture in Queensland Education, which is included in this issue. This sparked a wave of media interest that included interviews with The Sunday Project and TEN News, to discuss our response to the article.

The key messages in the interviews were:

- Parents' misconceptions of what makes their child ready for school, with the key emphasis being placed on literacy and numeracy (due to the emphasis and publicity around NAPLAN), when in actual fact the main components for school readiness are being competent in the areas of social emotional/self-care and physical development.

- The Department's Ready Equation clearly states 'ready school + ready ECEC service + ready community + ready family = ready child'. When children are able to access a high quality, language rich home/early learning environment provided by parents/carers, and a high quality kindy program/early learning centre, they will be prepared for formal schooling without additional tutoring.

- Not all children will be developmentally ready for school at the same time (4.5 years of age). The Department acknowledges this and offers a second year of kindergarten for children prior to formal schooling if required. We recommend that if parents are not feeling that their child is ready for formal schooling that they have conversations with the staff of quality early years centres.

- The practice of gathering purposeful data to inform teaching should be adopted, not just be actioned as a process to tick boxes and to reach

Kim Walters interviewed by TEN NEWS Team

EDITORIAL

benchmarks. Such assessment practices lead to misconceptions and raise levels of anxiety in the children and parents/carers/community.

- The Department tasks teachers to consider a range and balance of age appropriate pedagogies including the approaches of event-based, play-based, direct teaching, project-based, explicit teaching, inquiry learning and blended. This message is not reaching all schools or stakeholders. We encourage the Department to continue their endeavours in this consistent messaging across all levels of education.

The coverage that this topic received was followed closely by ECTA members and the wider school communities, with ECTA's Facebook post views on the interview reaching over 7000 within ten hours. ECTA will continue to advocate for best practices in the early years for its members, educators and for the children in our school communities.

This year's conference was once again a huge success and a credit to all involved. Volunteers from the regional groups, coordinating and journal committees supported the members of the conference committee along with several of the partners of committee members.

We were honoured to have an elder from the Quandamooka peoples of Stradbroke Island to welcome attendees to the conference and to Country. As part of our Strategic Plan, ECTA is committed to building a meaningful connection with First Nations peoples and we hope to have a local elder with us again next year.

The conference provided 37 high quality, practical presentations, with many of the presenters currently in support roles or teaching young children in before-school settings and lower primary school classrooms. The feedback from workshop attendees reported many take home messages to action and support early years settings.

Conference feedback from attendees, presenters and exhibitors was amazing, with 99% rating the organisation, catering and parking at excellent or very good. 98% rated the information prior to the conference as excellent or very good and indicated they would be returning to the conference next year. Some comments sent in were:

Jessie B, 'I always look forward to your conference. It is practical, well organised and value for money.

Presenters are always knowledgeable and varied.'

Fiona H, 'This is my first ECTA conference and I wasn't really sure what to expect and really my expectations weren't particularly high given that it was such a low cost. I have had a great experience - from the signposting on the road of where to go, to the excellent food, the topics and the networking opportunities. There was a great atmosphere to this conference which I partly put down to not outsourcing the organising of the conference to professional conference businesses and of course to Educators being a great bunch.'

The breakdown of work sectors who were in attendance at the conference are shown in the table below.
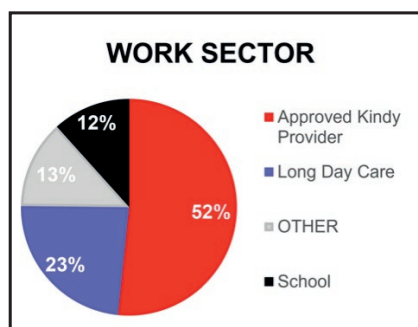
ECTA have recognised that there is a decline in attendance from the school sector and this is a focus for the conference committee for next year's conference, in looking at accessing targeted workshops relevant to attendees from the primary sector, along with the other focused age groups (birth/babies, toddlers, pre-kindy, kindy). Planning for ECTA's 2019 conference is well underway. The conference committee has reflected on feedback and is preparing for the opening of expressions of interest shortly. EOIs will open online in early September and we ask our members to recommend presenters. If you know of a colleague (or yourself) who is able to share best practice and practical ideas in a workshop at the conference, please encourage them to submit an expression of interest online.

Following further reflection on feedback received, ECTA will be changing the name of our conference. The acronym ECTA will be expanded in our conference name to – Early Childhood Teachers' Association Conference. The hashtag for next year's conference will be #ECTACon2019. As information becomes available for the conference this hashtag will be used as a means of promotion, along with our Facebook page and website.

Check out the conference photo story in this issue. Looking forward to seeing you all at next year's Early Childhood Teachers' Association Conference that will be held on Saturday 29 June.

Yours in Early Years Education

Kim

EDITORIAL

ECTA's Statement on the Audit Culture in Queensland Education

The ECTA State Coordinating Committee composed this statement in response to concerns from members regarding the ever increasing demand for data collection and the push-down of explicit teaching pedagogies. This is having a huge impact on children's learning, engagement and wellbeing.

ECTA State Coordinating Committee member Jodie Riek used research informing her current dissertation to formulate the first draft of the statement. The committee collaborated to finalise the statement, which will be forwarded to ECTA members and key stakeholders in the education and early childhood sector. The State Coordinating Committee hopes it will stimulate and inform members' discussions around implementing appropriate pedagogies. This statement provides a clear vision on what ECTA believes is important and we hope members will share it with those who can influence the direction of early childhood education in before-school and school settings across Queensland.

The Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA), on behalf of our 820 members working in before-school and lower primary settings across the state of Queensland, wishes to address the National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and its impact on growing audit culture.

ECTA is concerned by reports from our members that there is increased pressure being placed on early childhood teachers to teach academic curriculum earlier and produce students that are performing at a high academic level earlier. This has resulted in curriculum and testing being pushed down to the early years of schooling.

ECTA is particularly concerned that in many classrooms throughout Queensland this has resulted in an increased focus on explicit teaching strategies and scripted curriculum delivery with huge data collections and assessment expectations. This is a result of Government policy which has flowed on from NAPLAN.

This is in stark contrast to the preschool curriculum guidelines that were focused on creating programs that catered to children's interests and developmental needs through the provision of play pedagogies (Logan & Clarke 1984). Engagement in education was high, behaviour issues were minimal, and teachers and children co-constructed the curriculum to meet their individual needs, which resulted in deeper learning, solid foundations in pre-literacy and numeracy and a love of learning.

While there has been a return to age appropriate pedagogies in some schools, this is far from universal across the state. Until the extrinsic pressures to meet defined benchmarks are removed we will not see a full return to engaged, child-centred learning in classrooms.

ECTA members call for the following actions:

- *Stop teaching to the test*. Removal of curriculum designed towards high-stakes standardised testing with no regard for holistic well-balanced learning and the focus only on bottom line, rather than the growth and development of an individual.

- A return to teachers and children being the key curriculum designers, not policy makers and political members in power.

- Less demand for continual collection of student data that has resulted in less 'teaching time' and the reduction of opportunities for pedagogies other than explicit teaching.

- A return of appropriate practices, learning outcome expectations and play pedagogies based on research of how children learn best in the early years.

- A reversal of the view that only knowledge that is audited through standardised high-stakes testing is of value.

- A return to a balanced curriculum to replace the current curriculum that is driven by standardised testing.

The experience of developmental play pedagogies is now becoming a rare privilege for children in many early primary classrooms across our state. It is time to return to a child focused curriculum that engages children in learning and promotes a love of lifelong learning.

REFERENCES

Logan, G & Clarke, E 1984, State education in Queensland: A brief history. Brisbane, QLD: Policy and Information Services Branch, Department of Education, Queensland. Retrieved from http://education.qld.gov.au/library/docs/edhistory/stateedu.pdf

Acknowledging Country

We were graciously welcomed to Quandamooka country by Maree Goebel; it was a wonderful, inspiring way to start our conference. Maree's words described the beauty of the natural environment we share and invited us all to take some time to stop, listen and take notice of the changes happening around us. She reminded us – as countless generations of people before us have - to focus on what these changes are telling us.

We had many requests – and Maree's kind permission – to share the full text of her welcome but a technical glitch has prevented us publishing it in this issue. Instead we would like to ask you to stop now, look around you and reflect on what the land you are on now would have looked like before it was built on; think about the first people, who have cared for the land over generations; and consider the wonderful things we have in our life now because of the stewardship of all the people who have gone before us.

Quandamooka Country comprises the waters and lands of and around Moorgumpin (Moreton Island), Minjerribah, the Southern Moreton Bay islands and South Stradbroke Island. It includes the mainland from the mouth of the Brisbane River, Wynnum, Chandler, Lytton, Belmont, Tingalpa, south to Cleveland, to the Logan River. The traditional custodians are the Nughie of Moorgumpin and the Noonuccal and Gorenpul of Minjerribah

How are you acknowledging Country in your services, settings, schools and organisations?

All photos courtesey of Chris Walker

EDITORIAL

Allison Borland

2018 ECTA 43RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

1. *It starts with a Forklift on Friday!*

2. *A few eager committee members Lisa, Kim & Kristy*

3. *Anne Hurman and Kath Ferguson assisting with the parking*

4. *Anne Hurman and Jenny Caswell assisting with colour coded pathways to workshop sessions*

5. *Delighted delegate with a great coffee to start the day!*

6. *Sam Tolchard and Angela Bulmer greeting the delegates with satchels kindly donated by MTA*

7. *QIEC supporting sponsors Graham Burke and Kate Graham with regional ECTA conference committee representative Lynne Ireland*

8. *ECTA conference committee staff preparing for the delegates arrival. Jo Young, Anne Hurman and Sharon McKinlay*

9. *Lisa Cooper (ECTA Treasurer) sharing free journals*

10. *Lisa, Anne, Kim, Kirsty and Angela, with friend Matt, busy with pre-conference set up*

11. *All the way from Cairns Community Kindergarten: Annette Anderlini, Lianne Murchie, Christine Hanarahan & Erica Conroy*

12. *Dianne Davey all smiles as she gets another handful of satchels to give out.*

13. *Kristy Grott welcomes Shijie Li & Yushi Xu with satchels from Platinum sponsor MTA*

14. *Sue Lewin warms up the ECTA delegates with a song!*

15. *Daniel Donahoo presented Children, Technology and Play in the 21st Century: What do we do now?*

16. *Welcome to country: Maree Goebel, Quandamooka People*

17. *MTA Platinum sponsors Lisa Davidson & Richard McGilvary present the MTA Game*

18. *Delegates competed for prizes in the MTA game*

19. *ECTA President Kim Walters opens the 43rd Annual ECTA Conference*

20. *Rob Buchanan provides a brief introduction to Teachers Mutual Bank*

21. *Prize winners competing in the MTA game*

22. *Allison Borland, Andrew Laming, Robbie Leikvold and Kim Walters*

Workshop Session 2:

23. *Jennifer McCormack: Ecological Story Telling*

24. *Kate Wengier: Forget Nutrition, Time to Teach Food Education so our Kids can Shine*

25. *Lukas Ritson: Sustainability in Early Childhood Development*

26. *Maureen Hawke: How to Improve Learning and Behaviour in the Early Years through Movement Programs*

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27. *Natashja Treveton: An Introduction to Talking and Thinking Floorbooks*

Session 3:

28. *Julie Bishop: Age Appropriate Pedagogies Theory into Action*

29. *Kerry Sellers: Tiny Dancers Learning Through Dance*

30. *Ellen Brewer: Age Appropriate Pedagogies - Theory into Action*

31. *Emma Fiechtner: Programming for Play*

32. *Grant Webb: Parent's Perceptions, Expectations, Adjustments and Experiences as a Child Transitions to School*

33. *Anne Buchan (C&K Anne Shearer Community Kindergarten) and Sarah Ohlson (Brisbane School of Distant Education) are set to go with a great coffee and ecofriendly satchel compliments of supporting sponsors QIEC super & MTA*

34. *Pip Treveton & Stephanie Karlson (St James Primary School) enjoying soup and a gourmet sausage roll*

35. *Marilyn Beale, Vicki Lo and Tania Rafferty enjoy the gourmet morning tea.*

36. *Melissa Harries from The Gowrie QLD enters a prize draw at the KIds Matter stand*

37. *Leigh Rowland and Cindy Marshall chat with supporting sponsor QIEC super*

38. *Tracy Joyce and Kate Frischkorn (Wynnum General Gordon Kindergarten) with Christine Meadows (Manly West State School) enjoying the lunch time break*

39. *Pip Theyers and Kylie Ogot (Upper Coomera Play & Learn) resource shopping*

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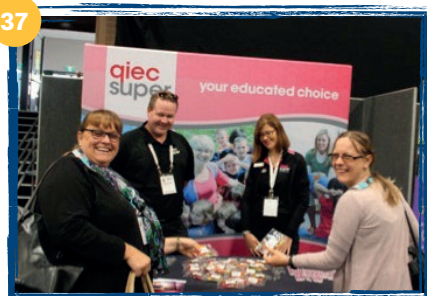
40. *Abbey Rule (Griffith University student) meets with author Chris Collin from Funky Books*

41. *Dr Joe and Allison Borland have some fun with Bones!*

42. *Supporting sponsor HART Sport engage with Lorraine Douglas and Leah Murray from Geebung*

43. *Fiona Hjortshoj (Toowoomba Regional Council) spends some time with Illume Learning*

44. *A much sought after Trilo Tri-cycle goes to Carrie Jones, kindly donated by New Shoots Educational Resources*

45. *Eben Appel wins a book pack prize compliments of Allen & Unwin*

46. *Mel Rudder wins the frizbee prize kindly donated by ECTA supporting sponsor Hart Sport*

47. *Nora Forrest wins a CD Music Pack kindly donated by Sue Lewin, our conference warm up special guest*

48. *Jesse Barker wins the Egg & Spoon prize compliments of HART Sport*

49. *Winners are grinners especially when there are 25! Special thanks to SafetyPride*

50. *Cath O'Connor wins a Service membership kindly donated by Queensland Early Childhood Sustainability Network*

51. *Vicki Low wins a fine motor kit thanks to Illume Learning*

EDITORIAL

52. *Wishful winners Robbie Leikvold and Jodie Reik collect prize for Jenny Caswell - Moet donated by ECTARC*

53. *Jenny Hyde excited to receive her ECTA Journal Pack*

54. *Scavenger Hunt prize winner Naomi Desilva (with Robbie Liekvold) receiving her Block Play kits kindly donated by MTA*

55. *Journal Editor Marion Mori wins an activity pack donated by Early Street Education*

56. *Kimberly Campbell receives her prize compliments of Readilearn*

57. *Learning Connections kindly donated a voucher to Lucinda Steadman*

WINE & CHEESE

58. *Anne Pearson welcoming delegates to the Wine & Cheese*

59. *Kerry Boland & Marilyn Way from Birdwood Consultancy enjoying the Wine & Cheese event*

60. *Delegates networking at the Wine & Cheese, kindly supported by ECTA*

61. *Kate Shapcott, Marion Mori and Jeanie Watt from the Journal Committee*

62. *Tonia Fletcher, Lyndall Hind, Jane Nimmo and Alison Pechey (Kenmore District Kindergarten)*

63. *Tonia Fletcher (Kenmore District Kindergarten) and Jessie Barker talented relief teacher*

64. *Rebekah Peterson, Yael Walters, Ingrid Nierfeld and Paige Crichton enjoy the Wine & Cheese*

65. *Kristy Grott & Kellie Nalder from Gympie networking!*

66. *Nadia Rabiller and Chris Collin from Funky Books Funky Chooks*

67. *Kimberly Campbell & Helen Paton Holewa*

68. *Sylvana Li, Tash Treveton,Libby Lee, Kat Robinson & Sally Park from MCEL*

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69. *Anne Hurman (Conference Committee member), Joanne Young (Secretary), Kim Walters (President) and Lisa Cooper (Treasurer) enjoying well deserved wine with cheese.*

70. *Girls just wanna have fun! Jo, Robbie, Lisa and Kim*

71. *Happy SCC committee Lisa, Kim and Allison*

Conference committee members' meeting/social gathering pre-conference

72. *Robbie Leikvold & Jenny Casswell sharing cheers for another year!*

73. *All ECTA Conference committees at annual meeting on Sunday!*

74. *Regional Gympie group get excited!*

75. *Sunday sharing resources with regional group office bearers*

76. *Planning for 2019! Sunday regional group meeting.*

Nell Ward

Igniting STEM learning through nature education

Lobethal Community Kindergarten is situated in the beautiful Adelaide Hills. We have hot, dry summers and cold, wet winters, which is really how our nature education journey began.

