



# *EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN*

*Learning and teaching in the early childhood years*

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## ***From the President***

***Kim Walters***



Welcome, everyone, to the first edition of *Educating Young Children* for 2010. I would like to thank Lynne Moore and her team for once again producing an excellent high quality journal.

***The articles sourced from ECTA members, conference presenters and leaders in the early childhood field, will provide our members with current information to enrich their professional development.***

This journal, along with information available in the member's only section of our website, provides professional development opportunities for all members. We expect that this information is especially valuable for our members in rural and remote areas who struggle to find opportunities to engage with issues of particular concern to early childhood professionals

Using profits from our 2009 conference, the State Coordinating Committee, along with Gladstone, Hervey Bay and Cooloola ECTA Groups, facilitated a lecture tour by Loretta Giorcelli. Those of you who heard Loretta's 2009 State Conference keynote, or were lucky enough to attend one of her Master classes, will appreciate the many positive

comments we received from those who attended the regional lectures.

*Last night was excellent. I went to tell my principal this morning, and he said three people had already told him the same thing! Loretta was so easy to listen to.*

Lyn Tweed, Learning Support,  
Pialba State School.

*It was great to meet Loretta - so great to see a large gathering. What an inspiring speaker and such knowledge.*

Sandy Johnson, Lecturer, USQ.

The State Coordinating Committee has assigned priority to supporting ECTA Groups in 2010. We are keen to know how we can best support our existing Groups and how we can help establish Groups in your area. This year we have a Northern Rivers NSW Interstate Group starting and hope to establish Groups in Townsville, Bundaberg, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Please contact Libby Gaedtker, our ECTA Groups Coordinator, at <herveybayrg@ecta.org.au> for more information.

ECTA has been invited to participate in Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) Learning Area Reference Committee (LARC) and I recently attending the first meeting. The LARC will meet four times per year for two years. It will provide expert analysis of curriculum resources and materials needed for the early years in both a state and national context and also provide informed technical advice about the development of the P-12 syllabuses and the nature of documents developed to support their

implementation. At the first meeting we were given an overview of the LARC responsibilities and provided feedback around the draft Kindergarten Guideline. I encourage all members working in kindergarten (pre-Prep) or childcare centres to register to attend one of the forums offered from March to May 2010 at <<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/events/10552.html>>.

The draft National Curriculum makes changes to expectations of children in our preparatory classrooms and all members are strongly encouraged to register on the ACARA website and register to provide feedback <<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home>>. The feedback is structured so that you can revisit the site multiple times and/or provide feedback on specific areas of interest. The draft National Curriculum is currently being trialled and each state has agreed to a 2013 deadline for its implementation. We are yet to find out how the new curriculums for English, Maths, Science and History will be rolled out across Queensland. Keep an eye on ECTA eNEWS for updates.

Whilst the draft National Curriculum sets out clear statements of what is to be taught within each year level, it does not and will not set out the pedagogy to be used to deliver the curriculum. QSA is developing their online resource bank to provide examples of pedagogy for the early years which is in line with the philosophy of the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines.

*As early childhood teachers we need to show how we can maintain our active enquiry-based pedagogy which provides meaningful in context learning for our students.*

ECTA will submit a response, on behalf of members, to the consultation process on the draft National Professional Standards for Teachers which closes on 7 May 2010. The draft details teaching standards in three areas which cover content, how it's taught and a teacher's professional development and involvement with his or her school. They propose four levels - graduate, proficient (full registration), followed by two optional higher levels - highly accomplished and lead teacher. The consultation response form is downloadable from the DEEWR website <<http://www.mceecdya.edu.au>>.

ECTA has also submitted feedback to the *Flying Start* consultations. In our submission

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we outlined the importance of funding in the early years with particular mention being made of aide time and resourcing and equipment. The full ECTA submission is available in the Advocacy section of the ECTA website.

*We can make a difference to the outcomes of the above government initiatives.*

If we are to be successful we need everyone to become critical friends helping the ECTA Committees to develop wise responses. I encourage you all to send your thoughts to me via email and to participate in consultations as individuals. I would also ask each ECTA Group to submit feedback.

Technical issues are making DVD recording of Videolinq workshops problematic. You will have noted in ECTA eNEWS that we have used our new online web forum tool to gauge member's opinions on the value of the videostreaming technology which allows members to view the presentation

online. Following consideration by the State Coordinating Committee of members' feedback, we have included a CD with this journal which contains recordings of the 2009 May, August and November Videolinq workshops in Videostream format. This CD is only viewable on a computer. The three streaming recordings will be an added bonus for members joining ECTA this year. As this is a new initiative from the State Coordinating Committee, we would value your feedback via email <kim@ecta.org.au>. We plan to burn all four of this year's videolinq workshops to one CD for distribution with the final 2010 journal. Members will be able to access the streaming of each Videolinq workshop from the day after it is presented from the secure area of the website. The second disk posted with this journal is the DVD recording of the Masterclass presentation from last year's conference – *Maintaining the Balance* by Laurie Kelly.

Kim

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## *From the editorial panel*

*Lynne Moore*



Our first *Educating Young Children* for 2010 explores 'play' from a range of perspectives. *Belonging, Being and Becoming* - the Early Years Learning Framework has a

specific emphasis on play-based learning. Providing, for the first time in the history of Early Childhood Education and Care, a nationally consistent statement about the importance of play in children's learning.

This issue begins with an article penned by ECTA member Bronwyn McGregor on the 'state of play' in Queensland. Bronwyn critically reflects on anecdotal evidence that points to the downward creep of structured activity into play-based environments. We would be interested to receive your feedback.

Not so at St Margaret's. Here educators Melissa Garbutt and Jennifer Schlatter have created an environment that engages children and educators in the pleasure of learning. Our 'play' theme continues in 'conversation' with early childhood educators in schools and early childhood education and care settings.

*Beyond the familiarity of the learning environment our profession is experiencing rapid and significant change.*

EYC is committed to bringing readers the latest in these new developments.

Professional Support Co-ordinator Queensland (PSCQ) provides detail about the support available to assist educators in their implementation of the *Early Years Learning Framework*. While the commonwealth Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care brings us up to date with the most recent developments in the early childhood reform agenda.

The first of our feature articles is from a team of educators. In this collaboration the writers promote the value of a holistic and integrated approach to supporting behaviour and communication in early childhood environments. Deb Brydon and Cecelia Dods provide simple suggestions to enhance children's musical development; Kathleen Richards shares her enthusiasm for Kids Sports; Dani Reidy explores the benefits of Yoga 4 Kids and Simone Jacobson shares teaching and learning strategies for dance in the classroom.

Our last article, an interview with Laurie Kelly from 'Mindworks', leaves busy educators with some sound advice to maintain balance in life.

Finally, EYC team member, Mathilda Element has again collected an interesting selection of resources for review.

We hope you enjoy our first Issue for 2010 and look forward to seeing you at the ECTA conference in June.

Best wishes

The EYC team

## ***Where is the PLAY in worksheets, colouring-in, art templates, phonics programs, sight words and early readers?***

***Bronwyn McGregor***



Usually, I submit an article for the EYC when I have observed or heard about educators in early childhood settings who have demonstrated practices that I think others would

benefit hearing about. This time, however, I hesitated for quite a while about whether or not to submit this article, wondering if it might offend some early childhood colleagues. I am becoming increasingly uneasy about the 'state of play' as I listen to colleagues and observe practices in some early childhood settings. My concerns about what is happening in early education in Queensland – a state that purports to be offering good (even world's best) early childhood practice – are demanding that I speak up.

The belief in 'play-based learning' and/or 'play-based curriculum' that guided my own early practices as a preschool and primary school teacher now seems to be just a slogan repeated *ad infinitum* in posters and advertising but no longer a philosophy guiding teaching and learning for young children. Revisiting and standing firm in my own beliefs and values about play has made

me begin to question the integrity of early childhood education and care in the "Smart State".

I despair as I encounter early childhood learning environments (and early childhood educators) who state they have a philosophy that learning is based on child-centred play yet, in reality, some of the practices taking place involve anything but play and even less about the child. If you think that I am being over-critical, let me share some anecdotes that demonstrate my concerns.

I heard recently of one early childhood setting that provided an experience for three-year-olds that consisted of a page containing an outline of the human body. Each day, for/by each child, a bodily organ (a brain, a heart etc.) was coloured, cut out (presumably by the child) and glued onto the page in the correct part of the body outline. (Understandably, the parent of a child in this setting was asking other parents about the age-appropriateness of such an experience for her child – and she wondered if she should be concerned that her child found this task a challenge ... not to mention that he wasn't there on the day that they 'did the heart'.)

***I wonder if the concept of 'play-based' learning still remains central to the early childhood philosophy, or if early childhood educators are abandoning what they know is best for young children as downward pressure is placed on the early years to meet the expectations of others with a more content driven approach to learning?***

# Teacher Stories

A primary teacher, now stay-at-home mum friend of mine, commented that the Prep class at the primary school her child is attending in 2010 includes a 'text book' as part of what is purchased with the parent-funded contributions. She quite rightly questioned the use of such a thing in a 'play-based' setting, and was consoled with the idea that it is just something that the children are given as an activity when they 'do' shapes, or height etc.

Conversations with other parents about Prep also raised the issue of school uniforms. In some cases, Prep children have a different uniform from the primary school children, others have the same. The ex-preschool teacher in me thinks, "Well, I guess it is better to get paint and glue on a school uniform than to get it on expensive clothes." Then I consider the parents' perspective ... uniforms can be quite expensive. To have one for just one year, then to buy another one ... they would be hoping their child doesn't get it too worn or stained so that they may be able to resell it or pass it on. So what pressure does this put on the child? And the teacher? Where does that leave experiences like messy play, finger painting, goop and the like?

A professional colleague confided recently that a group of schools in her area is planning on introducing 'home readers' and 'sight words' and maths worksheets in

Prep classrooms as a strategy to improve their future NAPLAN results. (Perhaps the next anecdote gives an indication of what lies ahead for children in these Prep classes.)

An early childhood teacher who now spends many days as a relief teacher in Prep classrooms, recounted an event where children in one Prep class told her that they had to read their readers to their teacher, and they demonstrated how this was done with the first reader at the start of a long line in front of her. When she asked if the children in the line read to each other as

'reading time' progress, they replied, "Oh no, we just wait here until it's our turn to read." (Seems like a great waste of someone's time ... and childhood, to me!)

