



# ***Educating Young Children***

Learning and teaching in the  
early childhood years

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## *From the President*

*Kim Walters*

### *Attendance record broken at 40th ECTA conference birthday celebration.*

It was amazing to see over 550 ECTA members in attendance at the Annual Conference this year. Together, they contributed to a total attendance of 615 early childhood professionals in a strong and united voice dedicated to the children they teach and their families.

Facilitating the conference this year were nine very hard-working conference committee members who, from their first planning meeting held on the night of last year's conference, have worked tirelessly. The conference committee were joined by eight state coordinating committee members, six of whom are also office bearers within their own regional groups, along with twenty-seven other regional group office bearers and colleagues from across the state and several early childhood student volunteers.



*Regional Group Office Bearers.*

ECTA was founded in 1973 with the first conference held in 1975 at the Bardon Professional Centre. Over the past forty years ECTA has grown to a membership base of 238 organisations and 549 professionals who work in a variety of settings across Queensland and interstate. Simultaneously, our conference has grown in quality, stature, reputation and attendance.

I congratulate everyone who has contributed in some way to the success of this and previous years' conferences. Whilst early childhood teaching has changed across the years, the conference remains synonymous with providing practical, realistic and hands-on professional development. I know delegates left energised, inspired and empowered to continue the great work they are doing within their settings. So much so that 95% of delegates rated the conference excellent or very good. In this journal we begin publishing articles from conference presenters and include a transcript of the Director-General of the Department of Education and Training, Dr Jim Watterston's opening address. The included DVD has a copy of this address along with the keynote presentation *Lighten Up! Humour is FUNdamental to providing Quality Education and Care to Young Children* by Paul McGhee. We also include a copy of the Deputy Director-General Early Childhood Education and Care, Gabrielle Sinclair's session entitled *Early Childhood in Queensland, what has changed and what is to come*.

I was very pleased to welcome to the conference 177 delegates from the long day care sector. Also a record for that sector's attendance. Seventy of these are working in approved kindergarten programs within their service. They were joined by a further 219 delegates who are teaching in kindergarten-approved programs within schools or stand-alone kindergarten settings. This year we also welcomed 144 delegates working in schools as well as others from FDC, OSHC and tertiary settings.

The conference, like ECTA itself, is cross sectorial with delegates working in settings that cater for babies to lower primary school children.

We continue to see changes in the early childhood sector with the sand still shifting in education. I commend all ECTA members for holding strong to your early childhood pedagogy and integrity.

I encourage you to continue to advocate for high quality early childhood practices, teaching young children in the way you know is best for learning engagement, giving the children whose lives you touch ownership to their learning, with play in all its varying forms remaining at the forefront and a key component of your curriculum delivery in all settings from long day care through to primary schooling. Curriculums and pedagogy must be age-appropriate and founded on current research.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the Director-General, Dr Jim Watterston, Deputy Director-General, Gabrielle Sinclair, and the Regional Directors, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) who are committed to reigniting early childhood pedagogies in schools.

ECTA applauds the publication of the document *Supporting successful transitions: School decision-making tool*. This document which is available online at <http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/transition-to-school-decision-making-tool.pdf> is being promoted across the state by ECEC regional directors and early childhood colleagues to Principals and staff. This document directs schools to provide high-quality early childhood pedagogy. The document states the importance of responsive environments which provide a balance of indoor and outdoor experiences which support all domains of learning. That classroom environments reflect key aspects of ECEC services, adapting over time, offering blocks of uninterrupted time to provide for deeper engagement in learning and the need to promote social and emotional wellbeing. The tool further states that a range of early years pedagogies such as investigation, inquiry, problem-solving and play motivate children and engage them with learning.

Through this document and the direction of the Department, we are seeing a re-emergence of effective, high-quality pedagogy in some schools. ECTA members from across the state

are reporting being directed and encouraged by Principals to engage children in learning by making their classrooms come alive, displaying children's individual creative works, consolidating learning before moving on and putting play back into the curriculum.

We have a long way to go, but changes are happening with a return to active inquiry-based learning with play as an important component – which is vital for learning, social emotional development and wellbeing.

Children must have a voice in their own learning journey. They need to be engaged, confident, empowered learners in rich early childhood environments, spanning from before school settings to the lower primary years.

For the first time in many years I can see a light at the end of the tunnel. Make the most of the journey ahead and continue to advocate for what is best for children's learning, knowing that you have the support of the Department through the transition tool.

We welcome the review of the Australian Curriculum and its recommendations to lower the quantity of content in the curriculum. A recent survey regarding Prep starting age in Queensland, conducted by ECTA, saw 233 professionals respond within 24 hours - most with concerns about the impact of the July intake into Prep this year. Results show that 61% recommend children should be five by the end of January, 17% by end of April and 17% by end of June with only 5% agreeing to the current provision for early enrolment for children turning five in July. We have discussed the results of the survey with the Director-General.

Continue to network with like-minded colleagues. Recharge your battery, build your strength and focus to maintain your integrity and be empowered in your settings. Importantly, have professional conversations with those who challenge your philosophy.

As the Director-General says '*when you see an early childhood teacher who's an expert, you know you are in the company of greatness.*' I encourage you, as he has, to advocate and agitate, to make all in your community aware of the importance of the early years and to make your pedagogy the best it can be for the children you teach.



## *From the editorial panel*

*Lynne Moore*

The Director-General is right in saying 'when you see an early childhood teacher who's an expert, you know you are in the company of greatness' ... and you don't have to look much further than the pages of this journal to see why.

There is nothing more satisfying than being in the presence of an early childhood educator implementing their craft - masterfully guiding the learning, development and wellbeing of young children and transforming ordinary moments into moments of wonder that captivate imaginations and enrich learning.

The educators who share their stories in this issue testify to the craft. Like Michelle Scheu,

who unpacks her unique approach to thinking about play; and Michelle Chester, who reveals strategies to assist you in embedding oral language throughout your literacy program. Then Sarah-Jane Johnson brings another story from Shanghai to shed new light on co-teaching.

If you would like to read more from the Director-General we are pleased to include an abridged version of the conference opening address.

How will you make people understand what we do, why we do it and how we do it? Nicole Bourke and Justine Walsh take up the challenge. In environments they share their journey to hand play back to children.

Paul McGhee's article 'The Playful Brain' is the first of this issue's feature articles. Laugh along with Paul as he explores the development of young children's humour.

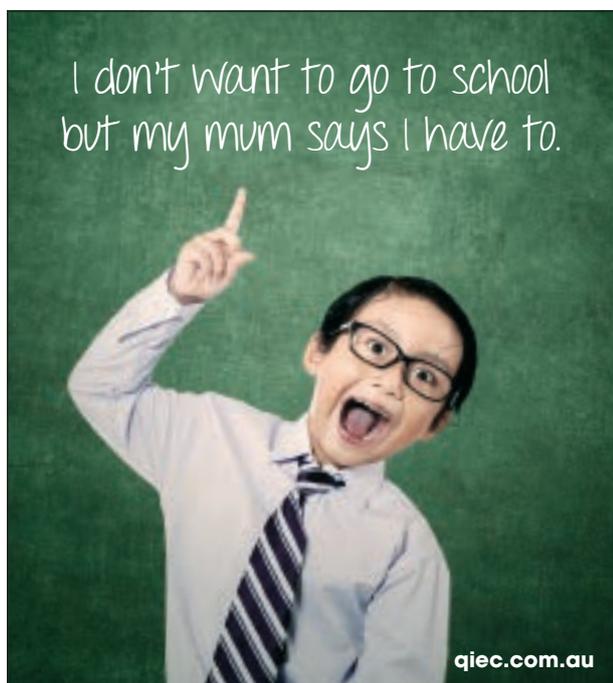
Caroline Fewster ensures the play of babies and toddlers is not overlooked in a delightful exploration of spaces that inspire learning and development. Psychiatrist Kaylene Henderson outlines the benefits of supporting children to manage their emotions; while Jane Tayler returns with more useful tips to maximise your time and energy.

Ronit Baras reminds us of the benefits of bilingualism and Angela Ehmer shows how skilful teachers ensure that every day is rich in opportunities to develop and extend language and literacy development. Finally, Stacy Cottam introduces iPedagogies in an overview of the benefits of tablets in the early years classroom.

As always we end with some charming media reviews.

Little wonder the Director-General speaks of greatness.

From the team



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## 40th Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA) Annual Conference

*Lisa Cooper and Kim Walters*

*With a record number of delegates in attendance, ECTA celebrated its 40th conference birthday in style. For all who attended, from Southern, Central and Northern Queensland, as well as from interstate and overseas, this was a truly special occasion.*



In her welcoming address Kim Walters (ECTA President) thanked the conference committee for their tireless efforts in organising the conference. Kim acknowledged the growth of ECTA and the celebration of ECTA's 40th conference. 'ECTA has grown in quality, stature and reputation ...' Kim remarks.



Dr Jim Watterston, Director-General DET spoke of re-igniting pedagogy and practice. Dr Jim Watterston, Director-General DET, Kim Walters (ECTA President), Lisa Cooper (ECTA Treasurer), Gabrielle Sinclair (Deputy Director-General DET) and Marian Prete (Regional Director ECEC) share in conversation the importance and benefits of a solid early years education.



Paul McGhee, the keynote speaker got down amongst the delegates during his animated, humorous yet substantive keynote - *Lighten Up! Humour is FUNdamental to providing Quality Education and Care to Young Children*



ABOVE: Paul, all tangled in chairs, talked of how much we carry ... the visual imagery of the chairs resonated with many in the audience.



LEFT: Celebrating the milestone of ECTA's 40th Conference with life members, Noeleen Christensen, Robbie Leikvold and Mark Cooper cut the 'birthday cake' while the audience sang in fine tune to 'Happy Birthday'.

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Prizes of ECTA membership, a light cube from MTA and vouchers from Gold sponsors TUH and Dance Fever, were given away as part of the 40th ECTA conference birthday celebration. Scott Young and Lisa Davidson MTA Platinum Sponsors.



Hamming it up in the photo booth. Chris Cook, Noeleen Christensen, Robbie Leikvold and Rebecca Trimble-Roles.



Birthday celebrations. Allison Borland, Lisa Cooper, Paul McGhee and Kim Walters.



Looking out over the ECTA conference gathering and trade displays.



Gabrielle Sinclair (Deputy Director-General DET) shared how the early childhood landscape in Queensland has changed over the past five years. Delegates left this session inspired by the changes ahead.



Stacy Cottam shared the effective use of technology and links to the Australian Curriculum in her presentation Using iPads and IWBs in early years classrooms.



Gladstone Regional Group members ran the multi-prize draw at the QIEC Wine and Cheese.



Delegates from Hervey Bay network and celebrate a successful conference at the wine and cheese. Libby Gaedtke, Scott Young MTA, Lisa Cooper, Melissa Gillard, Leonie Mitchell and Romayne Boniface.

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# Thinking play: honouring the child

Michelle Scheu



Through her practice as an early childhood educator, Michelle has developed a pedagogy known as *Thinking Play*. At her school, she is an early years team leader, ASOT mentor and a cognitive coach. Michelle was awarded an ASG NEiTA National Teaching Award in Leadership in 2014 and attended the Education Accord Summit in September 2014. Michelle has a YouTube channel to promote play-based education. The most well-known of her clips titled *Let the Children Play* has received over 3800 views worldwide.