Nell Ward has over 20 years of experience working in the early childhood sector. She has worked at Lobethal Community Kindergarten on and off over the past 14 years and has witnessed the centre's shift from toys to tools, to nature play and finally to nature education. The staff team at Lobethal Community Kindergarten is committed to reflective practice and nature education, and runs a renowned bush kindy program called nature connect. The kindergarten is a STEM lead-learning site of best practice for the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD)

In the autumn of 2013 our inspirational director, Lee Munn, offered up a provocation to staff. What if we were to spend an entire week outside, replacing all toys with tools and wearing weather-appropriate clothing? We had noticed, as a staff team, that while our children liked to play outdoors whatever the weather, our staff was less enthusiastic to head outside on cold, drizzly days. So we planned our first outdoor kindy week. Each staff member came up with their own project—giant bubbles, campfire cooking, loose parts cubbies. We stockpiled resources in baskets on the verandah (more popsticks than any person could ever conceivably need!) and we purchased quality tools for woodwork, and outdoor exploration.

That was the start of our journey towards a nature education pedagogy. Of course, looking back on our early outdoor kindy weeks, we could easily predict what would happen—the baskets on the verandah were left largely untouched, the teacher-directed projects sometimes didn't happen, and the toys just never found their way back. Our children developed relationships with each other, staff and the environment in rich and deeply rewarding ways. Our teaching practices were altered and staff and students began spending more and more time outside during our normal kindy days. We became passionate enthusiasts of loose parts play and 'tools not toys'. STEM learning was not even a buzz word back then but our children were definitely strong STEM learners -

curious and enthusiastic problem-solvers able to resource their own learning.

We began taking children for days on the 'summer track'—a closed road at the back of the local football club. We played in a small waterway at the back of the clubrooms, clambered over fallen logs and explored muddy puddles.

One of the things we have always had a strong focus on is making the learning visible. Nicole Wood, one of our highly skilled educators, wrote a blog post at the end of each outdoor kindy week session and each day spent on the summer track. This began to attract a fair bit of attention from the field and, before we knew it, we had educators from all over the state wanting to come and visit. Ever conscious of the impact on our children, we decided to host a get-together for educators around the campfire after an outdoor kindy day.

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The response was immediate and overwhelming. Our campfire session morphed into a conference and, when that sold out, we ran it again. We used the funds from our 'Digging Deeper Conference' to fund a team trip to New Zealand for the Reggio Emilia Nature Play Conference.

After seeing the wonderful outdoor learning happening at Fiordland Kindergarten, and reflecting on the big take-home ideas from the conference (the notion of revisiting, uninterrupted, extended time to play in the bush, and the importance of reflective practice), Lee suggested that we were done with outdoor kindy week. Our outdoor learning environment and teaching practices had changed so dramatically that outdoor kindy week had become almost meaningless. It was time to dream bigger. We returned from the conference and put into place our 'nature connect pilot program' (rapidly consulting with families and community then launching the program in term 2!). Our utopia was Bushland Park – a 160-hectare piece of bushland (some heritage, some not) about five kilometres from our kindergarten site.

We are now in our fourth year of nature connect at Bushland Park and the children continue to astound us. In the bush our children are researchers, scientists, engineers, mathematicians, risk-benefit analysts and keen observers of nature. They are the eco-warriors that our planet so desperately needs. We still have a strong 'tools-not-toys' philosophy and our powerful learning tools now encompass digital cameras, iPads, microscopes, magnifying glasses, digital apps, binoculars, compasses, yabby nets, and watercolour paints! The children would also argue that one of their most important tools is their 'Bush kindy journal'—a visual art diary in which each child records their observations, draws maps, writes stories, explores writing and mark making and generally documents their learning.

Our powerful STEM learners have become such strong advocates for the park that they take their families and friends there on weekends. Through parent and community advocacy for the program, the ripple effects have reached our local schools which now run their own bush school and outdoor day programs.

While we are proud of creating this change, it is a double-edged sword. Last year it was brought to our attention that parts of the park had been altered by regular use and there was a perception among some stakeholders that the kindergarten was to blame. All major stakeholders (Friends of Bushland Park, Adelaide Hills Council, NRME, and Nature Play SA) were invited to a meeting to discuss the way forward. From this, we have changed the way we use the park. We are mindful of what we teach our children and they know that there are some areas we no longer access because of regeneration and endangered species. The

Adelaide Hills Council has begun to view the park with a different lens—looking at ways to support children in this space and allocating some spaces with nature play in mind. We have looked at ways for children to help with weed management, and child-friendly signage encouraging people to appreciate the different species and habitats within the park. The children are now all aware, and fiercely protective, of the Candlebark sapling nursery. We have become more deliberate in using nature education to describe what we do. We are still firm believers in children's right to play, but play is only a part of what we do at Bushland Park.

Our nature connect program actively builds STEM learning dispositions. We have used the dispositions taken directly from the DECD STEM Learning Strategy— curiosity, problem-solving, resilience, confidence, resourcefulness, purposefulness, risk taking, communication, persistence, cooperation, creativity, imagination and enthusiasm. We often find that, in the bush, children are working at a much deeper level of engagement, and at a much higher level of thinking. Four-year-olds who can confidently label and classify fungi, children in collaborative discussion, theorising how and why a kangaroo died and which anatomical part is which—they are citizen scientists sharing their observations and knowledge with families on our closed Facebook group, in the local newspaper and in *Wildlife Australia* magazine.

This is, by far, the most inspirational and important thing I have ever done in my 20-year teaching career. If you are not already on a nature education journey, I urge you to find your own little patch of nature—you don't need 160 hectares of heritage bushland. Find somewhere close to your site, or within your site, where you can make a difference; find somewhere that children can revisit, whatever the weather. Find somewhere that might need some help from your students. Look at it critically with a risk-benefit lens— be prepared to be an advocate for your students, and for the environment. Back yourself. You know that the benefits far outweigh the risks. You know that nature education will fit with curriculum documents. In fact, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority website clearly states that the guidelines are based on active learning for children through real-life situations, investigation and play (QCCA, 2006)—it sounds like a perfect endorsement to go and create powerful STEM learners through nature education!

REFERENCE

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCCA), 2006, Prep Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, viewed June 2018, https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/qld-curriculum/eycg

Technology

Can digital technologies and early childhood education play nicely together? Is it a threat to young children's imaginative play or a revolution in developing their problem-solving skills? Today's children are growing up in a rapidly changing digital age that is far different from that of their parents and grandparents. Digital technologies are an increasingly common aspect of children's lives. A variety of technologies are all around us in our homes, offices, and schools. In most early childhood programs and schools, technology will be part of the learning landscape of the future. With this comes debate about the role digital technology is to play in their education. We ask a panel of teachers, educators and parents for their opinions about these topics.

Belinda Rule

Belinda Rule is the Director/Teacher at C&K Eimeo Road Community Kindergarten in Mackay. She has been at the service since 2013. This is a two unit service that has 88 children enrolled and 9 key staff members, including Millie the kindy dog. In 2018 the service is supporting 47 children who have additional needs. Prior to teaching Belinda was living with her family in Brisbane and working as a Cabin Supervisor for an Australian Airline. She was inspired to become a teacher because of her eldest son's kindy teacher - who just happens to work for C&K..

How does the use of ICT's sit with your philosophy?

My first inner (personal) dialogue and response to using ICT in an early years environment was a resounding 'No!'. It was quite loud… "No, my class needs to learn through play and have limited access to ICT." Over the last five years, ICT has emerged and embedded itself within my philosophy. I value play, children's agency and that children have the right to be safe.

As my knowledge around the benefits of ICT's increased, I realised iPads were just the beginning, there is so much more to explore. As a team we value the importance of giving all children opportunities and experiences through different mediums. I am also strongly committed to children in my program having access to resources and experiences they might not have in their home environment.

What learning are you seeking to promote?

The learning that is promoted through ICT's is that of a love of exploration and being inquisitive. These will be important skills for the future as many of the children's employment pathways aren't yet established. It is teaching the skills around flexibility that are important.

Learning to take turns and respect for the equipment are important skills for all young children. Another valuable part of the learning is trust and independence. Children have the opportunity to learn this through participation and care of ICT resources. Computer coding and programming are two skills that need to be mastered in the three different types of robots we have at the service; Cubetto, Sphero and the Bee Bots.

How do you incorporate technology into your setting?

There are many ways we incorporate technology into our setting, the robots are just one aspect.

As our day unfolds opportunities present themselves so we have our iPads to take outside the classroom as well. The interactive whiteboard is another resource the children have access too. At the beginning of the year we start with the Paint program.

We use StoryPark to document children's learning journey. We can add to the child's notes during our group times and explore the resources that have been embedded within that program. The child can then share and talk about this with their families at home.

What has been most successful for you?

Success depends on the individual child and their interest in the level of ICT we are exploring. We are lucky enough to have our robots and each resource requires a certain level of scaffolding. I have found that slowly introducing these resources to a class is the key. Sphero is quite an easy concept as it requires the use of an iPad, it uses concepts of fast and slow and the ability of changing colours. The Bee Bots enable the child to navigate the robot using the directional buttons (left, right, up and down). These also support the concepts of abstract thinking to allow the children to make their own plan or map their own adventure, only being limited to their analytical way of thinking. The Cubetto is more complicated and can be used in a small group with an educator at first teaching the concepts. Without the floor map at first, then what

usually happens is that one of our leaders emerges and then the teaching is taken over by a child. The concept of peer teaching is introduced and then we introduce the floor map which requires instructions to get to a certain part of the map.

I also see that success comes from a team of educators having the passion to step outside their comfort zones and providing all children with opportunities to embrace their future.

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Jane Whitney

Jane Whitney is the EChO Teacher for Goodstart Early Learning Harristown in Toowoomba. She began her journey with Goodstart 7 years ago and in that time has worked with a diverse group of young children aged between 0 – 5 years. As EChO ECT her role requires her to work solidly with the trans-disciplinary team to support other educators in their key practices and provide ongoing support to the children in the service that are vulnerable or at risk. 'Enhancing children's outcomes' (EChO) means supporting children in the areas of emotional development, social skills and interaction and language/communication skills.

How does the use of ICT's sit with your centre philosophy?

Promoting learning through discovery is at the very heart of our centre's philosophy. As a centre we not only encourage children to question, wonder and make observations within their environment, we also guide them towards developing the skills for experimenting, exploring and inquiring about the things they experience on a daily basis. Using and implementing technology as part of our daily curriculum creates endless opportunities for children to learn how to observe, research ideas, reflect on their own discoveries and make conclusions about what they have learned. Through learning how to research, photograph and record their own learning, the children at Harristown are able to prove that they are "strong, capable and competent learners" who "actively participate" in both new and unfamiliar learning experiences.

What learning are you seeking to promote?

At Harristown our centre is comprised of a rather large group of multicultural families. Many of these families either speak English as a second language, speak some English or none at all. As part of our centre philosophy we aim to build positive partnerships with our families by working with them to identify, discuss and put in place individualised goals that aim to support their children in reaching their full potential whilst in our care. At times it can be a challenge communicating with both the families and children, particularly if English isn't the first language spoken at home. As the EChO teacher within the service, I would like educators to be able to access language/communication programs and apps more easily and also be educated on how to best implement these with the children in their rooms. Part of our centre philosophy talks about "being inclusive of all children and families" and I feel that it's important that our educators are able to access technological resources that allow children to be fully included and engaged in the same learning experiences as other children and that also allow parents to have input in to their child's learning as well.

How do you incorporate technology into your setting?

Within our service technology is used for a range of different purposes across all rooms. In Nursery and Toddlers, taking photos with the room I-pad has become a rather fun and enjoyable means for the children to work towards establishing a confident and strong "sense" of identity. Seeing the faces of their peers, educators and even family members captured on the I-pad allows them to reflect on their daily learning experiences and interactions with others and learn to recall their faces, names and moments they have together.

In the older rooms technology is implemented with a focus more towards research, documenting and producing work that can later be shared and reflected on with others. The Kindergarten and School-Aged care children have taken interest in using the room I-pads to capture, record and share their own learning with educators and peers. This includes photographing their own work, documenting their own stories using the "Book Creator" app and even using the internet to research topics of interest.

Within the Kindergarten room, the children have made it a regular routine of using the class Lenovo or I-pad to research ideas or questions they've come up with as a result of their play experiences. Using the computer or I-pad is not only something the children are able to do as a group but also independently as they have learned what certain programs or apps are used for and how to use them. If the children have

built something fantastic or discovered something new in the garden outside, they'll often come and ask if they can use the I-pad to take a photo of their work (which allows them to feel a real sense of pride and satisfaction).

Implementing technology in the Schoolies room has done wonders for the children as they are very much in to writing their own stories and drawing pictures to reflect what they are interested in or have learned. Learning how to use the "Book Creator" app has helped the children learn to combine their love of writing with their desire to take photos and produce pieces of documentation that have been put together completely by them. Being able to print out their own documentation and have it displayed in the room or in their portfolios has proved a real success in allowing them to have more involvement when it comes to taking control and direction of their own learning journey.

What has been most successful for you?

In the last month or so we have had a new little boy begin his journey with us. His family is from Syria and they have only been in Australia a short while and speak very little English. As the EChO Teacher within the service it is my job to ensure he settles in to his new learning environment, feels safe and secure and works towards building a positive attachment with his educators. Upon arrival, it was very clear that he was quite frightened and easily disturbed by loud noises or any unfamiliar faces that looked in his direction. Building a secure attachment with him proved to be a challenge. Knowing that he spoke very little English made routines and transitions even more challenging as he couldn't understand nor comprehend what we were communicating to him and the same was experienced with educators (we didn't understand Arabic). Through conversations with our Speech Pathologist (who works as part of our EChO trans-disciplinary team), educators discovered there were several translation programs and apps available that they could access on their room i-pads. This proved to be a very useful and effective tool and if we needed to know how to say something as simple as "hello" or "you are safe" we could just talk in to the i-pad and it would translate in to Arabic for us. We are still in the early stages of exploring the use of the i-pad as a "translation tool" but it has already proved a success by allowing us to communicate words and short phrases to him, allowing him to settle more and even engage in meal times or take a nap during rest pause.

Kelly McBurnie

Kelly McBurnie is currently the Prep-Year 2 Coordinator at St Peters Lutheran College Indooroopilly. She was awarded the National NEiTA Award 2013 for Innovation, was nominated Brisbane Person of the Year 2013, Griffith Alumni of the Year 2014 and Positive Teacher of the Year 2015. She has published articles for Canberra's Child and The Educational Leader and spoke at the Asian Conference in Education in Kobe, Japan in October 2015 on Choice Theory. In 2017 she presented two workshops at the ECTA conference related to digital literacy and oral language competencies in the early years. She recently completed a Leadership Course through the Australian School of Applied Management and completing her Masters.