Another primary school teaching friend of mine has retold countless anecdotes of the way Prep children have been 'included' in the school community. One

tells of how Prep children endured hours of waiting and watching from the far end of the sports field during school sports days. Is there an assumption that sitting in the hot sun watching school-aged children for most of the day and then running a single race is actually "participation" in a sports day? Why do schools use such inappropriate strategies in their efforts to include very young students in the school community? There are so many better ways to achieve this but it does involve altering some school traditions, finding a better cultural 'fit'.



*If you, as an early childhood educator and professional, are not concerned by these anecdotes then, indeed, I do hold grave fears for the future of early childhood philosophy and pedagogy.*

Even as I entered my own child's early childhood 'classroom', I sighed to myself as I noticed a wall covered in children's 'artwork' all practically identical, neatly displayed beside another wall covered in identical photocopies of a worksheet 'coloured' by the children (who are aged two and three years old). I asked myself, "Where is the creativity (not to mention



play) in a photocopied page that has been scribbled over?" I would have been more excited to see a display of blank pages scribbled all over!

I'll admit it has been almost a decade since I taught in an early childhood setting, so perhaps my idea about what is good practice is not as 'current' as I think it is. Yet, as I flick through the "Learning Outcomes" component of the new Early Years Learning Framework for children in the preschool years, nowhere do I see mention of the use of 'worksheets', 'colouring-in', 'craft activities', 'phonics programs' or 'art templates' as a strategy to achieve any of the five key learning outcomes. I will also admit that, in my time, I have used phonic-based worksheets

and the odd structured/craft-based art experience with children under eight, but NEVER with children under four and there were certainly lots of open-ended, context-based experiences that gave these 'tools' meaning in a play-based situation which supported their use.

I am now beginning to wonder how such practices continue to occur when we know so much about how young children learn, and have known for so long about the importance of play and creativity in the learning of young children ... not to mention copious research that has been done on the significance of responsive, reciprocal relationships on early brain development, social and emotional development, school readiness and later life outcomes. Having also been part of the Children's Services Training sector, and having associations with universities with post and undergraduate programs in early education, I KNOW that these practices are not acknowledged as best practice, so I wonder once again why these practices are still evident in today's early childhood settings. Somehow, we are failing to support our graduate teachers in selecting tools and strategies that create a learning culture guided by maintaining true to early childhood philosophies and values. Somehow we are also failing to support our





*My role in the learning environment is to scaffold children's learning. I spend much of my time 'being with' the children as they play, rather than preparing, setting up and organising group activities.*

experienced early childhood teachers to advocate for the early childhood philosophy. Most importantly, we are failing to support



our children's childhoods and their futures in the way that we know is best.

Perhaps you feel I am painting a grim or even unfair picture of what is really taking place in some early childhood settings in Queensland, and maybe that is so. But let me ask you this: as early childhood professionals, if we begin to view the practices such as those I outlined earlier in this article as developmentally appropriate/ acceptable in even one of our early childhood settings, and we do not question their validity in a child-centred, play-based philosophy, then are we willing to accept learning experiences that are less than our children deserve and less than what our profession knows is best quality practice?

If my article has aroused strong thoughts and feelings in you, then I challenge you to channel those thoughts and feelings into critically reflecting on early childhood practices that you encounter (particularly your own), and questioning practices that may be less than best. Consider the following:

If you are planning on handing out some photocopied worksheets to young children this week, run through this mental checklist:

- What is the purpose of this work?
- Is there a play-based alternative that will provide similar learning? How can I provide this instead?
- Does this work extend on the child's own ideas or is it teacher-driven?
- Do all children need to do this? If some children can do it without my assistance ... do they really need to do it? If some children can only do it with my assistance ... is this the best way for me to support what it is they need to learn?
- When this work is done, who will gain the most satisfaction and pleasure from it ... the child ... the teacher ... the parent?

If you are providing 'craft templates' or 'colouring-in' activities during this week, run through this mental checklist. Start by asking yourself all the same questions listed earlier for worksheets ... then ask:

- Where in this work is there room for the child's own expressive work and ideas?

- What will my role be as the child completes this 'activity' and how does that contribute to supporting the child's learning?
- What skills will this 'activity' require and is it appropriate for the age and stage of the child/children taking part?
- How will I react if the child's work doesn't look the way I thought it would/should when it is completed?
- How much enjoyment will the child get from this 'activity'? How much enjoyment will I get from this activity?

*Finally, if you are providing a child-centred, play-based learning environment, how many of these statements can you answer with a resounding yes?*

- I have had conversations with the child and with his/her parents/family about the child's interests, strengths, capabilities.
- When I come to the learning environment, I am open to where the play will take me, and I have a range of resources available so I can respond to where the children lead the learning.
- The learning environment belongs to the children. I encourage the children's self selection of materials and resources as they work and play within the boundaries and routines of the day.
- I am able to recognise each child's development and potential and I can build on this using play-based experiences, rather than formalized 'instructional teaching'.

- I am able to allow the children to make decisions about their learning. I do not do all the planning and deciding about learning with colleagues during planning sessions – without the children.

Bronwyn McGregor is an active member of the ECTA State Coordinating Committee.

Her association with ECTA first began in 1990 when she was president of the Longreach regional group. Bronwyn is currently working on a Qld Health Mental Health Promotion project – the Social and Emotional Early Development Strategy (SEEDS). Prior to that she was working for Disability Services Queensland, and previous to that was part of the Children's Services Team at the Open Learning Institute of TAFE. Her love of young children lead Bronwyn to teaching, and she 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 and a year teaching in a Montessori Preschool (also in New Zealand).

## ***Cassie Mutimer*** ***Wellers Hill State School***



*Cassie and Prep son Matthew*

Cassie Mutimer has had an interesting and varied journey to her current position of Prep teacher at Wellers Hill State School.

Cassie began her career as a preschool teacher at Coolum, after graduating in 1988.

After only one year, Cassie was transferred to Mt Sylvia, teaching there for 18 months. This was her first experience teaching a preschool/1/2 multi-age class.

However, after thirty exciting months of early childhood teaching in Queensland, Cassie applied for seven years unpaid leave and followed her partner, David, to Canberra, where she worked in child care as a preschool teacher.

While in Canberra, Cassie and David married and then, following David's employment, moved to Singapore. It was now 1993. Cassie worked in an International School as a Kindergarten teacher. Her career was further extended when she accepted positions in Hong Kong as a Year One teacher and then spent three years working towards the position of team leader in Reception 2 (our Prep).

Cassie and David then moved to Beijing in 1999 around the time their darling first child was born.

***Cassie worked for the Australian Federal Police as an Intelligence Officer and project manager for Police Education programs.***

After nearly ten years overseas, the family returned to Brisbane in 2001.

In 2002 Cassie accepted the position of Director of Playhouse Child Care at Yeronga. However, she soon resigned to have two more beautiful children. During her early years of child raising, Cassie worked as a supply teacher in her local schools: Junction Park, Wellers Hill and Marshall Road State School. Cassie completed several long-term contracts including a year with Grade Three at Wellers Hill.

In 2009 Cassie accepted a position as a Year One teacher at Stretton State College.

Cassie thoroughly enjoyed her diverse journey to Wellers Hill, but was rewarded by the challenge of her year at Stretton State College. Cassie found her time at Stretton, a P-12 school, to be a time of wonderful personal growth and confidence building.

Cassie is looking forward to her year at Wellers Hill teaching Prep, as she continues to consolidate her experience and confidence teaching the early years curriculum.

## ***Look inside our space!***

***Melissa Garbutt & Jennifer Schlatter  
Year 2 Teachers, St Margaret's Anglican Girls School***

"Children are miracles. We make it our job to create, with reverence and gratitude, a space that is worthy of a miracle! Action follows thought. We can choose to change. We can choose to design spaces for miracles, not minimums."

*Anita Rui Olds, 1999*

In designing our classroom environment we thoughtfully considered the kind of space we would like to spend our days in and the environment that we believe our students would enjoy being a part of. We agree with the principles of Reggio Emilia Approach to learning in placing a strong value on the aesthetics in our classroom, as well as the importance of recognising the environment as an important part of respecting the children and their learning.

***Our aim is to create an inspiring atmosphere where children, families and teachers feel welcomed and valued.***

Our environment is seen as a significant element of education and a reflection of our own values. Our focus shows that we value interaction, aesthetics, discovery, organisation and communication.



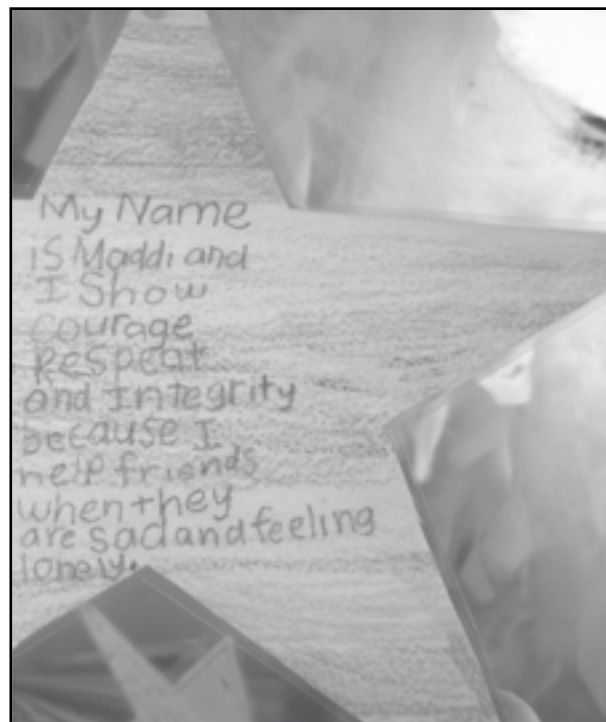


## Respect

This space is designed to ... respect and value children's work through displays that document and celebrate children's learning.



## Belonging



*The stars and work displayed at the entrance to the classroom are a sharing of individual strengths and interests representing group connection and belonging.*

## Collaboration

This space is designed to ... provide differing areas that invite children to work in small groups, nurturing cooperation and peer mentoring. Flexible groupings and seating also facilitate small group investigations.



## Quiet spaces

This space is designed to ... provide children with places that encourage stillness and quiet reflection.



*Pillows, soft furnishings to create connections and a sense of belonging.*

## Exploration

This space is designed to ... allow for common areas available to all children in our double learning area. These areas provide stimulating materials to engage learners, encourage exploration and nurture investigation.