I believe children are unique and exceptional. Through my practice as an early childhood educator, I aim to facilitate the development of individuals who are rich in character, intelligent, divergent, socially adept and innovative, inspiring them to actively engage in their community. In realising my goal, I have developed a technique known as *Thinking Play*. I have a passion to share my learning with other educators, striving to contribute to local and global educational communities.

My teaching philosophy and practice centres on the child. I view each child as an individual on their own journey to understand themselves and the world around them. During this process, children learn to function effectively and interact successfully with others.

***My role is to discover the developmental stage of each child and promote holistic growth as they seek to know and be.***

I am informed by the research of Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner and Malaguzzi as well as by the theories of the reconceptualists and brain researchers. I believe children are capable and need a role in the decision-making process and that learning is enriched during play-based problem-solving. I also believe learning environments need to attend to a child holistically, as they work in their zone

of proximal development and that children's learning is enhanced by forming positive relationships with educators.

### Thinking Play

As an early years educator in a multi-aged Prep/Year One environment, I found myself searching for best practice which reflected this philosophy. My previous experience of multi-age early years classes found the demands of the Year One curriculum directed the learning, resulting in children missing out on rich, developmentally appropriate learning. It is not enough to just learn basic language arts and math skills.

***Our children need to be innovators and inventors.***

To embed intellectual rigour in my practice I coupled my understanding of the Reggio Emilia philosophy and New Basics with the notion of negotiated play outlined in the Queensland Early Years Curriculum (QSA, 2006). The result was play in a formalised learning environment, with children working in groups, for a common purpose, to conceptualise, design, plan, and create a 'progettazione' with real life application. Thus the notion of *Thinking Play* originated.

To meet curriculum demands, I am deliberate in equipping children to engage in *Thinking Play*. To be effective as a mode of learning in a primary

setting, *Thinking Play* is part of a balanced program. *Thinking Play* has its place alongside planned learning through direct teaching, small group rotations, routines and transitions. Thus ensuring the development of skills, knowledge and deep understandings are facilitated.

*Thinking Play* is also a manifestation of my belief that parents and the wider community are an integral part of the learning process. As the African proverb states, 'It takes a village to raise a child'. To understand and work with a child effectively is to see them as an individual who is part of a family and the family in turn part of the wider community. *Thinking Play* manifests authenticity by sourcing real situations from the local community and inviting 'experts' (e.g. Elders, professionals) to the service to extend knowledge and skills. Most importantly, each *Thinking Play* culminates in a memorable event reflecting community life, where quality learning is shared, enacted and celebrated with families, friends and invited guests.

### Start with a provocation

A *Thinking Play* starts with a provocation, perhaps a child's book, idea or experience, a community concern or a curriculum necessity. This provocation is shared as children are involved in a scribed discussion and planning session to crystallise the content and direction of the *Thinking Play*. The children then choose a 'play group' or committee within the larger *Thinking Play*, with approximately seven children per group. Teachers and assistants become a resource for various groups, joining meetings to clarify or challenge thinking and to support learning as children become increasingly self-directed.

The results are rich as evidenced in the well-balanced children who succeed in many areas

during their time in my learning environment and as they move on to further education. *Thinking Play* motivates children to learn both during *Thinking Play* and also during more formal learning situations. It offers children an immediate reason to read, write and solve problems as they work together writing play plans, creating signs, menus, invitations, letters, exchanging money, measuring, building and constructing. As younger children observe, older, more capable children model the behaviour of a skilled master player, they are motivated to develop as an active, skilled member of a *Thinking Play* group. Inclusivity of all children, including those with special needs, is naturally promoted as every child is encouraged to work within their zone of proximal development.

It is my passion and pleasure to engage in professional discussion, mentor others and share practice with early educators, administrators, and decision-makers.

Through *Thinking Play* I am able to gather information about each child and plan for children in all developmental areas. I collect authentic assessment, providing parents with rich feedback about their child's development.

Though many children I teach achieve high results and our school boasts the best data in our region, data is never a focus at Chevallum School. It is an advantageous side-effect of strong leadership and a commitment to delivering great education. Success in teaching depends on our intent. If we desire to see children achieve their best in all learning areas, it is important to educate using researched-based, age-appropriate philosophy and practice.

It is an honour and privilege to be entrusted with guiding children's development during their time in my learning environment. Through time,



Start with a provocation.



The results are rich.

love, trust and empowerment, I form meaningful relationships with each child. This connection extends to encompass the entire family as together we actively participate in the school and wider community. Through experimentation and exploration of established teaching pedagogies, I have developed a specialised and personalised teaching pedagogy that I believe nurtures a desire for lifelong learning. My philosophy as an early childhood educator is realised through my best practice - *Thinking Play*.

### Suggested Readings

An Early Education Reform Group Publication November 1987, *Unravelling the Mysteries of Multi-Age Grouping*.

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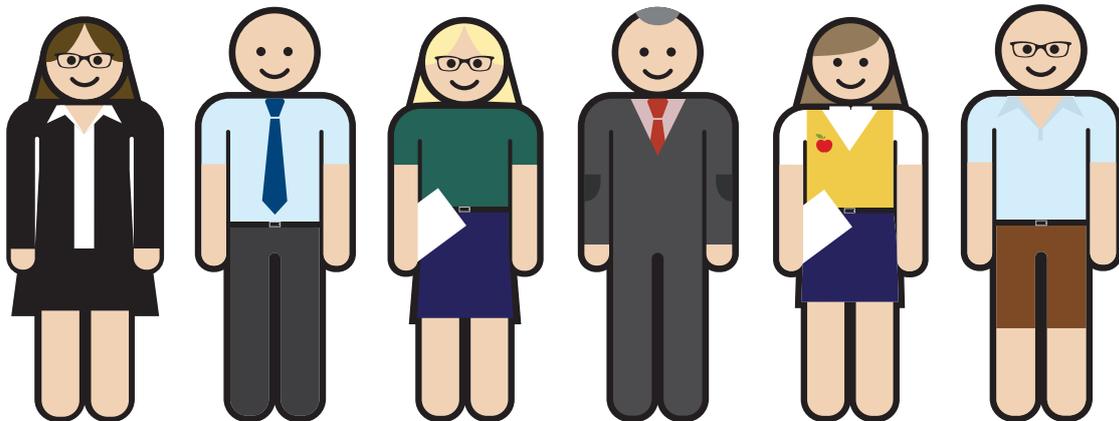
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## Embedding oral language

*Michelle Chester*



At Holy Name Primary School, Prep teacher, Michelle Chester, embeds structured oral language instruction throughout her literacy program, which is central to all learning across the day. Michelle also provides opportunities for children to participate in unstructured speaking and listening episodes to apply and practice what they have learned. Frequent mini chats with a partner are common and provide Michelle with opportunities to make active observations and gather formative data which she uses to inform ongoing instruction for small and large groups, as well as individuals. In this photo story, Angela Ehmer describes Michelle's approach.



*As children participate in Show and Tell, Michelle looks for evidence of ongoing improvement and provides positive, focused feedback.*



*Mini chats allow Michelle to move amongst children, gathering data relating to specific aspects of language, literacy or content knowledge. These chats may occur before, during or after lessons.*



*(ABOVE): Having modelled how to navigate and locate sounds on an alphabet chart, Michelle looks for evidence of children able to apply this knowledge without assistance, children able to apply with some scaffolding and those requiring higher levels of support and reteaching. Very importantly, the children in Michelle's classroom believe they are writers.*



*(LEFT): Working with a partner enables children to use their collective knowledge. Michelle uses partner supports as needed to scaffold learning. These children work together to locate and talk about specific meaning supports in the illustrations.*



Michelle's observations enable her to identify children requiring additional support and extension.



These readers support one another to notice and discuss elements relating to letters and words.



Michelle uses a variety of learning experiences to scaffold language development. Using his creation, this student explains how he constructed this fort to his classmates.



These readers begin guided reading. Michelle teaches one-to-one matching on this early reading book.



Michelle uses carefully selected picture books for early group reading experiences. Teaching/learning goals across these lessons include:

- why books are wonderful
  - why books are made
  - parts of a book
  - authors and illustrators
  - book handling skills, including page turning
  - noticing words and pictures
  - building a love and appreciation of literature
  - building a love and appreciation of 'read to learn' books
- Lessons are highly interactive rich with discovery and conversation.



Every book is an exciting adventure in Michelle's classroom. As children develop story and content knowledge during these reads, Michelle supports them to apply recalling and remembering strategies, as well as engaging high order thinking.

## Living the Hai life

*Sarah-Jane Johnson*



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

Last year, I had my first ever Skype interview. I sat at my computer desk dressed in a suit jacket, blouse and pajama pants, and spoke confidently about my experiences as an early childhood educator. I answered each question with conviction and poise, until they asked, *"and how do you think you will work with a co-teacher by your side every day?" ... What?! Co-teacher?*

As it turned out, my standard 'teamwork' anecdote passed the test and a couple of months later, I moved my life to the hustle and bustle of Shanghai to teach in one of China's top international schools.

A school providing bilingual education to expatriate students in China made sense. The idea was simple and brilliant, to enable the students to develop proficiency in both

English and Chinese languages. But how did co-teaching fit in and was it going to disturb my autonomy as a classroom teacher?

In the school's Early Childhood and Primary classrooms, two qualified teachers (one Western and one Chinese) serve as teaching partners with equal authority and accountability over their students. The aim is to draw from the strengths of both co-teachers to enhance the quality of learning and better meet the needs of individual students. I am not yet in a position to write a plausible argument about the extent to which co-teaching benefits student learning, but I can offer some insight into how it is implemented into practice.



*Global awareness is at the heart of international education. Sarah-Jane encourages the children to know themselves and where they come from.*



*Classroom displays are labelled in both English and Chinese.*

As a first grade teacher, I share my teaching responsibilities with my Chinese co-teacher, Vivi. Except for our own exclusive English and Chinese lessons, we co-teach the rest of the curriculum (Mathematics, Science, Topic, Character Education and Pastoral Care). Vivi speaks to the children predominately in Chinese. Every day, whilst Vivi teaches a focused Chinese lesson, I have an hour of preparation time. Vivi also has preparation time when I teach my focused English lesson. During that lesson, my students are separated into either the mainstream English class or the English as an Additional Language (EAL) class. The students who speak English fluently qualify as mainstream and stay in the classroom with me. The other students are separated into EAL focus groups until they are fluent enough to transfer into mainstream. The Chinese program runs similarly.

In practice, there cannot be an equitable distribution of workload among co-teachers. Each co-teacher must contribute to the classroom management by taking on specific roles so that, together, they can accomplish various tasks. Some roles are more easily delegated than others. For instance, we decided



*Vivi teaches a Science lesson in Chinese.*

that it would be my role to record the daily attendance and Vivi's role to check the student diaries for parent notes. As the 'expert' in English, it makes sense that I take on more of a leading role to manage the planning of the curriculum, simply because the British National Curriculum is in English. It is also my role to take the wider plan to Vivi so that we can then 'flesh out' the detail of the unit together.

