



# *EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN*

*Learning and teaching in the early childhood years*

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## From the President

2006 is shaping up to be an interesting and busy year for ECTA. We have already had two of our very successful Videolinq Workshops with six more to come over the year. Our partnership with the School of Early Childhood QUT and the Open Learning Institute of TAFE over the last few years has proved to be an added bonus for professional learning in the regional areas. Our next Videolinq Workshop 'Celebrating Young Children as Mathematics Learners – New Ways for New Times' on Saturday 20 May is delivered as part of Early Childhood Australia's (ECA) celebration of 50 years of Under eight's Week. ECTA has been associated with this annual event for many many years and we are proud to have supported ECA in this program.

The Digital Photography Mentoring Project is well underway and our mentor and ECTA Vice-President, Kim Walters, has already travelled to Cairns, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Gold Coast and some parts of Brisbane to mentor twelve ECTA members. Other applicants will be visited by Kim after she returns from her overseas trip (lucky girl) in July. We are very grateful that the Joint Council of Queensland Teacher Associations (JCQTA), of which ECTA is a member, has been able to secure the funds for this project. The funds have been made available through Teaching Australia and the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP).

Preparations for the Annual ECTA Conference on Saturday 24th June are nearly finalised. The Conference Program offers a variety of professional learning to cater for all early childhood professionals in whichever children's service they are working. We are very privileged this year to have as our Keynote Speaker, Sue Bredekamp, the noted author of '*Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs*'. ECTA members should have already received their conference brochure



and registration form so make sure you register early to secure your masterclass/workshop preferences. We have also planned a special presentation looking back at the history of State preschools as well as preparing for the introduction of Prep in 2007. It will be a celebration of the past while looking forward to the future.

ECTA has recently been involved in two initiatives of the Department of Communities. I have been on the reference group for the Child Care Skills Formation Strategy, a project led by the Community Services and Health Industry Training Council. This project brings together representatives from all children's services and endeavours to enhance the professionalism and provision of early childhood services in Queensland. Kim Walters recently attended the launch of '*Towards an Early Years Strategy*'. This project is focussing on the universal provision of early childhood services across the state. ECTA was represented in the initial phase of the consultation process. Both of these initiatives are looking to the future and collaboration of early childhood services, something that has been a long time coming. We will keep you informed of the progress of these two projects.

2006 will continue to see ECTA enhance our communication strategies with members. Check out our new web-site [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au) and go into some of the additional or revamped sections.

As you can see ECTA has already been very active since the beginning of the year and we look forward to the exciting months ahead.

*Toni Michael*

Thank you  
Toni Michael

## ***From the Editorial Panel***

Welcome to another year of *Educating Young Children*. We thought that we should begin the year with an introduction to the Editorial Panel - some new and some familiar faces, all with diverse backgrounds in Early Childhood and all Early Childhood Teacher's Association members. The panel meets regularly to create a journal that is both interesting and relevant to the needs of our diverse profession. We welcome all contributions and ideas whether from first time writers or the experienced with the aim to support the inclusion of practitioner based stories, experiences and research. Beginning with this journal we have included *Guidelines for contributors* on the back inside cover to assist in guiding you through this process. If you have a story or project to tell (written or visual); professional learning or a personal experience that you would like to share with others we encourage you to consider making a submission. or alternatively contacting us to discuss your ideas. We look forward to hearing from you.



**Lynne Moore**

Lynne began her career in early childhood as a director in community kindergartens and preschools. Her experiences have included completion of a MEd (studies) in Early Childhood, lecturer and mentor of students at universities and TAFE institutes, program manager of early childhood studies, community resource officer with the Department of Communities, regional facilitator for the Statewide Training Strategy and early education consultant with C&K. Lynne is currently the Training Division coordinator for C&K. Passionate about early childhood and quality experiences for all children, Lynne has, for the past year, been immersed in the development of the C&K curriculum *Building Waterfalls*.



**Angela Drysdale**

Angela Drysdale began her teaching career in 1981, teaching in the middle primary years in State Education. Early in her career she developed an interest in Early Childhood and this area became the focus of her teaching and study for four years. During this time she moved to the independent school sector at John Paul College. At this school she also worked as a Deputy and Acting Head of Primary School.

In 2000 she was appointed Head of the Infant School. In this position she was responsible for curriculum, pastoral care and the daily organisation of this area of the school. She has been on the editorial panel for the Early Childhood Teachers' Association journal *Educating Young Children* since 1998.

In 2003 she moved to the Anglican Schools System when she was appointed Head of Primary of St Margaret's Anglican Girls School. In this position she provides leadership in curriculum and the pastoral care of staff, parents and students. Angela has a passion for the early childhood years and has strong beliefs of how children learn. She continues to draw on these values in her role as a primary school leader.





## **Lindy Austin**

Lindy has played an active role in education for nearly forty years and has worked in the early childhood, primary, secondary, special education, vocational and tertiary sectors. Lindy has worked in New Zealand where she held educational positions such as teacher, advisor, principal, deputy principal and manager. She was an ANZAC Fellow in 1985. On relocation to Queensland in 1994, Lindy was a tutor at the Wide Bay TAFE. Lindy joined University of Southern Queensland - Wide Bay Campus in 2002 as a fulltime lecturer in early childhood education. Additionally, she has worked extensively in the Asian Pacific Basin. Currently Lindy is completing

her Doctor of Teaching through Charles Darwin University. Her special interests are reflective practices, community of learners and transformative learning - especially in relation to early childhood education.

Because of her commitment to community partnering, Lindy has played an active role in the regional ECTA group since her arrival in Hervey Bay twelve years ago.



## **Bronwyn MacGregor**

Bronwyn MacGregor's association with ECTA first began in 1990 when she was president of the Longreach regional group. After many years teaching in England and New Zealand, she has returned to Australia and is once again a member of many ECTA committees. Bronwyn is currently working for Disability Services Queensland but, previous to that, was part of the Children's Services Team at the Open Learning Institute of TAFE. She has always had an interest in teaching and a love of young children and studied her Diploma of Teaching Primary (with ECE specialisation) at the Mt Gravatt BCAE.

After graduating in 1987, she took up her first teaching position as Teacher-in-charge at the Gayndah State Preschool. Two years later she headed west to teach Preschool and Year One at the Longreach School of Distance Education. Bronwyn's other early education teaching experience extends to Reception and Year One classes in London, various age groups in child care in New Zealand, a year teaching in a Montessori Preschool (also in New Zealand). More recently, Bronwyn completed her Bachelor of Education and has been involved in adult education – delivering professional development workshops on Literacy and Numeracy, and later as a teacher, tutor and fieldwork liaison officer for private and TAFE registered training organisations.



## **Lyn Hunt**

Lyn Hunt is a member of the ECTA Coordinating Committee and the Educating Young Children (EYC) Editorial Panel. She is the immediate past President of ECTA and has been involved with EYC journal since its inception.

After leaving a career in the dental field, Lyn began her teaching career in indigenous education as the Director of an indigenous mobile kindergarten/preschool. A range of other teaching experiences followed and included enjoying a significant amount of time as the Director in a community based long day care centre and working with children, teachers and parent committees as an Early Education Consultant for the Crèche & Kindergarten Association of Qld.

Passionate about the responsibility society has to the total well-being of children of all ages, especially their health needs; Lyn has taken an opportunity to blend her experiences in education and dentistry in her current role. She is currently employed in the specialized health field of dentistry, as the Manager of Education & Training for the Australian Dental Association (Queensland). Amongst her many and varied duties in this role, she is heavily involved in oral health issues and health promotion activities for young children.



## **Sharon Noall**

Sharon is currently working as an early education consultant for C&K with services covering Mungindi in the south west corner of Queensland to Bribie Island and Brisbane. Prior to this role, Sharon was the director of a community based childcare centre for five years successfully taking the service through the accreditation system.

Sharon has also held the position of Membership Services Coordinator for the Australian Institute of Management Qld & NT. She has a Bachelor of Education – Early Childhood from QUT and has worked in early childhood services for over ten years.



## **Emma Friis**

Emma Friis has currently joined the ECTA family and is looking forward to the coming year working with the team on *Educating Young Children*. Emma holds a Bachelor of Education Early Childhood from QUT 2001 and an Associate Diploma of Education Child Care 1995.

After nine years of working in the Child Care Sector she has embarked on a new journey in the VET Sector currently as a teacher at the Southbank Institute of TAFE Children's Services. Previously, Emma has worked as a tutor, marker and writer (Children's Services) and as a Learning Support Teacher for the Open

Learning Institute of TAFE and a teacher at the Logan Institute of TAFE working with teacher aide students and trainees in the Child Care industry.

Emma's work with The Gowrie Inc. and as a Validator with the National Childcare and Accreditation Council's Quality Improvement Accreditation System has strengthened her commitment and advocacy for quality care and education for young children. Her love for the industry has led her to share her experiences and passion for Early Childhood with eager new recruits to the industry. She enjoys being a part of a dynamic team at Southbank and continues to work with young children and their families in a unique TAFE-based Playgroup at the Southbank Campus.



## **Ingrid Nicholson**

Ingrid has been an active member of ECTA for just over two years. She is currently teaching at Eatons Hill State Preschool and Samford State School SEC where she finds both roles as preschool teacher and special education teacher to be challenging and exciting.

Whilst working in the field of Early Childhood for a little more than six years Ingrid believes that she is constantly learning and developing and finds that ECTA supports this change, and why she chooses to take an active role on both the journal and coordinating committees.



## **Sue Webster**

Sue is currently a preschool teacher at Junction Park Preschool on the Brisbane South Side and has been a teacher throughout Qld since 1984. She has taught mostly preschool with short contracts in many other grades and has also had a two-year stint in a preschool/Year One class. Sue is looking forward to becoming the Prep teacher at Junction Park next year and is currently on the Brisbane South District Working Group for Prep and the Q.T.U. Prep working group. Sue also enjoys being on the panel for the E.C.T.A. *Educating Young Children Journal*. With two adorable teenage children and a husband who is a Principal for Education Queensland, Sue is kept very busy and very happy.

## ***Milestones of prep implementation***

***Angela Hack, Sandra Grant and Caithe Cameron  
Education Officers – Prep Support, Education Queensland***

As Education Officers working to support school communities with the implementation of Prep, we believe that the introduction of the Prep Year has provided the impetus for further professional dialogue, exchange of ideas, values and beliefs about early childhood education. Such exchanges have highlighted the importance of providing all children with supportive learning opportunities that encourage a positive disposition towards lifelong learning.

This article outlines the milestones that have been reached during this journey of implementation. We also acknowledge the achievements of those dedicated and enthusiastic teachers, teacher aides and administrators, who have driven implementation at the grass roots level. The willingness of these practitioners to share their experiences across sectors has contributed to the opportunity for developing professional dialogue and understanding.

### **Changes to early education in Queensland**

The Queensland Government completed a review of the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 (the Act). An exposure draft of the new Education (General Provisions) Bill 2006 has been released and feedback will be accepted until 17 March 2006.

The draft Bill incorporates several important provisions that relate to the introduction of the Prep Year in 2007 and an increase in the compulsory school age by six months in 2008. These provisions are outlined in Schedules 2 and 3 (pages 238-243) of the Bill. The likely commencement date for the Bill is 1 July 2006.

### **Implementation Process**

In 2003, 39 schools were involved in trialling the Prep Year program. An external evaluation, conducted during 2003, indicated that the Prep program was highly successful in promoting children's social-emotional development and their communication, numeracy, literacy and

motor skills. Currently, across the government and non-government sectors, we have 122 classes conducting a Prep Year program. Target class size is 25 students. In some schools, where there are not enough children to form a separate Prep class, children may be in a composite or a multi-age class.

The research that led to the implementation of the Prep Year found that across Australia, almost 98% of children attend when State Education systems offer at least one year of non-compulsory full-time education before children start Year One. Schools located within several of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities will continue to offer two years of non-compulsory state-funded education prior to a child starting Year One.

By raising the age that children are eligible to start school, Queensland will be aligned with most of the other States. It also reflects the increased school starting age used in European countries such as Sweden, Germany, France and Norway where formal schooling starts at six or seven years of age.

### **Enrolment**

Schools will have already begun their enrolment processes for 2007. To be eligible to enrol in Prep in 2007, a child must be born between 1 January 2002 and 30 June 2002. From 2008, the starting age for Year One increases by six months.

If a child is born in 2001 they will be eligible for preschool in 2006 and will start Year One in 2007. However, some students born in 2001 may be able to attend Prep in 2007 if it is determined that they are not ready to start Year One. Further information may be accessed on the Education Queensland website:  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/etrf/year1readiness.html>

Within the State schooling sector, this coincides with the expression of interest process that has been put in place for Education Queensland teachers to identify their interest in teaching





# The Prep Year

Prep. Each teacher who is interested in teaching Prep should fill out the EOI form and submit this to their current Principal by 5 May 2006. Regional Offices will identify Education Queensland Prep teachers through the teacher transfer report in July 2006.

## Curriculum Guidelines

The Queensland Studies Authority has recently completed the final version of the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines. The guidelines build on the play- and inquiry-based approach to learning that has been a feature of Queensland's successful preschool program. The published version, complete with a CD of support materials, will become available when teachers attend their professional development days.

## Facilitators

State-wide, 132 facilitators have been selected to assist with the facilitation of the Prep Year professional development programs at their local level. Facilitators will be attending a seven-day training program during March to become familiar with the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines. Teachers of prep in 2007 will participate in professional development in Semester Two, 2006.

## Professional Development

A number of opportunities for professional development have been offered to school staff in the trial and phase-in of the prep year. These include induction programs followed by a reflection day, teleconferences and on-site support from Education Officers. In addition, Education Officers provide ongoing support through network meetings and a range of communication strategies. At a district and regional level, implementation teams continue to hold community awareness-raising sessions incorporating the experiences of teachers, teacher aides, parents and principals from phase-in schools.

## Continuity between pre-prep providers and state schools

Highlighted in the implementation process has been the importance of continuity between Pre-prep providers and schools. Schools have begun to devise action plans for continuity using the six building blocks of Curriculum,

Pedagogy, Communities, Understanding Children, School Management and Operational Structure. Some district implementation teams are working with Pre-prep providers to provide strong partnerships.

## Teacher Aides

In consultation with union representatives, the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts explored both the allocation methodology and the transition strategy to support the full implementation of Prep with a view to ensuring success in the move from preschool to the Prep Year. An agreement was reached for State schools that comprised three components:

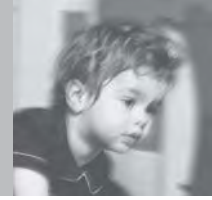
- an enrolment-driven Prep Year teacher aide allocation methodology; plus
- a P-3 allocation for schools with 3.5 FTE or more early years teachers as an adjunct to the Prep Year allocation; and
- a socio-economic weighting of the P-3 allocation component based on the school's socio-economic status that is derived from the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSED).

This approach aims to provide schools with additional teacher aide flexibility over and above the Prep enrolment-driven allocation to ensure that not only will there be more hours available in the lower school, but also that these hours can be used flexibly to meet the differing needs of early years students over the school year. In particular, additional hours may be used to support Prep students early in the school year.

## Facilities

To accommodate the introduction of Prep, the Queensland Government is refurbishing or building more than 1600 classrooms, including more than 400 new classrooms across State school sites. The building process has already begun at many schools across Queensland.

Prep classrooms are designed for the delivery of the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines. They include a carpeted area, an open space for group and individual activities, access to a kitchenette, a preparation area and an outdoor learning area.



### Advertising Campaign

A *Get Set for Prep* kit will be available to help inform parents about the introduction of Queensland's new Prep Year. Additionally, a media advertising campaign that encourages parents to 'get set for prep' was introduced in late February. This campaign encourages parents to begin the enrolment process for children and identifies the kinds of learning experiences children may experience in the Prep Year.

### Closure of Preschools

2006 is a year of significant change in the process implementing Prep as it signals the final year of State preschool education. We wish to acknowledge the significant contribution of teachers, teacher aides and school communities in preschool settings since 1972. Many professional early childhood organisations, as well

as Education Queensland, are creating opportunities to acknowledge the contributions that preschool educators have made to the lives of young children. We encourage educators to be a part of these opportunities and to support similar initiatives within their regions.