How does the use of ICT's sit with your philosophy?

I believe in play, exploration and genuine moments of wonder. I believe part of our role as educators is to develop the independence of our students, to foster confidence in their abilities and to encourage them to see adventure in risk. ICT's provide students with the perfect avenue to investigate these concepts in an environment in which they feel comfortable. We are teaching digital natives in a digital age.

What learning are you seeking to promote?

In these very early years I hope to promote basic ICT skill development alongside academic learning and social skill development.

For us that means primarily learning how to use equipment safely and responsibly. Beyond that, the students learn how to take clear and well framed photographs, locate and use apps, navigate their way to the home page, utilise a microphone and headphones and perform some basic trouble shooting tasks independently.

Students also participate in beginning coding and programming through a variety of apps and related hardware.

How do you incorporate technology into your setting?

Technology is a part of our everyday life in the classroom. We often use the IWB as a starting point for lessons; sharing and recording ideas or viewing stimulus material. Technology allows us to investigate the big questions, "Why does the Earth spin in that direction and not the other?" It also provides us with

another relatable behaviour management tool via apps such as "Too Noisy" and "Fluidity".

I personally use iDoceo to record all my marking, comments and work samples. At the touch of a button it provides me with mountains of data making reporting and interviews less time consuming.

As for the students, we use iPads as a class, in pairs or individually depending on the needs of the lesson. ICT's are often substituted for traditional methods e.g. using "Drawing Pad" to replace pen and paper but it can go far beyond that.

Children are experimenting with beginning coding, working together to solve complex problems, creating and facilitating change.

- Play School Art Maker
- Pic Collage
- Drawing Pad
- rED Writing ios
- Charades
- Book Creator
- Fluidity
- iMovie

- Scratch Jr
- Too Noisy
- Quiver
- Puppet Pals
- Popplet
- Bee bot
- Kodable
- Daisy the Dinosaur

What has been most successful for you?

I believe having a structured routine with very clear rules and expectations surrounding the use of ICT is essential. This ensures that the lesson time is used productively rather than spent on behaviour management or trouble shooting. At the start of every year we establish essential agreements that all members of the class must adhere to during lessons. I explicitly model the use of ICT's – what does it look like, sound like, feel like when working with an iPad as a class, in pairs or individually.

We rehearse what to do when the teacher is giving instructions, how to ask for assistance and how to problem solve. Time spent at the beginning of the year on these behaviour management practises ensure ICT lessons run smoothly. We aim for the lessons to be positive experiences for both students **AND** the teachers, where all parties are learning and laughing together.

I have also found that sharing an iPad is a wonderful source of stimulation for developing oral language competencies and social skills. When students have to share an iPad they must learn to negotiate, take turns and express their needs in a positive manner. They also support and scaffold each other's learning; a natural sounding board for ideas. Again, this is another

perfect opportunity for explicitly teaching behavioural skills in an interesting and engaging manner.

For me there is nothing more thrilling that hearing a child exclaim in wonder as they are finally able to complete a task, make a discovery or solve a problem collaboratively.

ICT goes far beyond the gadgetry and cool toys. Instead it provides us with another way to connect and share and grow together.

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Rachel Yates

Rachael Yates joined the teaching staff at St Peters Lutheran College in 2003 and has been the eLearning Facilitator for Prep to Year 6 for over ten years. With a passion for integrating technology seamlessly into the curriculum and preparing students for a technology rich world, Rachael's major focus is to provide professional development for staff and support the teaching and learning of digital technologies in the classroom. Rachael has over 20 years teaching experience and a Masters of Information Technology in Education.

How does the use of ICT's sit with your philosophy and what learning are you seeking to promote?

The use, availability and opportunities with technology have expanded at an incredibly rapid rate and children today know no different. They don't remember a time when there were no mobile phones, tablets and internet connections. In education, this area has also exploded and we have had enough time to learn how to best use technologies in effective and appropriate ways. The question isn't whether to use technology, the questions should be about the what, when and how, to maximise opportunities.

The SAMR model is one way to assess the way we are integrating technology. It describes the progression of four levels: Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition. This model is a great way for teachers to reflect on and consider the adoption of technology in teaching and learning to ensure maximum outcomes for students.

As the eLearning Facilitator, my goal is to assist teachers to integrate technologies which are authentic, developmentally appropriate, fun and engaging. We

do this through the implementation of Australian Curriculum, namely the Digital Technologies learning area, in conjunction with the ICT general capability. This all sits under our PYP (Primary Year Program) Framework whereby our curriculum is divided into 6 Transdisciplinary Themes. The inquiry nature of our framework aligns with the use of ICTs as we can integrate them in a meaningful unit of inquiry.

The other big ticket items that I think are important include a move towards less content, more skills. These days we can 'google' whatever it is we need to know so we need to use our time at school efficiently by focussing on skill development especially higher order thinking, collaboration, communication, creation and positive relationships. These skills will always be valuable in the future, no matter the technology and field of work. These skills align with the use and teaching of ICTs and digital technologies as we can integrate multiple learning areas, skills and ICTs, not only to maximise teaching and learning time, but also to engage today's learners.

I am a keen supporter of agile classrooms; learning spaces that are flexible and therefore can encourage communication, collaboration, creativity and flexibility around student learning. When implemented well, agile classrooms can assist with the creation of a learner-centred environment, whereby students are motivated to do their best. Technology can be implemented to enhance and seamlessly complement this type of environment, for example mounting TVs and interactive displays, and wireless solutions. The mobility, flexibility and availability of devices such as laptops and tablets assists with the flexible learning style and nature of this type of classroom.

Blended learning is currently gaining much momentum and this is due to the positive impact it can have on today's classroom. The main advantage sits with the ability to use technology to combine in-class and out of class learning. This allows for differentiation as students can revisit teaching materials, often created by their own teacher, outside of the classroom walls. We have many teachers at our school who create content for their classes, and upload onto our Learning Management System, thereby making them available anytime, anywhere.

How do you incorporate technology into your setting?

Some of the ways I achieve my role as eLearning Facilitator include:

1. Support teachers to integrate digital technologies and ICTs in their teaching and learning through:
   - Planning support
   - Resourcing support
   - In-class teaching and mentoring
   - Remaining abreast curriculum developments and sharing these with staff
2. Professional Development
   - Drop in sessions – fortnightly drop-in sessions where teachers can come with requests, questions etc
   - Regularly sharing information and technology suggestions during staff meeting
   - Focussed training and workshops during pupil free days, before or after school
3. Resourcing and current trends
   - Researching and sourcing technology and digital technology resources
   - Following trends and sharing if I can see value
4. Parent Education
   - Opportunities throughout the year for parents to attend information sessions such as LMS (learning management system) workshop, Technology and Wellbeing Information evening.
5. Blogging
   - Blog for staff with the goal to share innovative classroom practice and ideas

What has been most successful for you?

We have a successful iPad program in the Primary Years which is now into its 6th year of implementation, consisting of:

P-Year 1 – 1 iPad between 2 students (school owned)

Year 2 – 4 – 1:1 iPad (school owned)

Year 5-6 : 1:1 iPad (Bring Your Own)

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Meg Hoyes

Meg Hoyes has been working in the industry for 25 years. She is currently a kindergarten teacher and educational leader in a long day care setting.

How do ICT's sit with your philosophy?

In line with our centre philosophy, ICT is used as a tool to support our existing values and to extend learning opportunities that enhance the kindergarten curriculum. We are committed to providing a

quality program and by incorporating ICT's we are inclusive of all children and their various learning styles. We believe it is vital to work together in partnerships with families to provide appropriate learning experiences for the children; our online program allows us to do this successfully.

How do you incorporate technology into your setting?

The dominant form of ICT in our setting is used as a communication and documentation tool. We use an online program to document and reflect on children's learning. It includes photographs, work samples, learning stories, annotated samples, communication with family members, notes, discussions and reflections. It provides a detailed holistic account of the child's progress and achievements over time. The online tool is shared and strengthens connections between the child, families and the educators. In the kindergarten room educators and children use ICT together to scaffold the children's learning. We do this by using the internet to locate information and resources sparked by the children's interest in a particular topic or idea. We find that the internet can provide us with a wealth of learning resources that can extend and enrich our existing practices. Other technology tools that are incorporated within the kindergarten room include, digital camera, tablets, digital photo frames, programmable toys and computers.

What learning are you seeking to promote when you use ICT's?

In the kindergarten room we recognise that children are active, competent learners and by using ICT together within the classroom we can enrich and extend our practices. Through the use of ICT we are seeking to promote the holistic child, and the development of communication and collaboration, creativity, investigation, research, language, numeracy and integration of play.

Our online program promotes communication and collaboration with families in building portfolios of children's work, which promotes their progress and achievements.

What has been most successful for you?

I believe the integration of ICT's within the centre as a whole has enhanced and complemented our existing practices. The use of the ICT's within the kindergarten room has catered for different learning styles of the individual children in regards to visual, audio, kinesthetic, solitary and interpersonal learners. While using an online program has helped educators and children to use ICT together to document and reflect on the children's learning and then share this with families.

Jane Goodfellow

Digital inclusion in early childhood environments

There is continued debate on the use of technology in early childhood environments. However, for many children, technology is crucial to their development and wellbeing. As an early childhood teacher for children with additional needs, I'm a strong advocate for the use of technology as it enables my students to participate in aspects of the daily routine and learning program that they would otherwise have difficulty accessing. However, it's not computers and tablets I'm using, it's assistive technologies: assistive technologies that support my students' independence, language development, concept development, social skills and, most importantly, their participation in play and learning experiences to promote inclusion.

Jane Goodfellow is an early childhood special needs teacher and has also been working as a tertiary lecturer in education for the last 20 years. Jane's early childhood work is as a part-time Pre-K teacher with children with autism and is experiencing success in her student's learning and development through a play-based curriculum. Being profoundly deaf herself, Jane recognises the unique communication and academic needs of young children with additional needs and is committed to sharing this knowledge with her professional network.

Some students are already using assistive technologies such as wheelchairs or walkers. When they enter the learning and play environment though, new difficulties for access and inclusion arise, so a range of assistive technologies is often required to overcome barriers to learning and play. In my classroom, access and inclusion for the child will focus on communication and language, manipulation of resources and toys, and participation in learning and play.

Assistive technologies are generally categorised as either low-tech or high-tech. 'Low-tech' means accessible resources that are often adapted from mainstream equipment, or resources that can be easily made in the classroom. 'High-tech' means more sophisticated technologies such as voice-output devices. The key to choosing the right assistive technologies is to match the technology to both the child's current and future developmental needs. So let's have a look at some appropriate assistive technologies for young children to promote inclusion.

Children who have complex communication needs experience difficulties with both receptive and expressive language and will need integrated assistive technology throughout the daily routine. To assist young children to join their peers in play, participate in learning experiences, communicate their needs and wants, and engage in conversation, a range of resources and tools can be used to support their communication.

One of the most effective and accessible methods is to use low-tech visual supports employing picture symbols that either the educator or child points to in order to convey meaning. Picture symbol strategies can be created using either photographs (for copyright free photographs try Pixabay (https://pixabay.com/) or software generated drawings using programs like Boardmaker (https://www.boardmakeronline.com/). Picture symbols can be used to express needs and wants, make a statement, make a request, tell a story, reinforce behavioural expectations, and even assist with routine transitions.

Some examples of picture symbol strategies are:

● lanyard with individual symbol cards

● activity schedules (series of pictures showing the sequence of an activity)

● timetable/daily routines

● feelings/opinion chart

● choice board (a collection of symbols for the child to choose from – might include favourite activities or toys)

- placemats (with symbols relating to an activity such as art, drawing, eating, playdough)
- first-then cards to help the child transition from one routine/activity to another.

A more sophisticated system is a multi-level communication book, often called a PODD (pragmatic organisation dynamic display) book. This low-tech strategy is especially useful for non-verbal children who require a more complex communication system, as it allows them to access an extensive vocabulary of symbols and words.

High-tech communication strategies involve the use of voice output devices, also known as speech generating devices. A voice-output device produces digitised speech at the push of a button. Some devices allow only one or two words to be programmed into a button switch whereas others can be programmed to speak in full sentences. There are even apps that can be installed on iPads, which generate speech and even singing (nursery rhymes) when the child chooses a button. ProLo2Go is a good example of this kind of app.

In fact, PODD books and voice-output devices can be used simultaneously!

Voice-output and PODD being used at the same time to communicate

To assist young children to participate in play, readily available toys can be modified to be switch adapted—this means a switch like a LITTLEmack (see the red button in image 8) can be connected to the toy which then activates (makes a noise or triggers an action) when the child pushes the button. This gives children access to toys that they may not be able to play with without the adaption for a LITTLEmack switch.

Assistive technology can also include adapted toys like balls with bells in them for children with sight disabilities, or magnifying glasses to help with viewing. To help young children access drawing, low-tech equipment like slanted boards and simple clip-boards (to stop the paper sliding) can be easily implemented. The use of audio books is another example of assistive technology to help children with a sight disability to access favourite stories.

In many cases having access to assistive technology makes a huge difference for children with additional needs. Assistive technology gives educators the means to remove barriers to learning and play which in turn promotes inclusion. Without assistive technologies, some children would not be able to share in a joke, tell a story, play with a toy, interact with peers, participate in learning experiences, request a song, or tell us how they feel. The use of technology to ensure this access is an important and essential part of inclusive early childhood environments.

Nick Dryburgh
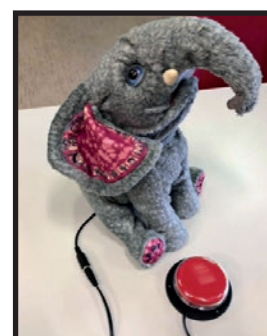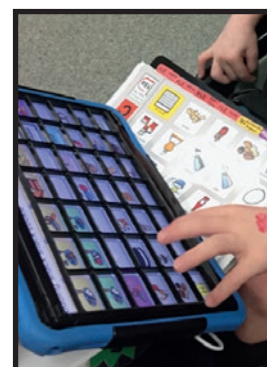
Work visas and the child care sector

We are often asked how work visas fit within the childcare sector in Australia. Most often the query comes from the visa applicant and not the childcare organisation. But what do these visas mean for the sector?

Nick Dryburgh is a registered migration adviser and FCPA

Childcare, ECTs and visas: demand drive!

ECTs are part of a growth employment sector; demand for staff has never been higher and continues to rise. As an industry in transition to the National Quality Framework (NQF), demand for qualified and registered early childhood teachers is increasing and will increase further. Demand for ECTs already outstrips supply.

Nationally over the next five years (to May 2022), the number of workers is expected to grow very strongly to 59,400. Around 36,000 job openings are likely over this time from workers leaving and new jobs being created (joboutlook.gov.au). Demand is driven not just by the NQF expectations; the uptake of ECTs is growing in the government and private school sector, health care and social assistance, public administration and safety, private education and training, and private day care. Demand for ECTs outstrips the production sources of new ECTs into the system. The government predicts a 30% increase in demand, even without fully factoring the NQF load.

In recognition of this, the government has added early childhood teachers to the Department of Home Affairs' (DHA) medium long-term skills shortage list (MLTSSL). This means that the DHA recognises that ECTs are and will be in short supply in Australia. If you haven't already had trouble filling an ECT position, there is a pretty good chance that you will have trouble in the future. Country areas typically will be hardest hit.

Work visas

Work visas exist to assist Australian businesses with in-demand occupations; the use of work visas by businesses is intended to supplement Australian resident staffing. There are safeguards in place to ensure that the labour market is tested by all businesses. Using overseas workers is not a cost reduction exercise, as payments to overseas workers must match the market salary for equivalent workers.