*Areas for dramatic play, shared group tables, areas for thinking and quiet work and shared gathering areas.*



## Discoveries

This space is designed to ... provide the materials that are necessary to facilitate choice, problem solving and discoveries in the process of learning.

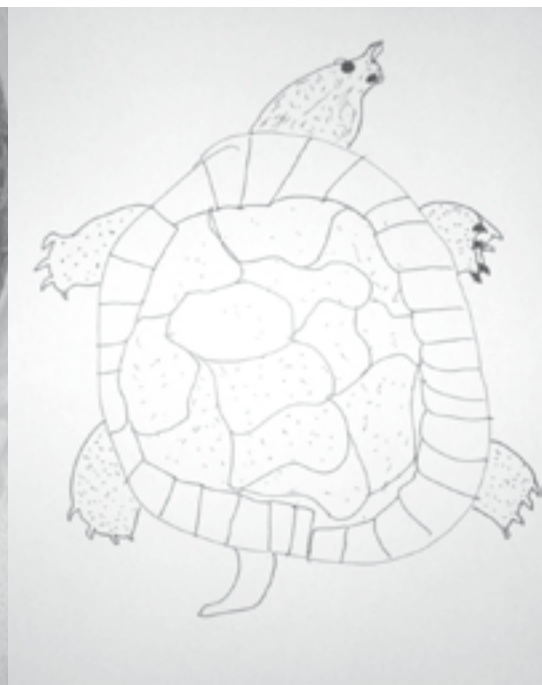
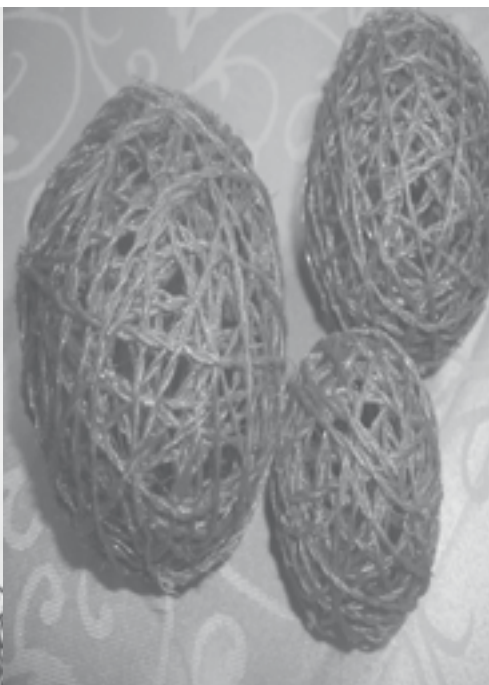
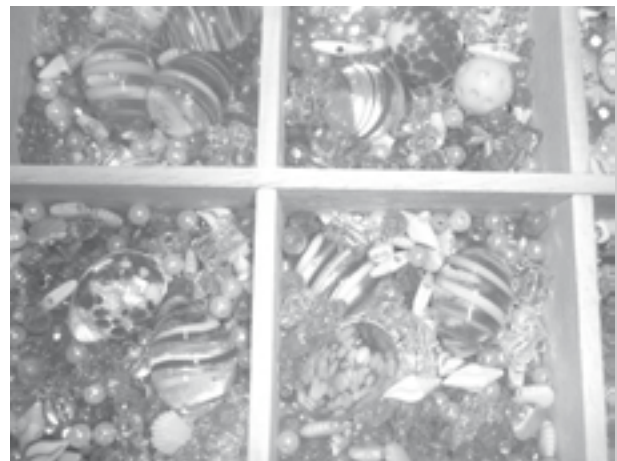


*Well-labelled open shelving provides easy access for independent learners to locate and retrieve materials needed.*

## Collections

This space is designed to ... create interest, hold beauty, inspire and engage our senses.

We considered collections of items or treasures that have beautiful colours, interesting shapes and textures; baskets, glass jars, marbles, bottles, vases, shells, art work, scented sticks and plants.



*We believe our classroom environment conveys a compelling message about children and teachers engaged together in the pleasure of learning.*

## ***Learning through play***

*Belonging, Being and Becoming* – the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia has a specific emphasis on play-based learning as:

*a context for learning through which children organize and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations. (EYLF, 2009:3).*

Fundamental to the Framework is the understanding that children's lives are characterised by *belonging, being* and *becoming*. It is through play that children experience opportunities to learn as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. Most importantly, children's immersion in their play enables them to simply enjoy *being*.

Early childhood educators, too, take on many roles in play with children. For example they:

- engage in sustained shared conversations to extend children's thinking
- provide a balance between child-led, child-initiated and educator-supported learning
- create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct
- recognise teachable moments as they occur to build on children's learning.

In this series of conversations *Educating Young Children* explores children's play through the eyes of the educator.

**Melanie Lester** is an Early Childhood Teacher who has been blessed to have worked as a Teacher and Director for Kindergarten and Preschool-aged children both in Brisbane and Cloncurry. She is now making exciting, new discoveries at home with her 18-month-old son.

### **We show we value play through ...**

engaging in play. When we join children in their explorations and discoveries, we are showing them that we value their ideas, their interests and their passions.

### **We build on each**

**child's strengths through play when we ...** ask questions. When we ask questions, children become the teachers. Imparting their knowledge to us reaffirms to them what they know and what they want to know.

**In a play-filled learning environment we would see ...** a trail of discoveries. To the untrained eye, it might appear to be a mess but

if you look closely you can see that the puddle on the floor was the point where children discovered that wet chalk has a different texture to dry chalk and will write on cement differently. The puppets covered in blocks and torn up paper are actually living in a carefully created habitat. And we would see children who don't notice 'the mess' because they are busy, engrossed in learning.

*Grace (5 yrs) I love to play in the playground because there are lots of things to play with and do and you can see the sky.*

### **We are challenged/stimulated by ...**

the children around us and our inherent quest to understand them. After years of studying how children learn and working with children

to foster and support their learning, I am still challenged and stimulated every day by the joy that a child expresses when they master a new skill or make a new discovery.

**A rich play-based experience or moment that I remember was ...** when I worked with Kindergarten-aged children. We used to send



home a large paper shopping bag every few weeks – each time to a different family. We would ask parents to look through their home to find unidentified treasure – a roll of packaging labels, empty film canisters, paper plates, empty seed pods. Every few weeks it would come back, parents apologetic because they really weren't sure what to put in and thinking that they had filled it with 'junk'.

The children and I would tip it out onto the middle of the mat and they were excited by all the amazing things they saw. The packing labels were exactly what they needed to put on the crates of the animals staying at the 'Vet Surgery'. The empty film canisters were perfect for the hand creams they had mixed up earlier. The paper plates inspired a picnic morning tea in the playground. And the seed pods were just the right weight to float along the canals of the sandpit if we added water. The photos taken and displayed each afternoon helped the parents to really see the potential in these everyday items and the potential of their child's imaginations to create learning experiences for themselves.

**Gail Young** is Acting Head of Curriculum, teacher of Prep, literacy contact and GEM (Gifted Education Mentor) at Holland Park State School.

### We show we value play through ...

developing our own sense of playfulness. We should take time out to engage in free play activities just for ourselves, running at the beach, finger painting, making up songs, dancing, engaging in dramatic improvisation, role-playing with friends. We really need to free up our own creative energy and then use this to impact on how we allow young children to play

As preparatory Early Phase teachers, we also need to have play in all forms proudly displayed

**Annika (5 yrs) Blocks are good to play with because you can build castles.**

on our daily time table to communicate to parents and the school community that we value play as a fundamental aspect of early childhood daily experience and one of the most significant modes through which young children come to know and understand the world in which they are part. Play is a precious and valuable aspect of early phase classrooms.

### In a play filled environment we would see ...

- unstructured imaginative play (pretend play) e.g. peekaboo, children playing heroes and villains, playing monsters, dolls, flower shops, space adventures etc.
- free and spontaneous play – children playing as they initiate, direct, complicate and pursue their interests to a point of personal resolution.
- self-directed play – the opportunity to play provides an effective context to build on the social-emotional and learning strengths of all young children.
- symbolic play – children substitute one object for another in the context of play and begin to create imaginative play scenarios from familiar objects, toys, household objects in home corner.
- physical play – running, hopping skipping climbing, moving through obstacle courses.
- playing games with rules – children creating their own games with rules.

**Holly (5 yrs) Playdough is great because you can make stuff like tables and houses and seats with it.**

Children beginning to engage in involved negotiations and attempts to establish complex rules for play. They are looking for rules and procedures.

- manipulative play – a wide range of hands-on stimulus resources.
- play patterns – children concentrating longer on books and puzzles, construction, paintings and drawings.

- problem-solving play – children making new connections testing out ideas. In play, meaningful problems are found by children, investigated and explored. Issues come out of play: How to keep a tent up on a windy day? How to prepare a broken piece of equipment, toy etc. Opportunity for higher-order thinking skills and decision making .
- early literacy and numeracy play – children having access to catalogues, maps, dictionaries, telephone books , indexes measuring tapes, calculators, instruments.

**We are challenged and stimulated by ...** resourcing, both material and human – the need to provide additional resources and our need to be open to resources being used in new and often unexpected ways. Open-ended resources have infinite possibilities for complex and creative use.

We need to affirm and acknowledge play for what it is and advocate children have a right to play as they explore and come to know their physical and social worlds.

We need to observe and monitor all forms of play children engage in and document the process of play.

**A rich play-based experience or moment I remember ...** as a young child visiting my grandmother's home and dressing up with her hats, gloves and bags – pretending and role-playing. Reading classic books and finding play-based moments e.g. reading about how Jane Austen used to play as a young girl.

Visiting Japan and going to a kindergarten school. Seeing children engaging in play-based learning. Celebrating birthdays and outdoor play.

**Jenny Leo** is an educator at C&K Maroochydore Occasional Care Centre.

**We show we value play through ...** offering a wide variety of equipment and experiences and encouraging the children to choose what they would like to play with.

Observing the children during play and offering props or new experiences to extend their interests.

Presenting the environment and experiences in an inviting way; showing respect for the equipment and the children.

Taking an interest in what the children are playing with and engaging in their play by getting down to their level, using eye contact, smiling and talking to the children about the play and joining in the play.

Allowing the children time to explore the environment and experiences – not packing up the equipment – leaving it available for the children to revisit and reflect. Resetting the experience to look inviting and adding, removing objects to suit the style of the play.

***Bailey (5 yrs) I like to play in home corner because you can pretend that you are home.***

**We build on each child's strengths through play when we ...** observe children while they are playing and extend their interests by setting up new, more challenging experiences for them to get involved in. These follow on from experiences that have interested them.