### Conclusion

When visiting schools and networks across the state, we have had the pleasure to work with many dedicated educators who demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm as they collaborate with children and their families to provide valuable learning experiences. In their classroom practices and conversations, teachers' respect for the rights of children, belief in the early years curriculum and willingness to engage in the personal and professional process of change is unmistakable. Such commitment is to be admired.



**Date Claimer:**  
**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May - Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

**Celebrate Under Eights -  
'Celebration of 50 Years'**

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/under\\_eights\\_week.html](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/under_eights_week.html)

Look out for our program and posters soon! For more details or to find out what Under Eights Week events are happening in your area visit our website or email [undereightsweek@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:undereightsweek@earlychildhood.org.au)

Under Eights Week aims to:

- promote quality early childhood activities
- highlight the needs of young children from birth to age eight
- increase public awareness of the importance of the early childhood years
- increase awareness of issues concerning young children
- arouse public awareness of the range of early childhood services within the community



Under Eights Week is a subcommittee of Early Childhood Australia, Queensland Branch.  
([www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au))

## ***State Preschool Education – 1972 to 2006 A bold, exciting, highly successful initiative***

***Gail Halliwell***

### **PICTURE THIS**

It is early 1970s and Australian politics has entered new territory. The Federal government has recently introduced funding for 'child care' and a right royal barney is underway about just what is to be considered a 'child care' program worthy of funding, and, whether sessional preschool/kindergarten programs should attract the new Federal child care funding. While this debate swirls around us, the Queensland Liberal Party is campaigning vigorously for 'free State preschool education' at a time when community kindergartens are in such heavy demand that waiting lists are growing at an unseemly rate.

In 1972 the Coalition wins the election and announces it is going to introduce free State preschool education; the Federal government agrees that child care funding can be used to do this; experts in early education are invited to visit and advise on policy and very soon the Queensland Department of Education has a huge building effort underway. In 1973 the first State Preschool Centres open with wide media acclamation and by the early 1980s there are over 350 State Preschool Centres and 131 Early Education Classes attached to small rural schools (Logan & Clarke 1984, p. 20). Long waiting lists indicate the level of uptake among families.

There is international interest, especially in creative strategies used in the Preschool Correspondence Program for isolated children, including the SPAN playgroup concept that brought these isolated children and their families into contact, and, in the policy of a 'flat structure' where all but the ten or so senior staff in the Division of Preschool Education are expected to work as a team.

Such a flurry of excitement, such a bold initiative!

I was there at the time, a campaigner for adequate child care, a parent with children in

community kindergartens and State Preschool Centres and then - I got involved as teacher. The sentiments expressed in this article provide a personal perspective on what so many early childhood teachers found to be a rewarding, growth-producing experience – even some who had thought they would never, ever, work in a nasty old school system.

I have confined my reflections to the first decade hoping that others will tell us stories grounded in the next two.

### **WHAT WAS IT LIKE DURING THE FIRST DECADE?**

The first decade was exciting - for so many parents who were able to experience kindergarten education for the first time and for so many of the teachers opening Centres and finding they were regarded as having expertise!! The whole Division of Preschool Education was on a fast learning curve, so our advice on equipment and resources was sought. We found we had to be better at assessing the relative worth of various resources than we'd needed to be in the past.

Within the school community we sometimes felt defensive, especially when procedures set up to involve parents seemed to clash with traditions in place in the school. For instance, organising the start to the session so that parents felt comfortable about observing or asking questions was not always understood as part of 'teaching'. And nor was it rewarding to find that principals didn't see any learning benefits in all the work we put into displays, notices and other ways of bringing parents into the program.

So too the concept of a 'teacher aide', with practices in primary schools very, very different from those we were trying to implement in our Centres. The idea that all adults worked as a team interacting with children was almost anathema within the school culture of the time.

The whole idea that outdoor areas could be considered part of the learning space appeared foreign to some personnel. For me, a most memorable interchange happened when I was assigned to a Centre where the outdoor area was not yet ready for use. To my horror I found that Works Department had taken the view that an outdoor learning area ought to be flat so they intended to cut down the large gum trees on the sloping grounds, build a very high wall and fill. It took skills of persuasion I didn't know I had to convince those with power that it would be cheaper, safer and educationally superior to merely tidy up the existing landscape. That outdoor learning area has remained sloping down from the building for 35 years now and enjoyed by teachers and children alike (at least I think they continue to enjoy it).

Another aspect of the preschool learning environment that caused grief, though I've never really understood why, was the positioning of toilets within the learning environment so that adults could make sure four to five year old children were becoming competent and confident in using toilets away from home. As teachers we knew how often children found this difficult and how easily they became confused and frightened. I lost count of how often I talked this through with anxious fathers and the male teachers who came to visit. Maybe they never had much to do with toilet training at school or home.

Parents came with different expectations and concerns. We found we had to allay the fears of parents who wanted nothing less than they had experienced in community kindergartens and to do this we needed to provide a high quality play-based program and have an outdoor learning space full of trees and the joys of nature. We also had to communicate effectively with parents who had never experienced a curriculum informed by early childhood beliefs and values, helping them see that learning was taking place and why particular areas of learning were important for this age group.

The need to extend our knowledge and skill was what led to the birth of ECTA (or the

Preschool Teachers Association as it was first called). We gathered together to talk through issues in our daily work and to find more and better ways to act on future occasions.

## TRADITIONS

Many of the teachers in Centres opened between 1973-5 were primary school teachers who undertook special courses to become qualified to teach in early childhood programs. We were in a unique position – familiar with school hierarchies and traditions of practice, yet part of an emerging culture of practice that promoted the idea of a 'flat structure'. Each teacher was said to have equal status no matter what position she or he held. Advisers could advise but not 'direct', the teacher-in-charge did necessary accounting and reporting to authorities but did not have power to direct other teachers. Oh yeah!! Many of us liked the rhetoric but didn't have great expectations.

We were used to 'advisers' as staff with power to judge and report on us. It took about six years, two turnovers in advisory staff appointed for three years, to get the feel for a support service where 'advisers' really did return to a teaching position (as opposed to moving up the hierarchy), and, as they shared their experiences we began to act differently towards our 'advisers'. I say 'we' here but in fact, I am reporting what I heard so many of my colleagues say. I was never an 'adviser' as I left teaching to complete a university degree in 1975 and to avoid what was a difficult juggling exercise for me of caring for my preschool children and giving my all to my teaching.

By the end of the 1970s I was working on a State-wide curriculum project for early education – another break with tradition that brought shock waves within our ranks as well as among our school colleagues. Another swift learning curve was underway.

It must be difficult for teachers now to understand all the angst of the time. For two decades now, there have been curriculum documents for preschool education endorsed by the Queensland government that legitimise



practices informed by early childhood education values and beliefs. From my point of view, it is extremely pleasing that these curriculum documents continue to emphasise the need for teachers of young children who know how to use skills in observation and analysis to make effective matches between what the child knows and can do and what the teacher considers an important learning task. It is gratifying to see continuing acceptance in these curriculum documents that the quality of the indoor and outdoor learning space is as important for effective learning as is the sequencing of subject matter for instruction, and that fostering and enriching 'play' has that level of legitimacy that traditional curriculum documents usually reserved for 'lessons'.

By the early 1980s the seeds for acceptance of these curriculum practices were planted and, of course, I have been very, very interested in watching the evolution towards what now appears to be the curriculum approach that will inform teachers working in the Preparatory classes instituted State-wide in 2007.

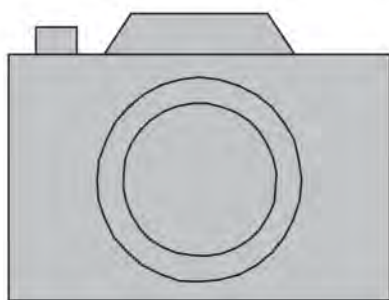
## WAS IT WORTH ALL THAT EFFORT?

Of course it was. Whole generations of families gained access to a quality early childhood program, whatever their finances. Many, many teachers became increasingly professional in their approach to their work and gave so much to the communities in which they worked. In the last few years I have been invited to a number of 25 year celebrations where parents and adult children return with such joy to a place where they relive early exciting and growth-producing experiences. I wish I could capture here in written form some of these interchanges and the stories told. They might help you, the reader, understand just how important they felt the preschool year was in their lives.

Let us hope that the Preparatory classes that are to replace State Preschool Centres in 2007 will do as much for coming generations.

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## WIN 12 Month FREE Membership in the ECTA PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Fancy yourself as an amateur photographer? Here's your chance to show us your top shot! ECTA is looking for quality photographs that represent children and adults learning together. Photos submitted for the photo competition will be retained for future use in ECTA journals and publications. The top ten photos

will be selected by ECTA committee members and displayed at the annual ECTA Conference on Saturday 24th June, for judging by the conference delegates. The winner will receive twelve months free ECTA membership, and will be featured in an edition of the ECTA EYC journal. Runners up will be featured on the ECTA website. Log on to the ECTA website [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au) for entry forms, photo release forms and conditions of entry. Entry closes Friday 19th May, 2006.

## ***What is action learning and how can it be useful to me?***

***Kylie Baddiley - Year 2 Teacher - Mary MacKillop Catholic Parish Primary School***

### ***Introduction***

In April 2005 I attended a weekend seminar about Action Learning. Action Learning is a process that guides people along a set path to achieving a goal. It makes you think about what you want and take responsibility for it. To me Action Learning can be about going out and making it happen for yourself and taking ownership for your teaching and professional development. Don't wait for someone else to do it for you.

I have written this article in two parts. The first is informing you of the action learning process the second will tell you more about what I actually did in my classroom.

### **ACTION LEARNING: THE PROCESS**

I have always looked for professional development that provided me practical advice. Therefore I went to this seminar eager to learn anything that would help me with my teaching career.

Action Learning was not a term I was familiar with but with the encouragement of my Principal, I undertook this challenge to attend two Saturdays and undertake a project with the assistance of grant funding.

I found the seminar was very daunting, as here I was, a fairly new teacher amid a room full of variously titled committee members from many educational associations. I began to think I was not worthy of being there. As the day progressed and I began to get to know others and their reasons for being there, I relaxed, as I felt that my intentions were just as worthy. Each person there had a goal in mind and Action Learning was their key and vehicle to achieving that goal.

It is especially good for helping people to take ownership and to develop their own professional development. In my case, I wanted to create a classroom culture that encouraged

self-directed and independent learning, and allow time for the teacher to give more small group instruction. But how do I go about this? What do I need to know? What are some tried and true ways that work for others? My Action Learning Plan directed me to really nut out what I wanted to achieve and how I could go about it.

### ***After developing my question***

Q. How can I organise a classroom that provides literacy activities that allow the children to be independent, challenged, successful and on task?

Action Learning then helped me set a course of action that would bring this style of classroom to life. I followed the spiralling process step by step as I planned my course of action.

I found this most useful. I particularly liked that this process made me think about what I wanted to achieve.

- We were encouraged to use many tried and tested (as well as new) thinking strategies to guide our thinking.
- I used the 'Y' strategy to discover what I wanted my classroom to look, sound and feel like.
- I wrote myself goals on what I wanted to achieve as a result of this teaching style.
- Next I developed a timeline of events, including the steps within the Action Learning Process and the core learning activities I would undertake to improve my knowledge and skills in this area.

Sometimes the knowledge we can gain from other teachers, from classroom visits or meetings as well as our own reading can be far more beneficial than sitting and being lectured to at an in-service. I found sharing knowledge and experiences with other teachers, in conjunction with my own research and some in-service seminars, were jointly beneficial.

I journeyed through the Action Learning process and I was finally at a point where I knew what I wanted to achieve and how I was going to go about it. I believe this is what action learning does, enabling you to know what you want and how you are going to achieve it. I spent some time preparing my literacy lessons for the term. I had worked out what I would do each week and I had a system in place so it was workable. This pre-preparation was worth its weight in gold, as during the term all I had to concentrate on was teaching, not what I was going to teach.

***Finally, the Action Learning Process involves a celebration of learning.***

In conclusion I was very impressed with Action Learning as a tool. I believe it could be very powerful for both whole school goals and particularly valuable for individual or small groups of teachers who wish to make something happen. Using Action Learning will not necessarily provide you with the results you wanted to achieve. Sometimes we learn by taking the journey and then reflecting on this. Action Learning provides you with the vehicle to begin that journey.

## **PART 2 – LEARNING CENTRES IN A YEAR 2 CLASSROOM**

I am a Year Two teacher and this is my third year of teaching. I came into this profession as a mature-aged student, and I have two young children of my own. I am early childhood trained and I like to provide the children with a variety of different teaching and learning experiences. I have been successfully using maths rotation groups in my classroom for the last three years with the help of parents and teacher aide. I wanted to use a similar approach with literacy, where the children could work independently on worthwhile and motivating tasks while I worked with a small group helping them to improve their writing.

The unit I would be teaching had a strong focus on writing narratives, with a fairytale theme to it. I felt that children needed lots of modelling and small group instruction where they were given immediate feedback to help

improve their writing. The fairytales were both engaging, imagination-provoking and modelled the narrative structure well. The end result required the children to plan, draft, and publish their own fairytale.

The core learning activities that I planned through my Action Learning plan, led me to speak to other teachers about what successes they had had, read articles and books about literacy centres and attend two seminars focusing on teaching writing. All this information armed me with the knowledge I needed to set up my learning centres and how to effectively teach writing. My biggest concern was implementing these literacy rotation activities without any other adult help.

I chose to use a system of individual folders for each child that were housed in a group box with all the resources the children would need to complete each activity. This also was a great way to keep all work completed by each child in a displayed and secure place.

The language group activities I chose were as follows:

1. Listening post
2. Computer activity from the web – fairytale theme that helped children with many different grammar activities
3. Language games
4. Folder activity – fairytale activity sheet e.g. speech marks, word search etc.
5. Writing activity with teacher – each week the focus changed. We worked our way from structure of narrative, characters, and describing words; to how to write more interesting sentences; and what is in an orientation, compilation and resolution.

I introduced the literacy block three days a week for two hours each day. This consisted of a group session where I read to the children a different fairytale a week and focused the learning in a particular direction for the week. For example, we would look at how the author had used describing words to set the scene or what words can we use instead of 'said'. The children then broke off into their groups and set up the activities needed. I pre-taught the

procedure for setting up and how to use each workstation. The children worked for 20 minutes on their activity and then rotated to the next one. I purchased a timer tower that gives both a visual cue and sound cue for how much time is left. This worked well as the children knew how much time they had remaining. I also set up procedures of what to do if the children came across a problem or finished early.

### **IF YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO**

1. Look around your group and see what they are doing
2. Ask the person next to you
3. Hand up to ask the teacher (but only if absolutely necessary).

### **IF YOU FINISH EARLY**

1. Do activity sheet in early finisher folder. (Incentives were given in the way of a group ticket if extra activities were finished)
2. Read a book
3. Draw a picture

After three rotations the children tidied up and we gathered again on the floor. I then went straight into another program called Reading Friends where the children buddied up with another reader. They read to each other for ten minutes then swapped. We then gathered again as a class where I then modelled good reading to the children. This program also gives the children strategies to help their reading buddy if the buddy has difficulty with a word. This went on for three days a week with one 20-minute time slot given to the children to finish off any unfinished word.

I found the children loved the language group activities and I had lots of feedback from parents informing me that their children were discussing the activities at home.

As the teacher I did find this style of teaching rewarding but hard to facilitate on my own. Only having the one adult in the room was hard. There were problems that the children came across that they needed to speak to me about, and this did interrupt the group that I

was working with. The language games were also a concern as, undoubtedly, the children ran into problems with playing by the rules. As the time went on I either kept the same game for a couple of weeks so the children knew it very well, or I changed to a different activity that was easier for the children to do on their own and just as engaging.

On some days I did have parent help, and this was invaluable. Having the extra pair of hands freed me up to concentrate on my small group teaching. Due to my timetable I had to have these language groups in the middle of the day. This makes it harder for parents to come and help out.

Although I believe the groups were a great success, due to the enthusiasm of the children and the result I got with their narratives, the process would have been less stressful for me if I had another pair of hands during each session.

Using the Action Learning Plan provided me with a starting point and a guide to undertake these literacy activities. Without this, I may not have put so much effort into learning about and implementing these activities. My job now would be to go back to the Action Learning Process, re-develop my question and see how I could improve my teaching and learning with learning centres, or begin a new project.