There are four main co-teaching strategies that we use to differentiate instruction, namely:

1. **Supportive co-teaching** – one co-teacher takes a lead role and the other provides support.
2. **Parallel co-teaching** – both co-teachers instruct and facilitate different groups of students at the same time.
3. **Complementary co-teaching** – one co-teacher complements the instruction provided by the lead co-teacher (translates the lead co-teacher's instruction or writes discussion notes on the board).
4. **Team teaching** – both co-teachers teach simultaneously to the whole class.

Curriculum demands, and student learning characteristics, needs and interests inform our decisions about which strategies to use.

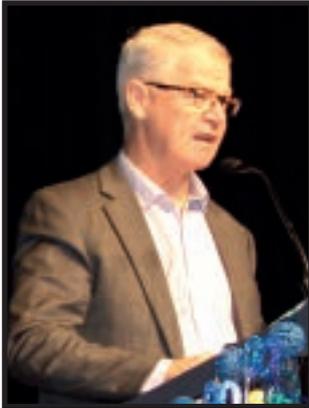
After six months of co-teaching, I am finally starting to find my feet. It has been a challenge to my time management and it has disturbed my autonomy as a classroom teacher. However, the collaboration and conversation between Vivi and me at every stage of lesson development has trained me to continuously adapt and modify my lessons for maximum student learning.



*Vivi works with a small group during a Mathematics lesson using a parallel co-teaching strategy.*

### ECTA Conference opening

#### *Abridged version of speech by Dr Jim Watterston*



In my teaching career I wasn't trained as an early childhood teacher. I grew up in WA and I became a primary teacher in that system. In those days, it was traditional that the males got the higher grades and the females got the lower grades, and that was the culture at the time. I don't think anyone ever designed it that way, but there was a gender bias. I was a Year Seven teacher, which was the highest grade in primary school, and one day I was in school at the end of the year and the staff were talking about next year. The principal said, 'Well let's start with teacher allocations.' The principal was talking about three classes of Year One allocations in the high socio-economic area of Nedlands Primary School. A lot of the people around the room started making fun of the fact that we were looking for a new Year One teacher and who would lose the draw to get that job. And so for no reason – and I had

no reason to think about it, and I certainly wasn't planning it that day – I volunteered. Having never had any experience in that area, (a) it was a stupid thing to do, and (b) it incurred great humour from everyone in the room, including the principal, who later turned out to be my father-in-law ... but I won't go into that!

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So there it was; my early childhood career was born. For the next seven years until I became a principal, I was a Year One teacher in that school alongside two of the greatest teachers I've ever met, who schooled me along the way. So, while I wasn't trained formally, I think I had the best early childhood education you could ever have.

Now I tell you that story because going from being a Year One teacher to the Director-General of the third largest state in Australia is kind of a big step to take. And it's been made a lot more difficult along the way. I've encountered a lot of barriers and road blocks – particularly when my history as an early childhood teacher on my CV gets discussed. It has felt like quite a stigma for me in some ways, although I'm hopeful this is changing with time. Early childhood is a science. It is a speciality that is the most important in the whole education landscape, and most people outside the early childhood area don't recognise or understand that. Part of my message to everyone, and why I wanted to come and open this conference today, is to talk to all of you and implore you to be advocates for early childhood. My job is to manage an \$11.5 billion budget annually. It's a lot of money, and it's about 22.5 percent of

the total state government allocation, although some of it is federal government money as well.

The most impossible job I have is to take those base allocations in higher education, training, primary, secondary and early childhood and move those resources from one sector to another. If we were really clever, we would focus most of our resources in the early childhood area. James Heckman was a Nobel laureate in 2000 for figuring out something that was simply intuitive to the rest of us; that for every one dollar you invest in early childhood education, you save about \$17 on the journey through to employment for young people. So, if governments wanted to save \$17 for every dollar they invested, we should be putting more into early childhood, and in Queensland we are now starting to do that. We have a government that is really committed to early childhood and focused on being able to exploit the opportunities that we have, if we can get to young people early enough.

I don't want to seem altruistic or vague about this, but I do have this kind of dream that if we were able to get every single young person from birth and educate them in a way that includes their family and the community, that village

type approach, then I doubt that we would have to invest even half the money that we invest in our school system and everything else going forward. Unfortunately however, in some of our remote communities and some of our low socioeconomic environments, and indeed some of our high socioeconomic environments, we've got children for a whole host of reasons that don't get those opportunities and aren't advantaged in that way. That's our department's work at the moment.

Moving forward, it's important we continue to boost participation. In six or seven years, we've gone from 28 percent participation to 105 percent participation in kindergarten. The 105 percent is based on the Bureau of Statistics expectations for how many people would be in Queensland. We've basically gone from having not many kids at all in kindergarten to giving nearly everyone that early start.

What needs to happen now though, is a focus on quality. While quality is there, and I'm sure quality is represented by every person sitting in this audience, what we really need to do now is make sure that every young person that participates gets that quality beginning and foundational understanding that will enable them to be successful right through life. I don't care who gets up and wants to talk about the good old days, it's never been harder in our society to bridge the gap between the haves and the have nots. And in this current environment that we live, where jobs are becoming more specialised and difficult to maintain – and we've got around 20 percent unemployment for some young people in parts of Queensland – it's never been harder. If we don't get the early childhood part right, if we don't make sure that every single Queenslanders has that experience, then their life is potentially consigned to being part of those have nots unless we can find some other way to bridge that gap. So boosting participation and quality is important. It's our job to ensure that the early childhood system, as well as formal kindergarten and prep, transitions seamlessly into high quality schools.

So what we're tasking our schools to do is to build community, build social capital, and bring the early childhood providers – all forms of care and all forms of formal early childhood – into a network and a community of people that

work together to make sure that it is a seamless transition, that education doesn't finish at one point and then we start at the next. We're seeing some amazing clusters evolving where schools are offering professional development, bringing early childhood teachers from non-government providers into their environment, and talking about what they do, as well as sharing practice. That's part of the public education system's role: to make sure that we provide opportunities for people to be part of a larger group, to be able to grow and learn by sharing what I think is some amazing practice.

People don't always get the early childhood story, and it's a powerful story. As I said before, it's a science. It is complex. Understanding developmental needs of young people and addressing those needs on an individual personalised basis is such hard work. But other people think because we call it 'play-based learning' that it must be easy. Everyone plays, it can't be that hard, anyone could do it. People just don't get the skills and the knowledge required. What I think is missing is the 600 people in this audience and the one person standing out the front telling the story in the community, talking to government, talking to local members, talking to the council, talking to people of influence and letting them know that this is a science. This is an area that if we don't get it right, society doesn't prosper.

It is important that each of us become advocates for early childhood, so that people don't have a stigmatised approach to it, or think this is a job that simply anyone in our state could take on and do with aplomb. Because when you see an early childhood teacher who's an expert, you know you are in the company of greatness. I implore you all to really make sure that you take that on, and part of that story is perhaps not over-emphasising the use of the word 'play', because 'play' doesn't tell the story. It is about making sure that there's an age-appropriate curriculum in place that enables young people to developmentally grow depending on the stage they're up to.

We need to make people understand what we do, why we do it and how we do it. We need to show people that building essential foundations will stand a person in good stead for the rest of their life.

## *Journey into play*

*Nicole Bourke and Justine Walsh*



In 2007 we were at a stage where we knew our philosophy and program weren't marrying up. We believed the children deserved an environment that was truly child-focused, offering a variety of play experiences, utilising open natural materials. At the end of 2010 we decided to start *Journey into Play*. We were so excited by the changes we had implemented, seeing children who were engaged and involved in their environment, eager to experiment and utilise materials in various ways, and by the reactions to those changes, not just by the children but by other staff

members, parents, families and the community as a whole, we wanted to share it with others. We love every minute of what we do, especially getting to meet and share ideas with other passionate early childhood professionals and talk about our ongoing journey in the early childhood field.

*Journey into Play* was born out of our excitement for changes we had made within our environment. These had come about as we reflected on:

- Why were we working with children in the way that we were?
- What was our environment saying to children?
- Why was it so tightly controlled by us, the adults?

The alterations, both physical and mental, we discuss in this article were the start of a journey for us - a journey that continues to this day.

Two of the most significant modifications included us rethinking our outdoor play spaces and eventually removing almost all of the tables from the environment. These steps forward had a significant impact on the environment, which in turn caused a ripple effect upon the rest of the program.

### **Can you reflect and share some memories about the type of outside play you engaged in as a child?**

This question always elicits a similar response from people which is: outdoors, risky, muddy, dirty, no adults, using resources that were around (very few toys) and going home for dinner when the street lights came on and or you were hungry, whichever came first.

We reflected upon this very question quite early on, when we started our journey, and realized that our experiences as children were vastly different from the experiences the children with whom we were working were having. We wanted to provide within our setting a place that could afford children: time, space, and uninterrupted periods of exploration. One of our aims was to replicate an environment where some of the types of play we had engaged in as children could be possible.

*We set out to hand play back to children, to say we place value on play and this is an environment where play is possible.*

In order to truly mean this, we had to walk the walk and talk the talk. Ultimately, this meant that our outdoor space needed a lot of work, if this was to happen.

What opportunities should the outdoor space provide?

- risk-taking
- discovery and wonder
- engagement in nature and its elements
- access to all sorts of weather
- a sense of place
- open participation with no pre-prescribed outcomes - free play.

We started to experiment with ideas and resources. Everything we provided inside was replicated outside. We provided a studio area where art materials were plentiful. There was play-dough and clay, books, couches, cushions and rugs, all outside.



*Everything inside was replicated outside.*

## A sense of place

Not all children enjoy being in large open spaces with other children. We provided spaces where these children could get away to be alone or in small groups. We did this in a variety of ways - draping material from trees, from the sandpit and also from the corner of the shade sail poles. We also added teepees and sun shelters, to name a few.

It was also extremely important to us that children had access to materials that enabled them to create their own spaces. This was implemented by adding large baskets of material to the environment.

## Risk-taking

Children are able to engage in risk-taking, for example, climbing trees, swinging from ropes, building and tending fires. We were aware that children were often stopped in their risky



*Materials for children to create their own spaces.*



*Building and tending fires.*

play, wrapped in cotton wool and protected from injury. How could these children learn to regulate for themselves?

## Discovery and wonder

Natural materials have a comforting, familiar, calming influence on children. We started hiding baskets of natural materials throughout the environment so children could 'discover' them. These baskets would be carried around by some children, adding materials as they went. Natural resources were also incorporated into their play. We started to see play that involved children utilising a variety of materials together that 'normally' wouldn't have been possible. Children started to build knowledge of the materials and how they worked, which enabled children to experiment and discover sophisticated ways to use them.

We started to notice that the previously-used plastic toys, that often had one use, were being replaced with these types of materials. Materials that had multiple and open uses, such as loose parts, became a very important part of the setting.



*Baskets of natural materials.*

## Access to all sorts of weather

Access to all sorts of weather was supported by the fact that we provided an indoor/outdoor program, meaning children had access to the outdoors at all times, regardless of weather.

The importance of the outdoors, and children having long periods of uninterrupted time, was a big factor in eliminating the many transitions that we included in our sessions. These transitions of coming together to eat, walk outside, group time, pack away, were intruding on the children's time to truly engage themselves in their play. We noticed that when we continued to interrupt their play the behaviours of the children were like a rollercoaster. Once these interruptions ceased, we observed children more settled and engaged.