Listening to the children and scaffolding their learning by extending on their interests, supporting them and valuing their contribution.

**In a play filled learning environment we would see ...** educators involved in play with the children, on their level and with interested and smiling faces, using plenty of language and expression.

Children involved in play, small interest areas set up all around the room with opportunities to choose what they would like to play with, for how long and when.

Free-flowing environments where children come first, where children are supported and encouraged for their efforts.

Children engaged in play as individuals, small groups and moving freely from the indoor environment to the outdoor environment.

*We are challenged/stimulated by ... coming up with new ideas and experiences for young children who are not using language to tell us what they would like to do.*



*Will and Tavian stir and watch as Gemini mixes with the wooden spoon.*

**A rich play-based experience or moment that I remember was ...** buckets of water, trays of sand.

Will has just started attending the centre this year and has shown a very big interest in sensory play, especially water play. Every time he attends we have been extending on his interest and offering a variety of water play experiences. Each time Will is very interested and involved and plays with the experience for over twenty minutes at a time. We found that every time he was involved in the water play experience he would always tip all the water out or hop into the water. Once all the water was tipped out he would always look for more water to tip out, or if he hopped into the body of water, no one else could enjoy the experience. As much as the water was his main interest we wanted to create an atmosphere that encouraged him to follow his interest and play with the water, but allow for other children to be involved and play with the water too.

***Torin (5 yrs) Mobilo is my favourite because you can follow a pattern or build things by connecting them in different ways.***



*Buckets of water and trays of sand Will stirs and mixes.*

We set up the water play experience quite differently. We offered the experience on a table under the patio, with two large trays of sand, along with four buckets of different coloured water and wooden spoons. Will was drawn to the experience straightaway and used the wooden spoon to stir the water into the sand. He interacted with Gemini (assistant educator) passing her handfuls of sand, using a small container to transfer water from the bucket to the tray and splashing the wooden spoon on the water and sand mixture in the trays.

This was a rewarding experience to observe, for normally Will would have poured all the water out of the buckets and tipped the sand from the trays. This time he was very involved in the play, only pouring small amounts of water and only what he needed. This allowed other children to get involved in the experience.

## References

Commonwealth of Australia, 2009, *Belonging, Being and Becoming – The early Years learning Framework for Australia*, Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments.

## ***Supporting the implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework***

***Peter Demopoulos***

*Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, known as the EYLF, is part of the Council of Australian Government's National Reform Agenda.

***The EYLF is the first component of the National Quality Framework to be introduced to Australian services.***



The new Framework articulates the expected learning outcomes for early childhood education for children from birth to age five, providing guidance to families and early childhood educators.

For the Framework to be used effectively by early childhood educators and families it is essential that support is offered both to services and organisations and individuals who offer support to services. The professional support should result in all educators and those who support educators knowing that they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to successfully adopt the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

***Professional Support Coordinator Queensland (PSCQ) is supporting services and organisations to successfully implement the Framework in a number of ways, including:***

### **Newsletter articles**

Articles outlining the experiences of educators who have been part of the Framework trials

Articles outlining the experiences of educators who have been part of the Educators Guide trials

An article from our resource library detailing resources that can be borrowed by members to support implementation of the Framework. These articles can be found here:

<http://www.pscq.org.au/publications.html>

Keep an eye out for more newsletter articles as the year progresses

### **Information Sessions and professional development opportunities**

Representatives from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace



Relations: Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care and the Queensland Office for Early Childhood Education and Care have spoken at a number of PSCQ events. Keep an eye out for upcoming activities in your region: <http://www.pscq.org.au/activities.html>



## Resources

A staff meeting resource (developed by Children's Services Central) to support services to investigate the Framework within a service is available here:

<http://www.pscq.org.au/reform-eylf.html>

## Action Research Projects:

During the next couple of months, PSCQ will be advertising supported Action Research projects in some regions. These projects will have the Early Years Learning Framework as a central link in their investigations. More information about the PSCQ Action Research projects can be found here:

<http://www.pscq.org.au/action.html>

## In-Service Contributions:

In July 2010, PSCQ will be offering another round of in-service contributions. During this round, applicants who identify Early Years Learning Framework as a topic for investigation will be considered priority when applications are being assessed.

More information about the In-Service Contribution Program can be found here: <http://www.pscq.org.au/in-service.html>

*Over the coming months, PSCQ will provide more support for individuals and organisations that have a role of supporting services to successfully implement the Framework.*



Opportunities to look out for include:

## Principles of Practice for presenters:

PSCQ are providing support by developing Principles of Practice to be embedded through PSCQ events to ensure that the Early Years Learning Framework is embedded throughout all sessions.





**Professional conversations:**

*PSCQ are currently developing a partnership with Education Queensland – Office of Early Childhood Education and Care, and TAFE QLD to collaboratively initiate and present a series of Professional Conversations for people supporting child care services.*

These sessions will provide an opportunity for Early Childhood Officers, presenters, teachers working in the vocational education and training sector, the Indigenous Professional Support Unit, university lecturers, Inclusion support agency staff, and peak bodies to have a structured discussion and reflection about supporting services to implement the Framework.

For more information about professional support offered by PSCQ, please look on our website [www.pscq.org.au](http://www.pscq.org.au) or call us on 1800 112 585.

PSCQ is a project of the Workforce Council.

The Australian Government funds the PSC as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.



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## ***Early Childhood Reform Agenda Update***

### **Council of Australian Governments Meeting 7 December 2009:**

The following points briefly summarise the COAG meeting outcomes that directly impact on Early Childhood Education and Care.

#### **Key Issues**

COAG signed a new National Partnership Agreement which further strengthens the Government commitment to achieving higher quality childhood education and care.

*The National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care will create new quality standards, including improved staff-to-children ratios and better trained carers and early childhood teachers with requirements phased in over the next decade.*

This new framework will deliver better quality for children through a single National Quality Standard which will:

- Improve interactions between children and carers based on better qualified staff and improved staff-to-child ratios which allow for more quality time to focus on individual children's needs;
- Provide nationally-uniform standards in seven key quality areas including educational program and practice; children's health and safety; physical environment; staffing; relationships with children; partnerships with families and communities; and leadership and

service management which will ensure every child care centre, family day care program and preschool (kindergarten) provides a quality service; and

- Provide a new transparent ratings system which will provide parents with information to easily compare services and make informed choices about which service best meets their child's needs, and encourage services to put an ongoing emphasis on quality improvement.

#### **Staff-to-Child Ratios**

The staff-to-child ratios for Long Day Care and preschool required under the National Quality Standards are 1:4 for children aged from birth to 24 months by no later than 1 January 2012, 1:5 for children aged from 25 months to 35 months by no later than 1 January 2016 and 1:11 for children aged from 36 months to school age by no later than 1 January 2016.

#### **New Ratings System**

The framework combines the seven quality areas with a five-point scale rating system of 'Excellent', 'High Quality', 'National Quality Standard', 'Operating Requirements' and 'Unsatisfactory' to describe the quality of early childhood education and care and school age care services.

#### **Streamlined Regulatory Administration**

The administrative burden on services will be reduced by eliminating the duplication of regulation across government and sectors, with services dealing with only

one organisation for regulation against the National Quality Standards. A consistent fee structure will apply to all services.

A new national body, with joint Commonwealth and State governance arrangements, will be responsible for guiding implementation and management of the national system, with the affairs of the National Body to be controlled by a board reporting to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). Administration and enforcement activities in relation to the National Quality Standards will be undertaken by State agencies (accountable to State Ministers) under the direction of the National Body.

### **Transition and Implementation**

As part of the transition process, from 1 July 2010 the National Childcare Accreditation Council will start to assess Long Day Care, Family Day Care and Outside School Hours Care services against the National Quality Standards.

The national framework will be fully operational by 1 January 2012 and will cover Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Outside School Hours Care and preschool services, with the national body commencing operations prior to this date. New ratio and qualification requirements will be implemented progressively. The Commonwealth and States will retain their current roles until 2012 to ensure all services continue to be monitored until the new system is fully implemented.

The new framework will be reviewed in 2014 to examine the progress of implementation, with a particular focus

on workforce availability, governance arrangements, including their impact on the regulatory burden for providers, further improvements to the standards and appropriate regulatory agencies for preschool.

### **January 2010 Update:**

The Ministerial Council For Education, Early Childhood Development And Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) has established the new Early Childhood Development Working Group which has three project groups:

1. Operational Project Group – To develop and draft the details of the standards and ratings system, assessments and the regulatory arrangements, including a Communications Strategy and improvement plans for the implementation of the National Quality Standard;
2. Transitions/Establishment Project Group – To establish the new National Body and transition to the new body; and
3. Legislations Project Group – To set up Legislation for all states and territories to progress, with Victoria being the first to enact the new legislation and all other States and Territories to have legislation based on Victoria's.

For more information refer to [www.mychild.gov.au](http://www.mychild.gov.au) and [www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood) which include a series of Frequently Asked Questions. Information is also available from [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au) and [http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/early\\_childhood\\_development\\_working\\_group,28457.html](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/early_childhood_development_working_group,28457.html). 3. EARLY YEARS LEARNING FRAMEWORK

## Key messages:

The Queensland Government has undertaken to use the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and is looking at ways to support implementation. States and territories may still use their own state-based early childhood curriculum framework documents, such as *Building Waterfalls* in Queensland, to complement or supplement the EYLF.

*The EYLF will be incorporated in the new National Quality Standard. Once this is in place, early childhood education and care settings will be expected to provide evidence of their use of the EYLF in the design and delivery of their early learning programs.*

The EYLF was sent to early childhood education and care centres in Australia, together with a Families' Guide. Additional copies of the EYLF and the Families' Guide, which has been translated into 20 Centrelink-recommended languages, is available on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' website. New services, which did not receive copies of the EYLF and Families' Guide, are invited to request copies at the following email address: [eylf@deewr.gov.au](mailto:eylf@deewr.gov.au)

The Educators' Guide, which has been developed to support early childhood educators' use of the EYLF, is going through clearance and production processes. On release, the Educators' Guide will be mailed to early childhood education and school-age care services in 2010. The Guide and background information will be available on the Department's website.