I would recommend other teachers to use the Action Learning framework to help focus your thoughts and actions in any area of your teaching that you wish to improve or know more about.

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## Big ideas small art

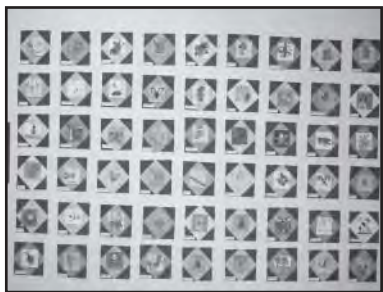
**Angie Lewis and Angela Drysdale –  
St Margaret's Anglican Girls Primary School**

The P-3 teachers were inspired by the philosophy of Reggio Emilia and planned a project. This project enabled the students to work together as a cluster to provide the girls with a learning experience that would extend their thinking and cooperative learning skills.

The P-3 cluster planned an Art Show. This show was developed as a major part of the cluster curriculum based on The Project Approach. A project is defined as an in-depth extended investigation of a topic. Project work provides a context for a child's emerging literacy and numeracy skills.

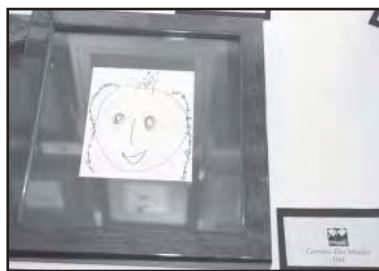
This project was designed in three phases. The first phase included exploring and sharing experiences, ideas and information the children have already related to the topic. In this case, the students shared what they knew about art galleries and exhibitions and read stories. They also visited the Queensland Art Gallery and Oriel Road Gallery to make comparisons between private and public galleries.

The second phase was a period of data gathering, first hand observations of phenomena related to the topic, interviewing experts and other information gathering strategies. In this phase, the students investigated how to set up an art exhibition and identified the different components. During this phase, the children elected to be part of small group, which was responsible for a component of the Art Show. These components included marketing, entertainment, catering and setting up the environment.



Alongside the project investigation, the students were busily creating miniature artwork in their art lessons, to display at their exhibition.

In the final phase the students brought the investigation to a conclusion which was an Art Show. Every child had an art piece professionally framed, which was available for sale (only to the



family of the artist!)

### Phase 1

The teachers offered immersion experiences. These included

reading stories about visiting art galleries and watching an excerpt from the movie *Madeleine*. These experiences set the scene for the provocation.

**Q. What is an art gallery?**

**Q. Why would you visit an art gallery?**

*'To look at pictures.'*

*'To have a look at all of the pictures painted by the artists.'*

*'If you are really interested you could go and see more.'*

**We visited the Queensland Art Gallery.**

To further their understandings and to investigate the workings of an art gallery it was decided that we would visit the Queensland Art Gallery.

The students were able to view the art, ask questions, observe the various duties of the staff and to take note of display options.

They also were amazed to learn that they, along with other Queenslanders, own the art.

**We visited Oriel Road Art Gallery.**

To give the girls a wider view of art galleries we decided to visit Oriel Road Gallery. This visit enabled the girls to view art in a more intimate environment and we were fortunate to be able to 'question' staff and artists who had their works on display in the gallery. This visit really inspired the girls.

**Q. How does the Gallery acquire the art?**

*'The artists come here and hang their art. When it sells*

*we get part of the money and the artist gets the rest.'*

**Q. What do all the lights do?**

*'It is very important to get the lights right. Some paintings look stunning at night. Others look better with lights shining on them especially from the ceiling.'*

**Q. How many pieces of art are there in the gallery?**

*'About thirty-nine paintings are hung and about fifty pieces of art altogether as well as sculptures on the tables.'*

**Q. What advice would you give to the girls about art?**

*'Lots of practice. More often we have to do it and redo!!!'*

**We discussed differences/similarities with the children between our art gallery visits.**

**Q. What was similar or different between the two art galleries?**

*'The art was hung the same way at both galleries.'*

*'The Queensland Gallery was public and Oriel Road was private. The big art gallery is public because they own it and Oriel Road is private because you can buy Art.'*

*'The Queensland Art Gallery was big and Oriel Road was like a house.'*

## Phase 2

**We decided to start our own art gallery and discuss what would be needed.**

**Q. What are the types of things that we need to make?**

*'Art work and paintings on canvas.'*

*'Sculptures'*

*'Detailed art work.'*

**Q. What jobs would we have to do for opening night?**

*'Food to take around, waitresses.'*

*'Tour guides would have numbers eg. Group two with Tour Guide two.'*

*'Microphones, someone to say thank you, maybe a Master of Ceremonies.'*

*'Girls to talk about who made the art.'*



**Q. Where will we hold our Art Gallery?**

**Q. What type of music will we have on the night?**

**Q. Who would we invite?**

**Q. What special things would we need for Opening Night?**

*'Make it look like an art gallery.'*

*'Wine for the grown ups, drinks for the little ones.'*

*'Play area for bored children.'*

The students then elected to be part of a working groups, marketing, art gallery set up, catering.

## Marketing

The Marketing Group had to design the logo for the Art Show. The group brainstormed ideas for what could be used as a logo for the posters, invitations and labels.

Each student designed a logo and the group voted upon the logo that was to be used for marketing. Two designs were chosen. Two students met with a graphic designer with whom they worked with to create the final logo.

The marketing team also had to plan the entertainment for the night.

**Q. What sort of music should we have on the night?**

*'No loud music. No drums or guitar. Just piano, violin and harp.'*

**Q. Should we have one person playing for 90 minutes or a number of girls for a few minutes each?**

*'We don't want one person because they'll get really, really tired.'*

**Q. Who would we invite?**

*'We could invite our family and friends.'*

**Q. Will they need to RSVP?**

*'We would need a list of all the people who are invited and we can cross their names off as they arrive.'*

**Q. How many ushers will we need?**

*'The ushers could also be security.'*

# Teacher Stories

*'We could have nametags so everyone knows who they are.'*

*'We could also make signs that say – don't touch!'*

## Catering



**Q. Who do we need to service the food?**

*'Waitresses'.*

**Q. How many pieces of food will we need per person?**

*'Three'.*

**Q. What type of food would we like for the art show?**

*'Biscuits, mini pizzas, mini burgers and mini quiches.*

*Pink wine and red wine for the adults'.*

**Q. How will we make the food?**

*'We could make the food in the tuckshop'.*

**Q. Where will we get the ingredients from?**

*'Get them from the supermarket or bring them in from home'.*

**Q. How are we going to organise the drinks?**

*'Have cups on the table and serve the drinks'.*



## Set-Up

The students visited the art space drew plans and drew lots of pictures. They discussed how they would like the artwork displayed. They decided to display the Year One animal wire sculptures in a Bonsai Garden. They asked Mrs Wall to bring in some jungle settings for them. They painted leaves and decorated drums and

cylinders to glue the 'animal eyes' on to. They designed and made a woven bamboo wall for the Year Two art.

They decided to have teddies hold some Year One art on the couch and make it look like a lounge room.

For the Year Three shell sculptures the girls set up fishing lines, real shells and sand and scattered the



shells amongst the sand. The preps decided to create a barn scene with straw for their miniature vegetables.

We then discussed



themes for the framed art to be displayed in the gallery. For the Year Two's we decided to create a 'butterfly garden'. After the framed art was hung, the girls dressed the area with a rock display, watering cans, flowers and shells.

## Phase 3

### Art Show

*'We wanted to display our artwork we had been doing in class this term.'*

*'We invited our parents, teachers and Mrs Waters. Food and drinks were served on the night. Some girls played music and our parents could buy our artwork.'*

*'On the night I was a waitress. I served muffins, sausage rolls, quiches and cheerios. After that I had a break and another student replaced me and I had a drink.'*

*'I got lots and lots of people coming to me for a drink and most of the people wanted red fizz, green fizz, water and coffee. I had to fill one jug because it did not have any milk in it.'*

*'We had the Art Show because we made little sculptures and sketches of sea shells.'*

*'My favourite part of the night was serving drinks. The night was outstanding. I rate it 10 out of 10. We should do something like that again.'*

This project was facilitated by Irene Michaels, Christene Wall, Angie Lewis and Emma Clarke – P-3 Teachers St Margaret's Anglican Girls Primary School. These teachers would like to acknowledge the inspiration gained from 'Big Art Small Viewer – Celebrating children as artists'

## References

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## *The scenic route to early childhood teaching*

*Lynelle Coates*

The quickest way from one point to another is in a continuous straight line. I have met many people who, quite sensibly, chose this route in gaining their teaching degrees. I, on the other hand, chose to take a few detours and stop at all the tourist spots on the way. The journey to my destination went something like this: school, a legal secretarial job, an early childhood certificate, a diploma in early childhood, a couple of years overseas, various positions in child care, a couple of years of a special education degree (not finishing for reasons that now seem superfluous), more work in the early childhood field, a couple more years overseas (again for reasons that now seem superfluous), and finally a degree in early childhood. Well almost.

I have just completed my final teaching practicum and have one assignment that is all there is between me and my dream. Towards the end of the four weeks I began to travel down memory lane and reminisce about each of the practicums I have completed. To my shock I added up at least ten. Do I feel well-prepared to enter the teaching world? Does anyone ever feel totally prepared? I do feel that the scenic route has allowed me to mature and it has given me the opportunity to build my knowledge and abilities from the grass roots up.

Studying for my diploma took place nearly 12 years ago and one of those practicums changed my direction in life. It was a mandatory special education prac. I was placed in a school that has children in residence and their special rights and needs were severe. Out of ignorance I was concerned as to how I would handle the



situation. I remember speaking with my host teacher on a pre-visit and I told her that I was not sure how I would handle it but not to give up on me because I would do everything to make it a positive prac. They say everything happens for a reason and I believe this was one of those situations. Within five minutes of my first day, and seeing those huge smiles on the children's faces while we were singing the

morning greeting song, I had a light bulb moment. This was something I wanted to do more of. And that experience has shaped who I have become and steered me to where I have arrived.

Teaching and caring for children with special needs became a passion for me but it was a passion within the area of early childhood. It is for that reason that I then embarked on an early childhood degree. An unexpected bonus was that I have found the knowledge and skills I have learned through being involved in the special education field have been invaluable on my teaching pracs. I have been able to incorporate them with all children in many different situations. As a result I have a real interest in the area of inclusion and the next planned stop along the scenic route will be a masters degree in inclusion.

To be a teacher was a lifelong dream of mine. Some people ask me if I regret not completing a teaching degree when I first left school. My answer is always that this is the path I was meant to take and that I would not be who I am or where I am now without having taken that path. For some people the right path is the continuous straight one. For me the right path was the scenic route.



## ***A change of scene for Ann: An active ECTA member for the Hervey Bay Regional Group***

***Lindy Austin***



*Ann and her Lonely Planet Guide on China.*

On the 6th of April, Ann Le Marseny, ECTA member, former early childhood lecturer for USQ - Wide Bay and Master's degree candidate will be leaving for China on a teaching assignment for Australian Volunteers International. She will be heading to a region officially known as Shangri-la, a mountainous paradise in the foothills of the Himalayas.

In contrast to its fictional namesake from a 1930s novel, the Shangri-la region in south-western China near Tibet is beset with poverty. Although tourists have flocked to see Shangri-la's cultural diversity and geographic beauty since it was opened to visitors in 1994, it still has some of the poorest villages in China.

Ann is going as a volunteer to work at the Eastern Tibetan Language Institute which seeks to change the local community's employment opportunities by offering scholarships to young people from impoverished villages. The not-for-profit school aims to provide a pathway to

employment and an escape from living on less than a dollar a day.

Tourism can provide new economic opportunities for remote communities, but the poor are usually ill-equipped to take advantage of those opportunities. 'Very few people among the local Tibetan population can speak English, an important skill for the hotel industry,' says Ben Hillman the Institute's founder, '... by learning English and getting a job in the tourism industry, young people have the opportunity to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.'

Ann will be part of a small team of full-time teachers who will be taking part in the Australian Volunteers International program (AVI), which receives funding from Ausaid. This is a Federal Government's foreign aid program. Chinese authorities have also supported this school.

Ann first started exploring volunteering overseas at the beginning of 2005. Her dream was to work in Asia within a relatively small community. Her image of communities as diverse and valued partners and collaborators meant that she wanted to work with them, exploring their educational needs and desires, and then help them to achieve those goals.



*Lindy Austin, Ann Le Marseny & Leonie Mitchell.*

She was inspired by AVI's goals, one of which is to create enabling environments for people to enjoy long, healthy, happy lives. She also wanted to grow in her understanding of another culture and, most importantly, to have an adventure.

AVI first offered Ann an assignment in June last year but, following government intervention, the project did not go ahead. In September she was rung again about another assignment this time in Zhongdian China. After the initial interviews and discussions nothing much seemed to happen, so Ann assumed that this project had also been put on hold. Ann then won another twelve months early childhood lecturing position at USQ - Wide Bay. However, shortly after commencing the position she was contacted by AVI and offered the contract to work in Zhongdian China starting the 6th of April.

Now Ann had a big decision to make. Should she take the assignment in China (which she felt was just what she was looking for), or should she continue with her contract at USQ - Wide Bay? Mostly friends advised her to continue with the position at the University, after all she could always do that 'other stuff' later. However, after a lot of self-reflection Ann decided that she really needed to follow her heart's desire for adventure, now rather than later. So she laid her cards on the table and discussed her options with the University staff at Wide Bay. They were very encouraging, and supported her request to resign from her position in time to depart Australia on the 6th of April.

In a world where everything is measured in terms of economic return and how it increases one's earning capacity, volunteering is surely against the trend. However, this perception fails to understand the capacity of the human spirit, the desire for many to make their contribution to society, and that as human beings we are always searching to belong and to build relationships with meaning. Anyone interested in supporting the Eastern Tibetan Language Institute can contact Mr Hillman at [ben.hillman@anu.edu.au](mailto:ben.hillman@anu.edu.au)

While she is in China, Ann will be documenting her experiences as part of a research project, Learning Opportunities of International Volunteers, being undertaken by researchers from the School of Business at The University of Sydney. She will also be using her teaching documentation for her own research project.

Post note: When Ann initially shared this news with me I was delighted for her but sorry to be losing my colleague and friend. During her time with us, Ann has contributed fully in areas of the Faculty and the local early childhood community. However, this was such a great opportunity - one to be "grabbed hold of". The challenge for the Faculty of Education (Wide Bay) staff was to find a replacement - which is sometimes a challenge in regional areas like Hervey Bay - at short notice. After some discussion it was decided to approach Leonie Mitchell who is one of our early childhood graduates. She is an active ECTA member as well. Leonie has over five years of early childhood experience in Hervey Bay. As a pre-service teacher Leonie completed many of her professional experiences in local educational settings. Her area of expertise is in the child care sector.

*Ann is going as a volunteer to work at the Eastern Tibetan Language Institute which seeks to change the local community's employment opportunities by offering scholarships to young people from impoverished villages.*

## *The open book scenarios: NIQTSL and the NFA*

*Celeste McIntosh*

During the month of October, the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership took its first steps alongside the Neville Freeman Agency, to explore the implications of rapid change on the future of teaching and school leadership. In this initial Open Book Scenarios workshop in Sydney, NIQTSL and NFA brought together a diverse representation of members to an open and transparent discussion about preparing for the future challenges in education. From this initial group meeting of around 25, a reference group will be formed to assist NIQTSL and NFA in their initiative to ease us all into the unpredictable future of education.