## Engagement in nature and its elements

With time now available to children, we were able to observe their engagement with nature. This occurred through experimentation, revelling in its elements or returning to parts of the environment and discovering something new. This time and exposure to the outdoors was vital to so many children who feel more comfortable and alive outside.

Once we made changes to the outdoor spaces and reflected on how the environment and resources were offered, we started to view the indoors differently as well. We realised that we now needed to bring more of the outdoors inside and, for this to occur, we needed more space. This is when the idea of removing the tables began.

One table at a time was slowly repositioned and utilised outside or placed down the side of the centre and covered. We no longer had to fill tables which an 'activity' which alleviated pressure that we had put on ourselves to come up with table top experiences.

With more floor space, we were able to bring sand, water and mud inside. This was done in a variety of ways for children to explore and experiment with. We set these resources up on the floor in large tubs, trays or on a tarp. This gave the children room to move around and spread themselves out. The environment and thus the program started to head in the way



*Setting up resources on the floor.*

that we had always wanted ... child-directed and play-based.

We were guided by how the children used the space, engaged with the resources and what they needed. More resources and materials were being brought out of the store room and left out for the duration of the year. Children were now able to revisit the resources at different stages, remembering them from a previous time or building up their confidence over time to try them out.



*Bringing sand, water and mud inside.*

With the extra space made available, a large dining table and chairs were set up in the art studio, more couches were included. These items added to providing a homely and welcoming aspect to the indoor and outdoor environment. This encouraged parents to stay and eventually be more involved within the centre's community.

Upon reflection, we realised that tables were a real barrier for some children. The idea that there is a table with four chairs can restrict movement as well as children participating in that experience. Not all children are physically comfortable sitting in chairs, while others are timid to approach a space with other children in it.

As changes were made, we realised that children were empowered to play. They were able to move materials around the spaces and create their own areas of interest. The needs of all the children were being catered for because the environment was owned by the children.



*Homely and welcoming indoor environment.*

*Play became the most important thing.*

*Play was the foundation. Play must come first, always.*

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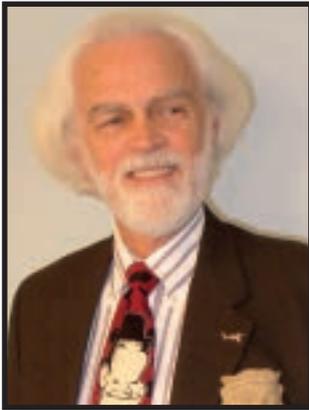
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## *The playful brain: Development of young children's humour*

*Paul McGhee*



Paul McGhee is President of The Laughter Remedy in Wilmington, Delaware, USA. With a PhD in Developmental Psychology, he is internationally known for his own research on children's humour. He has published many scientific articles and fifteen books on humour (five specifically on children's humour). Paul works full-time as a professional speaker, having first spent 20 years teaching at the university level. He has provided keynotes and workshops to many early childhood organisations across North America, as well as in Germany and Singapore.

As parents and educators of young children, one of our greatest delights is the sharing of their infectious laughter. This laughter makes a powerful contribution to the early bonding of parents with their infants and also reveals another aspect of the most striking feature of their early years—their love of play. In this article, we will explore when this early laughter first becomes associated with the mental experience of humour and how underlying progress in intellectual development generates new stages of development of their sense of humour.

### **When do infants first experience humour?**

So how do you decide when an infant first experiences humour? It all depends on how you define humour. My own view is that humour involves the enjoyment we get (when in the spirit of play) from mentally distorting things that have already been learned. The experience of humour involves the realisation that something is being depicted or done that is totally inconsistent (incongruous) with the child's prior learning/knowledge in connection with the event. As long as this occurs in a familiar, safe, setting and in the spirit of fun or play, it is a good candidate for being experienced as funny (although a different

kind of humour also emerges among toddlers involving the doing or saying of 'taboo' things).

So humour is actually a form of play—mental play, or play with ideas (McGhee, 1979, 2003a). It is children's biological heritage to play with new physical and mental abilities as they develop. This heritage leads them to derive pleasure from mentally distorting the world as they come to understand it. Evidence using brain imaging technology shows that humour activates known reward or pleasure centers in the brain. (Mobbs, 2003.) And it is underlying changes in emerging intellectual abilities that determine developmental changes in their sense of humour.

While all early childhood educators are keenly aware of the importance of play for learning (and the joy experienced from learning through play), it is just as important to be aware of the joy experienced from mentally turning upside down what they have already learned (distorting it or doing/saying it 'wrong').

### **Laughter without humour**

Parents usually point to their infant's earliest laughter when asked about the child's earliest humour. The problem with this is that you can make infants laugh simply by physically stimulating them (e.g. tickling), and it seems to

be built into humans to laugh (especially when the situation is very familiar and 'play cues' are present) as a means of releasing the inner 'arousal' generated by such active stimulation.

Laughter begins by the third month, and sometimes earlier. Three- to five-month-olds do laugh at unusual behaviors/sounds made by their parents, *who usually also laugh when they do them*. As late as six months, infants laugh similarly at both 'normal' and 'odd/unusual' behavior when parents laugh too (Mireault, et al., 2014). So at this point infants do not discriminate between normal and unusual events as a cause of laughter; they use the laughter of others as a cue to laugh.

An examination of the many *Youtube* videos of young babies laughing shows that most of the things very young infants are laughing at involve some kind of vigorous or unusual (often sudden and intrusive) sounds and sights (e.g. laughing at a blown-up balloon flying around when the air is suddenly let out of it) initiated by parents. While the unusualness of the event may qualify it as a very early form of humour, it could also be the built-in tendency to laugh to reduce tension that explains this laughter.

### **Earliest humour: Laughing at unusual behavior of parents**

By five or six months, infants are beginning to laugh less at 'normal' behaviors even if a parent is laughing, and laughing more at odd/unusual behaviors even if their parent is not laughing. The earliest form of humour experienced typically occurs in connection with parents doing things that are 'wrong' or different from the way they've been done before (Loizou, 2005; McGhee, 2003a; Sroufe & Wunsch, 1972). Any unusual parent behavior (e.g. mother 'waddling' like a penguin, sucking on a baby's bottle, putting a bowl on her head) is the main source of this earliest humour.

### **Developmental changes between one to seven years of age**

**Earliest infant-initiated humour** – By the beginning of the second year, children begin to initiate their own humour. It takes on a form very similar to pretend play with objects (which

also begins at this time), and yet is different. The difference is a matter of emphasis. In pretending to drink milk from a shampoo bottle (for example), the child is fully aware that this is not a baby bottle for drinking milk, but finds it fun to go through the motions of pretending to drink from it. What changes FUN to FUNNY involves a shifting of attention to the 'silliness' or 'wrongness' of drinking from it like you drink from a baby bottle. Putting your shoe on your hand instead of your foot or going through the motions of brushing your teeth with a hairbrush would also be examples of this. The emphasis here is on intentionally 'doing it wrong'. This playful emphasis on the wrongness of it is what changes it from just pretend to funny pretend—i.e. humour.

**Mislabeled things** – As children become more competent in their understanding of language, this built-in drive to play with ideas gets extended to playing with words. So by age two or so, they begin purposefully calling things by the wrong name (calling a cat a dog, an apple a banana, etc.). Their accompanying laughter or playful facial expression tells you this is meant to be funny.

In the USA, the earliest example of this new basis for humour usually comes up is in the context of the 'Show me your nose' game. Even if you always play the game 'straight' (always pointing to the correct body part), the day will come when the child gets a mischievous look in her eye and points to the wrong part of the body. The giggle or smile immediately tells you this was no mistake. It's just very funny to do it wrong on purpose (and sometimes wait for a parent's reaction).

In this case, the child is not actually saying the wrong word, but her actions clearly point to a purposeful misinterpretation of the word, a precursor of saying the wrong word. For the next couple of years, calling any familiar object or event by the wrong name remains a source of great fun (e.g. 'Do you like my kitty?'—while holding a stuffed toy dog). For some children at this point, it's also very funny to do the exact opposite of what you ask (sitting down when asked to stand up).

**Distorting familiar features of objects, people and animals** – By the age of three, it becomes much funnier to create incongruities based

on incorrectly representing specific features of familiar objects and events than simply calling them by the wrong name. So having a cat say 'oink oink' like a pig is now funnier than just calling a cat a pig. Other examples would include laughing at depictions of a dog's head on a person's body, a cow on roller skates, or a bicycle with square wheels. While this kind of humour does not become common until three, some children start appreciating it as early as age two (Hoicka & Akhtar, 2012). This makes sense, since infants are already beginning to become sensitive to (aware of) the relationship among different features of objects and events at twelve months—already starting to develop the essential prerequisite to having a firm enough understanding of how those features should go together to find humour in distorting their relationship in some way (Baumgartner & Oakes 2011).

Similarly, infants are learning that certain actions go with some objects, but not others. For example you drink from a cup, not a cell phone. So getting any aspect of key relationships wrong is now a basis for a good laugh. Many children's books geared toward three- and four-year-olds (e.g. *Wash your Face in Orange Juice*) focus on this kind of humour. Just to be sure even very young children get the idea that washing your face in orange juice and brushing your hair with a tooth brush are actions to be laughed at, we're told that Mr Clicketty Cane 'plays a silly game'.

**Understanding double meanings: the transition to adult humour** – The earliest transition to adult forms of humour arrives (on average) around age seven, when children first begin to understand double meanings of words as a basis for humour. (If you work with four- to six-year-olds, you know that they start telling such jokes before they actually understand them.) So they now get endless enjoyment from sharing jokes like the following.

What's gray, has four legs and a trunk?

A mouse on vacation

Why can't you starve in the desert?

Because of the sand which is  
(sandwiches) there.

To build children's skills at coming up with their own original riddle-type jokes, try telling them

jokes like the following, providing clues without giving the answer.

What happens to little canoes when they're naughty?

They get \_\_\_\_\_.

1st clue: It's a kind of spanking.

2nd clue: Find another word for 'oar.'

3rd clue: It rhymes with 'battle.'

(Taken from McGhee, 2003b. Answer: paddled.)

For a further discussion of humour at this age, see McGhee (2003a, 2003b).

See [www.LaughterRemedy.com](http://www.LaughterRemedy.com) for additional articles on children's humour.

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# Contemporary spaces and places that inspire babies' and toddlers' learning and development

Caroline Fewster



Prior to developing Bond University's Bachelor of Children's Services program, Caroline Fewster enjoyed a long and varied career working with children in a wide range of Children's Services care and teaching situations. Starting out as a preschool teacher in the ACT, she progressed to advisory and consultancy roles with regional and government education authorities. Her experience encompasses all aspects of early childhood learning, from classroom teaching to managing services and from educating future teachers to consulting and developing professional development programs. Caroline consults for a range of non-government, community-based and corporate organisations, as well as local, state and the Commonwealth Government.

Babies and toddlers are unique. They have particular ways of learning about their world through exploration in the physical and social environment in an early childhood setting. Spaces and places for learning experiences, therefore, provide the foundation for knowing and understanding the social world, as well as shaping early development.