Following endorsement by the Council of Australian Governments on 2 July 2009, the EYLF is in the implementation phase. In addition to the Educators' Guide, implementation strategies include:

- Support provided by the Australian Government-funded Professional Support Coordinators program and the Indigenous Professional Support Units which provide training and mentoring for child care services.
- The Australian Government online forum which was reopened on 11 September 2009 for approximately six months to enable early childhood educators and service providers to provide feedback on the draft Educators' Guide, to network with other early childhood educators and to assist in implementing the Early Years Learning Framework.
- A web-based training package and professional development for remote Indigenous settings are under development.
- The *EYLF in Action – Educators' Stories and Models for Practice* and a CD with EYLF Resources are currently under development and will form part of the EYLF Educators Guide.

Further information, including copies of the EYLF and Families' Guide is available at [http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy\\_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Pages/EarlyYearsLearningFramework.aspx)

Office of Early Childhood  
Education & Child Care  
Australian Government  
Department of Education  
Employment and Workplace Relations  
GPO Box 9880 Brisbane Qld 4001  
P: 07 3223 1344 Fax: 02 6275 3634

## ***ECTA conference a must for early childhood professionals***

This year's ECTA conference on 26th June 2010, at John Paul College, Daisy Hill is set to be another great one!

### **Register now**

Early bird closes 4th June 2010.

Go online to the ECTA Website at [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au) and click the link to the Conference Website.

The keynote address, sponsored by Modern Teaching Aids, will be presented by Professor Tony Attwood. Professor Attwood is well known for his specialisation in autism spectrum disorders. His presentation will outline some of the difficulties that can occur when trying to work in collaboration with parents, and some of the issues at home that may be affecting emotions and social behaviour.

Tony will also focus on identifying signs of depression and anxiety in young children and strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to improve self-image and self-confidence. Come and share in this day of revelation with the always entertaining and informative Tony Attwood.

### **Master classes and workshops**

There will be a selection of over 25 workshops and five master classes during the day. Tony Attwood will conduct a master class sponsored by Flower and Hart Lawyers following his keynote address, titled "Strategies for guiding children with aggressive behaviours including Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)". The structure of the master class will be based

on information provided by the participants at the Conference with questions submitted before the conference via email to [info@ecta.org.au](mailto:info@ecta.org.au) or at the conference into a box at the ECTA stand during the morning break. The content will include discussion about why a child may become aggressive and defiant and what is realistically possible within a typical classroom.

For more information about Tony Attwood please visit his web-site <http://www.tonyattwood.com.au>

There will also be two other master class presenters on the day. Firstly, Pam Linke well known speaker and author, will present two master classes and address the very serious issues of 'Building resilience in children' and 'Bullying – is it relevant to early childhood? What can we do about it?'. Secondly, Louis Bradfield, a dynamic and passionate communicator, will present two master classes. In the first master class Louis will share with us how 'play', under the guise of supposed 'child centeredness', has experienced a significant shift away from children and their agendas which he regards as "The Bastardisation of Play". The second master class is titled "The Arts' - Identifying elements of the arts that present children with opportunities to tell 'their stories'. For further information about Louis or Pam see the ECTA website.

***Due to popular demand we are also planning another exciting and interesting lunch-time program which will involve playing, relaxing, networking and an update about what is happening nationally.***

We look forward to seeing you there.

# Conferences



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# Annual Conference



**Saturday 26th June 2010**

**John Paul College, John Paul Drive  
Daisy Hill, Brisbane**

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Professor Tony Attwood**

**MTA Keynote Address**

**"International Trends in Behaviour Guidance Approaches"**



Kindly sponsoring the Morning Tea



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ECTA donates 50c each to the Abused Child Trust and the Cassandra Weddell Memorial Library from every registration.

## Communication as Behaviour

*Peter Melrose, Karyn Johns, Carrie Rose*

Karyn Johns is a Speech Language Pathologist who has worked with children and families for 20 years both interstate and on the Gold Coast. She has experience working for a number of agencies including Education Queensland, private schools and, more recently, consulting to the Commonwealth-funded Communities for Children Initiative in the Northern Gold Coast.

Peter Melrose has been working in the social welfare sector for around 20 years. He has extensive practitioner experience in both government and non-government work throughout Queensland and interstate with families and children and young people.



Carrie Rose

Carrie Rose has worked in early childhood education for 20 years. She has worked for many years in a range of teaching across both private and community-based child care, lecturing in early childhood education and her successful EC consultancy work for the past three years. Her passion focuses on using both emergent curriculum principles and innovatively designed environments to provide an engaging educational environment for young children.

Often, when we approach children who display difficult to manage behaviours, or challenging behaviours as they are often referred to, we decide to run with a range of strategic responses that we think will connect the child to a reward-based management regime. Many people will talk about the successes they have with such approaches and this is not to be underestimated.

***Developing any behaviour support or guidance process in early childhood is not just about sticker charts or consequences.***

We are proposing that there are three integrated domains that need to be considered and supported at the same time, in order to develop sound, long-lasting techniques that teach children to regulate and manage their own behaviours long after they have left early childhood programs.

These are:

1. Environmental design of play spaces, resources and strategies that enable and extend learning
2. The development of an effective behaviour support toolkit
3. Communication skills i.e. the child's ability to understand their environment and the language being used and their ability to express themselves.

In addition, there is a belief (or at least what is observed in practice) that these domains can operate independently of the other, as though they are not connected or affected by the other. In other words, a belief that strategies to modify behaviour should be readily applicable in any environment and the child should respond the same way at a child care centre as they would at home. However, we suggest that, with these three domains

in mind, it is important to ask the question, 'How can I support children to make sense of what's going on around them'?

When we consider how children feel about the space that they play in, then just like adults, it will guide the way they behave. In many cases early childhood environments have very similar materials to play with and familiar play spaces to play in. Sometimes this can be many small, boxy spaces where perhaps only a few children can play without getting in each other's way, or spaces that are meant for specific games and materials only. We would argue that the environment should clearly show what the children of that group are exploring, games they are playing and reflect their varying levels of skill. Further as Curtis and Carter (2003) write, children are driven by a desire to make connections with others and develop a sense of belonging. Therefore, cosy, comfortable and nurturing environments are important for supporting personal connections and positive relationship building.

To do this, we must consider that learning spaces should promote a variety of options and choices for children and not just the ones that we think are 'developmentally appropriate'. Schiller (2009) suggests that 'over-stimulating classrooms inhibit cognitive functioning' and therefore we must make careful decisions for the environment.

***Children cannot show their skills if we do not give them the opportunities through environments that provide challenges, aesthetic appeal and ignites the senses.***

The way in which the room provokes wonder and curiosity will assist in firing up the senses

and imagination. The smell, aesthetic look and levels of noise will then play a critical role in how adults support and guide the children's behaviour.

As educators, we should base the decisions in the environment not on what we think we should have, according to history or developmental milestones, rather base it on inspiration, intrigue and function.

To be able to inspire and intrigue children to explore their environment, we should consider what materials we are offering. Edwards and Springate (1995)

write '... young children want and need to express ideas and messages through many different expressive avenues and symbolic media'. Although there are many materials we can purchase through relevant catalogues, it can be argued that many of these materials have one main play purpose or function. The introduction of recycled or second-hand furniture and materials will start to give the learning space a closer connection to the 'home-like feel'.

***The provision of environments that engage children in long-lasting play, with a more creative and open ended purpose, with materials of interest, will create a context that will minimise children's challenging behaviour.***



Learning and play spaces will require negotiated communication and collaboration between children.

Both verbal and non-verbal communication skills, underpin the interaction between adults and children. Oral language competence is fundamental to the perception of “success” in our modern-day world – both the success of our interpersonal relationships and the acquisition of literacy skills (Beitchman & Brownlie, 2005). Dealing with a breakdown in interaction and play (which for young children is displayed via “challenging” behaviours) can be as much about understanding the breakdown in communication process as knowing how to deal with the “behaviour”.



Being aware of the developmental stage and skills of the children, and having access to visually based strategies that support communication, will ensure positive interactions are more likely to occur. Therefore, support and information from Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) for prevention-based strategies as well as intervention is increasingly being sought

by early childhood professionals. Examples include:-

- modelling use of visual-based routines and scaffolds for activities
- demonstrating and “teaching” effective teacher talk strategies (Weitzman & Greenberg, 2002)
- supporting specific social language-based experiences that support play entry, and social skills development (turn-taking; waiting; problem-solving; negotiating; politeness rituals etc.)
- modelling screening tools, supporting early detection and liaising with parents about children’s skill development.

*What binds the environments and the ways in which children learn to engage in those environments and spaces, is the way in which we, the adults, model behaviour and engage with the children.*

Unfortunately, the time for “conversations” with children in busy centres can be limited. Rather, the majority of verbal exchanges are short, adult directed and initiated (Makin, 2009). Also, sometimes children are expected to answer questions that they know the teacher knows the answer to, which then can feel like testing questions, not inquiry-based questions. So verbal exchanges about behaviour need not be just about teaching them how to behave and who makes the rules (although that is important); it is more about talking with them about why we engage in particular ways and modelling how we engage in particular spaces.

*We need to reframe the practice from approaching a child with strategies, to strategically approaching the child in ways that will meet his/her needs for learning.*

This means that there is no one-size-fits-all and we have to consider the need of the child before we come anywhere near them with behaviour response plans. These plans must fit with the needs of that child and recognise the fluidity and dynamic and changing nature of children's behaviours.

As a starting point, almost all strategic approaches should aim to meet the following principles:

- teach – not punish. In other words, focus on proactive rather than reactive responses
- be developed for that child alone.
- be reviewed regularly and finetuned always
- not be stressful for the child or the adult
- engage families wherever possible
- take full account of how the child makes sense of the environment and how they interpret the space around them.

*This paper encourages early childhood professionals to consider a holistic and integrated approach to supporting positive communication skills and behaviour in early childhood environments.*

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## ***How can we help children to sing well?***

***Celia Dodds and Deb Brydon***

Deb Brydon is a music teacher. Originally a primary classroom teacher, she has taught pre-school, prep and primary school music for ten years in both Charters Towers and Brisbane as well as “*Do re mi – music for children*” classes. Deb has a particular interest in early childhood music and expresses this daily in her interactions with her own children.

brydon@dovenetq.net.au

Celia Dodds has been a primary classroom teacher since 1989 and always had a keen interest in music and music education. Celia has three young children and currently works part-time, teaching nine classes from Prep-Year 2 as well as conducting a Junior Choral group. She thoroughly enjoys sharing her love of music-making with little people. cmdodds@bigpond.net.au



*Celia Dodds*

It is clear to many early years professionals that children love to sing. How can we harness this enthusiasm and at the same time enhance children’s musical development? This article seeks to offer some simple suggestions, grounded in the research and drawn from personal experience, to help address this issue.