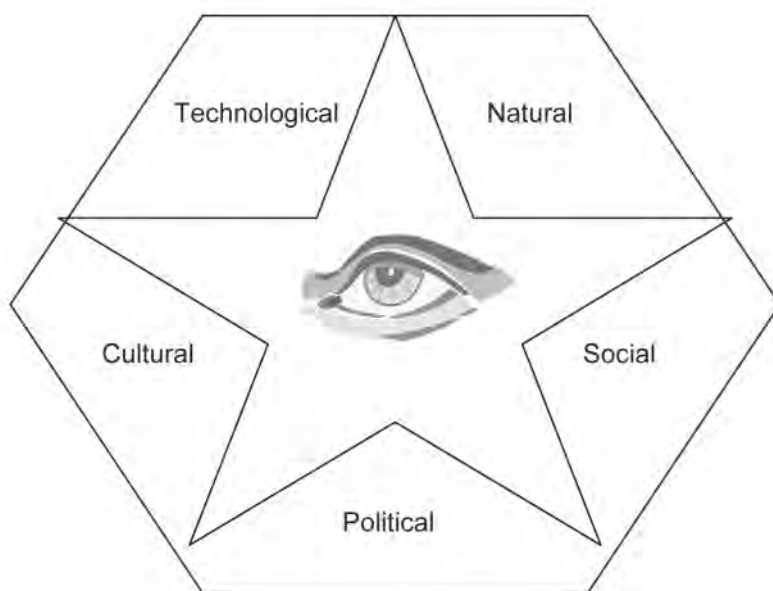
Questions were asked such as: How will educators face the future and its challenges? How will they prepare young people to cope with a rapidly changing world? What will educators' and students' roles be in the future?

NIQTSL and NFA are embarking upon a journey to demystify and uncloud how future educators will deal with educating tomorrow's children. The process of scenario building,

endorsed by NFA, appears to be a progressive not retrospective model and aims to engage the wider community in its process. Here is an interpretation of the model used during the initial brainstorming session.

The **Futures Scenarios** reference group is yet to be established and their role is yet to be finalised. The reference group will include representatives of the teaching profession, the broader education community and futures consultants. When established, the reference group will meet with the managing team from the NFA, which includes Oliver Freeman, the project's director, Richard Bawden, Howard Dare, Melanie Williams and the chair Greg Rippon.

During 2006 NFA will continue to gather information from a wide range of sources and interest groups. By mid 2006 of that year NFA hopes to draft the first of the scenarios. I attended this first session in Sydney and as a classroom teacher I felt invigorated about the future prospects in education, realising that the future in education may be a Renaissance, or rebirth for humanity.



NIQTSL encourages the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations to take an active role in this initiative towards demystifying the future of education for its stakeholders. I endorse this sentiment.

## **What is this 'scenario building' project?**

A visit to the NIQTSL website ([www.niqtsl.edu.au](http://www.niqtsl.edu.au)) reveals that one of their current initiatives is directed toward building scenarios about teaching and school leadership to the year 2025. The announcement states '... (the project) presents an active and creative opportunity for teachers across the nation to take part in conversations about the future of schooling and about the role of their profession ...'

But to what end?

Well, firstly, it is important to realize that scenario building (let's call it 'scenario-ing' for simplicity) is not about predicting the future. That simply cannot be done with any degree of reliability. It is more about conducting a series of conversations and analyses as a means of examining future possibilities in order to be ready for the future.

So read on

## **How does that occur?**

The scenario-ing process starts with the presumption that in any community, however large or small, there will be wide and divergent views of the existing world. This richness of views is carried forward when we start thinking about possible future worlds, except that 'future' introduces higher levels of uncertainty.

Individual world views may differ, as we see in the interpretation of the daily news, but each is right in its own way and from its own perspective. Group views of the world differ and these in turn differ from individual views from within the group. Again, each view is legitimate.

As we scale down from 'global' communities by considering world views around a service idea (as education may be considered), or a

business idea (which may also include education), we may begin to see some common themes emerging. We could use such themes to build some pictures of possible future worlds for our chosen activity. That is, of course, provided we can share these different world views in some constructive, open and non-threatening way.

So scenario-ing seeks to generate a climate for strategic conversations about future worlds, and to capture these views in all their richness and complexity (we call this the 'divergent phase'). Through an iterative process we then try to find consistent themes about key issues for our activity, and to identify all the significant influences generated, or likely to be generated, by the environment in which the activity will operate (the 'convergent phase').

As the future is not predictable, it is not surprising to find that several alternative, but plausible, futures arise.

Scenario builders generally describe these possible 'futures' in the form of a narrative or story to allow people to imagine the subject activity in each of the plausible worlds.

It is important for participants in scenario-ing to realise that it is the journey through the process, not the destination (outcome), which counts, as useful or interesting as the outcomes may appear. It is in this arena that personal development takes place, and in which personal perceptions are modified, and these are often the enduring benefits of the scenario-ing process.

A sound scenario-ing process generates a safe, healthy and creative space for us to have conversations about the future. As these conversations occur, we mix perceptions while generating new ideas and debating them through rational argument. The process serves as a tool for re-framing our perceptions of the future for our activity, and leads to an understanding of the influences likely to drive the activity. It seeks to foster adaptability and to maintain a balance between total integration (which would inhibit change



through lack of original thought) and differentiation (where individualism dominates to the exclusion of cooperation and adaptability).

We know that uncertainty and ambiguity create individual and organisational tension. The process of scenario-ing helps smooth such turbulent waters by mitigating the impact of surprise, and by providing more cohesive planning processes as well as rational responses to change.

By using long time-frames, the hope is to shift planning and change discussions (and change is as inevitable as death and taxes) outside what might be called the 'inertia cycle' (a planning cycle which lies within the time needed to make significant change).

By endeavouring to engage large numbers of practicing teachers, from all sectors and demographics, the 'Open Book Scenarios' is seeking to capture thousands of such strategic conversations, and, by iteration, distil them to address the focal or 'framing' questions:

**WHAT WILL THE AUSTRALIAN TEACHING PROFESSION HAVE TO DO TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH IT WILL HAVE TO OPERATE IN 2030?**

**WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CHALLENGES FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?**

(Note: the time-frame differs slightly from the earlier 2025. This shift is a consequence of re-considering the time-frame during the co-design phase now nearing completion)

**What are we planning to do in the process?**

While the full process design is yet to be released, we know already that there are discrete activities which will be included.

We need to identify and collect the key issues which will affect teaching and school leadership in 2030.

Secondly, we wish to identify the influences which will play out in 25 years.

To do this we will run FOCUS GROUPS with teachers, principals, pre-service teachers, parents, school councils and business, ensuring that we cover all sectors and demographics of schooling.

Also, we will conduct INTERVIEWS with other interested parties, including the union and policy-makers, as well as remote and home educators.

Today's students will be included through the use of STUDENT FORUMS.

In the background, we will conduct extensive desk research, covering similar studies both here and overseas, as well as researching the likely environmental, political, social, cultural, economic and technical influences likely to affect us by 2030. We will talk with prominent thought-leaders, again both here and overseas, to obtain their views.

And finally, we will seek to engage young people in a writing exercise based on their ideas about life in 2030.

**And then?**

These activities will collect large amounts of data and many thought-provoking ideas. There needs to be an analysis and distillation process in order to generate a series of quite different 'pictures' about teaching and school leadership in 2030.

Then, using some carefully selected teachers, we will put these pictures into story form (so-called 'narratives') so that others can imagine themselves in these alternative worlds. These narratives then can be used to inform policy-makers; to alert the community to possible learning environments in 2030 and beyond; and to provide useful material for teaching future students about the value of being prepared for the future by thinking about those future worlds which may emerge.

Finally, there will be a public launch (July 2007), a publication (book) and a teaching kit for teachers.

## ***Early brain development: why education is not a race***

***Dr Michael Nagel (BEd, MEd, PhD)***



Dr Nagel has been an educator for over twenty years and has worked with children on three continents. He is Australia's only Master Trainer with the U.S. based Gurian Institute specialising in neurological development in boys and girls. His current research interests focus on how children 'see aspects of their world', incorporating neurological research into educational contexts, the importance of student voice in educational decision making and enhancing the total school environment for boys and girls. Mike is a Senior Lecturer in education at The University of the Sunshine Coast. He has presented papers, workshops and seminars nationally and internationally and is expecting to release two books in the near future entitled *Boys-Stir-Us: Working WITH the Hidden Nature of Boys* and *It's a Girl Thing: Understanding the Female Brain in an Educational Context*.

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***Children must master the language of things before they master the language of words.***

***- Friedrich Froebel 1895***

In 1837 Friedrich Froebel founded his own school and called it "kindergarten," or the children's garden. Froebel described his educational philosophy as "self-activity" which was premised on the notion that children were to be led by their own interests and be free to explore them. In this educational context, the teacher's role was to be a guide rather than lecturer or trainer. In the end, Froebel's most important gift to children was a philosophical position where the classroom was viewed as a lovely, thriving garden needing a teacher who took on the role of loving and supportive parent. In the fast-paced world of the 21st century, one can realistically wonder if some educational gardens can be more readily described as superhighways to socially demarcated destinations of success underpinned by a belief that the quicker a child's formal education takes place the better.

Almost two decades ago, American scholar Professor David Elkind noted that 'education is not a race' (Elkind 1987). Indeed, Elkind has

become synonymous with the term "hurried child" and has spent much of his life documenting the inherent problems with trying to get children to do too much too soon. Much of Elkind's work focuses on the psychological pitfalls that accompany children who engage in activities long before they are mature enough to do so. Based primarily on his research in cognitive science and psychology, Elkind was and still remains very concerned with ensuring that childhood activities and childhood learning remain developmentally appropriate and are not consumed by a culture of standardised testing, academic competition and parental or educational agendas aimed primarily at improving or hurrying opportunities for academic, sporting or social prowess. For Elkind, generations of children were missing out on free time, unstructured play, opportunities to daydream, being bored and discovering themselves and their world through the environment around them; growing up had become a competition, a race to success.

Elkind's views stem primarily from the context of education in America that arguably operates

on a collective over-focused on gaining a competitive edge and such matters cannot be as great a concern here in Australia. Surely we don't have pockets of suburbia where groups of children spend every day of the week and much of the weekend rushing from one activity to the next. Furthermore, we can't possibly have preparatory programs, early childhood centres and schools who compete with each other to the point that forms of assessment are used as a measure of accountability and tool for marketing. And finally, parents here are not overly concerned about being seen to do all they can for their children to the point of having dance lessons one night, tennis the next, swimming the next, tuition the next, etc. We don't push our children too much and too soon, do we? Growing research across various disciplines actually suggests otherwise; Australians may indeed be hurrying children along so it is timely to examine why this is perhaps not in the best interests of children and childhood.

For most people, trying to gain some measure of success for their children may not appear as such a bad thing. After all, most would agree that parents and educators are only trying to do their best to enhance the options and futures of the children around them. However, if education is indeed becoming a race, it is important to remember that most types of racing include some form of pit stop, chances to refuel, clear navigational pathways, opportunities to change course and most importantly a driver who knows where and how fast he or she might want to go. Therein lies a fundamental problem with moving childhood along, who or what is driving the educational race and where exactly does a pathway to the future lead? Moreover, what inherent dangers accompany a race when the participants are not ready? These are questions that should be continually revisited by parents, early childhood educators, administrators and policy makers due to the fact that recent neurological findings lend

support to the romanticism of Froebel and the concerns of Elkind; too much, too soon and too fast may do more harm than good.

### ***The Developing Brain – More Marathon than Sprint!***

One of the most fascinating neurological findings in recent years is the important influence of experience on brain development and learning. In some sense, educators and parents alike have always known that we learn from experience. John Dewey, widely regarded as one of education's greatest thinkers, spent his life writing and philosophising on the nature and importance of experience (Dewey, 1938). In the 21st century however, what is truly amazing is how experience actually shapes the architecture of the brain. At the risk of being overly simplistic, it works kind of like this ...

Not long after conception the architecture of the brain begins to take shape. *In utero*, the foetus is actually beginning its learning journey based on the environment and experiences of the mother. Upon birth, learning really begins to take off with the growth of connections (synapses) between some 100 billion neurons. These connections are influenced by individual experience and the more repetitive an experience, the greater the opportunity to permanently hardwire these connections. This in turn becomes the essence of learning and is repeated throughout one's lifetime. However, when it comes to formal education, many other factors play a part in this process. It is clear from both social scientists and neurologists that children, at all ages, need appropriate environmental stimuli to facilitate their learning and neurological functioning. It is also important to note that over-stimulation and activities that are introduced too early can actually hinder learning. In other words, appropriate does not necessarily mean more and much of this is dependent on windows of neurological opportunity facilitated by 'myelination'.

As noted above, neurons provide the raw material for learning by building connections in the brain. Throughout life they become differentiated to assume specialised roles and form connections with other neurons enabling them to communicate and store information. Stimulating experiences activate certain connections, repetition consolidates these connections and the brain learns. However, there is also a neurological timetable that extends from birth through childhood and into adulthood and is mediated by various processes. Through early childhood and into adolescence this timetable is significantly influenced by myelin, a fatty material that insulates an important part of the neuron known as the "axon". Myelin actually appears as white fatty material and thus is often referred to as the white matter of the brain. Current research identifies that the escalation of myelin occurs in various stages and there is actually a 100% increase in white matter during adolescence. In other words, the build-up and acquisition of myelin towards full brain maturation is more marathon than sprint.

Why is myelin so significant? As an insulator, myelin aids in the transmission of information from one neuron to another and the more "myelinated" axons in the brain, the greater opportunity for neural information to be passed quickly. The end result of all of this is that certain activities may be easier to learn when regions of the brain are sufficiently myelinated or when our brains become "fatter". Incidentally, myelin is the material that gradually breaks down when individuals are stricken with multiple sclerosis.

Myelination is very important for children due to the fact that when we are born we have very few myelinated axons. This is one reason why visual acuity and motor coordination are so limited at birth, the neural networks responsible for facilitating vision and movement aren't working fast enough and will become much more efficient when myelin increases. Furthermore, as we grow older

different regions of the brain myelinate at different ages. For example, when Broca's area, the region of the brain responsible for language production, myelinates children are then able to develop speech and grammar. These times of myelination have become referred to by neuroscientists as "**learning windows**" and amazingly, a healthy brain knows which areas need to be myelinated first and that myelination cannot happen all at once; again, it takes time to become a 'fathead' (Diamond and Hopson, 1999; see also Herschkowitz and Herschkowitz, 2004; Kotulak, 1996).

There are, of course, a number of other determining factors influencing neural proliferation and as Dr John Ratey from Harvard Medical School states, 'the exact web of connections among neurons at a particular moment is determined by a combination of genetic makeup, environment, the sum of experiences we have imposed on our brains and the activity we are bombarding it with now and each second into the future' (Ratey, 2001). In other words, along with time, stimulation from an individual's environment and social context are other significant factors related to myelination; experience facilitates stimulation, which in turn facilitates neural connectivity.

Some might suggest that if experience and activity are indeed significant factors in neural development then surely the earlier the stimulation (read "enrichment") the greater the propensity for learning and early success. However, while we know that input from the environment helps shape the brain, we must also remember that 'the brain is not primarily an experience-storing device that constantly changes its structure to accommodate new experience ... it is a dynamic computing device that is largely rule driven' (Gazzinga, 1998). Experience is important, but so too is each individual child and a one size fits all race to excellence in formal education settings may do more harm than good. In an earlier issue



of this journal, I noted an example of how doing something too soon or too fast becomes problematic (Nagel, 2005). Specifically, I described how disadvantageous it could be for children to be engaged in writing before the fine motor skills required to hold a pencil are neurologically established. Often, a child who is introduced to penmanship too early has “incorrect” pencil grip neurologically hardwired to the extent that when a teacher or parent aims to correct this it becomes very difficult if not impossible. In a sense a child’s brain in this situation is being asked to “unlearn” something already programmed because the “learning window” was forced open too early. If something like pencil grip can be hampered by racing too fast, what might happen to children, who in the early years of their educational lives, engage in cognitive endeavours beyond the developmental timetable of their brain? Perhaps the number of boys identified and labelled as having learning problems in literacy are merely behind the neurologically developmental stages that allow them to process and produce the required information for language related activities.

Equally important, because it is not possible to accelerate emotional maturation since the emotive areas of the brain (limbic system) have their own time clock, how do we ensure that racing towards academic excellence does not result in engulfing children in undue stress beyond their coping abilities? For some children, too much too soon can lead to stress related anxieties that actually turn off thinking processes. It is these types of considerations that must be part of the craft of each and every educator; ensuring that timing is everything and experiences are developmentally appropriate. This cannot be overstated enough especially in an era of educational agendas often founded on enhancing a nation’s economic prowess rather than enhancing each child’s developmental trajectory. As they engage in facilitating

opportunities and activities for learning, parents and teachers alike would do well to remember how influential they are and how important timing is in regards to stages of neurological development.