Contemporary spaces and places can be a vision of what the program values, and frame the possibilities and actions for living and learning with babies and toddlers. Learning materials in early childhood programmes are described by Curtis and Carter as *the bones of the curriculum and the foundation of the teaching and learning process* (Curtis D, Carter M 2008:54).

### Design principles

Designing and collecting learning materials and arranging them as invitations can be compared to the pleasure of finding a gift for a friend, carefully selected and presented in a beautiful way.

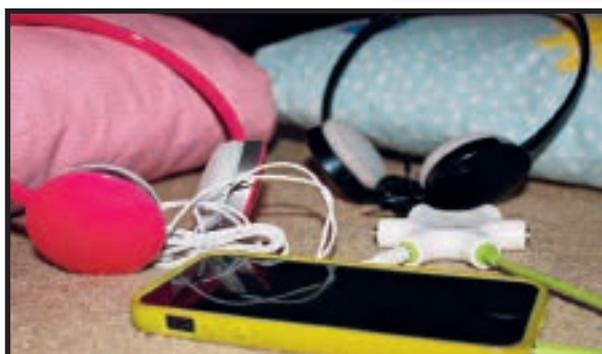
Contemporary spaces and places especially designed for babies and toddlers are presented to children within a framework of design principles:

- creating new possibilities for familiar spaces and places
- provisioning the environment with materials that honour and extend children's interests

- introducing collections of open-ended materials
- including symbolic representation of each child and their family.

### Particular places

Potential for a collective sense of our place and a number of 'my places' is important in baby and toddler programs. Space with character, friendly and defining objects will enhance other elements of the program that are critical to younger children and their families, and they can personalise the space. Introducing family stories so babies and toddlers can listen to their families all day!



### 'Thinking in things'

Babies and toddlers constantly use materials to learn about the world, explore their questions, and represent their thinking. Their initial experience is to examine the properties and functions of materials. As young children get more familiar with how objects can represent ideas and concepts, they begin to intentionally use materials for a purpose. Joan Newcomb calls this 'thinking in things' (in Curtis and Carter 2008:55)



### Introducing portable play and learning materials

Autonomy contributes to the simple enjoyment of life – to choose our space and objects gives freedom to invent the spaces babies and toddlers design themselves. If babies and toddlers are given the opportunity to create play spaces and places, they can make settings and things work for them indoors and outdoors, in many different ways.

*Potential for a collective sense of our place and a number of my places is important in children's programs* (Greenman J, 2007:93).



### Introducing the floor curriculum

It is estimated that 60% of baby and toddler play takes place on the floor. Look for treasures, intriguing objects and materials to stimulate curiosity and inquiry.



*Contemporary spaces and places that inspire babies' and toddlers' learning and development are places where young children can feel a sense of belonging, a sense of wellbeing — and a desire to discover and explore an early childhood setting.*

When early childhood educators design a learning environment with particular values and design principles in mind, along with engaging materials to explore, they set the stage for meaningful learning experiences for babies and toddlers.

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# Teaching young children to manage their emotions

*Kaylene Henderson*



Dr Kaylene Henderson is an Australian Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, author, mother of three and a warm and engaging speaker. She is also a member of the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health and is a passionate advocate for early intervention practices. To support the critical role played by early childhood professionals, Dr Henderson has developed a scientifically informed, yet practical, online course series entitled *Raising Good Kids: A professional's guide to managing behaviour and emotions in 0-5-year-olds* (launched late April). She has also developed a corresponding course series for parents in the hope that, by sharing the same, research-based education with parents, educators and caregivers, these groups can work together to provide maximum benefit for the children for whom we all care.

Children learn best when they are feeling safe and calm. Yet children are not born with the innate ability to calm themselves down from strong feeling states. It takes years to develop these skills along with the development of essential brain pathways. Within education and care settings, young children will need your help to calm down quite often. And since it makes sense to ensure that your students are in the best state for learning, it's important that you know how to help them with this.

Let's first look at how children develop the ability to calm down from strong feeling states (clinically known as 'emotional regulation'). As with many areas of development, there are specific stages that children go through as they learn these important skills.

### **Stages of development of emotional regulation**

1. Initially, the adult needs to calm the infant's distress for them by doing things like holding the infant close, patting or rocking them.
2. Later, feelings can be managed with the help of the adult. This is called 'co-regulation of emotions'.
3. Finally, the child can manage their feelings on their own – 'self-regulation of emotions'.



*When children are very young or when they have had limited practice at calming down, they will need your help quite often since even mild emotional upsets can be overwhelming.*



*Emotional upsets can be overwhelming.*

With repeated practice, children will improve at regulating their emotions as they develop through these stages. They might still require your help when their feelings are more intense or at times when they're less able to cope due to tiredness, hunger or sickness. But the key, as with any new skill-set, is repeated, consistent practice.

In reality, even as adults we might move between stages two and three depending on how well we're coping at the time, how much sleep we have had and how stressful the trigger is. This means that most of the time we are able to calm ourselves down but at other times we still need close adults to help comfort and contain our distress. Similarly, some of the children in your care may be fairly skilled at calming themselves down, but it's important to know that there will still be times when even these children will need your help.

### **So what is the most effective way to help children calm down?**

To help us understand the most effective approach, let's first consider what approaches help us to calm down when we, as adults, are feeling overwhelmed by our feelings.

Think of a time when you have been upset ...

Has it helped when someone has attempted to distract you?

Tried to reason you out of your feeling state?

Or worse, treated you punitively?

Many of us would identify that simply having someone pay attention to us and genuinely try to understand our experience is what feels most helpful when we're feeling distressed.

Indeed, **connection** and **empathy** are what we need. These are what our brains need to regulate our emotions. Distraction, logic and punishment are not. In fact, as I'm sure you can imagine, when we use distraction, logic or punishment when children are upset, they take much longer to calm down. Research shows that when we try to distract children or talk them out of their feelings, then they stay feeling upset for longer.

So what is **connection** and how do we do it? Connection is something that I'm sure you do all the time. It requires squatting or kneeling down to a child's level, turning your body towards theirs and paying attention – really paying attention to what's happening for them.

*By making that important connection with a child, you convey to him or her that whatever is happening at that moment, you can work it out together.*

And **empathy**? Empathy is the ability to understand the situation from the child's perspective, even when it seems like she is over-reacting to a trivial issue. This includes an understanding of what the child is feeling and conveying this understanding back to the child, through our words, facial expression and body language.

*Each time you help children to calm themselves down using connection and empathy, you bring them one step closer to being able to better manage their feelings themselves.*

By effectively managing children's feelings, you will also be able to prevent more disruptive 'meltdowns' and behaviours. Importantly, you also strengthen your relationships with the children in your care while teaching them that they can always seek the help of an adult, no matter how they're feeling.

But the benefits of supporting and teaching emotional regulation don't stop there.

*Not only are calm children better learners but the ability to manage feelings is an important predictor of school readiness.*

Never underestimate the importance of your role in influencing children's outcomes, not only at school, but all throughout their teenage and adult lives.

# *De-clutter your diary - maximise your time and energy*

*Jane Taylor*



Jane Taylor is a coach, mentor and speaker who lives on the Gold Coast. She is the founder and director of *Habits for Wellbeing* and creator of *Dare to Love – Creating Habits for a Career and Life YOU Love* and is passionate about ‘Wholeheartedly living your truth ... one habit at a time’ through coaching, retreats and speaking. You can learn more about *Habits for Wellbeing* at [www.habitsforwellbeing.com](http://www.habitsforwellbeing.com)

Working in education can be a wonderful experience. However, it can also be challenging. Quite often, you are filling many roles in the classroom, child care centre or school. You can start the day feeling energised and focused — having your three most important tasks ready to go — but then the phone rings, you get interrupted by colleagues, the internet fails and the photocopier runs out of toner. Then the end of the day arrives and two out of those three most important tasks still need to be completed and this can leave you feeling defeated.

In order to juggle everything that comes with working in a school or child care centre, including your roles and responsibilities, effectively and efficiently, you need to learn and master a range of skills from personal effectiveness to self-management.

In this article, I will be discussing:

- Reframing how you look at time and time management
- Personal effectiveness and self-management
- Remembering you have the same time as ...
- Knowing what do you really want?

- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Seven tips to de-clutter your diary and maximise your time and energy.

Let’s get started.

### **Reframing how you look at time and time management**

There is no time to manage – the time is here right now. Subsequently, time management is more about how you manage the activities you do in the time you have i.e. self-management. It is up to you to decide how you invest, value and spend your time (we cannot save it). How you execute each of these leads to mastery of your time and energy.

### **Personal effectiveness and self-management**

Personal effectiveness means making use of all the resources (both personal and professional) you have at your disposal (i.e. your talents, strengths, skills, energy and time) to enable you to master your life and achieve both work and life goals.

How you manage yourself, impacts on your personal effectiveness. According to the Collaborative Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), self management is ‘... the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and

behaviours effectively in different situations.’ This includes:

- managing stress
- controlling impulses
- motivating oneself and being responsible, and
- being personally accountable and setting and working toward achieving personal and professional goals.

### **You have the same time as ...**

*One of the things you need to remember is that Oprah Winfrey, Maya Angelou, Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs, you and I all get the same amount of time.*

If you are lucky, each year you receive 365 days (unless it’s a leap year), 52 weeks, 12 months in a year, 24 hours in a day and 60 minutes in an hour. So what makes the difference? One area is, knowing who you are and what you want!

### **What do you really want?**

*In order to de-clutter your diary, you need to identify what you really want in your career and life and who you are.*

Have you sat down and allowed yourself to dream and identify what you value most? If not, you may like to make some time to complete the exercise on <http://www.habitsforwellbeing.com/what-do-you-really-want/> Once you have identified what you really want, you can then check-in to see if your current actions are in alignment with that. If not, you can start making changes.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency**

Once you have identified what you want, you can start looking at effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness or doing the right things means prioritising and completing important activities over unimportant ones as well as focusing on completing the important elements of an activity.

Efficiency relates to how fast you can complete an activity. There is a limit on how efficient you can be as a human being. To maximise your output, both effectiveness and efficiency are important. However, effectiveness comes before efficiency.

Now you have identified what you want and know the difference between effectiveness and efficiency, let’s have a look at a few tips to de-clutter your diary and maximise your time and energy.

### **Seven tips to de-clutter your diary and maximize your time and energy**

There are many tips to help you de-clutter your diary and maximize your time and energy. For this article we are going to focus on seven.

1. **Choose wisely** – many people have been quoted over the years as saying where you are today is the sum total of the choices you have made up until now. So it is important you choose wisely and check-in with how those choices feel to you. Do you really want to skip your workout this afternoon? How is it going to make you feel? Is it really going to make you happy and take you closer to living in alignment with what you want in your career and life? Or will it take you further away?
2. **Be responsible and accountable** – means being 100% responsible and holding yourself accountable for where you are in all areas of your life. Yes, I mean all areas of your life – from your health, fitness, career, relationships, fun, adventure, to your finances – no excuses. Taking responsibility means no blaming people or justifying why things are the way they are. Yes, I know this can be challenging, however right now, what would it mean to you if you started to be 100% responsible and held yourself accountable for your career and life?
3. **Learn to say ‘No’** – learning personal boundaries can be challenging. However, you only have twenty-four hours in a day to get everything completed (including sleep). You don’t have to over-commit or take on more than you can handle. Sometimes

a 'no' can be 'no not now', not 'no' completely! This also links in to knowing your own priorities and commitments.