Positions eligible for short-term work visas

All Locations:

● Child care centre manager

● Early childhood teacher

Regional Locations Only:

● Child care worker (group leaders only, must be State sponsored)

● All positions must comply with state and federal requirements

Case study

Judy from Ireland arrived in Australia on a working holiday visa (WHV). After a short period of general work in different locations, she applied for ECT positions in Sydney. Having already had her skills assessed, Judy was able to register as an ECT and began work at a large child care organisation. After three months, both Judy and her employer decided they wanted to make a bigger commitment. With a shortage of Australian skilled applicants, the employer considered the temporary work visa process because WHVs allow a six months maximum stay

with any one employer. The company sponsorship and temporary work visas were applied for and granted. After a further three years on the temporary work visa, Judy and her employer decided to make an even longer-term commitment. Judy now has a permanent visa application in the system, with both Judy and her employer intending to be together for many more years to come

Skills, standards, NQF, registration, productivity—how can work visas help my business?

Only suitably trained, qualified and experienced people can use the work visa system. The Department of Home Affairs requires that any work visa applicant must meet or exceed the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) requirements for a particular position e.g. ECT. The requirements relate to education, training, assessed skills and Australian registration. For example, for a visa applicant to be employed as an ECT, they need to meet or exceed all requirements including holding Australian Registration. Qualified applicants must already have a skills assessment by ACECQA and relevant state registration. These applicants can supplement your Australian staff by helping to meet quota requirements at the same time as being trained and qualified for the position at a level equivalent to the Australian Standards.

Employing an overseas worker—what's different?

Workplace laws apply equally to foreign workers as to Australian residents, so there is no difference in employment processes. Differences between overseas workers and Australian citizens or permanent residents relate to Migration Law. Through the application process, employers are fully informed of obligations and responsibilities as sponsors. For most organisations, managing this is straightforward because a migration adviser will ensure all obligations are met.

Recruiting

ECTs are in demand, Australia-wide. A flow of WHV applicants to Australia already exists and is not directed to any state in particular. Recruitment of these applicants is opportunistic, based on their response to a business's recruiting efforts. The key is knowing that you can use these applicants where no suitable Australian applicant is available. There are other sources of ECTs that, due to longer recruiting cycles, would suit larger groups or state-based programs being developed. The costs of recruiting and migration can be significant and vary greatly, depending on how individual organisations manage

these processes. Recruiting costs are often not apparent, particularly where organisations manage the process internally and the costs are not as obvious as when a third-party recruiter is paid. Ultimately, retention of staff where recruiting and migration costs are incurred is critical.

Pathways—next steps

Any business that is considering employing overseas workers should get advice from a Migration Agents Registration Authority (MARA) registered adviser (https://www.mara.gov.au/). This profession is heavily regulated and requires all advisers to be registered, maintain libraries and have up-to-date knowledge of legislation.

Grant Webb

Transitioning to being the parent of a school child

A child starting school is a significant event for most families. During childhood, children progress through a number of transitions and each of these will be a critical and fundamental point of development for both them and their families. Pivotal transitions for most children include starting childcare, transitioning to kindergarten and transitioning to formal schooling. For other children, pivotal transitions may include changes in family circumstances such as parental divorce and separation. Childhood transitions and the subsequent transitions for parents and families are framed as highly social, contextualised and political. These transitions can have a lasting impact on the child and their family. During their child's transition to formal schooling, parents have a dual role. They are expected to both support their child's transition and to cope with the challenges and changes that the child's transition involves for them personally and for their family unit.

Grant has undertaken a number of educational roles across a variety of state, national and international contexts. He has been a classroom teacher, learning support teacher, educational consultant, university lecturer, ECEC director, principal advisor and school principal. He is currently completing his doctoral studies at Central Queensland University.

While existing literature places a strong focus on understanding and supporting children as they make this transition, little focus has been placed on the experiences of parents as they transition to being the parent of a school child (Dockett, Perry, & Kearney 2012). Similarly, most literature on school transitions has focused on, and examined, the individual experiences of the child in the transition process and has left 'the implications of this event for the other family members underexplored' (Everri 2014, p. 257).

This research study aimed to describe and interpret eight parents' stories from four families about their perceptions, expectations and experiences as well as analysing the continuities, changes and adjustments made as their child transitioned to the Preparatory (Prep) Year of formal schooling in a regional area of Queensland, Australia. The objectives were to:

1. describe and interpret the stories of parents to identify their perceptions, expectations and experiences at different temporal points in the transition to school process

2. describe and interpret the stories of parents to identify their perceptions, expectations and experiences which may have been influenced through intergenerational factors

3. describe and interpret the stories of parents to identify the continuities, changes and adjustments that parents experienced at the individual, the relational and the contextual levels as their child transitioned to school.

This research used the 'Family developmental transition approach' (Griebel & Niesel 2013) and the 'Bioecological model of human development' (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006) to describe and interpret the ways in which parents' perceptions, expectations, adjustments and experiences may have been shaped by contexts and systems over time. In particular, through an intergenerational lens, this research also analysed how a parent's own experience of transitioning to school may have shaped the milestone of their child transitioning to school. Semi-structured interviews using biographic-narrative method principles (Wengraf 2001) were used for data gathering and collection. Participants were also asked to keep a written or digital journal. Data was analysed by sorting, retrieving and rearranging it into larger themes and categories. Subsequently, a process was undertaken to identify relationships and build abstractions across cases (cross-case analysis) and themes (meta-themes).

The research findings were that all parents experienced changes at the individual, the relational and the contextual levels. At the individual level, parents experienced a change in their status and identity in becoming the parent of a school child. As expected, this transitional

period was a highly emotive time for most parents and in many cases, these emotions could be linked to the participant's own experiences at school.

At the relational level, it was evident that there were changes to the many and varied relationships with educators, between spouses, with the child undergoing the transition, with other children in the family, with extended family members and between siblings.

It was at the contextual level that most changes occurred. For most parents, having a child start school had an effect on daily routines, adult working hours, household finances, vacation care arrangements and holidays. However, it should be noted that families are not homogenous units. Not only are no two families exactly alike, but also, no two family members have exactly the same experiences, expectations or perspectives. In other words, families are made up of multiple actors who have had diverse experiences (Dockett 2017, pp. 261 -262).

This lack of homogeneity was evident in this study. The individual experiences of parents and of families were a result of the unique contexts and systems in which they were operating over time.

In summary, the research found that this transition was a significant time for each parent as they have individually reimagined their parenting role to some degree; reshaped their many and varied relationships and interactions and have reorganised their family context. This transition has been a personal journey and has been a result of the influence of the interactions with the various systems and contexts in which the transition took place. This journey has also been influenced by parents' own schooling experiences.

In particular, the findings may be useful for school personnel to: expand their understanding of transitions; reconceptualise how parents may be supported as they undertake their dual transition; identify the opportunities for family development; and reflect on how a parent's own transition experience may have an effect on their own transition and the way in which they approach their child's transition.

For example, early childhood educators may: review their enrolment interviews to also discuss the parents' perceptions, expectations, and experiences of the continuities, changes and adjustments they are making; facilitate differentiated transition and orientation programs to cater for the diverse experiences; develop parental peer support programs where schools new families and 'buddied' together with existing school families to help ease their concerns and answer questions based on their experiences with starting school; and develop resources material for parents

who are experiencing this transition for the first time. Many parents are feeling anxious with this transition so early childhood educators should ensure communication with families is clear and concise as well as being inclusive of families for whom English is not their first language, Also, just as we 'mark' a child's transition to school, prep teachers could investigate ways to acknowledge and celebrate the parents making the successful transition to becoming the parent of a school child.

Schools and systems must be challenged to engage in a strengths-based approach to support parents at this pivotal time in their own and in their child's growth and development. There is also a need for increased research to identify ways in which this support can occur within respectful, collaborative and agentic relationships.

Becoming a parent is a significant event. As children grow and develop, parents make adjustments related to the changes in their children's development. One of the major adjustments parents make is in response to children starting school. Even when children have attended prior-to-school settings, starting school 'involves adjustments by the entire family, including altered schedules and changing expectations of parenting ... School entry therefore represents a potentially stressful normative change for parents as well' (DeCaro & Worthman 2011, p. 441).

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Lissanna Follari & Ashley Lawless

Becoming a coach and model: a new director's journey

The transition from classroom assistant to teacher, and from teacher to administrator, is a common trajectory for many preschool program directors or administrators. There is a natural fit between the demands of early childhood program administration and the hands-on experience that comes from close work with children and families as a teacher. However, as professionals shift from teacher to administrator, there are new and unique roles and tasks which require intentionality in developing new skills and leveraging new resources.

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Ashley Lawless is the first graduate of the Bachelor of Innovation in Inclusive Early Childhood Education from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. She serves as a coach and resource for professionals in her region, providing innovative solutions for children and families. Currently, she is the Early Childhood Special Education teacher and Preschool Program Director at Gateway Elementary School in Woodland Park, Colorado.

Addie, a preschool program director in a program serving four-to-five-year-olds, found her voice as a teacher-mentor through professional frameworks, and shares the lessons she learned in her first two years. 'I think the hardest-won lesson for me was around coaching and mentoring, specifically to support inclusive practices and serving children with disabilities. Growing into a mentor wasn't an easy transition for me or my teachers.'

Inclusive practice takes intentionality

Twelve years ago, Addie began as a parent volunteer and, as she pursued a college degree in inclusive early childhood education, she joined the professional team as an assistant teacher. She moved into a lead-teacher role while she completed her degree. As she learned and grew as an early childhood special education teacher, she increased the intentional design of inclusive programming and began to be viewed as a resource for her fellow teachers.

'In my classes, I learned about early childhood professional associations and their frameworks for practice, and I put a lot of effort into making sure my interactions with the children reflected the warmth, respect, appropriate challenge, and individualising I learned from the guidelines (Bredekamp & Copple 2009; DEC/NAEYC 2009). The emphasis on inclusive practices—those that increase access, participation, and supports for children with disabilities—became my primary focus. Finding these resources began to really give a professional voice and lens to my passion for improving preschool.'

Professional evolution: from self to team

Addie moved into the director position after she finished her degree. Like many professionals, for Addie the first year of directing the program was a big learning curve. By the end of the year she had identified some areas in which her team needed to grow. It took a big part of the year but, by term three, Addie realised she had to step up in her role as a coach to the other teachers; teachers with whom she had worked as an assistant, as a teacher, and now supervised as a director.

'I realised that my role as a coach was far more complex, involved, and essential to developing successful and effective inclusive practices across our program. I realised that I hadn't stepped

up to co-create real shared meaning, understanding, and agreements about what we were committing to as a preschool team. I really needed help finding the words to spark conversations about our practice, and to elevate our practices with children with disabilities. I knew I had to take more initiative to orchestrate this through coaching. Professional frameworks gave me the words I needed to engage my team in conversations around what inclusive practices could look like. They literally helped my team all get on the same page.'

Becoming the mentor they turn to

Addie understood that as a director she was also a coach and mentor, and she needed to explicitly co-create a new relationship with her team. This new relationship dynamic had to acknowledge her responsibilities as a leader and clearly create space and motivation for her team to take responsibility for professional growth and evolution in their own practice. She identified several key strategies of effective professional coaching that they could implement, which aligned with widely used models of instructional coaching (Wilson, et. al. 2012):

- co-creating a bi-weekly schedule of team meetings for shared dialogues and goal/objective reflections on program practices

- creating a regular schedule of individual meetings with teachers to focus on professional growth goals (trainings and certifications) and celebrate successes

- sharing small parts of professional frameworks with specific practical examples and recommendations in emails or in mailboxes prior to meetings

- asking for feedback on program practices and leadership strategies

- initiating team-building activities, such as shared lunch during school and weekend hiking.

Shifting from problem-solver to listener

'It took some time to get into a new groove. I was so used to problem-solving all the time that I had to be so mindful about slowing down to really listen to my teachers. Instead of quickly offering suggestions or solutions, I responded with questions and paraphrasing when we met. I asked them "Tell me more about that" when they shared concerns. I became more intentional in my language and asked "Tell me about three success stories from this week" or "What two moments would you do differently if you had the chance?" Meetings no longer felt like I was pulling the conversation out of them. I noticed they were coming up with lots of their own solutions, and then asking for my advice about them.'

Research on effective strategies for improving teacher practice has demonstrated that the implementation of

recurring coaching meetings with concrete focus on teacher-child interactions can have a positive impact on improving practice (Wilson, Dykstra, & Watson 2012). With Addie's strengths around high warmth and high expectations in her interactions with children, she had a great starting place from which to engage her team. They would identify a handful of specific practices which were focused on relationship-building with the children, and engage in honest conversations about how often they implemented these or if they needed to work on increasing these practices. They focused on strategies such as being on the children's level, listening carefully to children's comments and stories, giving ample time for children to think and respond to teacher questions or comments, and offering choices centered around children's interests.

'We became more and more connected as a team, more and more on the same page. Literally! Each time we had a team meeting, we spent time discussing our practice in relation to one small piece of the professional frameworks and tools. My team became able to self-reflect and self-assess using clear evidence from the tools, so they didn't feel like I was judging them so much as listening and guiding their own assessment of their practice and what could be even more successful.'

Coaching and mentoring to improve inclusion

Building a mutually respectful and productive dynamic with individuals and as a team was a real turning point for Addie as a leader. Addie still noticed areas that were challenging their practice, particularly around fully including children with disabilities. What was different in her observations now, however, was that she saw her team's capacity for active engagement in the problem-solving process differently. Bringing issues to the team as a question needing more dialogue, instead of a problem she was going to show them how to fix, allowed teachers to more readily jump in to conversation because they didn't hold back in fear of judgment.

They met as a team and included interventionists and therapists, and identified specific strategies that the teaching team could use throughout the day to support individual children's goals, such as gesture and picture cues, scripted prompts to support social interactions, and communication cards to convey feelings.

'By far, the biggest change I saw was in how our preschool team approached inclusion. I framed the guidance I offered around my experience with how much easier and more effective our work was when we embedded a plan for inclusion into everything we did. All our kiddos, all their individual instructional goals,

fit in a classroom community that was designed with the expectation of learner diversity. I look back at how far we've come this past year and the positive impact we've made on children and families in our community, and I am just moved to tears. Seeing the impact on our kiddos, and seeing how our preschoolers moved on to be successful in their next school year, really makes our whole preschool team so proud. To reflect on my own professional journey and how far I've come as a leader and a coach just really reminds me of how incredibly important and influential preschool teams are. We really are children's first and most influential experience with schooling.'

Addie's experience in her professional journey, beginning as a parent volunteer and working her way to director within the same program, adding education and credentials along the way, echoes a familiar professional path for so many early childhood professionals. This progression requires several key transitions for directors and for staff teams. In particular, the acknowledgement of the director's role as team coach, mentor, advocate, and partner provided clarity and focus for Addie to more confidently step in to this essential role. In so doing, she was able to galvanise her team around important improvements and successes in inclusive practices for all of their preschool community.

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Daniel Donahoo

Unpacking screentime: What should digital technology and early childhood look like?

Daniel Donahoo is a leading thinker and practitioner on the role of technology in the lives of young children,with a background in early childhood development. He is the author of two books on child development, "Idolising Children (2007) and "Adproofing Your Kids" (2009). Daniel's first involvement with technology and early childhood was as instigator of the "Darebin Children's Services Electronic Enablement Project" in 2000. Daniel now consults widely with early years peak bodies and providers, leading children's app developers and delivers professional development across Australia. This includes advising on the digital play design of the Early Learning Languages Australia project, developing the new F-2 digital assets and programs for Life Education Australia and advise organisations like Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Storypark and Early Childhood Australia on the best ways to engage children, families and educational professionals in using technology in purposeful ways for young children.