At the risk of stating the obvious, parents play a significant role in the development of a child’s neural hardware. For example, to stimulate greater language comprehension, you need to talk a lot with children early in life or to help a child be more coordinated or active as they grow, they should be encouraged to run and play games when they are young. In other words, if a child is doing music, sports, engaged in language activities or using their innate curiosity to find meaning in the world around them, then those are the connections that will be hard wired. A double-edged sword thus exists for parents and children who are either deprived of developmentally appropriate stimuli or who are hurried into activities too soon. That being the case, how and where does one begin to ensure that a child’s serendipitous and planned learning experiences are timely and sufficient? The first and arguably most significant avenue to garnish such information is by considering the needs of the child.

For all children, parents and other caregivers contribute to healthy brain development by providing routine, proper nutrition, talking, singing, playing and reading to a child. One must also recognise that above all else, relationships are the most important component of healthy early brain development. Indeed, the irreducible core of any child’s environment during early development is people. Just as appropriate stimuli will enhance neural connectivity, children’s developing minds also require that adults, especially those personally significant in a child’s life, will talk to them in special ways, nurture them as they grow and guide them in a loving fashion. Normal neural and human development draws upon these types of everyday experiences far more than those

offered by educational toys, flashcards and a weekly timetable filled with activity. Future success for a child begins with a healthy parent-child relationship. Children who experience warm and responsive caregiving are more empathetic with peers later in life and learn to connect with other people. Fostering this type of emotional hardwiring is perhaps more important than hurrying children through a plethora of activities and academic curricula.

In an educational context and for their neurological benefit, children must be allowed opportunities to explore their environments freely, self-regulate their behaviour and encouraged to ask questions. Howard Gardner, renowned educator and Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education advises that teachers carefully observe students and that in the early stages of a child's school life they forget about any formal testing or assessment (Gardner, 1995). Observing also means allowing young children to experience learning through the random appropriation of bits and pieces of information. During the early years the brain is not always receptive to carefully organised or sterilised, sequenced material. That is why 'play' is such an important component of formal and informal learning; individual experience fosters new brain growth and refines existing brain structures and there is nothing more naturally individual for children than opportunities to learn via playing. Contemporary research has shown that children who do better academically and socially throughout their school lives, come from home and early learning environments that provided a greater opportunity to explore and play (Eliot, 1999). Play is an incredibly important part of early childhood education and complements the rationale behind why institutionalised learning prior to Year One has traditionally been referred to as preschool. It's only after their fifth birthday that a child's brain is emotionally

and cognitively ready for formal learning; following adult reasoning, using memory in a deliberate fashion, beginning to grasp abstract concepts and having enough self control to sit for long periods of time and attend to what is being taught "starts" around the age of six. It can not be overstated that being ready for the type of learning usually associated with stereotypical classroom structures and agendas "starts" around age six and continues throughout one's life in school. In this sense, the educational mantra of 'lifelong learning' that often surfaces in arenas focusing on adult learning should be the catchcry for all those concerned with hurrying children along. Education is not a race and the brain is uniquely programmed to ensure that too much too fast may actually result in vehicular breakdown.

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## ***Gender and leadership in early childhood***

***Lorraine Collins – A/Principal - Upper Mount Gravatt State School***

### ***From the Past to the Future***

Early childhood education is the crucible of the education sector. It is where it all begins. The quality of the programs that are offered, the quality of the staff and their interactions with children, parents and the community are paramount. So one must then look to the quality of the leadership in this sector and ask can we ensure the same quality is available?

Current leadership theory acknowledges different leadership styles. In practice the traits that have been found to be successful in business are still being sought and seen to be the qualities needed to succeed, even though it has been acknowledged that educational institutions are not businesses in the true sense. They are in fact nurturing establishments.

In the past, leaders were characterised by 'aggressiveness, forcefulness, competitiveness, and independence' (Blackmore 1989, p. 100) and this has proved a potent mix for the success needed in the business world. This has also been distilled down so that generally some aspects of these characteristics are seen to be needed in all leaders. Such characteristics tend to be male (Shakeshaft 1989, p. 147) and in many spheres, if women aspired to leadership, they had to display aspects of these also.

Today, a broader concept of leadership is required. Many writers also stress that, in fact, all members can 'do leadership' (Bray, 1999, p. 12) and thus the leadership density grows.

This newer concept of leadership is better matched with current leaders in our early childhood settings.

Characteristics such as the nurturer, consultative leader, sharer of power, excellent communicator, supporter of teachers, committed to children and a visionary, are important traits to look for in potential leaders (Scrivens, 1999). We must move away from the old measures of success and ground our

knowledge in current practice and continue to reward and acknowledge people with these skills.

Whilst women are naturally drawn to the early childhood sector, it is pleasing to see many men in the field but much needs to be done to ensure this stream of gender diversity is there in the future. With expanding views of leadership, leaders will come forward from both genders and it will continue to benefit the services we deliver. Both men and women can explore the whole gamut of their potential and use their diverse skills to hone a style. This will take our sector successfully into the future. It no longer needs to be the sole responsibility of the leader to lead, instead sharing and drawing upon the potential in others, will ensure that the leaders we need will be there.

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As is already the case in other states of Australia, Queensland will introduce a Preparatory Year under the responsibility of primary school principals. This opens up many opportunities for early childhood educators to embrace the advocacy role with both hands and run with it. Principals without prior involvement with the Preschool sector, are in new territory. The accountabilities for all have risen, with the introduction of this addition to the early phase of learning within the school. This is a prime time to be advancing the cause of early childhood.

All the old and new traits of the leader will be needed: persistence, independence, assertiveness along with exceptional

communication, consultation and visioning. Within the service itself, leaders can model being the nurturer, consultative leader, sharing power, commitment to children and supporting teachers. What will also be needed is the sharing of expertise and the ability to influence others to achieve quality resource allocation, priority for early childhood issues and a shift to fully mesh the new early phase operations into those already operating in primary schools.

Early childhood professionals must build a place for themselves to be 'teacher leaders' (Andrews, Crowther, Hann and McMaster, 2002, p. 25) and create avenues by which their views can be heard. They can have impact upon policy and procedural operations. This will ensure the transition through the early phase years and on to the middle phase is a very smooth and unimpeded one.

With a majority of males in leadership positions in primary schools in Queensland, the development of linkages between this and the female-dominated early childhood area is important. Different leadership styles must be acknowledged for their worth. Common ground must be explored through worthwhile dialogue, and effort expended on maintaining the communication and building the team leadership concept. These factors will see the early phase of our education system become the very best it can.

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*Both men and women can explore the whole gamut of their potential and use their diverse skills to hone a style. This will take our sector successfully into the future. It no longer needs to be the sole responsibility of the leader to lead, instead sharing and drawing upon the potential in others, will ensure that the leaders we need will be there.*



## ***What options are available for families with young children in regional Queensland?***

***Lindy Austin and Ann Le Marseny***

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### ***Abstract***

***Questions about the early childhood education options for regional Queenslanders persist. Are Australian parents and young children disadvantaged because of their place of residence? Initially it has been assumed by regional residents that limited early childhood education existed for young children in regional Queensland. This paper explores the range of early childhood options available in the Hervey Bay region, Queensland, Australia. The options are explored through the experiences of a focus family who explored a range of alternative options to meet their family needs at specific periods of time.***



***Introduction:*** In this paper early childhood options in the Hervey Bay area are explored. Hervey Bay is thought to be representational of regional Queensland in that the same

educational structure exists throughout the State. The main options within the early childhood structure in regional Queensland include child care, family day care, occasional care, kindergarten, preschool, and Preparatory class.

Hervey Bay is a coastal city in regional Queensland, Australia. The city of Hervey Bay is the one of the fastest growing regional cities in

Australia. Even though there is a diversity of people relocating to the area, two distinct groups can be identified. These two groups are elderly people who retire to the Bay and families with young children. The second identified group will provide the focus for this paper. Generally it has been assumed by people that limited support and educational services exist for people who reside in regional Queensland. This includes the limited choice of early childhood education options for families with young children. This paper will narrate the journey of a family with three young children who have recently shifted into Hervey Bay and investigated a variety of early childhood services to meet their unique yet changing needs. Additionally, this paper will only focus on the early childhood option which existed at specific periods for the focus family and does not comment on the advantages, disadvantages or quality of the services.

During the 1960s there was a global movement to provide compensatory early childhood education programs. These were designed to 'compensate' poor children to address the perceived gaps in their care and education (Hutchins & Sims, 1999). Hutchins (1995, cited in Hutchins & Sims, 1999, p. 14) states 'it was argued that early childhood should be established in rural areas because children did not have shops and busy traffic to look at and learn about'. Unfortunately, this perspective of the policy-makers did not reflect an appreciation of the richness that rural learning environments



offered to young children (Hutchins & Sims, 1999). Interestingly, Australia was one of the first countries to refute the global assumption that children from socially different backgrounds and regional/remote areas were not necessarily deprived and impoverished 'just because their experiences were different from those of middle-class children living in cities' (Hutchins & Sims, 1999, p. 15). This perspective was reflected in the early childhood programs for Aboriginal children in remote areas (Broinowski, 2002). Now, these early childhood programs are deliberately built on the rich experiences which children encounter in their own communities (Hutchins & Sims, 1999). Recent theorists such as Bronfenbrenner and Vygotski acknowledge the importance of children's environments and communities (Berk, 2004). Recent research conducted by Barbour and Barbour (2001, p. 215) has identified that, regardless of whether a child's community is in the city, a small rural town or a regional/remote area, 'the resources available in each setting will vary but all form the bases for a community curriculum'.



Many challenges and societal changes are affecting family structures, family life and children today. Woodhall (2005, p. 1) states 'these changes not only influence what makes their family unique, it also poses consequences for all family members, family and child policies and educational services'. Due to a variety of factors such as changing employment shifts in families, children are faced with extended hours at educational settings (Barbour & Barbour, 2001). This is a major change, which has occurred in the last 20 to 30 years (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2004). Woodhall (2005, p. 1) states 'families are progressively changing in order to meet the demands of living in an ever changing society'. According to the United

Nations (1996) the rapid changing pace of life today is the most extreme challenge families are faced with. Many families are juggling children, careers, ongoing study, aged parents and lifestyle expenses. Consequently, young children are spending little time with their families and more time in education and care settings (Barbour & Barbour, 2001). However, the United Nations (1996, p. 9) acknowledge the worthwhile and precious family contribution by stating 'families continue to provide the natural framework for the emotional and material support essential to the growth and wellbeing of their members'.



The rapidly changing family and societal structures are evident in the focus family which consists of a mother, father, two little boys aged three years and 18

months and baby girl. Morgan (1997, p. 12) states 'the nuclear family-based household consists of a male breadwinner, who earns to support his wife and children. The wife's prime responsibility is to run the household'. Studies conducted by Coltrane (1990) support Morgan's findings. However, this is not the case for the focus family. After the birth of their first baby boy, the mother returned to work, while still breast-feeding her baby, and the father was the main carer. According to Berk (2005, p. 274) the picture of 'mother as caregiver and father as playmate has changed in some families due to the revised work status of women'. After the birth of their second baby boy both parents of the focus family shared the role of caring.

## **Early childhood requirements - 2003: Playgroup.**

The focus family settled in Hervey Bay in 2003. This enabled them to reside in a regional university city. Once again their roles reversed and the mother was a full-time carer while the father commenced university full-time. Additionally he found part-time work. Because the two boys were very young the mother decided to investigate the early childhood options for them all – not an option where the boys would be dropped off and cared for by



play a vital role in providing one of the early childhood options for young children in regional Queensland. Within Hervey Bay about six play groups are in existence and come under the auspices of churches, private enterprise, or incorporated community associations. Anthony (2002, p. 1) stated, 'Playgroups are about children and parents having fun. They help children learn new skills and assist parents interact with their children in a supportive environment'. Studies conducted by Austin & O'Brien (2005) concur with Anthony (2002). Funding for playgroups is accessed from Australian government bodies because of the social support opportunities they provide for parents and young children (Playgroup Association of Queensland, 2003) as well as grants from club gaming funds and playgroup membership fees (Hussey, 1995).

## **Early childhood requirements- 2004: Occasional care / child care/ family day care.**

By 2004 both parents were juggling three roles between them: that of studying, working part-time and caring for their two boys. [According to Woodhall (2005, p. 3) balancing work, study and home 'impacts on children who have to attend child care, school or outside school hours care would be an increase in time spent in institutions']. Papalia, Olds, & Feldman (2004, p. 349) concur. 'With the upsurge in the dual-earner and single parents, greater emphasis on education and the tighter pace of family life, children spend more time at school and in organised care than a generation ago'. Subsequently, the changing need of families affects the services provided by education settings. Out-of-home care has become an acceptable option and sometimes a necessary consideration for many families. Due to changing family and societal structures out-of-home care is interwoven with the economic

others. Play group appeared to meet their needs. Due to the fact the mother was not working, she could attend playgroup on the scheduled days. In fact, play groups

structure of any society (Broinowski, 2002). Findings by researchers Barbour & Barbour (2001) and Berk (2001) state that today over 60% of American children experience out-of-home care. Hutchins & Sims (1999) concur with similar findings for Australian children.

Even though Woodhall (2005, p. 3) argues that 'women have been left to manage the challenging problem of achieving a balance between work and home' this does not apply to the focus family. Juggling the three roles was a 'co-juggle' for both parents. At this period of time they required an early childhood option which enabled them to place both little boys for defined blocks of time, several days per week. Barbour and Barbour (2001, p. 118) point out:

*At first glance we may find many options for childcare and early education available for mothers. Yet parents have to be flexible and somewhat inventive nowadays in selecting the appropriate care for their children. And families will usually look for what they need.*



The focus family did just this and began seeking out which early childhood service would meet their needs. Three options were available to them: that of fulltime

private child care, occasional care and home-based care (known as family-based care in Queensland). According to Broinowski (1997, p. 21) 'private childcare centres also offer long- and short-term care for children of all ages. They are mainly employer sponsored ... services established for profit'. Presently there are ten child care centres in Hervey Bay with four more in the planning stage. Due to financial restraints most child care services charge parents for full days regardless of the number of hours they either use or require. Government subsidies are available for low-income families (Broinowski, 2002). Another option was family-based care for the focus family. Broinowski (1997, p. 21) describes family-based care as involving:

*people caring for children in their own homes. This may be carried out independently or through a*



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*family day care scheme. Family day care schemes are managed by the coordination unit which is responsible for finding and placing children with carers and monitoring the overall care and administration of the scheme.*



Family-based care is available in Hervey Bay and comes under the auspices of a church. The focus family considered seriously this option because this type of

arrangement provides a home-like environment (Barbour & Barbour, 2001). Unfortunately, due to the limited number of registered in-home carers in Hervey Bay, they could not access this option because there were no vacancies for both boys with the one carer. Again government subsidies are available for low-income families (Broinowski, 2002). The third option was occasional care of which only one centre exists in Hervey Bay. This service is State-funded and licensed through a government department. The Director (personal commitment, May 5, 2005) outlines the aim of this service as the provision of a flexible early childhood service at reasonable costs for parents who require short hours for study, work, emergencies, relief, respite care, time out and so on. To use this service the focus family were required to organise their work and study commitments around the days occasional care was offered.

## **Early childhood requirements- Semester 1, 2005: Kindergarten.**

Recent changes in the Australian Government policy determined that too many families were on government pensions. Now families are being 'encouraged' to return to work and place their children in out-of-home care. Broinowski (2002, p. 145) argues 'the economy determines people's work practices, needs, dependency and the way children are cared for. It provides funding, support or taxation systems which encourage care for children by families and community-based or commercial childcare services'. Since their arrival in Hervey Bay the focus family has been receiving some government support. The mother's decision to

return to part-time work necessitated the focus family finding suitable early childhood services which accommodated their care requirements to cater for work and study as well as their first boy's education.