4. **Use an organiser** – your organiser can keep you on top of the things you need to do and see where you spend your time. In your organiser, you can include your doing (or being) lists, birthdays, reminders etc.
5. **Use a calendar** – using a calendar can keep you on top of your schedule and important dates. Some people prefer to use a paper diary and some prefer electronic (i.e. iCal, Outlook or Google calendar). The most important aspect here is to identify what suits your lifestyle best and then develop a habit around using your calendar.
6. **Know your deadlines** – schedule out your deadlines in your calendar (i.e. daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, six-monthly and yearly). When you schedule your

deadline, you can create your daily plan and know what commitments you already have. This will also help with not over-committing yourself.

7. **Batch similar tasks together** – as you are going about your day, week or month, notice there are different tasks that are repeated and require similar energy. For example, it can save you time and energy if you batch your phone calls together a couple of times during the week instead of going from one phone call to the next without preparation or planning.

There you have it. I hope this article has helped you de-clutter your diary, so you can maximise your time and energy!

### References

Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies (CASEL), accessed June 12, 2015 <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/>



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# Who needs a second language?

*The role of parents and early childhood educators in supporting language learning: myths, challenges and solutions*

*Ronit Baras*



Ronit Baras is an author, educator, life coach, journalist, justice of the peace and social activist. She is the founder of *Be Happy in LIFE* and the State Director of the *Together for Humanity Foundation*. Ronit has over 28 years of educational experience, specialising in emotional intelligence development. Ronit is deeply involved in diversity education, focusing on multilingualism, global citizenship and social justice. In her presentations, she sends a message of inspiration, acceptance, harmony and happiness. For her community work, she has been nominated for an International Women's Day Peace award and twice for the Australian of the Year award.

In Australia, the number of students who speak languages other than English increases every year. Understanding the effects of language on family structure, social interaction, self-esteem and academic achievement is essential for parents and early childhood teachers.

Although everyone agrees that young children are very quick to pick up a new language, many

young children who speak a language other than English at home, and their families, still struggle in their communication. This affects these children's behaviour and their ability to learn English.

There is a strong link between language acquisition, academic success, social development and emotional intelligence.

For students whose English is a secondary language (ESL), this link can either be helpful or harmful. While at school, specialised ESL teachers support English learning, in the early years, this support is limited.



Noam. Photographer: Aura Naziri.

***Both parents and early childhood teachers need to adopt a new, holistic approach to language learning in order to guarantee successful language integration and to minimise the learning difficulties associated with language.***

As always with early childhood education, the earlier this is done, the better.

The real challenge that teachers and parents have is overcoming misconceptions about languages and bilingualism. Understanding the process of acquiring primary and secondary languages and the impact on children's life is the key to overcoming these challenges. When students receive the right support and their families continue to be important and positive agents of influence, a second primary language becomes an advantage rather than a problem.

### Primary vs. secondary language

Primary and secondary languages are stored in different places in the brain and develop through a different process. First, second and third **primary** languages are learned by creating patterns from a load of seemingly random information, while **secondary** languages are learned by using the primary languages as reference and building a 'translation net' to map elements in the secondary language to matching elements in the primary language.

Secondary languages cannot be converted in the brain into primary languages through repetition. Repetition can only help us retrieve the information faster.

Children learn primary languages better than adults do, but adults, having a strong and stable primary language, are better at learning secondary languages.

Contrary to common belief, the space in the brain for languages is not limited and people can have two or more primary languages

regardless of the complexity of their grammar and/or vocabulary. Children don't have to be proficient in both languages to be considered bilingual. If they respond in one language, it is not a sign they don't understand the other. It is very common for bilinguals to have one language that is stronger than the other is.

Many bilingual kids go through a 'silent' period when introduced to a new primary language. This period takes between a few weeks and a few months. During this time, the number of dendrites in their brain grows significantly and impacts positively on their development.



In response to what seems like a delay in speech, many parents stop using one language, because they believe that the delay is produced by the child being overwhelmed. However, removing one language to help children develop another language is more damaging than it is helpful. Researchers found that it limited the range of vocabulary, reduced children's ability to communicate with family and community members, damaged their self-esteem and weakened their cultural attachment.

Much research has been done on bilingual children and researchers agree they don't have any delays in developing languages. In fact, they are better able to focus their attention and ignore distractions (cognitive reserve), more creative, better at planning, more competent at solving complex problems and more analytical. They have higher cultural awareness, better social skills and higher EQ. Bilingual children have cognitive flexibility, make decisions faster, perform well in logic, math, music, computer, science and easily learn other languages.

*Based on this, if we want to raise a whole population of children with exceptional abilities, it is our duty as teachers and parents to support and encourage primary language learning and to invest in bilingualism.*

Experts still argue about the critical age for forming primary languages, but they all agree that it ends between the ages of seven and twelve. This means that we do not have to be exposed to a language from birth, but we cannot start any time we choose. After the critical age, we form a secondary language, which supports our cognitive ability, but on a much smaller scale. This leaves educators to deal with this important channel of education at the most critical age – the early years.

### **Parents speaking English as a secondary language**

Parents who speak a language other than English as a primary language, face conflicts between keeping their language and culture and adjusting to the local language and customs.

Many of these parents stop speaking their primary language in hope that it will help their children, but they risk losing their main channel of communication. The loss of their primary

language has severe implications on second language learning and makes it harder for the parents themselves to learn English.

Parents who do not stick to their primary language communication with their children experience many difficulties. They find it very hard to pass on feelings, ideas, beliefs, morals and values in a secondary language, because feelings and culture develop together with primary language and cannot be separated. The language of the dreams, for example, and the language in which people count are no indication of their primary languages. Which language they choose to express strong emotions is a better indicator. This is why we call the primary language 'the language of the heart'.

Parents who do not speak to their children in their primary language report feeling inferior and humiliated in their relationships with their kids and being unable to take an active part in their children's education. Families report that in a secondary language (English) they communicate at a basic level with their children and are therefore unable to support their education.

Another problem that families face is that children have difficulties communicating with other family members who cannot speak English. Family members who do not speak the children's language can no longer be resources for them. If this challenge is not addressed in the early years, the gap increases even more when the children reach their teens. The whole advantage of being bilingual is lost forever.

For most parents who speak a language other than English at home, English is a secondary language and their proficiency in it is limited. It is better that these parents speak with their kids in their primary language and encourage



Tomer. Photographer: Ann Vaserman.

their children to do the same. Teaching the children English is best left to educators who are more advanced in English and have a much wider vocabulary and a full range of accent, slang and cultural subtleties to explain and express feelings and ideas. The children can also develop their English naturally by living in an English-speaking environment without any contradictions with their parent's English.

Bilingual children tend to mix languages for a while. This is a reasonable process of learning languages. Many times, they 'borrow' one grammatical concept or phrase from one language and use it in the other. This is healthy and does not indicate a problem. However, being taught to speak using mixed languages is problematic. In some cases, parents who mix languages in the same sentence can create a learning difficulty that is harder to 'fix'.

Bilingualism is a major tool to increase emotional intelligence, social awareness and academic success. We can use the free and

available resource of parents who speak a language other than English or waste it. Once we pass the critical age, we can no longer enjoy its benefits. Taking advantage of this free resource will give children the full value of bilingualism, which they cannot get from learning a second language later in primary or secondary school.

### **Who needs a second primary language?**

Every child does before reaching the critical age!

*Parents and early childhood educators are the most important socialising agents for children in the early years.*

If they adopt this new, holistic approach to language learning, they can easily support children's language acquisition. This will guarantee the successful and advanced development of young children and support their learning for years to come.

### **The role of early childhood educators**

Based on the nature of the language learning process and taking into consideration the critical age, the early years are very important. Immersion in early childhood is the most effective and successful way to teach another (primary) language. Early childhood teachers who speak other (primary) languages are the best to help in this.

If full immersion is not possible, here are some tips to help early childhood educators support their children who speak English as a second language and their families:

1. Remember that having an accent does not mean the child does not speak properly. The accent of the major language contributor is responsible for the child's accent. Make sure that parents speak to their children in their own language and not in English. Encourage parents and children to express feelings in their primary language and make your appreciation for bilingualism clear.
2. Highlight the advantages of multiple languages in your class to instil pride.
3. Express interest in family languages and cultures, invite children and parents to share their holidays, songs and games in class and celebrate diverse cultural festivals.
4. Connect children and their families with similar primary language speakers to encourage speaking and communicating. If possible, create a family buddy system and never prevent kids from using their primary languages.
5. Teach your students to count and say greetings in many different languages and make it a secret code.

## Oral language: planning for explicit instruction using relevant and authentic experiences

Angela Ehmer



Angela is an experienced literacy consultant with over twenty-five years experience working with educators, publishers, parents and community organisations throughout Australia. Angela's expertise includes classroom experience, reading recovery and learning support teaching, as well as educational consultancy to both the public and private sectors. Angela is passionate about embedding practices which accelerate learning for harder-to-teach students and cater for individual needs, interests and strengths. Angela has presented at local and international conferences and also authors for leading educational publisher, Macmillan. Her work at Macmillan has been highly praised for its easy to read writing style and practical ideas.

Education should develop children's capacities to become effective communicators, to understand the ideas of others and to communicate ideas in a meaningful way. Developing proficiency across speaking, listening, reading and writing is central to every child's educational journey and begins with a child's earliest school experiences.

*All children arrive at Prep with different experiences and understandings about language and literacy, acquired in their early years. Some children arrive ready to begin formal reading instruction; others require more rigorous and focussed attention to aspects of oral language and pre-reading skills, in order to make a smooth transition into literacy.*

To determine a starting point for each child, teachers gather formative data, diagnostic data, or both, early in the school year. These data should be recorded, analysed and used to inform appropriate teaching-learning episodes. Aligning learning goals with children's interests and experiences ensures instruction is meaningful and relevant to the child.

### **What types of learning experiences may be required?**

Teachers understand a strong foundation in oral language assists most children to transition more smoothly into print. Specific data relating to phonological knowledge, vocabulary, grammar, expressive and receptive language skills and book knowledge, assists teachers to plan for meaningful interactions which consolidate existing skills and develop the skills and knowledge a child needs to become literate.

Whole class instruction begins early, as does differentiation and individualised programming. Focussed oral language instruction may involve reading and revisiting focus picture books to build vocabulary/develop phonological knowledge such as recognition and reproduction of rhyming words/build concepts of print/foster conversations/promote prediction and problem solving skills and very importantly, to build an appreciation and enjoyment of literature.

*In focussed lessons, teachers may work with small groups of children to promote more active engagement and to target the specific needs of learners. Texts are chosen strategically around interest levels, content, language and text features.*

In other instances, home corner may be the vehicle for language development. The adult may foster conversations with children during play, and when sharing may support these children to explain to others what they did in home corner today. If assisting this group of children to speak in sentences, the share session may conclude with each child sharing, 'The most fun thing I did in home corner was ... because ...'