Each generation has a different relationship with the world from the generations that have preceded it. Change comes both from human intervention and ingenuity, and through external environmental factors beyond our control. Early childhood educators are at the frontline of this experience. We foster and shepherd each generation through to its potential. We understand that change is constant and that humanity, and the children we work with, are defined by their ability to adapt to that change.

As early childhood professionals, we lead the way in supporting children to develop the values, skills and knowledge to make that adaptation. We constantly work to make sure that the children who pass through our services and programs have the best foundation to become confident and capable adults. We teach children to be resilient and adaptable. We foster their creativity and curiosity.

Before the buzz of '21st century skills' and educational theory evangelism such as STEM or inquiry, we were educating in these ways. Under the guidance of the work left for us by Montessori, Vygotsky and Piaget, we have continued to teach children how to be adaptable and how to deal effectively with change by exploring, experimenting and making sense of their world.

And now, in the midst of what the history books will refer to as the Technological Revolution that reshaped the way people lived in the world (just as the Industrial Revolution before it), we collectively are experiencing more change faster than we have ever experienced change in all of human history.

Change is hard. Change is scary. And, despite our own and our children's ability to adapt to it, we often find ourselves fighting against it. As a result, the frontline of children's learning and development has become the interface through which they now experience technology—the screen!

Screentime is increasingly an issue because it is the screen that has become the interface through which young children can engage with digital technology. Before the advent of touchscreens and mobile devices, young children couldn't effectively engage with technology. As pre-literate humans, a keyboard was of little value; computing power was unable to manage audio and video to a quality that was of benefit to these children. The mouse and other interfaces were no use to someone still developing fine skills sophisticated enough to control such a device. Then, in 2007 with the first iPhone, the mainstreaming of touchscreens began.

The power of the touchscreen is that it has been designed with the most basic of human fine motor skills in mind. A child of 12–18 months has already developed the simple mechanics within their hands to interact with the device. And, interact they have.

It is important to recognise this interaction has been mediated by adults. We create and design the environments and situations that children experience. It is the parent who hands over the device. It is the adult that sets it up in a pram, or uses it to find some peace in a waiting room. And they are fascinated because children can use the device and seem to be adept at navigating their way through and even making choices about what apps or content they choose to view or play with. As a result, the idea that they are 'digital natives' has arisen.

But, just because a child has the capacity to use mobile devices thanks to their design, we should not assume this means children know how to use these devices to support their learning and development. They are not native to digital technology, nanymore than their parents are. Look at the way we all use technology and increasingly spend time on it in ways that many would regard as non-productive. If our children are going to be mature users of technology in ways that are respectful, beneficial and productive—then someone needs to teach them. And, as they are using the technology from a very young age, that teaching needs to begin in the early years. We have a responsibility to equip ourselves as educators, parents and children to better understand, utilise and make sense of digital technology.

In early childhood education, we now have a responsibility to support children to learn and understand both about technology in the world they live and to understand that they can learn with technology. This can happen in numerous ways that suit and connect with the individual practice and approaches of educators.

Learning about digital technology without digital technology

Educators who are still concerned and working through the implications and impact of technology on young children and don't wish to have it in their service can still teach children about technology without using digital technology.

Children will bring the technology they interact with into the space. It may be in their domestic role play, it may be in the pictures they draw or the stories they play out with friends. Each of these points offer moments of intentional teaching where an educator can ask questions and provide commentary on the use of digital technology. A child who talks about playing 'Mario' while pretending to drive a car allows us to ask, 'How do you play Mario at home?' and, if the child talks about their parents or siblings' mobile devices, an educator can enhance that child's knowledge by saying, 'I know about that; my older daughter makes her own movies on one of those. Did you know you can make your own movie with a smartphone?'

In doing this, an educator is offering the most crucial piece of learning that they want children to have about digital technology. That is, digital technology is a tool that offers children agency and is not simply about consuming content and games, but about creating and making things themselves. If children head to primary education with an understanding of the breadth and potential of what technology can be used for, then our job is done. Early childhood offers a critique to young minds not that the technology is bad but that, when thought of in a variety of ways, the technology can be a useful and beneficial tool.

Learning about digital technology through play

Digital technology and touchscreens are inherently playful. The interface of a touchscreen is in some small way connecting the CEO at his desk back to a time when he was finger-painting in an early learning environment. We may see glass and metal as the opposite to the natural materials and non-corporate resources we have used for decades to support children's learning through play, but we need to also reconfigure our view and recognise that we can use digital technology in playful ways. In early childhood education, our use of mobile devices should be to weave them into the fabric of our play. They should augment our playspaces and become the front of a train engine (thorough the Toca Train app). They should become another musical instrument or band (through apps like Garageband). They can be part of a hairdressing salon (Toca Hair Me), a music studio (Subnortick's Pitch Painter App) or a cartoon creation space (Puppet Pals or ABC Art Maker Apps). The digital technology offers

new and different experiences. It should not be used to replicate an existing experience; for example, drawing on the iPad is a poor substitute for finger painting. But, for a child with sensory issues who refuses to finger paint (or paint at all), then a touchscreen as a painting interface may be an excellent place to start.

Using digital technology in a play-based program requires educators to re-engage with learning through play themselves. You need to get hold of digital technology and, just like the children we teach, you need to play with it. When you do, you will begin to develop ways to use the tool.

Learning playfully through digital technology

When people ask me, 'What is the best app?', I often ask them what they have done with the camera app. Every phone, tablet and latest technology gadget usually has a camera. It doesn't cost anything. It comes with the device. To use it, you usually just have to press a single button. We all want the latest and greatest app, but we do so to the detriment of those that already exist. Rather than exploring and pushing the potential of seemingly mundane apps, we chase apps that have all the bells and whistles and make claims to do extraordinary things. The secret is, apps don't do extraordinary things; people and children who use apps in unimaginable ways are the ones who do extraordinary things. The technology is only as good as the imagination of the user. Don't assume technology kills imagination. It fosters it. We just have to accept that, like children do, rather than want it all handed to us on a platter. Technology promises to do that—but it actually doesn't. So, back to this camera app. What have I seen done with it? I've seen:

- children offered the camera to capture their own images of their work and play to be included in observations, giving them agency and suddenly more control over their portfolio and learning as the observer—rather than just the observed

- educators redesign a learning environment and take photos of different parts of it, then share those images with children who arrive in the new environment and ask them to find the things they see in the photograph as a form of hide and seek to playfully explore a new play space. After this, children were requesting it each morning, despite the play space remaining the same

- the camera used as a microscope and photos of leaves, insects and carpet being zoomed in using the pincer grip and offering microscopic detail of items found by children, thanks to the high resolution of tablet cameras

- the video camera function used to video children's hand washing, and placed above the taps with gaffer tape, to really engage a group of children who needed a little support with their hygiene practice

- cameras set up to focus on a high-frequency play space and, using the time-lapse function, take photos over the day to give a view of how that space was being used.

These are just a few examples of how a single, usually overlooked, app like the camera (which costs nothing) can be used to learn playfully, to capture learning and offer new insights and improvements into the way we work in our learning environments. Imagine turning your mind to similar apps like maps, audio recording, messaging. What could you do with those and the children in your learning environment?

Of course, there are excellent apps that we can recommend to parents that go beyond the current situation of children playing apps, like Angry Birds, meant for an older audience. Apps like Busy Shapes, which is a cleverly designed digital posting box that works to support children's problem solving and executive functioning. Or Pitch Painter, that allows children as young as two years old to compose their own music. Or Word Wizard, whose 'Talking Alphabet' section offers children the ability to use letters like playdough and manipulate and explore letters and sounds in an open-ended, sandpit environment.

The key is to be open to exploring. Digital technology is the same as every other resource a teacher has; it requires your own knowledge and skills to make it magical. The bi-carb soda, vinegar, food colouring and clay don't become a volcano by themselves—and an app will always just be something to play on the screen until you find ways to help it jump off the screen. Digital technology is a launching pad; it sits within part of a learning continuum and is not the be-all and end-all. When it comes to digital technology, it is time to start playing.

Deb Brosseuk

Growing the entrepreneurial experience of a young learner through failure

Deb Brosseuk has been an educator in the early years of formal schooling for two decades. Currently, Deb is working in pre-service education, teaching language and literacies in early childhood at Griffith University, Brisbane. Deb is interested in cultivating organic pedagogies, which help young learners to raise and explore their own questions, and progress in their paths of enhancing learning dispositions including inquisitiveness, and intellectual curiosity. This article stems from doctoral research at Griffith University, Brisbane.

As a passionate early years educator, my end game is not the teaching that is set by tightly pre-packaged curriculum programs, but teaching that myself, my colleagues, and my learners imagine together. I know I have achieved this teaching when learners are able to act as creative directors, independent thinkers, and inspired troubleshooters. In this article I provide a contextual snapshot of a Preparatory learner's experience with the sometimes-uncomfortable feeling of failure. In so doing, I spotlight the pedagogical actions, which provided opportunities for failure to grow the learner's entrepreneurial experiences.

What can we learn from Google?

Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin's way of cultivating entrepreneurial experiences is no carefully guarded eleven-secret-herbs-and-spices recipe. In fact, Google has openly shared their ever-evolving principles of entrepreneurship with the world since 2008. These principles empower Google employees, known as Googlers, to be creative and innovative; they are encouraged to be ambitious, take risks, aim big, and embrace the notion of failure. Actually, Googlers are encouraged to fail! Currently, Google has eight principles that govern their innovation strategy (Schmidt, Rosenberg & Eagle, 2014):

1. Focus on the user.
2. Open will win.
3. Ideas come from everywhere.
4. Think big, start small.
5. Never fail to fail.
6. Launch early and iterate.
7. Be a platform; float all boats.
8. Make it matter.

A critical question for me was: could Google's eight principles be reimagined to create experiences that grow the entrepreneurial experience of my learners? Of course! In a Preparatory classroom the reimagined principles were clustered together and named LAUNCH:

Latch onto your ideas

Ask questions; search for answers

Use your creativity

Never be afraid to fail

Collaborate and cooperate

Have a blast

LAUNCH inspires young learners to find an idea with a social, moral, or humanitarian dynamic and give it attention, to nurture it and grow it. Importantly, these LAUNCH ways of working should not be viewed as an unyielding list to grow entrepreneurial experiences. Instead, educators should consider the complexity of their educational context, and explore the many possibilities of adaptation and, where necessary, reshape LAUNCH ways of working.

The visual prompts represent the visual vocabulary to indicate LAUNCH ways of working. These prompts act as a visual reminder of working behaviours encouraged during LAUNCH.

A moment to reflect:

How might Google's eight principles be re-imagined to suit your educational context?

What follows is a glimpse into Tristan's experiences with the fourth LAUNCH principle: (N) Never be afraid to fail.

Mrs. Brosseuk, I just failed!

When Tristan announced he failed, we celebrated with enthusiasm. Tristan's three-dimensional designed solution to stop hungry ibis birds entering the lunchtime eating area had completely fallen apart. With a slight tremble in his voice, Tristan said, 'Mrs. Brosseuk, it's so broken'. Failure had catapulted Tristan into the unsettling feeling of defeat and disappointment. I reminded Tristan of the sometimes-uncomfortable feeling of failure written about in *The most magnificent thing (2014)* by Ashley Spires. This book reminds readers that failing repeatedly could spark inspired thinking. ''*Remember, failure is an opportunity for new ways of trying*'', I told Tristan.


Tristan's failed three-dimensional model of his designed solution to keep the ibis birds out of the lunchtime eating area.

To inspire willingness for Tristan to take on failure, my pedagogical actions were a mixture of implicitness and explicitness. I implicitly put forward open-ended questions such as, *'Why do you think the frame broke?'* and *'What could you do to fix it?'* to rouse Tristan to think critically about his failed design. Sensing Tristan's need to experiment, I stepped away and gave him explicit control to explore different materials and construction methods. When Tristan required help to make an overhand knot, I provided an explicit demonstration. Then, I handed explicit control back to Tristan, allowing him time and space to practise tying netting to planks of polystyrene. He worked at his own pace, based on his

readiness and ability to self-direct his investigation. At times, Tristan chose to work collaboratively with peers. This time of togetherness sparked capacity for explicit control over talking about new ideas, proposing potential alternatives, and of course, celebrating new failures.

Failure grows entrepreneurial thinking

Tristan's initial failure, followed by further design failures, contributed to a change in direction. After much time exploring and experimenting, Tristan reconsidered his new designed solution. *'Well, maybe, like I could record a reminder? To pick up rubbish, so the birds don't come'*, Tristan suggested. After watching an ABC iview vodcast about ocean waste (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2018) Tristan decided to capitalise on an opportunity to produce a video recorded announcement to raise awareness, and change behaviour toward leaving rubbish in the lunchtime eating area. To maximise viewership, the announcement was played at a school assembly. Also, Tristan produced an information poster for his peers as a visual reminder to pick up rubbish. It reads, *'Please pick up your rubbish so the birds go away'*.
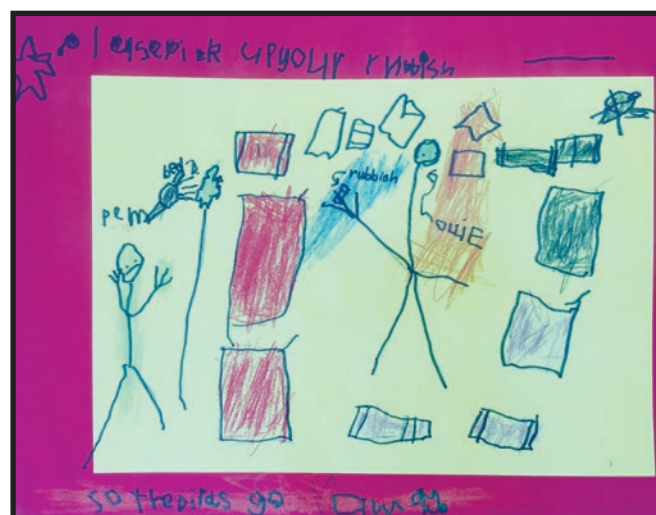
Tristan's information poster reminds peers to pick up their rubbish.

As early years professionals, it is important we change our, and our young learners', perceptions about failure.

A new take on failure

Pedagogical actions of implicitness and explicitness allowed Tristan the time and space to act as an innovative thinker, creative director, tenacious problem-solver, and active participant as visionary of his designed solution to a glitch in his lifeworld. Further, these pedagogical moments helped Tristan to see failure as important missteps, not to be glossed over and forgotten, but rather an opportunity for growth. Some of the pedagogic actions that embrace and support failure include:

Use children's literature to introduce the idea of failure (see references for suggestions).

- Talk about, and celebrate failure (yours too!).
- Intently listen and observe.
- Put forward open-ended questions.
- Offer diverse learning places and spaces to explore and experiment.
- Allow learners time to failure and grow.
- Connect learners with other learners.
- Use a mix of implicit and explicit pedagogic actions.

Could Google's eight principles be reimagined to create experiences that grow the entrepreneurial experience of my learners?

As early years professionals, it is important we change our, and our young learners', perceptions about failure.

Some recommended children's literature about failure includes books such as:

Rosie revere engineer (2017) by Beaty; *The book of mistakes* (2017) by Luyken; *If I forever never endeavour* (2011) by Meade; and *The cow tripped over the moon* (2015) by Wilson.