### ***Vocal development and singing***

In early childhood settings, songs should be taught by rote from the teacher’s unaccompanied singing voice. That way, children hear only the sounds they need to imitate, uncluttered by the different sound of a piano or other distracting accompanying instruments, or the insistent drum rhythms of modern backing music.

***Traditional songs and rhymes provide a wealth of useful material. Songs should be repetitive, rhythmically simple, and easily memorised.***

Many repetitions, both on first exposure and on subsequent hearing, ensure accurate internalisation of pitches, rhythms and words. Daily singing is the best approach, even if only for ten minutes. Once memorised, songs provide core material from which other skills can be developed.

According to Kenneth Phillips (1996), accurate singing is a learned psycho-motor skill. Like other skills, the ability to sing accurately can be learned – and therefore taught – and is not a matter of “can” or “cannot”. Assisting children’s vocal development includes:

- helping to differentiate between speaking voice and singing voice of selves and others
- vocal exploration through simple exercises or story songs
- simple vocal health – loud singing is not the same as shouting

- encouraging pitch-matching of the adult's voice
- voice recognition of friends, adults and peers
- providing a good model.

### ***Aiding children to explore vocal expression***

It is important to take time to focus on singing in-tune, remembering that there is a complex network that needs to be established between the brain, larynx and ear in order to sing in-tune. For some children, it may take until nine years of age, and this development is very dependent on their musical exposure, especially between the ages of 18 months and three years. This skill may develop at variable rates for different children in your class. Be patient and encouraging!

Singing the falling minor 3rd (so-mi e.g. in the song See Saw) is best way to learn to sing in tune, even with adults.

Echo singing requires hearing accurately, remembering accurately and reproducing accurately. It appears straightforward, but quite complex processing is required.

### ***Developing in-tune singing is a long-term goal – it takes time!***

The development of singing skills grows out of a child's desire to imitate.

***Through frequent singing, the teacher awakens the interest of the children, then, depending on their mood and receptivity, they join in the singing.***

Songs are taught by listening and repetition:

1. The teacher sings, providing a model.
2. The children listen, store the song in their memories, and then try to reproduce it.

Children who sing out of tune should always be allowed to sing with the group and never be prevented from joining in. Singing with others will motivate them to sing and help them accept correction. Encourage individuals to sing alone as well as with a partner who is confident and sings with good intonation.

To assist children to develop their singing voices:

- discuss the differences between talking and singing voices
- start with vocalisations – play with your own speaking voice; animal sounds; characterisations
- voice play – ghosts, owls, sirens, train whistle, rocket ship, take your voice on a ride in a lift. Moving the pitch of the voice up and down gets us away from our small everyday speaking range and makes it easier for children to find their singing voice.
- try using a puppet (some children will more willingly sing as a "cat" than themselves), sing to a friend.

It is critical that we provide a safe, secure environment for singing and music-making:

- encourage a love of singing
- encourage respectful listening to each other
- provide a good model as the teacher, and use other children as models too
- pair a good singer with a developing singer
- have high expectations – all children can sing!

- be careful about what you say, but be honest, encouraging and specific when giving feedback.

Confident singing is also a result of good 'mechanics':

- encourage good posture, open mouth and expression on face
- use good material with an appropriate vocal range
- use a variety of material
- use appropriate starting pitches.

Singing is also about listening – in order to reproduce a song correctly, children need to have both an accurate mental image of the song and an unconscious command over the mechanisms responsible for vocal production. Avoid using accompaniments (i.e. CD or piano) in order to encourage listening to own and others' voices.

### ***The importance of appropriate vocal range***

Try to keep the pitch range between middle C and high C. Remember that some children have difficulty differentiating between their speaking and singing voices when the singing is low, as their natural singing voices are higher than most adults. At first, starting at a higher pitch may feel unusual for you, but will be very comfortable for the children.

***Using an appropriate starting pitch will have great benefit in assisting your children to sing in-tune and as a group.***

Use an instrument (e.g. tone bar, glockenspiel, piano/keyboard, recorder) to help you. Remember that most young children have a limited singing range of

about a musical sixth (from about Middle D to the B above). The importance of this cannot be overstated. Often, simply starting on a higher note, can make the difference between children singing a song or chanting it.

Children can be taught to sing in tune. Good modelling, suitable unaccompanied song material, an appropriate pitch range and daily singing all help children to sing well.

***As with other childhood milestones, the ability to sing in-tune develops at varying rates, so constant opportunities to sing are important.***

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For further information contact:  
[www.kmeiaqueensland.com.au](http://www.kmeiaqueensland.com.au)

## ***Stemming the Tide of Childhood Obesity – A Story of Fun, Inclusive Physical Activity***

***Kathleen Richards***



Kathleen is an Early Childhood Teacher with 20 years experience. She is currently working as the Programs and Policy Development Officer for a small business called Kids Sports. [www.kidssports.com.au](http://www.kidssports.com.au) Kathleen shares her experiences with *Educating Young Children*.

*Kathleen with her daughter  
Anabella, aged 3 and a half.*

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### **What can you tell us about children and physical activity?**

We believe that ALL children should have the opportunities to be physically active in a safe, fun environment where their self-esteem is built upon and their strengths encouraged; where children are treated fairly and equally regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, disability, physical/sporting ability, fitness level and body shape. We encourage teachers to be passionate about children's physical and mental health, about their cognitive and social development and about them as people, in the context of their families, cultures, societies and environments.

***We believe that physical activity for young children should be play-based, cooperative, not competitive, and focused on the child, as they learn about their body, how it feels and how it works.***

Most of all, that it should be fun, and be shared with significant adults in their life who can support and encourage their attempts. Yes, there are the locomotor skills, stability skills and manipulative skills that get learnt along the way. However it is not the skills that are or should be the focus, it is always the child, their thoughts and feelings about what

they can achieve and the satisfaction that comes from their achievements. The sheer joy when the toddler shouts out, "Look at me – I can jump so high!!"

### **So how did it all begin?**

From small beginnings; we began running an after-school program catering for kids who felt they had been excluded from traditional sports ("I'm just not fast enough/not sporty enough/not coordinated enough "...). It was a simple concept – provide novel, active games that would make children run hard enough so they would puff, would build their self-esteem, be accessible to ALL children no matter what their ability level was, and most of all let them have a lot of FUN.

Brisbane City Council soon heard of what we were doing and invited us to run our after-school program for their Active and Healthy Parks programs. Families were arriving in the parks and hundreds of children filled the environment with colour and laughter. Not only primary school children we discovered, but their little brothers and sisters of course! We therefore gathered our finest early childhood teachers together and came up with some programs especially designed for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers and their parents/carers. These have now become

some of the most popular programs we run. They provide not only physical activity opportunities for children, but social opportunities for parents to connect with other parents, finding friendship and support.

Word spread amongst councils and, within a few years, we were running programs for Gold Coast City Council, Logan City Council, Moreton Bay Regional Council, and Ipswich City Council. Soon requests were coming for professional development of teachers, child care workers, family day care providers, council early childhood facilitators, and others who were looking for a new and innovative approach to inclusive, vigorous physical activity that was FUN. Other opportunities to work with state and federal government projects arose and soon we were helping communities start up Walking School Buses, Community Fun Days, and special ventures such as the Northern Gold Coast Communities for Children Program, and the Mary Valley Schools Project.

### **Can you share some of the things you have learnt along the way?**

What we have learned about achieving our goals is to work together with others. Find organisations with similar values and goals and form long-term partnerships. Firstly there might be small opportunities to work together, then over time, when we keep our eyes on government funding that becomes available, we can pursue larger projects. We have developed great working relationships with Nutrition Australia, that have been very productive through "Eat Well, Be Active Community Partnerships Grants". Kids Sports is also a 'Heart Foundation Walking' area coordinator which helps us to keep the parent walking groups we establish in parks, going. Our relationship with the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland helps us to work together to provide access to fun physical activities for members of culturally

and linguistically diverse communities, and our newly established partnership with Playgroup Queensland is beginning to flourish with many ideas already in the pipeline for projects together. Work with schools and councils throughout South East Queensland and beyond, is our daily business, with some recent interest from North Queensland.

### **What advice do you have for early childhood educators?**

Here are some questions that can help educators reflect ...

- is our early childhood setting working towards assisting children and their families to begin habits for lifelong active and healthy lives?
- how long in each day do children in our setting have the opportunity to really be ACTIVE? Do they experience an increase in heart rate? Do they 'puff'?
- do we need to reconsider the use of space so that children have room for vigorous physical activity?
- do we need to engage our staff in some professional development to discover new and innovative ways of making physical activity fun and accessible to all our children?
- do we need some new equipment that will engage children and encourage them to be more active?
- do we need to work together with others to find solutions to funding problems so that finances don't get in the way of children's access to increased physical activity?

***Remember: Laughter is a wonderful exercise; it increases the circulation, raises the heart rate, and relieves stress, so get active, have fun and laugh a lot!!!***

## Yoga 4 Kids

Dani Reidy



Dani is a yoga teacher and teacher trainer. She spent her youth (25 years to be exact) studying and performing ballet on a professional level. During this time Dani created classes for a prominent Melbourne Gymnasium in meditative movement and stretching. Not realising it at the time Dani had commenced her journey into Yoga. She has been teaching Yoga for over eight years and maintains her own personal yoga practice through workshops, seminars and retreats.

Yoga is an ancient scientific system of physical and mental

practices that originated in India more than five thousand years ago. The word yoga means 'to yoke or unite' in Sanskrit, that is the union of the mind, body and spirit. The purpose of yoga is to help us achieve our highest potential and to experience long-term good health and happiness all through life, even during the downs. Yoga can improve our health beyond the expected for our years and improve the quality of our lives.

Yoga is a direct experience of the vast inter-relatedness of all life and of all things. You will feel at peace at the end of a yoga class because there is a natural realignment of your body which leads to a natural realignment of your perception of life and of who you are.

***Young children are natural yogis. They intuitively stretch their bodies in every direction, run and play for the joy of movement, and rest when their bodies are fatigued.***

They normally live truly in the moment, neither with fears about the future nor regrets about the past.

Children's yoga reintroduces youngsters to the fun of movement. It triggers their imaginations and fosters creativity by taking the forms of

animals, unusual shapes, and making up their own poses. Through yoga postures, children build strength, gain flexibility, and improve balance. It offers effective tools for stilling the body and introduces them to the concept of self-calming through the breath. In all these ways, yoga helps children feel independent and accomplished.