Language should be embedded across and within daily activities. Authentic interactions are the best vehicles for teaching. Experiences such as Show and Tell, for instance, are invaluable for developing oral language and authorial skills. Children are able to learn to create, or craft a text to deliver orally. Children learn to select a topic, sequence ideas, elaborate or add detail, include complex vocabulary and speak in sentences, as well as developing confidence and learning important communication skills such as eye contact, voice projection and use of non-verbal skills such as smiling and gesture.

### **How to highlight learning goals using Show and Tell**

Often the child's *Show and Tell* is related to an item or object which provides an authentic opportunity for the child to learn to craft, or design, a report. In most other instances, the child's idea relates to something participated in, such as a game or sport, or the visiting of a special place, such as a zoo. This provides an authentic opportunity to learn to craft a recount.

The frequency of *Show and Tell* provides an ongoing vehicle for children to practice across the year. If the teacher enthusiastically highlights something important, children will often try to demonstrate or apply this.

For example, the teacher may highlight some specific vocabulary choices made by a child. After the child concludes his Show and Tell, the teacher may provide explicit feedback to teach all children about the importance of complex vocabulary, including topic words.

*Teacher: Did everyone hear those interesting words Jack used to name the parts of his truck? Tell us those parts of the truck again, Jack.*

*Jack: (Jack points) This is a rear-vision mirror and these are wheels. Those are wheel nuts and wheel rims and tyres and these are windscreen wipers.*

*Teacher: That's wonderful, Jack. Great speakers use interesting and complex words. I didn't know you knew all those topic words! Let's write that on a special chart to remind us. (Teacher writes the heading 'Great speakers' onto a chart and writes 'use complex words and topic words' as the first dot point beneath the heading.)*

*Teacher: Jack, I'll write your name on a sticky note and add it to the chart to show how skilful you are.*

***The teacher's aim is to highlight the use of more complex vocabulary and encourage other children to think about interesting words they might use.***

The next day, the teacher reminds children about the importance of complex vocabulary and topic words before children take their turns and she records more names on the chart as children attempt to substitute everyday words with more complex words. It is the teacher's aim to teach for assured success; all children must feel successful and some are likely to require support as they take their turn. For some children, substituting the word *large* for *big* is a noteworthy improvement and recognition of this is important. The teacher may check in with children before the *Show and Tell* session in order to assist them if needed.

By highlighting teaching/learning goals and providing feedback, praise and rich ongoing support and coaching, there should be visible evidence of improvement for all children across the year.

Every day is rich with opportunities to develop, extend and monitor the language and literacy development of individuals and groups. Focussed, scaffolded conversations with high levels of active involvement by all children should be embedded across the curriculum and connected to relevant, authentic learning experiences. Skilful teachers are able to make planned interactions feel like a natural conversation.

# Benefits of tablets in the early years classroom

Stacy Cottam



Stacy has been an early childhood educator for over eighteen years. Her passions are for literacy, information communications technologies and curriculum development and implementation. Stacy has presented at many local and national conferences in the area of ICTs, reading and learning in the Prep classroom.

In a world where young children have access to mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets from an early age, it is essential that educators understand how to utilise these devices in their early childhood settings. It is important for educators, therefore, to know the benefits of the tablet as a device for learning.

*The tablet is seen as especially appropriate for early childhood education, largely due to its tactile interface which is more accessible to children than a mouse.*

(Beschoner & Hutchison 2013). Lynch and Redpath (2012) found teachers reported that even after four to seven weeks, students showed themselves to be highly competent users of the tablet in terms of locating, launching and operating the apps and caring for the devices. During the *Education Queensland trial of tablets* (2011), teachers commented positively on using the tablet, particularly its size, engagement 'wow factor', ease of use, battery life, collaborative nature and the range of apps available.

### Tablets in the early years

*The interactive mode of the tablet and many of its apps, makes it appealing for young children as a tool for play and learning.*

Flewitt, Messer & Kucirkova (2015) stated that children relished the responsive nature of the tablet and the immediacy of the result they produced. This is also supported by Cooper and Tahnk, (as cited in Flewitt, Messer & Kucirkova, 2015) who observed children engaged and stimulated by the tablet's employment of their tactile, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic senses, providing them with immediate feedback. When interviewing students, Wu and Zhang, (as cited in Milman, Carlson-Bandcroft and Vanden Boogart, 2014) found that handheld computers made learning activities fun and easier as well as fostered more interactive and collaborative learning. Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova (2015) agreed with Wu and Zhang and further added that staff commented on children's collaboration around the tablet as they shared, took turns, supported each other's learning and rejoiced in each other's successes.

*Children love them, teachers can see the benefit of them, but has the research shown that the implementation of tablets has had a significant impact on student learning?*

In Flewitt, Messer and Kucirkova's (2015) research, staff noted:

*children with usually short attention spans persisted for extended periods due to the interactive nature of certain apps which helped focus their attention.*

In the *Western Australian Early Childhood Tablet Initiative Trial* (2014), teachers reported the tablets had a definite influence on the way they taught and considered them an effective additional teaching tool in an early childhood classroom.

Administrators and educators can have a preconceived idea that ICTs, and in particular tablets, are better suited to children in the middle school years. They believe that young children should not be playing with tablets and that their use may have a detrimental effect on their ability to develop, handwrite and socialise. The Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning Development (VDEECD, 2009), refutes this notion by stating that children in the early years need just as much access to technology as older children. They recommend that children need to develop skills to think for themselves and make choices on how to use technology to support their learning and to collaborate with others.

### **Tablets and play**

The *Queensland Early Years Guidelines* and the *Australian Curriculum* both have a fundamental philosophy that children learn best through play, investigations, experimentation and real life situations. Frazier (2014) states that play can be combined with technology to promote learning. This is highlighted in O'Mara and Laidlaw's (2011) research where children used their tablets alongside socio-dramatic play. Through this type of play, the young children were actively engaged with the tablets to problem-solve, creatively express themselves, collaborate and make meaning from real world situations. Chou and Lee (2012) assert that the application of tablets on children's brain science theory recognises its vital role in children's brain development through play-based problem solving. It is through this problem-solving and the development of thinking processes, where teachers noticed the largest benefit. Beschoner and Hutchison (2013) discovered that teachers stated the biggest difference in utilising the tablet in their classroom was the

communication between children as they solved problems together.

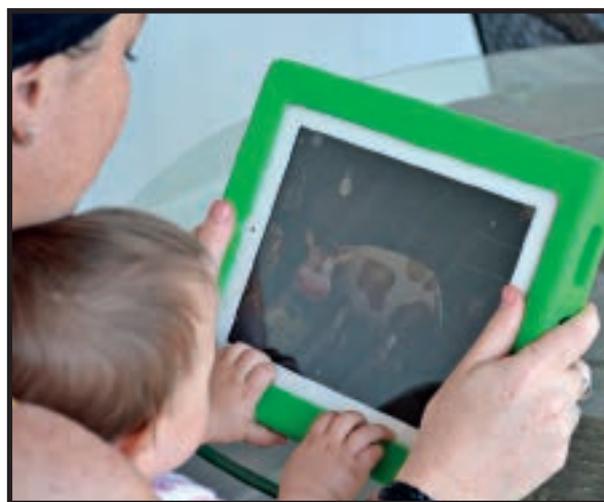
*Through these collaborative interactions, children explored, evaluated, considered and investigated alternative strategies, predicted and reflected as they faced challenging activities.*

This is supported by Bennett (as cited in Reynolds-Blankenship, 2013) who claims mobile learning devices allow for play that can elicit higher level thinking skills, motivation and engagement in learners. Tablets have been recognised by the NAEYC (as cited in Reynolds-Blankenship, 2013) as tools to extend and support children's active, hands-on, creative and authentic engagements with others and real life experiences.

### **Tablets and the curriculum**

*It is through the use of tablets in early years classrooms that teachers can facilitate the goal of embedding the ICT capabilities across all curriculum areas.*

The Victorian Department of Education recommended from its trial that tablets, as a tool, need to be integrated into learning rather than being taught as something separate.



*The tactile interface of a tablet is especially appropriate.*

The need to embed the general capability of ICT through play, investigation, creation and problem-solving, taught alongside the content in the *Australian Curriculum*, and its features and ease of use, makes the tablet an effective teaching and learning resource for the early years classroom. However, in order for tablets to be utilised effectively, the teacher's pedagogical understanding is invaluable.

As stated by Chou (2012), tablets can't totally replace traditional teaching. The tablet is a teaching tool and needs to be used as any other tool in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning. Neuman (2014) states in her findings that the quality of child-tablet interactions, rather than the time spent on tablets, is important to consider when using tablets to support emergent skills. It is therefore essential that we delve into the research to determine the best method or pedagogy to use when integrating tablets into our early years classrooms.

### **Choosing the right app**

Lynch and Redpath (2012) findings about how tablets are used in the classroom are consistent with observations in many primary schools.

*Teachers' initial engagement with tablets involves a focus on apps that are explicitly marketed as educational and that contain traditional early literacy and numeracy content presented in an interactive digital form. Children stated a preference for these 'games' or closed apps.*

According to O'Mara and Laidlaw many educational apps tend to be closed activities and do not hold children's interest in the sustained way that open-ended or creative apps do.

Lynch and Redpath's observations and interviews expressed a strongly held view that ICT ought not to be treated as something stand



*Open ended apps can hold children's interest. Photographer: Levi Hill*

alone or separate from the core teaching and learning process and foci of the classroom. She positioned her students as producers and owners of their learning and as active participants in a learning community that extended beyond the walls of the classroom by using more open apps, similar to what is seen outside school, in students' homes and the community where users move seamlessly between apps, modes and channels. (Davidson, O'Mara & Laidlaw cited in Lynch and Redpath, 2012) O'Mara and Laidlaw (2011) detailed in their research how children took innovative risks as creators, designers and experts when unfettered by the pedagogical practices of schooling.

### **Adopting an effective iPedagogy**

Should we not then adopt a more seamless iPedagogy with a balance of closed and open apps? An iPedagogy where the seamless integration of tablets into teaching and learning has a focus on empowering students to become effective self-directed learners?

The 21st century learner in the early years classroom, requires quality interactions and access to digital learning experiences. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2011) articulates that the ability of individuals to use ICT appropriately to access, manage and evaluate information, develop new understandings,

and communicate with others in order to participate effectively in society, is essential for learners.

***In the Australian Prep classroom, active engagement and ease of use with the interactive mode of tablets, supports and connects the learner through play, investigation and problem-solving when related to real world situations. This fundamental philosophy, allows children to develop the skills to be successful digital citizens of tomorrow.***

The key for educators, therefore, is to foster a pedagogical shift of teaching and learning in the Prep classroom through effective iPedagogy.

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# Finding inspiration in the English countryside

Angela Drysdale



Angela Drysdale currently works as the Head of Primary at St Margaret's Anglican Girls School. She is passionate about the education of children and has a deep interest in early childhood education. In her leadership position, she understands the importance of establishing a safe and caring community where all members feel valued. She is committed to building the professional capacity of the staff and therefore improve learning outcomes of the students. Angela believes there are many benefits in visiting other schools both locally, interstate and internationally which she has done throughout her 30-plus years in education.