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Ellen Brewer

From curriculum to cordial

Ellen has over 25 years of experience including learning support; as a Year 2 Net Key Teacher; and as an Age Appropriate Pedagogy Coach in Central Queensland, supporting schools with the introduction and implementation of AAP into the classroom. This has enabled Ellen to have a thorough knowledge of AAP and its implementation, as well as an understanding of the current systemic requirements to deliver the Australian Curriculum.

Teaching is a craft which involves interpreting the knowledge, skills and attitudes outlined in curriculum documents to deliver it to the students, using age and developmentally appropriate pedagogies.

The Australian Curriculum is separated into disciplines. However, it is important to remember that learning is not linear, but a complex process with many interrelated and overlapping ideas and concepts. As a result, it is essential that teachers have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy so that the learning experiences we provide to our students are engaging, rich and integrated.

With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum and the supporting curriculum into the classroom (C2C) resource documents, there was the notion that because it was Monday, term one, week three, preparatory teachers needed to be teaching specific lessons 'Using my Imagination' in English and 'Identifying Similarities and Differences' in mathematics. In the early days of these documents, I would apprehensively move away from what was stipulated on the department plan, always wondering how I would justify what was happening in my class when 'somebody' would ask, 'Why are they playing?' Fortunately, with an improved understanding of the Australian Curriculum, the introduction of age-appropriate pedagogies (Queensland Government Department of Education) and my participation in the 2015 pilot and 2016–2017 program, I now have the confidence to 'grab teachable moments' to create a rich, connected experience which engages the student.

One such experience occurred during outside time. I knew that in the following weeks I would be teaching measurement and the concept of capacity in mathematics, so I set up the water-trough with a variety of containers and coloured water. My purpose was to converse with and observe the children identifying their prior knowledge, language and understandings of capacity as well as any misconceptions they may have had. It was in the initial moments of their presence at the trough that one child stated that it looked like green cordial and that they should set up a 'cordial shop'.

That was the moment, the beginning of what became a 'teachable', 'integrated and meaningful' learning experience. While standing with the children at the trough, I had already started making connections across the Australian Curriculum learning areas and the general capabilities. In mathematics, students would make comparisons using capacity, while in English they would be writing, using words and images to convey their ideas. They would be using their sound and letter knowledge for their writing, and developing their oral language skills to communicate clearly. They would be developing their creative thinking and their social skills. During that session, the students continued to explore and talk with interest, building around the anticipated 'cordial shop'. Through discussion and an occasional question or prompt from myself, the students continued to develop and problem solve through their ideas: 'How are you going to set up a cordial shop? How will you know it is a shop? Hmm! I think I might have some in the storeroom … ' and shortly afterward, with the addition of paper cups, there were the beginnings of a 'cordial shop'.

The learning experience, which started as a data-gathering activity, was gaining momentum. Previously, I would have stopped any further exploration due to time constraints, feeling guilty that I was deviating from the C2C documents or, if by chance somebody in authority walked into the yard, would I have the language, the research or the confidence to explain why my students looked as if they were 'just playing'? Over the following days during outside time the children continued to develop their 'cordial shop' with students entering and exiting the learning area, depending on their level of interest. During daily reflections with our class planning board, discussions for outside time were focused on the 'cordial shop' from generating a basic list of requirements to how it was going to happen and who was going to organise and create. It was during these discussions that one child observed that the paper cups had become soggy after too many refills and that we needed plastic cups instead. BINGO! There was another curriculum link to science. The students would observe and describe the properties and behaviour of familiar objects; however, we were not learning about materials until term two, and it was only term one. Through using the photographs of the cordial shop, I now had my hook when it came to introducing the unit on materials and an opportunity for the students to transfer their developing knowledge into other learning experiences ... again reinforcing the notion that learning is a cross-curricular and interrelated process.

Throughout learning experiences, the teacher has an important role to play: building a rapport with and understanding the students in their class, considering their development, physical, social, emotional and cognitive abilities and fostering their interests to support learning and development. Throughout the 'cordial shop' experience the students were active and given opportunities to explore. They investigated their interests and were engaged in learning. The students could focus on their goals and, because the activity was open-ended, they could work at their developmental level with support from the teacher.

The learning experience enabled the students to be agentic, collaborative, and creative (Queensland Government Department of Education). Using the planning board allowed the students to engage in language-rich and meaningful conversations which contributed to the direction of their learning. Collaborating, the students could develop their interests as they had 'permission' to take control, articulating their thinking and making connections to other learnings.

There were other benefits too. Although the cordial shop initially focused on the students' mathematical understandings, socially and emotionally, the quieter students also began to contribute to the collaborative planning times. Through observing and conversing, there were other students identified as requiring extra support or needing extension. Allowing students to participate in the open-ended learning experience enabled me to be flexible, catering to the needs of the students.

Thorough knowledge of the Australian Curriculum is vital. Teachers need to be familiar with the achievement standard, the curriculum content and assessment tasks. Continually referring back to the documents on a weekly rather than a term basis is essential as it enables teachers to 'think off the top of their head', grab teachable moments and find the links back to the curriculum and assessment. It is when a teacher has a thorough understanding of the content and pedagogy that they can be flexible and responsive to the needs, skills, and interests of the children, having the confidence to create a dynamic program.

Valuing and reflecting on pedagogies is essential, and understanding different pedagogies is vital if teachers want to support learning across the curriculum. That one moment at the water trough could have been easily dismissed; however, utilising that spontaneous learning opportunity, opened the door to many other learning experiences and the opportunity to implement additional pedagogies. Recognising the importance of spontaneous experiences, intentionally planning the learning, reflecting on pedagogical practices, providing time, space, resources and the opportunity to explore, question and problem-solve are crucial for student learning.

A teacher has a significant role. They can either provide opportunities for learning or stifle the learning by one simple decision. Interpreting the curriculum is essential; understanding the assessment is crucial. However, it is a teacher's knowledge of age and developmentally appropriate pedagogies, their skills to deliver the content and their courage to deviate from their plan which creates an engaging program and successful learners.

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Rhonda Livingstone

More than cool tools – embracing technology with intention

There is no denying that digital technologies are an ever-present and pervasive part of children's contemporary lives and, increasingly, their identities as learners. These technologies may encompass a range of electronic tools and a growing number of devices. Touch-based digital technologies in particular, such as tablets and smartphones, are progressively a key feature of digital learning environments and have seen children more readily engaged in 'digital play'. Their intuitive and user friendly nature transforms a child's finger into a magic wand, providing a natural sensory tool for exploration and discovery as well as offering a valuable tool for teaching and learning.

Rhonda Livingstone is ACECQA's National Education Leader, bringing a wealth of experience to this role, having worked in preschools and long day care centres, as well as an assessor of programs and services for the Queensland Government and the Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland. Rhonda's extensive involvement in the National Quality Agenda reforms saw her contribute to the development of the National Quality Standard and its guide, the assessment and rating tools and processes, and the training and testing program for authorised officers. Rhonda has also worked as a Senior Advisor, Excellent Rating with ACECQA and as a sessional education academic with the Queensland University of Technology.

The once frequent debate regarding the appropriateness of digital technologies and their integration into a learning context is now less polarising. Conversation has shifted in recent years to acknowledge the digital presence in the lives of children, while considering how educators can best leverage the capacity of digital technologies within a play-based approach to pedagogy to meaningfully support children achieve outcomes for learning.

> *… experiences that invite children to be active producers, not merely consumers, of technology.*

More recently, the integration of digital technologies is seen and understood as a powerful tool to support learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). An increasing number of education and care services are beginning to introduce experiences that invite children to be active producers, not merely consumers, of technology. Educators are looking beyond the mere provision of digital technologies as 'cool tools', embedding them with intention as tools for teaching and learning.

Embracing technology with intention

Digital technologies can provide a number of rich pedagogical affordances. When embedded with intention, digital technologies can be innovative and effective tools in strengthening opportunities for teaching and learning, extending the curriculum and supporting learning outcomes for children.

At the Early Childhood Australia (ECA) National Conference in 2016, international keynote speaker Dr Chip Donohue (Dean of Distance Learning and Continuing Education / Director of the TEC Center at Erikson Institute in Chicago) encouraged delegates to consider digital technologies as 'windows, mirrors or magnifying glasses' – tools that can be used with the intention to view something beyond, reflect interests and

explore the world. In this way, digital technologies can be used to support and build relationships, and foster critical thinking.

Digital technologies are not separate from a play-based approach to children's learning. They have the potential to augment and deepen children's play experiences, assisting in promoting their capacity as critical thinkers, creators and collaborators and extending their learning in valuable ways. They do not replace traditional materials, but rather extend upon them and add to the array of tools available to children, offering a new vehicle of opportunity in which to explore, create and experiment.

> *... digital technologies can be used to support and build relationships, and foster critical thinking.'*

Digital technologies can provide children with a new spectrum of opportunity, but only if educators support children to recognise the value of these tools in appropriate and considered ways – they should never be introduced simply for their appeal or as ends in and of themselves. Educators can assist children in their playful exploration of digital technologies while emphasising their engagement in ways that are creative, open-ended, hands-on, and promote their agency.

Making informed decisions that support children's learning and development requires educators to constantly make reflective, responsive and intentional professional judgements. Educators must be knowledgeable about integrating digital technologies into a play-based curriculum and actively consider how and when to appropriately select, use and evaluate their application within their education and care environment.

Lisa Guernsey, Director of the Early Education Initiative and the Learning Technologies Project at the Education Policy Program at New America in Washington, DC, provides a useful framework through which to consider effective practice in the selection, use, integration and evaluation of digital technologies. Guernsey refers to the three Cs of screen time – content, context and the individual child.

- Content: How does this help children engage, express, imagine or explore?

- Context: How does it complement and not interrupt children's natural play?

- The individual child: How do we choose the right tools and experiences for each child's needs, abilities, interests and capabilities?

The framework provides a useful reference point for educators when considering how digital technologies can be thoughtfully embraced within the educational program.

Early Childhood Australia (ECA) is currently developing a draft *Statement on Digital Technology and Young Children* that will provide principle-based advice aimed at assisting educators to make informed decisions on the role of digital technologies in children's learning. With digital technologies increasingly incorporated into education and care services, the Statement is timely and will assist in building the knowledge base of the sector to ensure digital technologies are used to support and promote the best interests of children.

> *Educators must be knowledgeable about integrating digital technologies into a play-based curriculum and actively consider how and when to appropriately select, use and evaluate their application within their education and care environment.*

Digital limitations

Limitations on the use of digital technologies are important. When considering the integration of digital technologies into their learning environments, education and care services should be aware of the recommended screen time guidelines. ACECQA was fortunate to have been part of the Consensus Panel contributing to the update of the *Australian 24- Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 Years)*, released in late 2017, which provide new national recommendations for physical activity,

sedentary behaviour and sleep, and include a focus on limiting the amount of screen time – particularly sedentary screen time – for young children.

The guidelines incorporate the effects of screen time on children's growth and development, providing recommendations on how to mitigate these effects through an emphasis on increasing movement and limiting sedentary behaviour and screen time. The guidelines recommend no sedentary screen time for children under two and no more than one hour for children aged two to five, with all screen time at these ages as educational. This means discouraging passive or non-interactive use while promoting the co-viewing of digital technologies with children, discussing content and using devices in ways that help children build their understanding of the world around them through investigation, problem solving and creating knowledge.

While the amount of time children spend with digital technologies is important, time is only one metric. Not all screens are created equal and the type of screen time or the way children engage with digital technologies, as either passive recipients or active participants, is likewise a primary determinant of effective and appropriate use. Educators need to make informed choices that serve to educate, empower and maximise learning opportunities for children while managing screen time and mediating the misuse or overuse of digital technologies.

Digital literacy and citizenship

The ubiquitous nature of digital technologies within children's lives means digital literacy and an understanding of good digital citizenship is uniquely important for young children. With digital technologies playing a larger role in education and care environments than ever before, educators play an important role in supporting children to explore the possibilities and navigate the potential pitfalls these technologies afford.

While we often hear the term 'digital native' used to describe children born into and living in a technology-rich world, their relationship to digital technologies is not innate or neutral – they still require caring and knowledgeable role models to support their digital literacy and their capacity to understand and use technology, in safe, appropriate and socially responsible ways.

Digital citizenship forms an important part of digital literacy for children. The Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner acknowledges digital citizenship is 'about confident and positive engagement with digital technology' and recognises

three core principles responsible digital citizens should practice, namely to: 'engage positively, know your online world and choose consciously'. As well as being informed digital citizens and strengthening their own digital literacy competencies, educators can play a significant role in empowering children to be responsible and ethical users of digital technology with the knowledge and skills to safely access, critically question, evaluate and confidently engage with various digital tools as active media creators.

Partnerships with families

Families are the primary influence in children's lives and their first and most significant educators. With digital technologies and media increasingly commonplace in our everyday lives, the home environment is often the first context where children both see and participate in the use of digital technologies, media and devices. Families play an important role in providing children with opportunities to explore digital technologies, mediating their children's interactions and engagement, as well as influencing their learning and supporting their effective and appropriate use. However, the rapidly changing technological landscape coupled with the often confusing or contradictory information presented about the benefits and traps of digital technology can often leave families feeling unsupported in helping their children access the unique benefits offered by the digital age. In a sense leaving them stranded in the digital wild-west without a roadmap.

Educators can play a significant role in building collaborative partnerships with families and supporting them to navigate the obstacles and often overwhelming world of digital technologies. Donohue suggests that educators increasingly have a professional role as 'media mentors', not only supporting children's engagement in the digital age but also assisting families in the shift from being 'screen-worried to screen-wise'.

In a world where children are 'growing up digital' and technology is only likely to become more prevalent in all of our lives, educators can play an vital role in communicating the potential opportunities 'digital play' affords, as well as providing guidance to families on how to meaningfully use digital technologies in joint learning moments with their children. Educators can also provide access to best practice recommendations and relevant sources of information, such as the *Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines* eSafety resources from the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, to assist families

to become confident and empowered digital citizens, capable of making informed decisions on healthy digital habits for and with their children.

Children's engagement with digital technology does not occur in a vacuum. Consideration must be given to children's experiences and interactions across multiple environments, including education and care, school and home settings, and how they intersect, influence and inform children's use of digital technologies. Supportive relationships and respectful communication between families and education and care services matter. Educators play a significant role in listening to and learning with families – encouraging their meaningful involvement and inclusion as co-contributors to service decision making. This may include gathering information about the experiences of families' digital technology habits to meaningfully inform children's digital play within the education and care environment. Understanding families' use of technologies more holistically, coupled with an understanding of the recommended screen time guidelines, may also assist in exploring ways to address screen time concerns and establish service policies and procedures that scaffold and support positive and healthy screen time experiences.

> *The pace of digital innovation and the emergence of new technologies and devices afford many opportunities. They have the ability to transform, extend and enrich children's play experiences and facilitate learning in innovative and inspiring ways.*

It is increasingly clear that the digital age is upon us and is a rapidly emerging reality of the 21st century. Digital technologies – including, but not limited to, interactive whiteboards, robotic programming tools, animation software, tablets and e-books – are increasingly a part of an educator's professional toolbox. The pace of digital innovation and the emergence of new technologies and devices

> *"Let's not get so fascinated by what the technology can do that we forget what it can't do...it's through relationships that we grow best and learn best". Fred Rogers*

afford many opportunities. They have the ability to transform, extend and enrich children's play experiences and facilitate learning in innovative and inspiring ways. However, the potential and possibility of these tools extends beyond the devices themselves. It lies largely in the way children are supported and encouraged to use, respond to, participate and engage with digital technologies and the meaningful relationships that exist between children, families and educators – that help children grow and live well with these devices. As American television personality Fred Rogers, whose legacy is built upon and honoured through the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, once stated; *'Let's not get so fascinated by what the technology can do that we forget what it can't do...it's through relationships that we grow best and learn best'.*

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Maureen Hawke

Why are so many children struggling developmentally?