As the first boy of the focus family had reached to age of four earlier in the year, his parents considered he required a regular educational placement which focused more education than education and care. In Queensland, children around this age enrol in kindergarten which caters for children aged three to five years. Originally kindergartens emerged as the result of an ideological split with the day nurseries in Australia. Instead of providing care support for families (especially mothers) as did the day nurseries, the kindergarten movement advocated 'that children should not be separated from their mothers for more than a few hours per day' (Hutchins & Sims, 1999, p. 13). Additionally, carers were trained as 'teachers' and were not expected to carry out 'nursemaidish' tasks such as changing nappies/diapers or feeding very young children. This ideological split is still evident in early childhood services today in Australia. Present day Australian kindergarten programs are similar to public preschool programs in the USA which 'offer half- or full-day programs for 3- to 5- year old children' (Barbour & Barbour, 2001, p. 120). On the other hand Australian preschool programs are similar to American kindergarten programs.



Within Queensland, community kindergartens come under the auspices of the C&K - Crèche and Kindergarten Association of Queensland. Other

C&K early childhood options are provided such as preschools, child care centres and family day care schemes are available. These exist in some areas of Queensland (Childcare, Kindergarten, Preschool and Early Childhood Services Brisbane, Queensland, 2005). All of these services are government-regulated and parents pay a minimal amount for this service.



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To meet all of their education and care requirements, the focus family decided to continue accessing occasional care services for both boys. Additionally their elder boy was enrolled and attended one of two local C & K kindergartens which is located adjacent to the university. He attended three days per week. Once again the focus family had to be very flexible and schedule their work/study commitment to meet the times of operation of the services they had selected to access. Of interest, studies conducted by Bee & Boyd (2004, p. 379) found 'men and women whose jobs require higher levels of self-direction and autonomy show increases in intellectual flexibility'.



Another service provided by this C & K kindergarten is Outside Kindergarten and Preschool Hours Care which is available for families attending that centre

(Director, personal communication, 18 May, 2005). The focus family could access this after-kindergarten care for their older child if they deemed it necessary. Additionally, other organisations within Hervey Bay, [offer outside-school hours care (OSHC) and vocational care] such as churches, primary schools and private child care centres.

## **Early childhood requirements – Semester 2, 2005**

The co-juggling act of roles for both parents continued and their early childhood requirements changed again this semester due to two reasons. The first reason is the arrival of a new baby girl and the other is that the mother is working full-time. Additionally, she is completing two university courses of study and the father is continuing with his study as a full-time pre-service teacher. Of interest, parents who model hard work and high achievement demonstrate two of many attributes which nurture talent in children (Berk, 2005).

Once again the focus family has decided to continue using kindergarten and occasional care for the two boys, to meet their early childhood

requirements. And again their schedules are determined by the hours of operation of their selected early childhood options. Researchers in the field (Barbour & Barbour, 2001, Howe, 1999, p. 318) indicate that 'participation in group care settings is widely valued by parents as support for the family'. However, the father is looking after the baby girl while the mother works. Berk (2005, p. 158) maintains 'well-functioning families with a second (or third) child typically show a pulling away from a traditional division of responsibilities'.

## **Future early childhood options – 2006/7/8**

The focus family will need to consider preschool for their eldest child next year. Presently three preschool options are available in Hervey Bay. First of all is the State-funded preschool system. Prior to commencing formal schooling all children are eligible to one year of preschool. However this is not compulsory. Preschools come under the auspice of State-funded primary schools and are free. The hours of operation depend upon the needs of the local area. State-funded preschools will continue until the end of 2006. Queensland Education (2005, p. 2) state 'during this time the current age requirement for preschool will stay the same – that is, children must be five by 31 December in the year they start preschool'. Seven state primary schools have preschools attached to them. Three private schools have preschools. The second option is the preschool class at the C & K centres. Only one of the two C & K centres has a dedicated preschool class (Director, personal communication, 18 May, 2005). The other runs a multi-aged program (Director, personal communication, 10 May, 2005). Even though this service is government-funded parents are still required to pay a minimal charge (Childcare, Kindergarten, Preschool and Early Childhood Services Brisbane, Queensland, 2005). The third option is the preschool class in a private child care centre of which all have dedicated preschool classes (Director, personal communication, 11 May 2005). Government subsidies are available for low-income families (Broinowski, 2002).

Of interest is the change to the State-funded schooling system for young children. In 2007 a full year Preparatory Year will be implemented in

Queensland. This will replace the current State provision of a year of sessional preschool with a full-time universally available Preparatory Year (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005). Preparatory classes will be located in all state primary schools. The ramifications of this mean that the compulsory school starting age will increase by six months in 2008. Children must be six years old by 30 June in the year they enroll in Year One. 'This means that Queensland children will be starting school at about the same age as children in other (Australian) states' (Queensland Studies Authority, 2005). Presently Preparatory classes are being trialled in some state schools. Only one Hervey Bay school has been accepted in this State-wide trial. Consequently the chances of the eldest child of the focus family attending a Preparatory trial class are very limited as many parents have placed their child on the waiting list to be considered. He commences Year 1 in 2007.

**Conclusion:** Over a period of a few years the early childhood options for the focus family changed considerably from year to year. Underpinning their unique family changes are societal changes, such as women in the workforce and changing family roles, which impacted upon them. The research for this paper has identified and demonstrated a variety of early childhood options which are available in regional Queensland. Generally, it appears that several alternative options were available for the focus family to access their unique needs at any one period of the last few years. However they were, and are, constantly co-juggling their roles to predetermined early childhood schedules, to ensure that their three children receive education and care which meet their needs. As advocated by Woodhall (2005, p.8) 'clearly as society changes, families are also changing to accommodate new needs'.

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## Digital Portfolios

Kim Walters



Digital photography and technology can play a key role in the documentation process of a negotiated curriculum. With digital

cameras, phone cameras, computers and other technological devices becoming more affordable, there is now a real opportunity to incorporate digital media into our daily curriculum to document the many learning experiences of the children.

*Whether we like it or not, new technologies are also redefining our roles. Multimedia environments will increase, not decrease, the central role of teachers in orchestrating learning experiences. We will be challenged to thoughtfully guide students' learning within information environments that are richer and more complex than traditional print media, presenting richer and more complex learning opportunities for both teachers and students. (Lue)*



Every classroom or preschool unit should have permanent access to a digital camera for their own use. The need for full access to the camera is vital

especially in the early years of schooling when teachers need to capture the moment to gain optimal learning opportunities. Our early childhood classrooms are alive with play-based learning and child-generated spontaneous experiences. It is not appropriate or possible to share or 'book in' a time slot for the use of the school/centre camera to capture these valuable moments of learning. With the camera always on hand, teachers can make full use of these incidental learning experiences and use them to enhance the curriculum for the individual and group.

Hughes & MacNaughton tell us in *Building Equitable Staff-Parent Communication in Early Childhood Settings* that

*International research has consistently found that good staff-parent relationships in early childhood centres benefit children, staff, and parents.*

*Communication between parents and staff is an important part of the daily life of early childhood centres, international research has shown that good staff-parent communication contributes significantly to the success of early childhood programs in several ways ... good communication between staff and parents is a prerequisite for high-quality care and education of young children; it positively influences children's cognitive and social development, increasing their educational success; and it contributes to good relations between children and between staff and children. (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2001)*

Mendoza goes further stating:

*Communication and the exchange of information are key components of the relationships between parents of young children and the staff of programs that serve them. In order for information to be useful, however, parents must be able to comprehend it. Access to information can be seriously compromised by differences in reading level and home language, and by understanding of jargon and vocabulary, among parents and program staff. (Mendoza, 2003)*

In addition Mendoza states:

*distance and sensory or physical disabilities may impede access to information. (Mendoza, 2003)*

Kim Walters points out in her book *Digital Documentation*

*Digital photography allows us to traverse many of the limitations to communication. Especially those caused by such things as parental illiteracy, language barriers caused when parents and/or children have English as their second language, are non-English speaking, non-verbal or hearing impaired. Difficulties due to access or distance can be bridged by via e-mail and/or the World Wide Web. (Walters, 2004)*

Whilst using digital photography with children, the children become extremely motivated and excited at the knowledge that their thinking can be documented and shown to others. This allows very young children, who have not learnt to read or write or may have speech and language impairments, languages other than English or simply age-appropriate limited expressive language, an alternative language to readily communicate with peers and parents. I believe

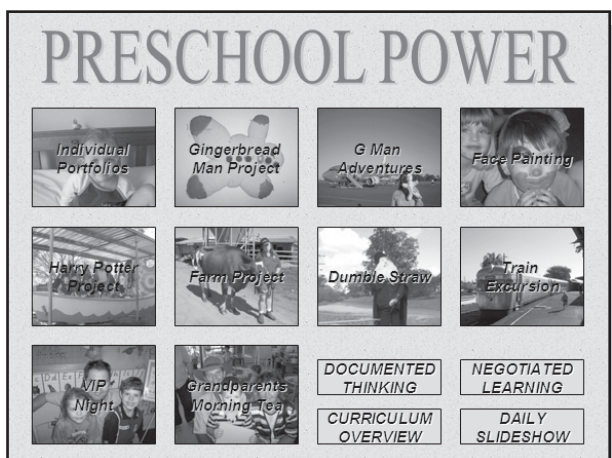


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digital photography allows us to give all children a VOICE to communicate with peers and adults.

Children embrace this medium of communication enthusiastically, often requesting photos to be taken to record what they see as important moments or accomplishments. Documentation can take on many forms both printed and electronic. Digital photography gives an immediate record of experiences and can capture the learning journey of each child. Teachers and children, reflecting back on the photographic documentation, are given opportunities to participate in assessment for learning.

Digital portfolios for each child should be available in the room on a daily basis. They should be updated as soon as possible after the recorded event so that learning can be scaffolded by the



photos and communicated information is up-to-date. I have found the visual reminder generated by the photos to be invaluable for children, especially young children, to recall and interpret past events and experiences. Photos can be used to create a vast array of documentation and resources for the group.

Over the past five years I have discovered the biggest single benefit of using the digital camera has been the enhancement of communication between parents, staff and children. When parents are informed on a daily basis of what the children are doing during the day, they are more aware of the educational value of the curriculum and they appreciate the time taken to strengthen the learning of the children. Parents are more aware of how the early childhood professionals relate to the children and how the children relate to each other.

The parents are more appreciative of the role of the educators, of their commitment to teaching in general and specifically to their child. This new appreciation is because digital photography changes the amount of information given to parents and how this information is communicated. Malaguzzi supports these findings stating:

*(Teachers) must discover ways to communicate and document the children's evolving experiences at school. They must prepare a steady flow of quality information targeted to parents but appreciated by children and teachers. This flow of documentation ... introduces parents to a quality of knowing that tangibly changes their expectations. (Parents) take a new and more inquisitive approach toward the whole school experience. (Malaguzzi in Edwards et al, 1993)*

By viewing current photos, and by this I mean photos taken on the day of viewing or during the previous session, parents can immediately see for themselves how their child was interacting with others, activities they were engaged in and (from facial expressions etc.) how their child reacted or felt about the various experiences. The parents should be encouraged to use what they see in the photos as discussion starters with their children. As we all know, asking about something specific produces far more detail in a child's response than 'What did you do today?' This in turn gives the parents more information about their child's day. Furthermore, digital photography can give a focused starting point for educators finding it difficult to engage parents in conversation about the curriculum or their child in particular.

As children examine photos they discuss the details in them with other children, staff and parents thereby revisiting past events and reinforcing the learning that took place. Digital photography allows us to display documentation immediately. As the children 'read' photographic documentation, they are encouraged to formulate ideas and decide what they want to make or add next to their project work. The children receive clear messages that you value their work when you take photos of it and display documentation immediately whilst it is still relevant to them. Children are encouraged to share the documentation with each other and their parents, friends and visitors to the centre.

By listening to children you can ascertain what is important to them and, therefore, what should be included in their individual portfolio. Portfolios become a photographic record of each child's individual learning experience and give real insight





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into how each child developed throughout the year reflecting what they valued. Each child's progress and level of development can be documented photographically and referenced to curriculum guidelines or phases of learning.

Photos are excellent for recording interactions and involvement in learning experiences, especially those that are not product-oriented. The specific level of development of the individual can follow a general statement about the learning area, with photos inserted within the text. General statements can verify your curriculum, describe learning areas and advocate for play. The date the observation was recorded is of particular importance when documenting a child's abilities as they can change rapidly. Including the date also allows a timeline to be established throughout the portfolio.

*ICTs, (Information and Communication Technologies) such as video, digital cameras, and scanners provide a means for educators to creatively capture, record and share that "moment" of the child's learning, discovery and excitement in unique and innovative ways. (Thelning et al, 2001)*

Thelning and Lawes tell us

*Because children's engagement is high, the impact of the 'teachable moment' is increased. Early childhood pedagogy is changing and the way practitioners plan for children's learning needs to be reflective, responsive, adaptable and flexible. (Thelning et al, 2001)*

Fleming, J & Connelly, R go further stating:

*Digitised images provide a huge body of evidence covering every aspect of school life. This will improve the efficiency of the school monitoring system and reduce the need to gather evidence from a variety of other sources. (Fleming et al, 2002)*

## Digital Portfolios

Portfolios have been with us for a very long time. Earlier portfolios were large boxes or drawers where our teachers collected artwork and work samples. Each item was selected because it provided evidence of a new skill or knowledge gained. Sometimes teachers would attach a note or reflection on the work. Digital portfolios allow us to extend this box collection to include audio, film and interactive displays. Storing photos of work in digital form alleviates the need for storage boxes etc. It also allows one piece of work to be stored in multiple locations allowing one artefact to be used for several children.

Paulson & Paulson state:

*A portfolio tells a story. It is the story of knowing. Knowing about things ... Knowing oneself ... Knowing an audience ... Portfolios are students' own stories of what they know, why they believe they know it, and why others should be of the same opinion. A portfolio is opinion backed by fact ... Students prove what they know with samples of their work. (Paulson, 2002)*

A digital portfolio should not be a haphazard collection of artefacts but rather a reflective tool that demonstrates growth over time.

*If I can begin to consider that the primary purpose for the portfolio is to provide a vehicle for each child to grow metacognitively and to demonstrate competence in telling the story of learning, the door is open for the child to assume ownership. (Herbert, 2001)*

Ownership can begin in the preschool years with transcripts and/or recorded audio of children's reflections or photos of the many languages of children, be they movement, dance, paintings, drawings, creative dress ups, clay, dough, collage or combinations of several mediums. Young children express themselves in a multitude of ways and the digital camera is an ideal tool to capture these. The photographic documentation allows for later reflection and interpretation by the child or skilled teacher.

What to include in a digital portfolio is only limited by the imagination and technology available. They may include multimedia presentations, newsletters, fliers, favourite internet links, charts, handwriting, graphics, animation, sound, photographs, graphs, speech, video, email, work samples, text and drawings. Through the digital portfolio we can truly create an engaging environment to document and reflect the many learning journeys of children in our schools.

As children's skills in using the digital camera improve they can begin to take photos to document their own learning and expressive creations. A camera or scanner can be used to digitally capture drawings, paintings, handwritten stories, graphs etc. all of which can then be added to the digital portfolio. Photos can then be inserted into each child's Individual Portfolio.

Microsoft PowerPoint was used to create Digital Power xi as it is familiar to most computer users and readily available. PowerPoint gives us the capacity to create interactive computer programs



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which include audio recordings, text and photos. The Digital Power main page links to all available class presentations, the home page for individual digital portfolios and several specialised slides. A modified version is available for child care operators who have more than 30 children enrolled in the one room.

Children select the presentation by clicking onto an AutoShape filled with a photo and/or text to identify the linked presentation. Pages in the various presentations contain a variety of action buttons that take you to the next page, previous page, back to the main page or to a different presentation. Audio records can be recorded and inserted into the slides. The audio can play automatically on opening the page, or after a mouse click on either linked text or an audio icon. I prefer to use the mouse click as the children are highly motivated to hear the audio, especially if it contains their own voices.

Specialised presentations display a Curriculum Overview sheet, Daily Planning sheet and an Observations and Child Quotes sheet. There is also a Learning Records Word document for each child that is also interactive. The document can be opened from the running show as there are links set in the first slide of each child's individual portfolio to their learning record, as well as a general link from the main page to a home page which links to every child's learning record. The document allows you to record observations and verbatim quotes and photos from children and record the child's progress through the phases of learning on a summation page. The curriculum areas are once again explained on the Curriculum Overview page.