Unlike most activities children undertake these days, Yoga is not competitive!! Every child is different. Therefore yoga is for everybody!

*The secret of a better world lives in the hearts of our children. (Teresa Asencia)*

Children love to move and find sitting still for long periods of time very challenging. Also their bodies become stiff and tense which makes it hard for them to learn....

*A flexible body leads to an open, flexible and receptive mind. (Dani Reidy)*

Yoga has been taught in schools around the world for over 25 years in countries such as South America, India, France, Italy and several other European countries.

In some parts of America, and more recently Australia, yoga has been integrated into the school day as part of the classroom sport's programs and other non-competitive physical activities. Many teachers are trained to include yoga as a regular part of classroom activity (or experience).



# Feature Articles

*Integrating yoga breaks into the daily schedule of your classroom helps students release tension, stay focused, heighten innate wisdom, creativity and potential.*

Taking a few minutes to breathe and stretch between activities will allow students to better assimilate knowledge learned, create a more harmonious classroom and inspire a more joyful, effective learning process.

Specific yoga postures can be used at various times of the day to restore energy levels, reduce stress levels, increase focus, create calmness, and improve balance and retention of information.

There are many ways to teach yoga to children that encourages enthusiasm, joy and love for yoga. It is important not to get too serious about yoga when teaching it to children. The teaching requires a balance of focus and playfulness. *Yoga games* are a creative and fun way to practice postures, learn simple yoga philosophies, improve listening, focus and encourage respect and acceptance.

Children are blessed with wonderful imaginations but are often held back by fears of criticism. One of the most important things you can instill in a child is a positive self-image. Another way to teach this through yoga is expression and goal setting through creative drawing and *Mandala* creations. Drawing and mandala making can be a very empowering experience for a child. Circular forms or 'mandelas' abound in the natural world. This is a great opportunity to talk to the children about respect for our planet. *Meditation* for children can be the most rewarding aspect of teaching yoga to children. When their little bodies finally settle into a still state they quietly float off into calm and peace.

It will help give children focus, connection between their minds and bodies and tools to explore their inner world and will be carried into adulthood.

*Breathing exercises* in yoga are known as *pranayama* and are not recommended for early childhood years. However, creating awareness of the breath in young children can teach them to manage their emotions and anxiety levels from a young age. Simple breathing exercises, in through the nose and out through the mouth, are used in forms of acting out an animal posture or in a short guided relaxation.

*Yoga stories are a great way to have fun, allowing the children to display their yoga knowledge and an opportunity to introduce simple yoga philosophies, morals and virtues. Children love to contribute to this part of the class and participate in creating stories.*

Over many years yoga has been scientifically trialed to measure its benefits and now, more than ever, professionals working with children are endorsing yoga as an important part of a child's education. It has been said over the next five years yoga will be taught in most schools and child centres.

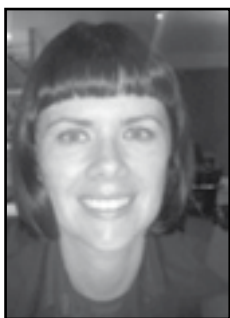
My ten years experience of teaching yoga to children has given me some beautiful memories and restored my faith in our youth. I have been privileged to witness amazing progress, through yoga, for children (and adults) suffering illness, pain, disabilities, social disorders and body weakness. I look forward to passing my experience on to those committed to bringing yoga into children's lives.

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Australian Yoga Life, Dec- Feb 2010, pp 1-4.

## ***A snapshot of teaching and learning strategies for the dance classroom***

***Simone Jacobson***



Simone has worked as a dance teacher in both the primary and secondary sectors of education for the past ten years. She is currently studying a Masters degree and has also worked as a dance lecturer and tutor at QUT.

The purpose of this discussion is to outline a few teaching and learning strategies that can be employed in the dance classroom for students aged five to eight. These strategies will be divided into the following topics: designing dance learning experiences and behaviour management strategies suitable for teaching dance in a school context. The knowledge of these strategies has been learnt from informal conversations with other dance practitioners, choreography workshops and reading reference material. They are designed to introduce students to dance movement for the purpose of exploring selected topics, stories or a response to stimulus.

### **Designing dance learning experiences**

#### **1. Safety first in the dance classroom**

Teachers should:

- ensure the dance space is appropriate through a risk assessment. This involves removing any obstacles such as tables and chairs from the dance space
- assess the suitability of the floor and avoid using slippery or rough surfaces

- make a judgment about appropriate footwear dependent on the floor within the dance space.
- encourage students to remove their shoes and socks to avoid any safety issues
- ask students to remove any jewellery when participating in dance lessons
- wear appropriate loose fitting dance clothing
- avoid unsafe movements, for example handstands and knee squats.

It is also worth referring to <http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/health/hlspr012/> about Curriculum activity risk management.

#### **2. Warm-up and cool down**

These should be fun cardiovascular activities at the start of the lesson that allow the students to warm-up and stretch out their bodies. Linking these activities to the theme of the lesson, can also be a good way of starting the lesson. For example with a theme like Dinosaurs the students could warm up with stomping actions like a big dinosaur.

The cool down should end the lesson and focus the students for their next learning activity.

### 3. Student exploration through movement.

It is important at this age that students engage in activities that allow them to explore the movement of dance. These explorations can be based on different stimuli appropriate to the age group such as story books, poems, picture books, textural objects e.g. leaves. Another important aspect of their exploration is the use of dance devices such as action words, level, shape, direction, and energy. Refer to the dance terminology section for additional sources.

### 4. Using personal and general space

Establishing the space with a dance classroom assists in preventing any safety issues during the students' movement explorations. Students need to be taught how to find their own personal space (as seen in the picture below) within the dance classroom. This can be achieved by setting the boundaries with the general space (as seen in the picture below) and demonstrate the use of personal space. This will need to be continually reinforced when the students are travelling or moving through the space.



*Demonstrating how to find and use your personal space*



*Demonstrating setting the boundaries with the general space*

### Use of dance terminology

Students need to become familiar with the language of dance; this can be visually displayed in the dance room on cards or posters. Refer to the QSA essential learning The Arts as a guide <http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/learning/7262.html>.

### Presenting dance pieces to an informal or formal audience

This should be based on the students' explorations looking at the class and then structuring it into a dance performance so the students can present this to an audience.

*Informal presentations can occur in the dance classroom in front of peers, other classes or parents, while formal presentations occur on a stage or auditorium. These opportunities will allow students to experience creating and rehearsing dance as well as performing in front of an audience.*

### Use of music within the dance classroom

Percussive instruments such as bongos or maracas are a creative way of introducing musical accompaniment during the student explorations.

*When selecting pre-recorded music, the most suitable for this age group are instrumental pieces with a variety of sounds. The music can also be connected to the theme of the lesson to enhance the students' explorations.*

## **Behaviour management**

### **1. Use of a safety switch:**

Establishing the safety switch in the dance classroom assists in 'freezing' the students' movement in the dance space to avoid any safety issues. The teacher highlights a verbal cue and introduces an action or movement the students will do when the word or phrase is used. For example, as illustrated in the picture below the teacher uses the safety switch of "lollipops" and the students do a movement where they jump and clap their hands together.



*Teacher demonstration of the safety switch*



*Student demonstration of the safety switch.*

The safety switch can also be quite effective when it is based on the theme or stimulus being explored during the dance class.

### **2. Developing classroom procedures:**

Highlight the dance classroom procedures visually for the students to see while working in the area that will be used as their dance space. At the start of the first dance lesson explain these procedures to the students. This could include:

- making two lines outside the dance space
- entering the room quietly and sitting in a circle.

The extent of teacher direction may vary according the age groups of students.

*When teaching students dance, it is essential that the students have an awareness of the safety issues within the dance classroom. This requires using teacher judgment about the designated dance space, use of correct footwear and clothing.*

# Feature Articles

*Designing dance learning experiences allows students to use their bodies to explore and create dance movements and provide students with opportunities to present their movements developed in the dance classroom to an audience.*



*Presenting dance pieces to an informal or formal audience*

Many thanks to the participants of the workshop who have modeled the student demonstration section of the pictures.

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## UNDER EIGHTS WEEK

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## ***Maintaining the balance***

***an interview with Laurie Kelly***



Enthusiasm – Laurie Kelly from ‘Mindworks’ is famous for it. Whether training teachers and trainers, assisting clients in-house with change management and motivation or helping organisations deal with information overload and balancing their work/life week, Laurie has over 20 years experience and an expertise for the workings of the mind that few can boast. Laurie has an impressive background in education including secondary teaching, career development education and then lecturing at the Queensland University of Technology. He has worked with homeless youth and undertaken an impressive amount of postgraduate training in understanding how the mind works, Laurie has been the Director of Mindworks since 1992.

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### **You talk about having a balanced life? Can educators achieve balance in their lives?**

The reality is that it can be a challenge. The proof of this is to look at the number of educators who get sick as soon as the holidays begin. They have been running on adrenaline for a number of weeks and their bodies simply say ‘STOP’ and force them to do so by simply falling ill. In the martial arts, balance is a crucial element. If you are off balance, it is easy for your opponent to knock you down. It is the same in life and work - if you are out of balance, the slightest blow will bowl you over. If, however, you are leading a balanced life, whatever hits you simply bounces off.

***People in the ‘caring industries’, which include educators, often run the risk of being very good at looking after the needs of others but not always so good at looking after their own needs.***

### **What can you tell us about stress?**

Stress happens. Stress is a reality of professional life. It is those who learn to control their mental and physical reactions to stress that will thrive.

Stress is a normal part of living and working.

Our body knows this and the pituitary gland assists us by producing two chemicals called cortisol and adrenaline, designed to help us deal with stressful situations.

We need adrenalin and cortisol to give us energy. Over long periods of accumulated stress, the body produces more and more of these chemicals resulting in uncomfortable symptoms.

Cortisol can flood the hippocampus. This is a part of the brain located in the temporal lobe which holds the short term memory. When the hippocampus is flooded with cortisol the following symptoms may occur: short-term memory loss; confusion; inability to focus; difficulty in taking in new information etc. Too much adrenaline can cause sleeplessness, palpitations, sweats, shaking, aching muscles, to name a few.

### **Does stress mean that we can’t cope?**

Most of us tend to work harder when we feel stressed but it isn’t long before the body tells us to slow down and will eventually make us slow down.