Maureen Hawke is the Director of the Learning Connections Centre and facilitates workshops in the Learning Connections School Program and the Early Years Program. Maureen has been providing successful home-based therapy for thousands of individual children over the past 40 years. She has also trained thousands of teachers Australia wide and internationally.

In recent years educators from all sectors of early childhood have been expressing increasing concern about the complex issues in their cohorts. The 2015 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) found that 22 percent of children entering school are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain(s) and that 10.8 percent of children are developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains (Department of Education and Training 2016).

Due to the complexity of developmental immaturities being experienced by children, educators commonly report feeling overwhelmed as they lack strategies to manage the issues of these children.

Over the decades, the way in which children are reared has changed dramatically. Many of these changes have been for the better, however many have had a negative effect on children's development. Such negative effects include:

- Restriction of valuable movement opportunities in early life due to constraints such as car restraints, prams, highchairs, walkers and bouncers that remove the opportunity for free movement

- Changes in sleeping practices

- Increase in consumption of processed foods and artificial additives

- Increase in environmental toxins

- Accelerated academic curriculum and early reading initiatives

- Pushing children into academics without the establishment of a strong foundation of motor, sensory-motor and language skills – this forces them to learn by rote

- Increase in the exposure and use of screens at an earlier age.

In this article we outline the importance of movement, and its role in the development of skills required for learning as well as how screens and diet can impact children's development.

Restriction of movement and the importance of movement for learning

Giving babies frequent opportunities for tummy movement in the first weeks of life is crucial for motor development (Majnemer, 2006). The baby's head grows very rapidly in the first year of life and if tummy time – which encourages movement and engagement with surroundings – is not a priority, lifting the head becomes a challenge. When the head is lifted, neck and back muscles are strengthened which stimulates the vestibular system. The vestibular system plays a vital role in the interweaving of all sensory messages into a whole awareness or integration; it is necessary for the development of balance co-ordination, muscle tone and visual skill development.

These early movements lay the building blocks for the development of the sensory motor integration necessary for learning in school. Sensory motor integration can be described as the sorting, organising and putting together of messages

received by the brain from all the senses, so that appropriate responses can be made.

As the brain receives countless pieces of information from nerve endings in muscles and ligaments, feedback from the brain to the body develops the sense of self and movements become more automatic and co-ordinated. Information received must be processed, decoded and integrated with body awareness if it is to be meaningful.

Body awareness

Body awareness is the internal awareness of our body parts in relation to each other and to our surroundings and is enhanced by good muscle tone. This awareness is a most important foundation upon which later skills required for learning in school are built, for example, spatial skills which are important for maths.

- Signs of body awareness immaturities include difficulties with:
- controlling their bodies at mat time
- sitting on a chair
- balance
- doing tasks in a slow, controlled pace – can only do tasks quickly
- lying on the floor on their tummy – need to rest on their elbows

The brain builds up memories of body parts and their position in relation to gravity, and this is essential for learning how to balance, sit still in a chair, pedal a tricycle, walk, stand on one leg, hop, skip and march (Brenière 1998). Without having mastered these skills, a child is not yet ready to read; they may be bright but are not yet ready for the demands of the classroom.

Children today are simply not moving enough and don't have sufficient opportunities in the early years to learn through play (Burdette & Whitaker 2005). Spending more time on the floor with young children and placing toys slightly out of babies reach, encourages them to move and is a great place to start. Provide opportunities for messy and imaginative play and interaction with the "real world" to assist the development of their sensory processing skills and spatial awareness.

Physical participation in activities is necessary for a child's healthy development; passive observation is not enough.

Education is constantly requiring us to use our sensory systems to process information. Many children are yet to develop mature sensory processing abilities.

Immaturity in early childhood behaviour is an indication that the sensory signals are not being interpreted correctly (Jean Ayres 2005). Many children are engaging in behaviours educators often find challenging and disruptive as they attempt to meet their sensory needs. This can be seen in the children who have to touch everything, or resist touch, who react to loud noises or conversely may be very noisy themselves, fearful and anxious children, fidgeting, rocking, impulsive children and those who have difficulty socialising in groups.

Auditory and visual development and screen time

Children with visual immaturities may show little interest in drawing, colouring in and painting. They can draw, however they usually choose not to. A child may look at a recognised shape, however not be able to draw or construct the shape because they lack body awareness and the visual thinking necessary for the meaningful interpretation of the neural impulses sent from the eyes to the brain.

Auditory function is closely related to speech and language (Svirsky, Teoh & Neuburger 2004). However many auditory activities are of a non-language nature. Listening is the active part of the auditory process and happens in the brain, whereas hearing is passive (Shiller & Rochon 2014). Many children are unable to actively listen. The difficulty for many children is that they have not developed the capacity to interpret the sounds heard. This may be due to their inability to concentrate, stay focussed, sequence and then visualise how to carry out a set of instructions.

Screens can also have a negative impact on auditory function. When screens are turned on, our brains are primarily occupied by constantly changing visual images and our auditory system takes a back seat. Active listening is not required when engaging with screens. Many children today are addicted to technology with some 3 year olds more capable of using a smart phone

than many adults (Goodwin 2016). Time spent in front of a screen by young children is time lost forever to the learning opportunities that come from play.

In a house where screens are on whenever children are home, the family will speak on average 500 words to each other compared to 6000 words in homes where screen time is limited (Merrillees 2014). This drastically impacts not only social interactions and bonding, but also language development. Learning apps and games on screens can be beneficial, but should not replace books, pencils and paper. Our brains store and process information received from screens differently to that received from paper (Carr 2010).
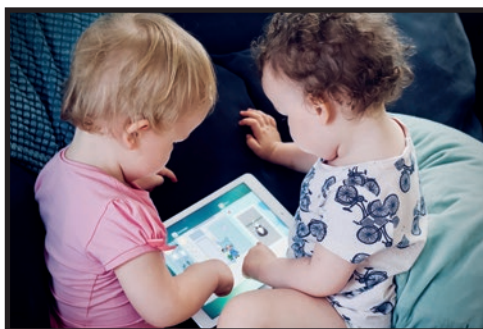
Technology plays a major role in children's lives; they see how adults interact with their devices and mimic adult behaviour. In some instances it's not our children's screen time we need to be worried about, it's our own. Helping young children to form healthy and sustainable habits surrounding technology is critical.

The importance of nutrition for positive behaviour and learning

It is impossible to underestimate the role of good nutrition on children's development, learning and behaviour. Many children are eating from a limited range of food, for example, children who will eat only white foods, eat large amounts of fruit and few vegetables or consume primarily dairy foods instead of a more balanced diet. Poor food choices can affect learning, concentration and behaviour. Attention problems, aggression, hyperactivity, sluggishness and anxiety are common symptoms of reactivity to food (Fishbein & Pease 2010).

Learning Connections recommends that carers and educators talk to children about healthy food and the importance of eating breakfast with enough protein to get them through to lunch.

As is demonstrated, children's learning, development and behavioural issues are caused by a myriad of intertwining issues. As such, it is important for educators who are dealing with these issues with children to be armed with the knowledge and strategies to assist children's learning and behaviour. Children do not need to be pushed into academia at a younger age, they need to have ample time and opportunity to play and learn. They need to move more, do more, experience more, get outside more, get messy more often and eat more whole foods. Only then will they have the proper foundations required for effective learning at school.

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Hyahno Moser

Nature play is the developing brain's superfood

Hyahno is the program manager at Nature Play QLD. He is passionate about nature play and believes it is a positive and practical way to ensure children participate in unstructured play in nature, delivering the myriad of benefits this type of play offers to their physical and emotional health. Like most children of his generation, Hyahno spent most of his leisure time outside; therefore, it came as no surprise to his family when he chose a career in outdoor education. For ten years, Hyahno was involved in devising, facilitating, teaching and leading young people through world-class, outdoor education programs, using adventure and nature to teach children vital life skills.

The beginning of the nature play journey

I have always loved nature and, most of all, immersing children in nature. Nature has been a life companion, a source of huge personal value. It's been a teacher; a space to recreate; rejuvenate; test; trial and master skills; grow as a human; develop my values; beliefs and attitudes; and a source of nourishment.

As a father of four children, nature has enormous value as source of joy, child development, bonding, and adventure. My childhood was spent exploring outdoors and my neighbourhood. Childhood channeled me into the highly self-motivated, deep nature-loving and community-concerned person I am today. I guess I took it for granted that childhood would always be there.

As my children have grown, I have noticed this is not the case. My wife and I work vigilantly to ensure our children can play, develop and

explore outdoors; most of the time this involves us grown-ups making sure we are not creating barriers to their play.

The early childhood human brain and learning

Of all the nature-play-centric learning I have absorbed, knowledge of brain development astounded me the most: synapses, neural pathways and pruning, plasticity, executive function, amygdala, hippocampus, frontal lobes, dopamine, serotonin, adrenalin, the environment, and how all these facets come together, shape our thinking, values, beliefs that in turn motivate our behavior, how we approach each other and the world. All from within our skulls. Amazing.

There are many things making humans unique as a species, but our brains are truly incredible. Here are three relevant unique facts about being human that make us very different from any other species on the planet (the commonality is our brains).

1. Humans have the longest childhood out of any species on the planet.

2. Humans occupy the widest diversity of environments on the planet. We can live in the desert and in the Arctic.

3. Humans perform the widest diversity of tasks and skills than any other species, from very rudimentary (like eating) to highly complex (neurosurgery) and everything in between.

Some facts about the human brain:

1. It adapts to suit its environment.

2. It can learn highly technical and refined skills.

3. It takes a lot of foundational learning, very early on, to create neural pathways to scaffold and support the learning during adulthood.

4. During early childhood the brain is mostly experience-based (learns through doing).

5. It takes a lot of time to learn the complex skills of human life.

6. There are critical windows of neural development during early childhood.

7. Early childhood needs to be highly sensory and experience based to develop the neural pathways to support a child into adult-centric learning.

8. The rule 'If you don't use it, you lose it' applies.

Here is another MIND-BLOWING fact (excuse the pun): humans start with only two basic neural functions—to feed and to bond (both survival functions). Everything else we know, we have learned, practiced and mastered since birth (Gopnik 2016). Consider all the things you know how to do. All learned since birth. Truly incredible.

Importance of play in early childhood development

Neuroplasticity (the ability of the brain to learn new tasks) is at its highest during early childhood. Infants are constantly learning, practising and mastering skills necessary to operate their little bodies as well as function within the environment where they are being raised, as well as learn skills to grow and thrive within that environment. Children's foundational learning peaks at seven to nine years of age and neuroplasticity across the developmental areas begins to reduce (or harden) from this point (Nagel 2010).

Play is the work of childhood. It's the psychological process built into early childhood for children to develop the neural pathways in their brains, and perform tasks that they see as meaningful: to test, practice and build complexity of tasks, to become the adults of tomorrow.

Concerns for the nature play brain

In relation to the brain and Nature Play QLD's mission to promote and inspire outdoor play, it is all about 'the environments of childhood'. Witnessing the recent extreme reductions in outdoor play, the growing indoor-childhood trend and technological immersion of our worlds, the question that keeps coming up for me is 'What type of adults are modern children preparing to be?'

The other 'nature play' question that comes up for me surrounds autonomy and freedom within childhood. When are children afforded time and space to play-out what is meaningful to them, without interruption? Children's play spaces are mostly indoors with little sensory value; play opportunities are interrupted by entertainment devices, and adults drive the child's play-agenda (which seems to always have an adult-centric educational component). How is this environment affecting children's brain development?

Cultural changes to childhood

Society is evolving at rapid pace. We are dragging those most vulnerable, our children, along for the ride, with seemingly little consideration. Reducing play opportunities and play spaces. Shrinking children's real-life horizons and directing them to virtual horizons within screens.

Childhood has gone from largely outdoors— highly active, highly social, independent, self-directed, highly adventurous and explorative—to now being largely indoors— sedentary, technologically immersed, highly organised, saturated parental involvement, education-outcome driven, fearful, and risk averse. This is having an enormous impact on our children's overall health and wellbeing, especially their brain development, regular brain activity and overall mental health.

Decline of chilzdren's health over the past generation:

- 29% of Australian kids are either overweight or obese (ABS 2016)

- 81% of Australian children don't get enough daily physical activity to be healthy (Heart Foundation, 2016)

- There are five times the mental health diagnoses than 25 years ago and children are more stressed, anxious and depressed (Twenge et al 2010)

The growing indoor childhood trend:

- Children five years old and above are spending an average of 4.5 hours a day sitting in front of a screen (Australia Institute of Family Studies 2015).

- 39% of Australian children fall asleep with a device (Telstra 2015).

- 75% of Australian children use a second device while watching TV (Telstra 2015).

- Only 7.4% of Aussie kids play outdoors everyday (Mullan & Maguire 2012).

- Only 13% of Aussie kids play outdoors more than indoors (Planet Ark 2011).

- Children spend more time with screens than with friends, family or at school (Greenfield 2011).

- Children's ability to roam their neighbourhood has declined by over 95% (Daily Mail Australia 2007).

- Given the choice, most children would prefer to play with technology than play outdoors (Dirt is good 2017).
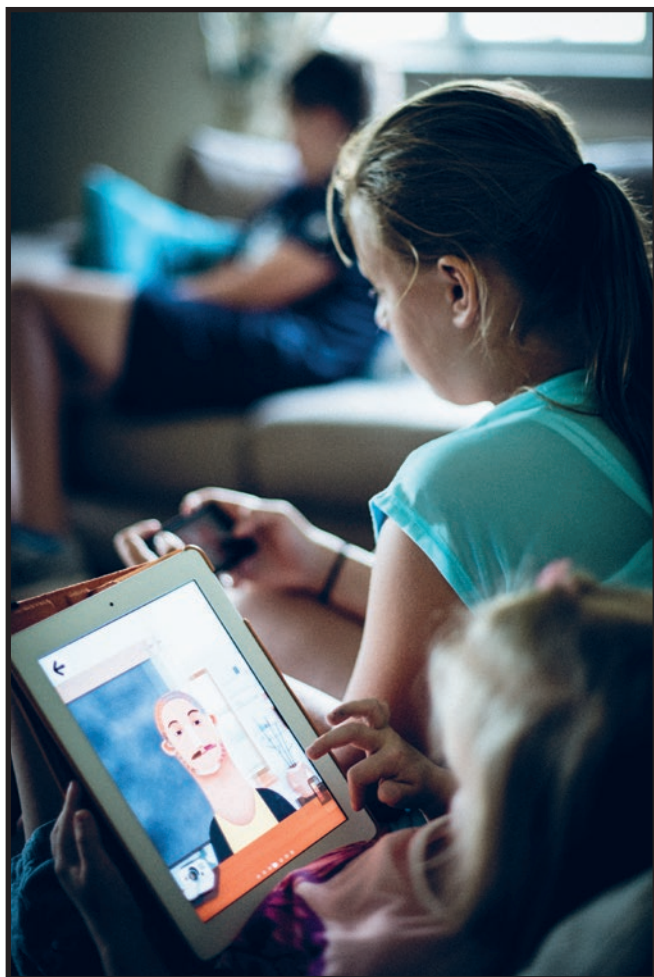
The reduced-screen brain -vs- the supercharged-nature-play brain

Recent neural research exploring brain activity uncovered that, during the early years, children are constantly learning when they are playing, but it almost stops when they are on screens (Swingle 2016). Conversely, when children play outdoors— on the grass, playing with leaves, rocks, dirt, sticks, sand—the brain activity is very high. Nature playing is a rich source of touching, movement, hearing, depths of seeing and vision, tasting and smelling. It is a sensory explosion. This high degree of brain activity is hugely beneficial to our children and their development, growth and learning.