I have used Digital Power to document excursions, visitors and learning experiences, to teach/reinforce routines, record children's thoughts at Father's Day and Mother's Day, to advocate for our play-based curriculum and to show a daily collection of photos with captions. Wherever possible, children's audio recordings are attached to give their own interpretations of the experiences pictured.

The thought of documenting through portfolios and especially digital portfolios, is quite overwhelming for many teachers, especially those new to computer technology. With a program such as Digital Power everything is set up ready for you to add your information and photos. No skills in hyperlinking etc. are necessary unless you wish to adapt the portfolio to meet your specific needs. The CD is accompanied by a book which

has full instructions on customising the Digital Power CD to suit your curriculum areas and needs, along with a full technical help section for those wishing to make changes and add more features.

Thelning states:

*Information and communication technologies (ICT) have the potential to provide 'rich and alive' mediums that are attractive, motivating, interactive and positive for children to engage with learning ... They support and enhance learning that is child initiated, involves choice, decision-making and problem solving and is fun. (Thelning et al, 2001)*

Leu reminds us:

*We are experiencing a historic change in the nature of literacy and learning as digital, multimedia resources enter our world. ... just the beginning of a radical departure from traditional reading and writing experiences. How I respond to these important changes will determine our students' ability to succeed in the world that awaits them. (Leu)*

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## ***Engaging cultural and linguistic diversity through an early childhood community playgroup***

***Carrie Rose***

Imagine you're given a boat shed that stored canoes and kayaks and were encouraged to create a high quality Early Childhood environment to train students and to engage the community into the Southbank Institute life ... that's what happened to us!!!!!!

In 2003 the Faculty Director Mike Diezman approached the Children Services team at Southbank Institute in Queensland and that is exactly what he said to us. He was supporting the high level teaching that we were challenging ourselves to achieve and this was his way of showing his support. I am not sure if we saw it at the time but we certainly felt very grateful for the support by the end of development!

We decided that this was going to be a great idea and began to think of ways that it could become a reality. We wanted to give as much ownership to the students as we could and began including them in the vision. Initially it was difficult to have the students engaged in every decision but, as the project continued and the momentum began, it was hard to keep them out! The students and teachers started collaborating and 2004 was our year. The workmen began rebuilding this shed and transformed it into a boat shed painted blue, just minus the boats. It was then that the team truly knew the work ahead.

A lot of time and energy was put into designing the space for the children and students were given a budget for particular areas and their assessment was to create their visions. This was a fantastic experience not just for the students but also for myself and Liz as, at the time we were teaching creativity and aesthetics in Early Childhood. The students presented each 'Learning Space' to the group as assessment and the environment transformed into a beautiful, purposeful playgroup that everyone would love. We were very proud of these students and they were pretty proud of themselves.

The next task for this group was to get it ready for an October opening. They worked hard with each other preparing, advertising and praying that it would all come together. Unfortunately there was little response from the community and it was back to the drawing board. To their credit, the students jumped straight back on the horse (so to speak) and the second time round it all started to fall into place ...

The next scheduled opening was a great success. We had more than 20 people come to that opening and within two weeks the students and staff were operating the playgroup two days a week catering for 15 families each of the days.



We set our sights high for 2005. It was decided that our goal was to open for five mornings a week and we began advertising. Initially we were all a bit nervous about the response but ended up being incredibly overwhelmed by it. We needed to cap each morning at 20 families and began a waiting list. After just two

months of operating five days a week we were forced to stop taking people on the waiting list as it was now 30 people for each day and the likelihood of them getting a place was quite some time away. The calls just kept coming though and the word had spread around the community like wildfire!!! Most parents loved the idea of the students working with the children. Many mothers' groups have joined the playgroup together and this has been a great way for them to keep in touch without having to have morning teas at each other's houses.

The students are timetabled in for particular shifts one or two times a week and they have really taken hold of the playgroup now. There is a real sense of ownership and the teachers have found it the best teaching environment. The students have really began to engage with the children and have opportunity to practice many skills prior to going out on Vocational Placement. They continue to think of new ways to engage with the families. Some of these ways are information posters to help parents understand their child's development, promoting language and literacy through book fairs and book club, making resources for the children, implementing experiences including small group sessions, planning for the children's interests and setting up environments that enhance their learning. Other ideas have been translating songs and posters into other languages to assist families to feel welcomed and valued and they are now discussing a 'lending library' for parents and in the process of setting this up.

Two of the families at the playgroup have shared some more personal moments with us and have allowed us to share them with you.

### **Firstly, it is the story of Akiko & Abby.**

Akiko is a Japanese migrant and Akiko's husband is Australian. Akiko and her husband adopted Abby from Korea when she was a baby and brought her



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back to Australia. Akiko saw the article in the local paper for the playgroup and enquired if it was a multicultural playgroup. After the staff assured

her that she would be most welcome to come, Akiko attended her first day. After the first day she said she felt very positive and loved the facility and the diverse cultures of the families that attended. She began inviting all of her friends to come along. As we had spaces to fill up soon the playgroup had many families from Akiko and Abby's circle of friends. Some of these families have adopted children from other nationalities and this provided them with a great meeting point each week or, for some, twice a week. They engaged in many conversations and we watched as the friendships grew not only within their circle of friends but also within the Southbank Playgroup community. Akiko describes her experience at the playgroup as her and Abby's world has 'expanded and we have learnt a lot from other members'. Akiko says: 'As an old and first time mother, and Asian, life is not always easy in Australia, but it has been easier since last October.'

## **Secondly, the story of Heesu, Chaeyon & Junsuh**

Heesu and her family arrived in Australia in 2004. Chaeyon was just over 2 and is blind and physically disabled (unable to walk) and Junsuh was 3 months old. They had no friends or family in Australia.

Heesu's husband did not speak very much English. However, she spoke some and therefore was responsible for most of the interpretations. This included buying a car and renting a house. Heesu talked to me about the loneliness she felt. 'I stayed at home with the kids for the first 3 months and never went outside unless my husband came home to help me'. She also discussed the challenges she faced. Heesu was not a confident driver and was exceptionally nervous in Australia so the thought of going to playgroup was quite daunting for her. She didn't believe that she would be able to get the two children in and out of the car and almost didn't come on that first day. She called the playgroup and the staff that spoke to her assured her that if she could just get here we would help her in and out of the car and the students would assist her with Chaeyon.

This is how she described her first day: 'I meet other mums (the most delight things) and I can talk to staffs and students too. Specially thank you to Kristen. Sometimes being a disabled child mum is not easy. A lot of people say they understand what I have but I think it is not.'

She continues ... 'I go to playgroup and make a good friend for myself. It is very important to have someone to talk to when you need it. I barely have a chance to speak to adults except my husband. So it is most wonderful thing to me. Also talking to other mums is good chance to get emotional support too.'

Heesu believes that the playgroup has assisted her in achieving the goals she has set for her family. She describes that as 'Chaeyon has overcome meeting new people and is experiencing a normal life'.

Now Heesu has developed many friends from Playgroup and has a network outside of this community to meet up with and we are grateful for meeting her and her family.



Other families commented on the playgroup during the interview sessions and these were some of the comments from them:

'As a mother of 18 month-old twins, it is often difficult to go to social gatherings by myself ... the high ratio of students to children means

that the kids are exposed to new people (of different ages, nationalities and sexes) every week.'

'Jonty (ten months now) has grown up here. I love watching him crawl to the various areas, noticing the students following him and learning with him ... Jordan our nearly three-year-old tells everyone about Jordie's playgroup.'

'Playgroup is a fantastic way to meet new people from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, enabling us to experience different cultural experiences and views.'

'The students have fantastic activities and ideas each week, influenced by their varied backgrounds, that are passed to the children.'

'In the past six months it has been exciting for me to watch Sophia grow and develop with children from different ages and backgrounds. The activities and equipment have always been interesting and challenging.'

'Meeting and interacting with other children of different ages, from different parts of the world, give my children a useful early lesson in diversity, which without any doubt will be beneficial in their future dealing with other people in society ... teaching mutual respect and understanding and accepting differences among people will create a peaceful and prosperous society.'

We are very proud of the playgroup and the students who operate it. It has created a wonderful communication 'hub' that has exceeded even our wildest dreams.



## ***Reflections from the 2006 study tour to Reggio Emilia***

***Beryl Exley, PhD – Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology***

Dr Beryl Exley now lectures in language and literacy education at Queensland University of Technology. She has a special interest in early years reading and writing, critical literacy, visual literacy and literacy as a vehicle for social justice imperatives. Contact details: [b.exley@qut.edu.au](mailto:b.exley@qut.edu.au)



Having been interested in the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education for nigh on

a decade, it seemed the right time to enrol in the Reggio Emilia Information Exchange (REIE) 2006 Study Tour. I had been an early childhood teacher for six years throughout the 1990s, and had read extensively about other people's reflections on the Reggio Emilia early childhood schools. In 1991 the American magazine, *Newsweek*, had nominated these schools as being the best early childhood schools in the world. Along with 90 other teachers, carers, administrators, academics and a sole architect, I travelled to Emilia Romagna, a region in Northern Italy. The week-long tour, hosted by Jan Milikan, Director of REIE in Australia, included visits to a number of infant/toddler (0 - 3 years) and pre-primary centres (3 - 6 years), and lectures by members of 'Reggio Children'. 'Reggio Children' is a company founded to defend and promote the rights and potential of all children and protect and promote the pedagogical experience of children in the early infant/toddler and pre-primary schools (Reggio Children, 2002a).

In true Reggio style, it would be remiss of me not to attempt to paint a picture of the context. Being a January tour, it was midwinter, and we were fortunate to experience blue skies and sunshine for the first four days, albeit with temps below zero. This allowed us to wear our newly acquired winter wear and relish in the delights of warm pasta meals such as the local speciality, tortellini de zucca. Mother Nature dusted the

ancient Roman market city with snow on day five. This was a thrill for some participants who had not yet seen snow! By day seven, we were accustomed to the site of residents and store owners shovelling snow from the footpaths and carefully riding pushbikes and Italian styled motorised scooters on the glazed historic cobblestone paths of medieval Reggio. The temperatures dropped to -7 degrees Celsius, and with that, the spout of water from the park fountain froze in mid-air. We all resided at the



Astoria Hotel, located adjacent to the town's public gardens, Parco del Popolo, just behind the historic theatre, Teatro Municipale Romolo Valli, and in close proximity to many historic Renaissance and baroque churches and monuments. We were only a two-minute walk to Via Emilia Santo Stefano

and Via Emilia San Pietro, a 1.4 kilometer long boutique shopping strip where shop and café owners showcased the best of Italian fashion and hospitality. Of particular note were the lovingly laid out shop windows, and the complaisance of the shop owners. Reggio Emilians still observe the early afternoon siesta; thus the focus of social and cultural activities takes place from dusk until well after dark, usually at one of a number of the city's politically historic piazzas. Masses of promenading Reggio Emilians of all ages rendez-vous to discuss art, the theatre, religion, economics or politics. Throughout the course of a week, we came to understand that the children of Reggio Emilia were immersed in a culture that was community-oriented, focused on aesthetics and relationships,

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and rich in history and politics. These understandings were crucial to making sense of the Reggio approach and for considering its articulation, or otherwise to our contexts of work.

The study tour model of professional development meant that we literally ate, slept and learnt together for seven days. The earlier part of the week was spent on re-visiting and developing a deeper understanding of the Reggio approach, in particular, the image of the child as being a



competent and intelligent researcher of knowledge; the inter-related role of the teacher, pedagoga and

atelierista; dialogic community-school partnerships; co-construction of educational space; curriculum development; processes of knowledge co-construction; and documentation of knowledge processes. It's difficult, if not impossible, to summarise such complex understandings in a few short paragraphs. New comers to the Reggio approach should read the seminal works, such as Edwards, Gandini and Forman's 1993 publication, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, published by Ablex Publishing Corporation, New Jersey. Jan Milikan has produced a publication based on Australian educators' reflections of the Reggio approach, entitled *Reflections: Reggio Emilia Principles within Australian contexts*, published in 2003 by Pademelon Press, Castle Hill, NSW. (See also the workshop presented by Darcia Baumann and Margaret Addicot at the 2005 ECTA conference and published in *Educating Young Children: Learning and Teaching in the Early Years*, Spring 2005, Volume 11, Number 2, Pages 41-42).

Much time, effort and energy was spent on instilling the notion that no matter how ideal an educational approach is, it is always rooted to local conditions. We were reminded of such on a daily basis, not only by the presenters, but also by our own conversations as we tried to tease out the articulation of the Reggio approach to our individual local contexts. This made for an extensive and intensive professional development experience, thanks largely to the generosity of the

many tour participants who shared their wide ranging experiences, ideas and visions and then listened patiently to others' contributions. In essence, we too lived out the Reggio approach. We became a community of learners, an inquiring community with questions, hypotheses, tentative answers and access to those who could facilitate, guide or provoke us to new and sometimes undiscovered understandings. We were co-negotiators of our own professional development. Through this process we became acutely aware of our differences: our different cultures, geographical location, linguistic differences and different reasons for undertaking the 2006 study tour. Some of the participants were from remote and isolated communities, others were in big city schools or child care centres, and a few participants were from our neighbouring nation states. Some were here with the support of their administrators; others were daring themselves to explore and consider what the Reggio approach had to offer non-early childhood sectors.

I was struck by the ease with which the Reggio Emilia educational personnel could theorise their



practice. In answering questions about their work, they always referred to the theoretical underpinnings before elaborating upon the surface level practicalities. Speaking through an Italian/English speaking interpreter, I asked a teacher at the Panda Infant/Toddler Centre about the use of floor level unsided day beds in the one/two-year-old room. Elaborating upon her theoretical understanding of young children as competent and capable individuals, she explained that they exercised good judgement and clear communication about when they needed to rest and when they could rise from that rest (fieldnotes). Again, drawing on the services of an interpreter, I asked a teacher at the Anna Frank [Pre-Primary] School about the use of glass bottles and drinking cups in the three-year-old dining

room; the range of workshop tools available to the children, including hammers, pliers, nails and wire; and the children's unrestricted access to the OHP, electric hand lights, light table and stereo equipment. She too drew on the same theoretical premise, stating that she believes young children to be 'extraordinarily capable'. She said that Reggio Emilia teachers do not construct young children as being 'at-risk' or 'in-need' of 'over-protection', such as is commonplace in litigious societies such as Australia (fieldnotes).

This philosophy of young children as competent and intelligent carried through to the curriculum and teacher/student interaction. While teachers may have laid the seed for the general orientation of long-term projects, the children were instrumental in determining the direction, processes and final outcomes. I will briefly outline two of the many examples of long term projects for real purposes and real audiences I observed whilst on tour. Although both projects involve children from The Diana School, many of the municipality's schools produced publications that documented the children's processes of knowing. The first project involved five/six-year-old children in becoming advisories to three-year-old children who were preparing to attend the school in the following September. The older students decided to produce a publication of the places and people in The Diana School. Through a translator, the teachers report that 'the result is not an exact or standard description ... More than describing, it transforms the spaces, times, people, and events of the school into small and big adventures of life' (Reggio Children, 2002a, p. 5).

... The children tell how in the spring the hedges become apartments where you can trade secrets and, in the thick greenery, you might be able to glimpse a treasure. From a ladder attached to the outside wall you can navigate the ocean. A quiet corner of the school yard with a bit of sand can turn into dangerous quicksand. The tree near the gate becomes a rock for climbing. (The Reggio Children, 2002a, p. 5)

The second project is entitled *Theatre Curtain: Rings of Transformation* (Reggio Children, 2002b). Five/six-year-old students were approached to design and decorate the house curtain for the historically beautiful Romolo Valli Municipal Theatre. The children considered and then negotiated the subject of the theatre curtain, researched about fire-retardant fabric and paint,

measured the size of the curtain, reproduced the area in the playground and learnt about the mechanisms for lowering and raising the curtain. This learning involved them working with the real mechanisms, representing their understandings through drawings and engineering model mechanisms. Eventually, after much discussion, listening, representing and presenting of ideas, the children settled on the subject of transformations. The children prepared their 2D artwork, scanned and viewed them in Pagemaker ® and Photoshop ® to explore the possibilities of size changes, composition variations and image rotations. After much experimentation and joint discussion, the final design was selected. The students worked together to finish the painting before the very formal, public unveiling of the new theatre curtain. The teachers worked alongside the children, documenting their learning processes as well as the product, and producing the publication *Theatre Curtain: Rings of Transformation* (Reggio Children, 2002b). It is a very detailed photographic and written account of learning within a long-term project. Both this publication and the aforementioned Advisories publication are available in English translation from REIE in Melbourne.