There is nothing I find more inspiring than visiting primary schools around the world. Whenever I am fortunate enough to visit a new place, and subsequently a new school, it is a truly enriching experience. Perhaps the most poignant lesson I have learnt from such experiences is that whilst there may be stark differences between continents, countries and even cities, there is a palpable thread linking even the most foreign places. From small Australian country towns, to the rolling English countryside, the goal of providing children with the very best start in life is universal. We may not speak the same language but the responsibility to educate children academically, socially and culturally is ubiquitous.

Earlier this year I visited two primary schools in England – Prince's Mead and Charles Kingsley. Whilst both schools are situated in the incredibly picturesque surroundings of Hampshire, it is the buildings and resources that are most impressive.

The two schools may share similar values and history but they are, in fact, quite different due to their funding.

Charles Kingsley School, named after the renowned author, famous for his book *The Water Babies*, was founded in 1853. The buildings are maintained by the Church and the school is funded by the Government.

Charles Kingsley School has met the criteria to be labelled a 'Thinking School' by Exeter University. It focuses on teaching for thinking and creativity and incorporates the principles of approaches such as *Philosophy for Children* and *Habits of Mind*.

Prince's Mead is a fee-paying, Independent School. Established in 1949, it is housed in a stately home, built in 1820. Prince's Mead could be described as having a holistic approach, with a wide-ranging curriculum and an extensive range of facilities.

Schools in the UK have high levels of accountability, but the two different school sectors have different inspectorate systems.

A significant difference between Charles Kingsley and Australian schools is class size. Like other Government-funded schools, infant classes are capped at 30 pupils. For classes with students from



Charles Kingsley.



Prince's Mead School.

seven years and upwards, Charles Kingsley maintains a class size of 32, but that is not a Government regulation. As a result this school instils self-sufficiency and independence in their students, traits I witnessed first-hand.

Both schools embrace the age and history of the buildings by maintaining historical elements and creating juxtaposition with



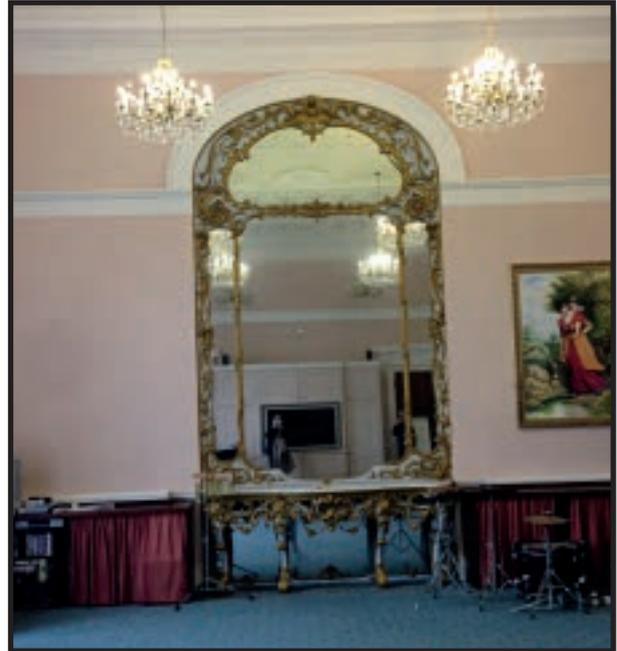
*Infant class at Charles Kingsley.*

modern, educational facilities. The layout of the physical spaces are welcoming and foster communication and relationships.

The most impressive room was the Prince's Mead music room, housed in the original dining room. Musical instruments sat beneath grand chandeliers and gold-plated mirrors.



*Library at Charles Kingsley.*



*Music room at Charles Kingsley.*

Whilst English weather isn't always conducive to outdoor play, both schools made use of their outdoor environments.

Each school has adopted the worldwide phenomenon of teaching children the value of growing their own vegetables. The vegetable plots not only encourage sustainability but help children to develop life-long skills.

Prince's Mead had several different outdoor areas, ranging from a mud patch to an environmental education site to a forest school meadow. Each outdoor environment is unique to each of the settings but each value it as a learning resource.

This was a valuable experience that inspired me to return to my school and look at it through new eyes.



*Outdoor activity noticeboard which changes according to the weather at Prince's Mead.*



*Environmental learning takes place in the pond with a specialist science teacher at Prince's Mead*

**Title:** My Happy Sad Mummy  
**Author:** Michelle Vasiliu  
**Illustrator:** Lucia Masciullo  
**Published By:** JoJo Publishing  
**ISBN:** 9780987358684  
**RRP H/C:** \$24.99  
**Reviewed by:** Sue Webster

'My Happy Sad Mummy' is a well-written heartfelt story aimed to support children who live with a family member experiencing a mental illness. With between one per cent and two per cent of the population suffering from bipolar disorder, Vasiliu draws from her own experience to portray the emotional rollercoaster of the illness through the eyes of a young child. This story is about a mother and daughter but easily translates to fathers, grandparents or friends.

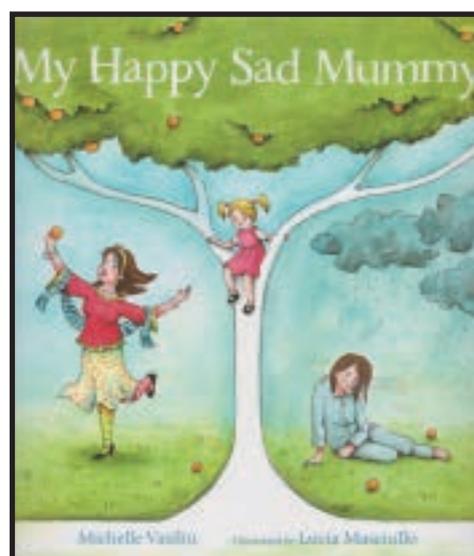
Vasiliu sensitively explores the days when a little girl's mum is overly happy and over-active (so overactive that she actually wears out her daughter to the extent that she falls asleep in the garden while her mother works). As well as the days when her mum cannot get out of bed and cries and cries. These days lead to time in hospital for Mum, with the little girl being cared for by her grandparents. The story resolves with a visit to hospital for the little girl to see her mother and an understanding that her mother loves her regardless of her emotional state.

It cleverly does not label the illness as bipolar disorder but shows the strong bond that a mother and daughter can have despite having days when Mum is not her normal self.

The illustrations by Masciullo bring another layer of warmth to the story. They are simple and engaging in soft tones and lines.

This would be a valuable book for parents with a mental illness who struggle to find the right words when talking to their children about their illness.

This is Vasiliu's first picture book in a series of books aimed at teaching children about mental illness.



**Title:** Peas in a Pod  
**Author:** Tania McCartney  
**Illustrator:** Tina Snerling  
**Published By:** EK Books  
**ISBN:** 9781921966712  
**RRP:** \$24.99  
**Reviewed by:** Sue Webster

Meet the quintuplets – Pippa, Pia, Poppy, Polly and Peg. Five little girls who do everything exactly the same. They eat, sleep, cry and sit the same.

Their Mum and Dad want to keep their identical girls forever matching, like peas in a pod. But, as these little sisters grow, they realise that they are very different from each other and do not want to be the same.

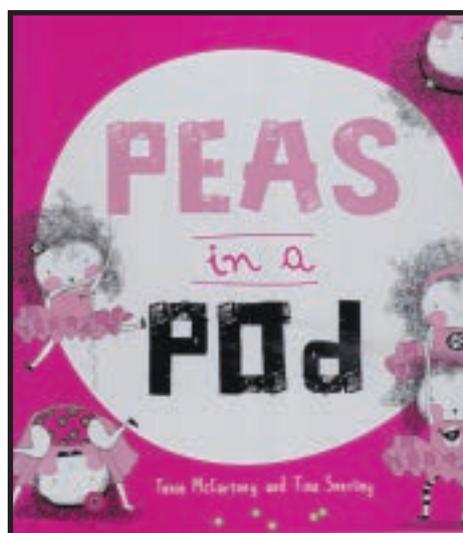
As the girls grow they go about changing their look, clothes, hair and favourite activities to show their individual personalities.

This is a simply written book by Tania McCartney. The language flows cheerfully over the pages with some repetition to assist early readers. The story has sparks of humour and sets out to encourage children to be true to themselves. This is a topic that will appeal to children and parents alike as we encourage children to develop their own personalities and talents.

The illustrations by Tina Snerling add a whimsical nature to this story and show a delightful childhood innocence. Tina is a children's wear designer and graphic artist who lives in Brisbane. The illustrations support the story and, in many cases, add new and interesting aspects to the girls' personalities. It is interesting to delve into each page and look at the differences the girls are making to themselves.

*Peas in a Pod* would be a wonderful book to use in the classroom or at home to teach young children (aged 3-7) about uniqueness and finding the real you.

Tania is an award-winning author and has worked with Tina previously to produce the bestselling *An Aussie Year* and *Tottie and Dot*.



**Title:           The Cloudspotter**

**Author/ Illustrator: Tom McLaughlin**

**Published By: Bloomsbury**

**ISBN:           9781408854969**

**RRP H/C:       \$22.99**

**Reviewed by: Sue Webster**

His real name was Franklin. But everyone called him ... The Cloudspotter.

The Cloudspotter loved to watch clouds. Cloudspotting did not make him feel so alone. He did not just see the clouds as shapes but as adventures in the sky. The Cloudspotter used his imagination to do things like swim with the giant jellyfish and be King of the Castle – just to name two.

But one day things changed when Scruffy Dog came along. The Cloudspotter was not used to sharing his clouds and did not like Scruffy following him on his adventures. He planned a way to be rid of Scruffy but was not so pleased when it worked. With Scruffy Dog gone, he felt lonely and realised that he could do with a friend like Scruffy. Eventually, he decides that two cloudspotters are definitely better than one.

*The Cloudspotter* shows the value of friendship. It is a gentle story that is enhanced by the vivid illustrations that so perfectly help tell the story of Franklin's journey in realising that it can be even better to share something than spending all your time alone.

A delightful story for any young child at home or school.

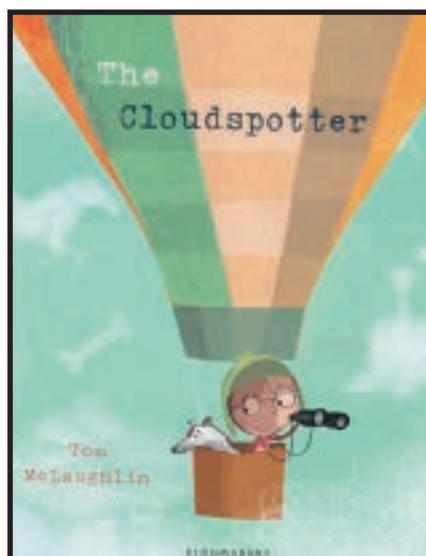
Some children at Wellers Hill State School said ...

Emily – *My favourite bit was when Franklin and Scruffy were friends. The best cloud was the dolphins under the cloud boat. Other children would like this book because you have to use your imagination.*

Will — *I liked it when they pretend to drive in the cloud car and all of the cloud pictures.*

Eddison — *The angry cloud and the lightning bolt cloud were both funny.*

Raven — *The cloud pictures were pretty and creative because they made so many different shapes. 'The Cloudspotter' is a funny book.*



## Guidelines for writers

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

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

### Style

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

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

### Referencing

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

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

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

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

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

### Specific terminology

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

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

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

### Length of contribution

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

### Form of submission

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

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