Natural brain development tools

Natural resources are play-tools for our children to play-out what is important to them. My son Ralphie, at the age of one, picked up a stick and used it as a chain saw, then a leaf blower, whipper-snipper and hedger, making sense of his world through play and with nature. Ralphie climbs over logs, hangs on low-lying branches, balances on rocks, falls off them, gets up and tries again.

I watch in amazement. Armed with my new nature play brain development knowledge, I can see the neural pathways forming and strengthening in his brain.

Ralphie takes himself to the sand pit, pushes trucks through, fills them with sand, making mechanical noises, talking through the process as he goes. Together we walk through trees, singing our journey, forming words, expressing our actions, bonding, smiling, connecting and exploring.

With amazement, he shows me around the yard, his new discoveries, and I respond in awe as I see the world through his eyes. Ralphie follows his older sister and neighbourhood friends through their outdoor play adventures. Looking up, Ralphie sees what is next, trials new skills, is cared for by the children and grows his sense of trust, positivity, optimism and drive to do more.

Freedom in nature play

I marvel at his continued brain development and identity growing out of his outdoor play. Most of all, I marvel at his self-direction, the amount of learning coming from Ralphie determining what is important to him in his play.

Ralphie has shown me that by providing opportunities to nature play during the early years, following the child's interests, giving children space to play-out what is important to them, giving them access to open-ended and highly sensory nature, we begin to support and nurture intrinsic motivation in children's brains and set them up for a life of their own choosing.

In this regard nature play really is the superfood of the developing child's brain. The more we give it this high form of nourishing activity, the stronger and more resilient that brain will become.

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MEDIA REVIEWS

Title:

Opposites

Author/Illustrator:
Nicola Killen

Publisher:
Bloomsbury

ISBN: 9781408880500
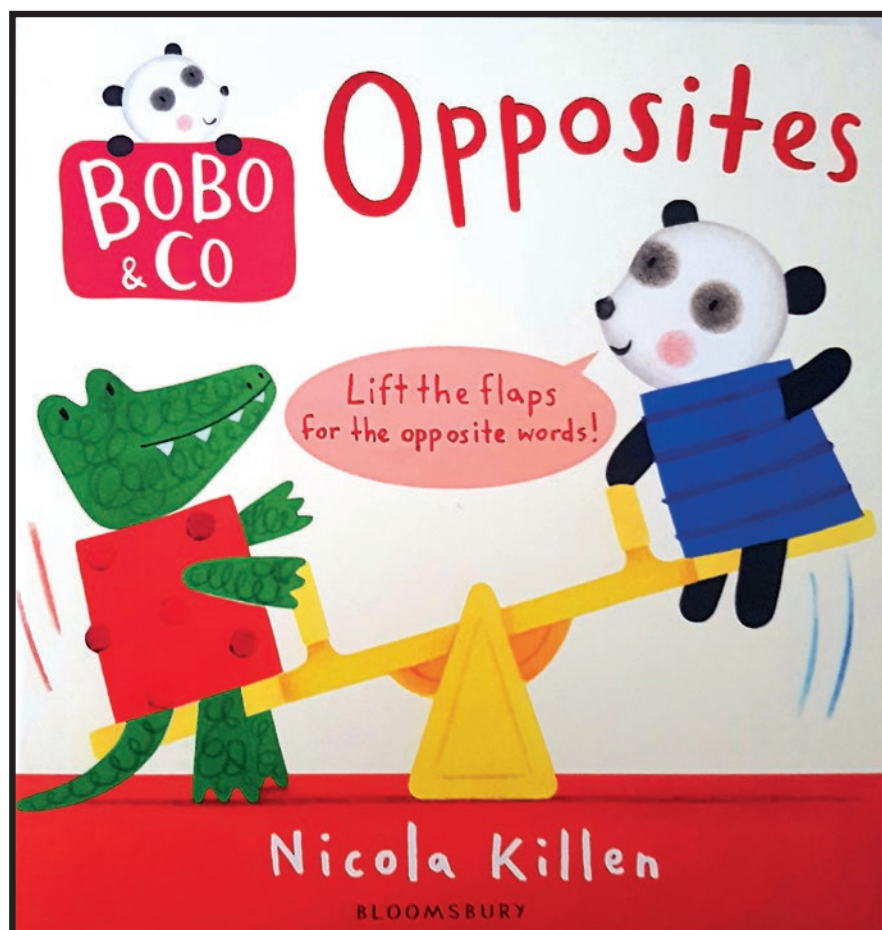
Reviewed by:
Sue Webster

Opposites is a continuation of the Bobo and Co series. It is a hard page lift- the-flap book for young children. The story follows familiar animal characters and is woven around a morning of play whilst adding new vocabulary.

The book deals with positional concepts/language and covers in/out, small/big, down/up, slow/fast and loud/quiet. This is achieved in a fun environment of an animal friend's house playing with their toys. Children need to read the story and lift the flap to see the opposite of each positional word. This allows for good use of prediction skills and memory building as they read the story over and over.

As the story develops, the excitement of the animals increase and the loudness of the animals escalates in their play. This provides a great opportunity to use many onomatopoeic words such as 'beep' and 'bang' which add another element to the language in this book. The final page brings the animals back to a quiet place with a big 'SHHHHHHHH".

It is boldly illustrated and fits the written words perfectly, allowing children to use the illustrations as wonderful clues for success in helping to read the book. The illustrations also add humour to the story. I enjoyed the use of bolded text and loads of exclamation points to help with the exuberant reading of this story.

A delightful little book to start very young children on their reading journey and build knowledge of positional language.

MEDIA REVIEWS

Title:

Scaredy Book

Author:
Devon Sillett & Cara King

Illustrator:
Liz Anelli

Publisher:
EK Books

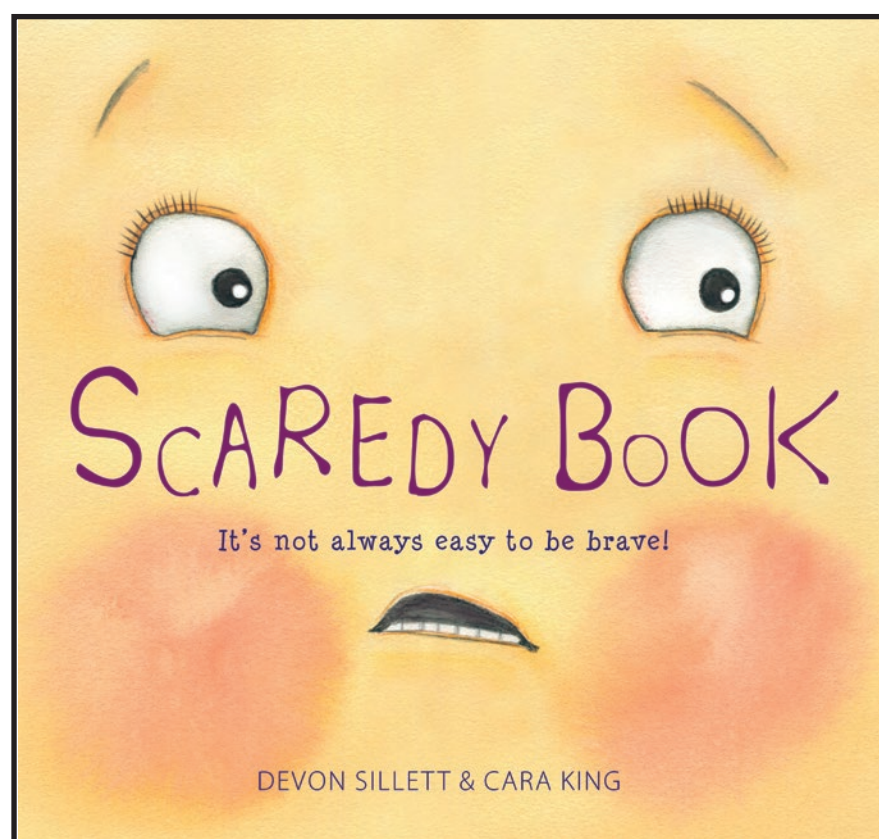**ISBN:** 9781925335682

Reviewed by:
Kerri Groves

As an adult I loved this book and chose it to read to the children during story time in our school Library.

The children loved it and the librarian has told me that several of the little ones have said they are taking this book out for an adventure!

The big kids remarked that they often feel intimidated by new things but are glad they did them afterwards. So this book looks at encouraging children to use books from libraries and that it is also okay to try new things. *Scaredy Book* covers this well with the two main characters meeting and discovering they are just what the other needs. Together they move out of their comfort zone to try new things, meet new people and enjoy some adventures like climbing trees, laughing in the rain and going to a soccer game – taking things one step at a time.

It's about being brave, taking risks and living to tell the tale!

MEDIA REVIEWS

Title:

Grandma Forgets

Author:
Paul Russell

Illustrator:
Nicky Johnston

Publisher:
EK Books

ISBN: 9781925335477

Reviewed by:
Cassie Mutimer and Friends

This is a beautiful story that deals with a Grandma who sometimes forgets, but who is always truly loved by her family. While Grandma has trouble remembering the past, her granddaughter has stored away memories of time spent together and along with her Dad, helps Grandma remember and make new memories. A difficult subject for younger children, as ageing grandparents suffering from dementia is not a common early years' story line.

This story launched our class on a trip down memory lane of wonderful activities and memories that everyone could recall of time spent with their grandparents.

"It made me think of my Nanna and the fun we have together." Quinn

"When they went on the picnic, it reminded me of having a picnic with my Nana." Julian

The idea of a grandparent forgetting or not remembering things is handled in a sensitive manner and the students could relate to the concept.

"Because the grandma is old, she is losing her memory, sometimes they just forget things." Kei.

The illustrations are soft and subtle and reflect the sensitivity of the storyline.

This would be a lovely story to share with the class leading into Grandparents' Day at school and talking about the special things they can do to let grandparents know how much they are loved.

MEDIA REVIEWS
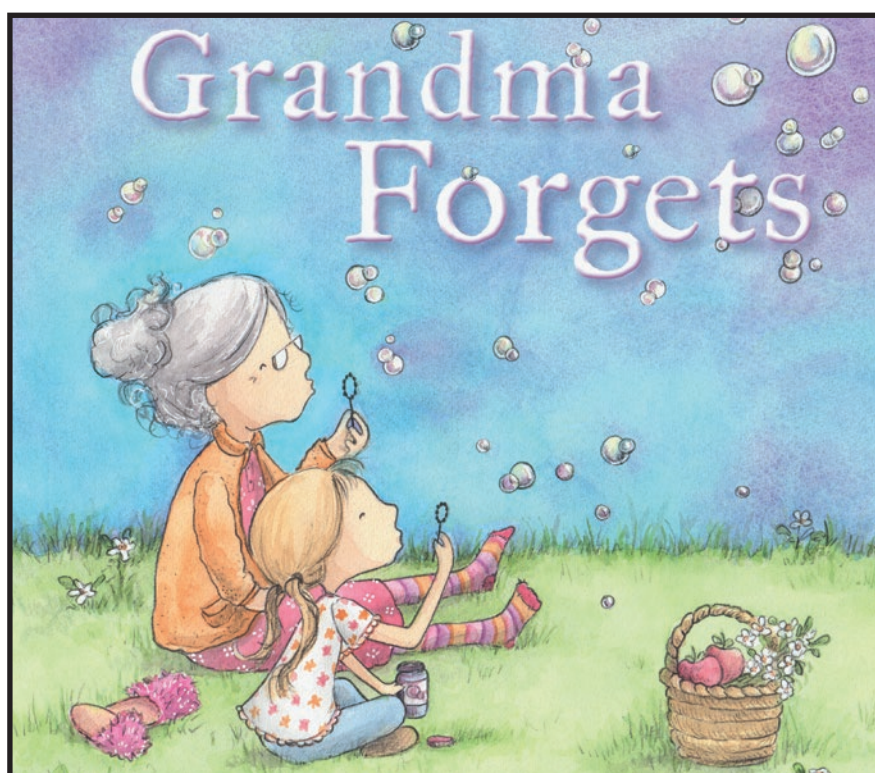
Title:

Walking to Corroboree

Author:
Anne Kerr and
Rhanee Tsetsakos

Illustrator:
Anne Kerr and Rhanee
Tsetsakos

Cover:
Teenie Wilton

Publisher:
Boolarong Press

**ISBN:** 9781925522747

Reviewed by:
Julie Jones

Walking to Corroboree tells of the strong connection that the First Australians have had with the land for over 60,000 years, with the story unfolding of children (yukatis) and families walking to a special meeting place, to come together to eat, sing and dance at a celebration, a corroboree! The story is written and illustrated by Anne Kerr, a Brisbane kindergarten teacher with over 28 years' experience and Rhanee Tsetsakos, who is passionate about her Aboriginal ancestry, the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges in South Australia. Adnyamathanha language is incorporated into the story with the corresponding English word in brackets, and a pronunciation of the Adnyamathanha word(s) given on the same page. This is a wonderful resource and means that children are listening to and appreciating some Aboriginal language as the story is read to them. As the authors suggest, the reader of the story can incrementally increase their use of the language as confidence grows.

Walking to Corroboree is a gentle story, telling of the shelter, food and tools that Aboriginal people used whilst living in harmony with the land and each other. The story culminates in the coming together of different groups to celebrate at corroboree. The importance of respecting and caring for the environment and helping and learning from each other is woven throughout the story, messages that translate readily to early childhood settings and are easy for children to relate to. At our kindy we learn about being 'friends of planet earth', which occurs in *Walking to Corroboree*, "The land was their mita (friend) and it looked after them. In return, they respected and cared for it and took only what they needed."

At the back of the book are useful tips on how to use the book with young children, giving practical and meaningful ideas that educators can use to enhance children's understanding of what life was like before the first settlers arrived, and the importance of the Aboriginal connection to country. Anne and Rhanee state that the aim of their book is to introduce the true history of Australia and its First Peoples to young children who are at the beginning of their educational journey. We want to create a culture of respect and awareness in our young ones ... and I believe that *Walking to Corroboree* is a wonderful resource to help achieve this.

I would recommend this book as an essential tool for educators, kindergarten and primary age children to explore and increase our understandings of the culture of Aboriginal people and their deep connection to country.
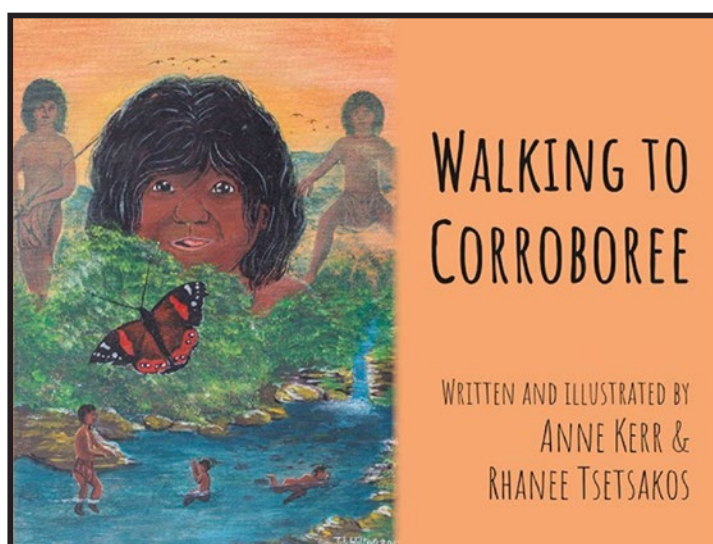
Guidelines for writers

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 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.