It was the combined experience of touring the Reggio Emilia educational facilities, listening and interacting with the presenters from Reggio Children and then participating in ongoing conversations with my tour colleagues that made the 2006 tour such a rewarding and fulfilling professional development experience. Participating in the REIE study tour was not a cheap exercise. It cost AUS \$1600 for the tour (plus travel, accommodation, sustenance and shopping expenses). However, it was without a doubt a marvellous professional development experience and an enormously successful network building exercise. Now that I've been, I appreciate why some tour participants return again (and sometimes again) as they seek to challenge themselves with new questions and understandings with new groups of educators.

## References:

Reggio Children. (2002a) *Advisories*. Reggio Children: Reggio Emilia.

Reggio Children. (2002b) *Theatre Curtain: the ring of transformations*. Reggio Children: Reggio Emilia.



## ***Bears help us care, share and belong***

*Maree Stanley*

### **The Better Buddies Program**

an initiative of The  
Alannah and Madeline Foundation



Teddy bears are messengers of caring, sharing and belonging. It is what bears seem to be particularly good at around the world. The lovable creatures have materialised on mass to help develop students' self-esteem, confidence and social skills in promoting safe and caring school environments. Buddy Bear and his friend Little Buddy are at the centre of a school program developed by The Alannah and Madeline Foundation.



Buddy Bears are spreading the caring word at many schools around Australia. Teachers say that *The Better Buddies Program* was flexible, simple, easily incorporated into the curriculum and fitted well

with the schools' existing programs of encouraging a safe and caring school environment. In fact, it is a must in schools that have buddy systems for their new students.

*The Better Buddies Program* includes an education resource book *Buddy Bear – Buddies Help Out*. The book offers teaching and learning



activities around friendship, peer support and co-operative classrooms. Buddy Bear's central message is: 'I'm special because I care about others' – the message from which the program's activities are based. The program launches into schools with a starter pack so the school can tailor the program to suit their own environment.

The Buddy Bears are mascots for promoting friendship, cooperation and caring and the basis for activities that encourage children to support their peers, build self-esteem, care for other children and develop social skills to enable them to get along with others.

Our new focus for *The Better Buddies Program* is Aussie Values.

#### **Rationale**

Research on school-based anti-violence programs confirms that short-term programs are not very effective. Successful programs have the following features:

- they are preventative
- they start early
- they give students the opportunity to revisit the concepts, values and skills every year of their primary schooling in an age-appropriate way
- they directly teach positive ways to think and act and specific skills.



*The Better Buddies Aussie Values Program* promotes the following values and related social skills as a strategy for developing resilience and positive social behaviour in all children:

- cooperation
- friendliness



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- courage
- mateship
- caring and support
- acceptance of differences
- respect.

Research confirms that these values and skills decrease the likelihood of bullying and other violent behaviour in schools. *The Better Buddies Aussie Values Program* targets children in their first year of schooling to have a Year Five and or Six buddy and this buddy remains with them for two years. There is a focus on the older students teaching values and social skills to younger students. A weekly values curriculum is built into the program.

*The Better Buddies Initiative* is a unique program that aims to encourage school-aged children to develop positive self-esteem and empathy for others through activities within each school's own buddy system.



Children engage in the Better Buddies activities to have fun, learn new skills, affiliate with others and experience the positive feelings of

caring for other students around them. The Better Buddies Initiative complements curriculum goals for children to have long-life wellbeing, social skills and resilience.

Children are introduced to activities, while supporting their special school buddies, that encourage social interaction and develop their own interpersonal skills.

The foundation was established in 1997 in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, who lost their lives at Port Arthur with 33 others. Money raised from bear sales, supports children who are victims of violent crime and sudden loss of family.

The foundation's schools support program also includes a storybook illustrated by Michael

Salmon, with an accompanying activity book about friendship and supports schools antibullying policies.

Although the program concentrates on the buddies in schools, it was designed as a whole school event where the other students are involved in a 'Be My Buddy' Day each term.

One activity suggested in the Buddy Bear resource book aims to create a special classroom bear as a jointly owned buddy to build a cohesive community focus with the class.



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Visit Buddy Bear at: [www.buddybear.com.au](http://www.buddybear.com.au)

Other areas of interest:

The Alannah & Madeline Foundation – [www.amf.org.au](http://www.amf.org.au)

The National Coalition Against Bullying – [www.ncab.org.au](http://www.ncab.org.au)

The National Safe Schools Framework Best Practice Grants Program – <http://ncab.nssfbestpractice.org.au>

The  
 Better  
 Buddies  
 Program

an initiative of The  
 Alannah and Madeline Foundation



# International Perspectives

## ***A little society – free and harmonious***

***Gu Ling Ying & He Hai Ying & liu Yong Zhi***

Twice each year, the China Welfare Institute (CWI) sponsors an Australian study tour for experienced kindergarten directors and teachers. In December 2005 a group of twenty from Shanghai were sponsored and, when they visited Brisbane, ECTA member Gail Halliwell organized a visit to a community kindergarten followed by lunch at her home. The teachers spoke enthusiastically about their visit and Gail encouraged them to prepare a photos essay for our journal. The article uses photographs taken at the Bardon Community Kindergarten & Preschool and other Australian centres to share a little of what experienced teachers from a different culture take from what they see in Australian kindergartens. This is their story.

When we entered this Australian kindergarten some children were reading books on the carpet, some were dressing up the rag doll, others were making Christmas decorations. Each child was immersed in a game with no adult leader in evidence. We could see smiles of approval on the teachers' faces. The whole classroom was full of freedom and harmoniousness.

**Photograph 1: little passionate host**



As we approached the entry porch, we heard children saying hello to us with great passion, and some were already showing us their works. A girl who was playing with a shell showed it to

Ms Gu and told her excitedly, "Listen, some wonderful sound there is!" After a while, the little girl made friends with us, and talked to Chinese guests about the shell, which made us think how good was her ability to communicate. We could see the initiative, passion and generousness of Australians from her.

**Photograph 2: we were the same as them**



Two boys were playing with toy bricks. They built in turn with great joy and then they led us to see their production. At the same time there was a little boy standing behind Ms Gu watching absorbedly. Sometimes he looked at us and we smiled at him now and then, hinting that he should join them. Suddenly he clasped Ms Gu and laughed delightedly. We deeply realised an equality among people here.

**Photograph 3: approach to nature**





# International Perspectives

When thinking of reading, we always see the picture of children sitting on the carpet of a classroom, but this time we saw another scene: there was a carpet under a big tree with books on the carpet so that children could read books leisurely while enjoying nature. We believe this must make children more at home with nature and this, in turn, forms a healthy and optimistic character and a more free and wide mind.

**Photograph 4: indoors or outdoors**



We visited a lot of kindergartens in Australia, and saw many harmonious scenes, which were illuminating for us. Underneath this building was designed with “fanduzl” for children to play with and a large area for games. There is a forest square, with all kinds of colourful sports appliances provided to choose from freely, and there is no strict distinction between indoors and outdoors. Children can freely choose toys and playground.

**Photograph 6: outdoor play**



Outdoors is children’s favourite, especially when it also provides them with colourful materials. They can choose whatever they want: sports appliances, painting on the ground with chalk and so on. And also they can decide to play alone or with others. Children can be given more free spaces to develop their characters.

**Photograph 5: the world in mirror**



In one Centre the mirror seemed to be the children’s favourite thing, where they could see themselves, and know the world. It is the second eye. Here we saw mirrors especially set for the very young and for handicapped children, set near the ground with different shapes. Children could get a variety of visual feelings. Our interpretation was that the teachers in Australia provide a more comfortable and humanistic environment, which promotes the development of children.

# International Perspectives

**Photograph 7: learning from these visits**



A group of four-year-old children playing in the environment provided by the teacher, all things from the layout of the cabinets to the supplement of materials are familiar with the children, they can choose what to play according to their mood and interest, freely and easily. In this case, the children can imagine as widely as they can.

**Photograph 8:**



The classroom in our school is divided into several activity areas by two transparent low cabinets. Each area has different kinds of materials, which children can choose freely in accordance with their interest. In this scene, children feel that their activity areas are independent, and interdependent with the surroundings.

This was a good opportunity for our study, which widened our horizons more. Meanwhile,

we will share what we have learned in Australia with others.

In fact, many other teachers have been sponsored by CWI for these visits to Australia and before we came they brought us their experiences in Australia. After many communications, we felt we already knew quite a lot about kindergartens in Australia. This trip makes it clearer, we saw surroundings full of equality and esteem, which provided a platform for the children's creative mind, and widened our ways of teaching.

*Twice each year, the China Welfare Institute (CWI) sponsors an Australian study tour for experienced kindergarten directors and teachers. In December 2005 a group of twenty from Shanghai were sponsored and, when they visited Brisbane, ECTA member Gail Halliwell organized a visit to a community kindergarten followed by lunch at her home.*



## Title: Top 100 Baby Purées – 100 quick and easy meals for a healthy and happy baby

**Author - Annabel Karmel**  
**Random House Australia**

**ISBN 0091 90499**  
**R.R.P. \$29.95**

**Reviewed by: Bronwyn MacGregor**



Whether you are a first time parent, a cook in a busy child care setting, or just trying to tempt a 'fussy eater', you can't go wrong with this little cook book. You'll be in awe at the way Annabel Karmel turns 'purée' into a delicacy for toothy (and toothless)

tots! This book takes you on a journey from your 'first vegetable purée' to 'strawberry, peach and pear crumble' and 'tuna pasta with creamy tomato sauce'. It is not difficult to see why The Guardian calls Annabel Karmel 'The Delia Smith of cooking for children'. Not only does she put a delicious spin of what is effectively mushy and lumpy food, she also serves up some hearty food facts to keep you informed of the nutritional and health benefits of various foods for babies.

Even if you are a budding Delia Smith yourself, knowing what and when to introduce solid foods to children may have you puzzled. Let *Top 100 Baby Purées* be your guide and your salvation! If you start at the very beginning, this book will lead you through starting solids, food allergies, and weaning pre-term babies. The introduction alone explores topics such as foods to avoid, the various methods of cooking baby foods, puréeing appliances, freezing and reheating food ... and we haven't even made it to the developmental stages sections yet!

The recipes have been developed with baby milestones in mind. Beginning with First-stage weaning (6 months), you progress to After first tastes (6 - 7 months), Second-stage weaning (7- 9 months) and Growing independence (9 - 12 months). Each recipe has a quick reference guide to suggested age for child, number of portions, cooking time and freezing/storage suggestions. Even the basics are covered with a section on stocks, cheese sauce and skinning fruits.

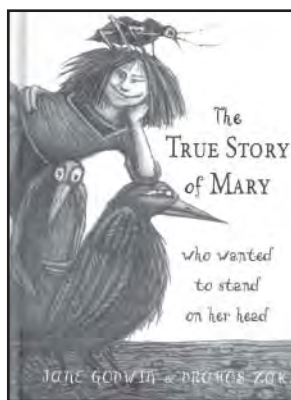
This practical, easy-to-follow recipe book with hints and tips is an indispensable cookbook for all those needing to tempt the taste buds of tiny tots!

## Title: The True Story of Mary – Who wanted to stand on her head

**Author - Jane Godwin & Drahos Zak**  
**Allen & Unwin**

**ISBN 1741 147 166**  
**R.R.P. \$22.95**

**Reviewed by: Ingrid Nicholson**



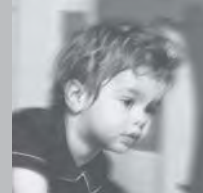
This story is cleverly written in thirty-one nonsense verses. The verses are complex and use a lot of adult language to tell the tale. *The True Story of Mary* uses verse to tell the story of a young girl who takes delight in standing up on her head. Her family stop at nothing to curb the behaviour to no avail. They visit doctors who prescribe some

astonishing treatments including leaving Mary alone in the desert. Mary's parents also try sending her to

a school which would scare any child into doing the right thing, but not Mary, who runs away. The story ends leaving Mary living alone in the desert. This strange and unexpected ending would be perhaps a little unsettling to younger readers.

The story is illustrated by Drahos Zac who uses eerily, but humorous, dark illustrations to complement the story. The illustrations may scare rather than humour some readers, with illustrations of Mary being tied up or caged, a common feature.

Considering the nature of the illustrations and the complexity of the verse, *The True Story of Mary* is appropriate for more mature early childhood readers. Adults are also likely to enjoy this story which has the meaningful message to accept children as they are, as trying to change them is likely to backfire.



## **DATE CLAIMER**

Saturday 24 June 2006

ECTA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006

## **KEYNOTE SPEAKER - DR SUE BREDEKAMP**

***"Effective early childhood curriculum and teaching: Staying true to our principles".***

The Annual ECTA Conference for 2006 will be held on Saturday 24 June at John Paul College, Daisy Hill, Brisbane. This time the Keynote Speaker will be Dr Sue Bredekamp the famous author of *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs* (1997). She has written many books since then, including *Play and school readiness* (2004) and has just recently co-authored the book *Where Bright Futures Begin* (2005). Sue is currently Director of Research for the Council of Early Childhood Professional Recognition, Washington, DC and Senior Program Advisor for RISE Learning Solutions, Cincinnati, Ohio.

With the movement toward state-funded Prep classes, the emphasis on a uniform curriculum framework, and the increased demand for accountability, early childhood professionals and teacher educators confront new challenges as well as opportunities. The keynote address will present key findings of research on effective early childhood curriculum and teaching, and describe ways the curriculum

can be adjusted to become more effective, while also preserving the fundamental values of the culture of early childhood education, including emphasis on the whole child and play. This theme will be further extended in a Masterclass to be held in the morning.

There will be two other Masterclasses - Ian Lilico (Boys in Education) and Phil and Susie Splitter (Music) and at least fifteen other Workshops to choose from, dealing with a range of professional and curriculum issues. There will also be an exciting and interesting Lunchtime Program.

Conference brochures will be posted to ECTA members sometime in late March, at least two weeks before the general mail-out. This will give ECTA members a chance to register early and get their first or second Masterclass/Workshop preference. The 2006 Annual ECTA Conference looks to be another successful professional learning event. Look out for further information on the ECTA website [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au) over the next few months.

## Guidelines for contributors

The ECTA journal committee welcomes all contributions and ideas for possible inclusion in the journal. These guidelines should help you to prepare your contribution.

### Style

In order to maintain a uniformity of approach within the journal, the *Macquarie Dictionary* and the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (6th edn) are preferred as the bases for reference. Australian spelling is used in preference to American.

- All numbers up to twelve should be written as words; figures are used for numbers 13 upwards (e.g. one, eleven, 18, 200). Exceptions are where numbers appear in a table, list or refer to a measure (e.g. Anne was seven years old when she walked 5 kilometres to school).
- Examples of dates and times: 15 February 2006, 1900s.  
If very few numbers are included in the article: She left at ten o'clock. If precision is required: She left at 7.25 am in order to catch the seven-forty train.
- Money is usually written as numerals (e.g. 20c or \$0.15, \$120 and \$88.15) but words may be used in approximations such as 'he made millions of dollars'.
- Titles should be in italics e.g. *The Australian* rather than 'The Australian'.

### Language

Your submission should be written in a style that is jargon-free, easy to read and without the assumption that your audience has any prior knowledge of your topic. If you use an acronym, include the full reference the first time e.g. Early Childhood Teachers Association (ECTA).

Avoid stereotypical, sexist, ageist or racist language. An internet search for 'The Language of Disability' will assist you in this specific area (e.g. 'uses a wheelchair' instead of 'wheelchair bound').

### 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 . .')
- programme (rather than program, unless the latter is correct in the specific context)
- 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.

### Referencing

Ensure you include references where relevant. The preferred ECTA Journal style is that used in the *Style Manual*.

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

Example from a journal: Singh M & Scanlon C 2003, 'Linguistic diversity, biodiversity and education', *Environmental Education Geography*, Issue 1, Autumn 2003, Australia.

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

### Length of contribution (maximum)

- Feature 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 three 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 GPO Box 3254 Brisbane 4001.

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.

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