Most people experience some or all of the symptoms of stress at some time. It is normal for the body to try and provide the energy we

need to do our jobs or to simply live our lives. If you are experiencing, or have experienced, some of these symptoms, it does not indicate that you cannot cope or that you need to change your occupation.

It may mean that an increase in an understanding of how your body responds to a stressful world, and some simple ways to assist it to do so, is all that you require.

## How do we know if we are out of balance?

As a challenge, write down a list of twenty things that you like doing and then beside each write down when you last did them. Most busy people find it a challenge to list twenty things and often find items on their lists that they know they love doing but have not done for quite a while.

This exercise is not meant as a guilt-trip but simply a 'reality check' exercise.

## Ok – I'm out of balance – what can I do?

We hear people talk about the need for a good work-life balance. When considering this balance, can I suggest that you look at this exercise as a life raft with six compartments?

These compartments are:

1. Our physical wellbeing
2. Our rapport with family or very close relationships
3. New areas of interest or knowledge that we are exploring/investigating
4. Our social and friendship circle
5. Our spiritual wellbeing
6. Work.

In a real life raft, if all the air was placed in one compartment only and that compartment suffered a puncture, you would very likely sink. If, on the other hand, all compartments had air in them and one was punctured, you would have an excellent chance of staying afloat.

Sure, there are times when one compartment needs extra air but don't go taking this air from the other compartments and deflating them.

*No matter how busy we get at work or with our family demands we need to keep a balance. We need to keep air in all compartments.*

## What advice can you give to busy educators?

May I suggest they use a Balance Wheel to run a reality check over the next two weeks just to see how much air they are deliberately putting into each compartment. It only counts if it is a deliberate decision and not just walking from the front steps to the car – this is not considered enough exercise to warrant a 'tick' in your Physical compartment!

If, after two weeks, one compartment is not getting deliberate air then simply go back and do something about it.

*Maintaining a balance is about you being as kind and caring to yourself as you often are to the children you work with. Enjoy life and enjoy the things that you love.*

Everyone will benefit – particularly YOU!



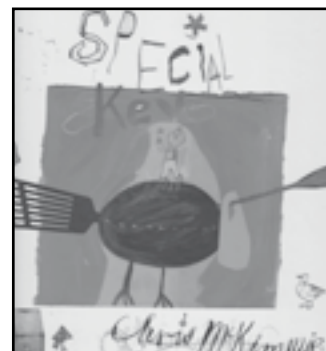
## Mathilda Element

*In this edition of the media reviews section, we are going to hear the voices of a diversity of our colleagues – from children in lower primary settings to childcare directors in both urban and regional settings. We are proud to be expanding our network of reviewers, and still keen to support new reviewers and centres to access resources via the media review process. For more information, or to add your name to our database, please contact <mathilda@ecta.org.au>.*

*Also, as many changes in education across the early years spectrum (from the Early Years Learning Framework through to National Curriculum) take place, we are hoping to diversify the types of resources we review and offer to educators. In this new age, with an increasing expansion of the definition of 'texts' we use in our settings, it would be great to see more digital and other media texts – websites, audio resources, etc. – that are of use to educators. If you know of a really great website, interactive whiteboard program or CD that you couldn't live without, why not send in a short review for the next journal? Alternatively, email the above address and I will find a reviewer willing to investigate that resource.*

*Once again, thanks for reading, sharing and networking. It marks us as professional educators who care about our practice.*

**Title:** **Special Kev**  
**Author:** **Chris McKimmie**  
**Published By:** **Allen and Unwin**  
**ISBN:** **9-781741-755503**  
**RRP:** **\$29.95**  
**Reviewed by:** **Baillie Kruger,**  
**Year One, Morningside Primary School.**



Special Kev is a picture book written by Chris McKimmie. Special Kev is the story of a boy called Special Kev. Special Kev is "the only one of his eleventy million" cousins to have red curly hair and freckles.

His favourite cousin is Fatty Boombah which is a funny name that makes me laugh. I have heard this name made up before. Special Kev has lots of cousins with funny names like: The Boombahs, Flathead, Megan the Meanie and Aunty Bingo.

Special Kev gets teased for his red hair and freckles. They call him bloodnut, carrot top and ginger nut. I don't think these names are very nice and you shouldn't really say them.

At the end of the story Special Kev has to go to bed early every night until his next birthday because he got carried away with Nicky Bathgate playing Ned Kelly. Special Kev threw his bike in the lake and left Nicky tied to a tree.

The good thing in the story is that Special Kev's parents make him feel unique.

The illustrations are great. I especially liked the picture of the scrub turkey Special Kev's dad made out of a football and a spoon.



*I would recommend this book to anyone in Year One.  
My whole class really enjoyed sharing this story with our  
Librarian in the lead-up to Book Week 2009.*

**Title:** **Sing a Song of Wiggles**  
**Author:** **Australian Broadcasting Corporation**  
**Published:** **ABC Books**  
**ISBN:** **978073325427**  
**RRP:** **\$12.99**  
**Reviewed By:** **Hayley Lambert, Childcare Director, Gold Coast**



The Wiggles collection of nursery rhymes would appeal to the 0-3 year age group for children. The book is a thick, sturdy page book that would be easy for little fingers to manipulate. The illustrations are bright and colourful and integrate the nursery rhymes in Wiggles fashion, which would encourage the younger audience to connect.

The nursery rhymes selected for the book have familiar ones that my three- and four-year-olds related to and some were not known to me. As there were unfamiliar rhymes, I believe a CD to accompany the book would be an asset to the *Sing a Song of Wiggles* and foster the message conveyed at the front of the book by the early childhood consultant Kathleen Warren. Kathleen states the importance of nursery rhymes linking children to the past and also emphasises the benefit of children using rhyme to increase their success in learning to read. I also believe they did not highlight the benefit of rhyme in assisting children in their language development.

Overall, the book was enjoyed by my children and, as mentioned earlier, a CD to go with the book would be useful to assist learning and teaching the songs. I believe that this book is appropriate for toddlers level and is a book for family and friends to share.

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**Title:** **10 Little Hermit Crabs**  
**Author:** **Lee Fox**  
**Illustrator:** **Shane McG**  
**Published By:** **Allen & Unwin**  
**ISBN:** **978-1-74175-739-2**  
**RRP:** **\$19.99**  
**Reviewed by:** **Sue Lederhose, Dip teaching, Grad Dip (Early Childhood), artist, [www.lederhoseart.com.au](http://www.lederhoseart.com.au)**



What a great take on a simple counting book. I first read 'The 10 Little Hermit Crabs' to a mixed group of 20, three- to five-year-olds. By the third page they were 'reading' along with the repeated rhyme on every second page as well as counting back the numbers when asked, "How many will there be?" It fully engaged their attention and continues to be a favourite book. The plot is obviously about hermit crabs and their environment which leads to all sorts of discussion on shells, crabs and beach holidays, all of which are dear to a child's heart.

The illustrations are stunningly clear, made from a collage of coloured paper with extra effects. There are also two double pages, continuing the brilliant illustrations, which have no written words and just add to the story line.

As a small negative, I would have preferred the number four to have been written in QLD cursive as consistency in symbols is important for the children's emergent literacy and numeracy. However, this book is a must-have addition to every early childhood library.

**Title:** **Mariella and the Stars**  
**Author:** **Selena Hanet-Hutchins**  
**Illustrator:** **Michelle Pike**  
**Published By:** **ABC books**  
**ISBN:** **978-0-7333-2339-3**  
**RRP:** **\$24.99**  
**Reviewed by:** **Sue Lederhose, Dip teaching, Grad Dip (Early Childhood), artist, [www.lederhoseart.com.au](http://www.lederhoseart.com.au)**

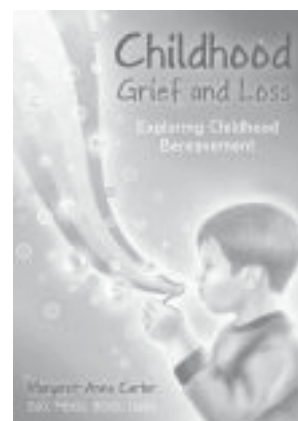


This book is in the genre of 'Where the Wild Things Are' by Maurice Sendak, a classic from 1963. Children from four to five upwards would enjoy and relate to this story. There is always something familiar in the knowledge that the behaviour has gone too far and the only escape is into the realm of imagination. It brings together dance steps, musical instruments, movement and an innate love of children. It appeals to the rhythm within each of us.

The illustrations are a beautiful combination of pen and wash overlaid with pastel. They are simple but emotive, showing wonderful depth and tone. Michelle has added an extra story-line with her addition of a toy dinosaur which comes to life and dances with Mariella. While I did find that the story-line tended to taper off at the end, this was an enjoyable read for children.

**Title:** **Childhood Grief and Loss: Exploring Childhood Bereavement**

**Author/**  
**Illustrator:** **Margaret-Anne Carter**  
**Publisher:** **MA Carter Consultancy**  
**ISBN:** **978-0-9757121-6-0**  
**RRP:** **\$44.00**  
**Reviewed By:** **Brioney Looney- Childcare Director**



This book appeals to adults and may be used by teachers, parents, family members or friends. It is an excellent resource for adults to explore childhood bereavement.

The book is formatted as a resource for professionals and includes definitions of stages of grief; examples of possible behaviours; indicators of grief; factors of grief; and general guidelines for supporting children through grief and loss. It targets developmental stages of children's learning.

This resource book was written by an Australian author who is highly qualified, with EdD; MEdSt; BEdSt and DipEd qualifications. The book is available online through [www.thebookgarden.com.au](http://www.thebookgarden.com.au) or [www.macarterconsultancy.com.au](http://www.macarterconsultancy.com.au).

I believe that this resource book would be a useful tool for adults to support children who are dealing with grief and loss, in whatever situation. I will definitely be using this book in the future to provide parents with information on this topic.

## ECTA Guidelines for writers

The ECTA journal committee welcomes articles and ideas for possible inclusion in the journal.

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

### Style

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

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

### Referencing

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

Maybe you need help with referencing. If so, you should find the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers (6<sup>th</sup> edn)* very helpful. The editor uses this manual and also the *Macquarie Dictionary*. This is the preferred style for the ECTA Journal. Example of referencing for a book: O'Hagan M 2001, *Early Years Practitioner*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, Harcourt: London.

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

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

### Specific terminology

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

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

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

### Length of contribution

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

### Form of submission

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

Author release forms must be signed and a hard copy forwarded to ECTA 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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