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EYC disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the ECTA Inc. or the editorial panel.

Editorial policy

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

Registered Teachers - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements

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



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From the President

Kim Walters



Welcome to the second edition of *Educating Young Children* for 2010.

Our membership numbers continue to grow with 813 early childhood educators currently registered as ECTA members.

I believe this

is an indication of ECTA's reputation for providing members with information and support and high quality professional development opportunities. Our rural and/or remote ECTA Groups in Cairns, Gladstone, Fitzroy (Yeppoon) and Cooloola

(Gympie) are also seeing their numbers grow and our ECTA Groups Coordinator Libby Gaedtke is currently working on supporting early childhood educators to establish ECTA Groups at the Gold Coast and Northern Rivers NSW. Early childhood educators desire opportunities to network with other early childhood colleagues and want to be involved in quality professional development opportunities.

This year ECTA offered sponsorship to two office bearers from each ECTA Group to support their attendance at the conference and a breakfast meeting on the Sunday following. Sponsorship included conference registration, accommodation and expense reimbursement up to \$300 per office bearer. We hope to offer this each year to promote and support the work of our ECTA



Back row: Deb Hancock & Liz Fallon (Gladstone RG); Leonie Mitchell (Hervey Bay RG); Libby Gaedtke (ECTA Groups Coordinator who lives in Hervey Bay); Kim Walters (ECTA President – who lives in Gympie); Lisa Cooper (ECTA Treasurer who lives in Hervey Bay); Roslyn Heywood (SCC who lives in Theodore).

Front row: Lynne Ireland (Cairns RG); Marion Sillett and Michelle Watson (Gympie Cooloola RG) and Sue Southey (SCC who lives in Brisbane).

Groups. Pictured below are the Office Bearers and State Coordinating Committee (SCC) members who attended the working breakfast which focused on how ECTA can support ECTA Groups and members living in rural and remote areas.

On behalf of all ECTA members, I would like to congratulate the Conference Committee on the success of the 2010 ECTA Annual Conference. Unprecedented registrations caused the conference to book out this year with the site capacity of 600 being reached by 6 May. This led to many ECTA members who did not register early missing out.

Members are reminded that it is vital that we have your correct email address as all financial members received a personal email containing a link to the conference website two weeks before registrations were opened to the public. You can update your own details by logging in to the website using your username and password. If you have forgotten either just email info@ecta.org.au or retrieve your password online by clicking Member Login.

Login, then access the Members Only Secure Area which has handouts and PowerPoint presentations submitted to us from the 2010 presenters. This area also has past conference PD along with PDF copies of previous journals.

We thank everyone who took the time to fill in the online Conference Evaluation form. Your feedback is valued. Congratulations to Suzanne Johns who won a complimentary 2011 conference registration for submitting her evaluation online.

It was very rewarding for the committee to read the multitude of glowing reviews from delegates for the work of the committee. They are a very dedicated group of

professionals who work together to make everything run smoothly on the day. I would also like to thank the members of the Coordinating, Web and Journal committees who supported the Conference Committee on the day.

Toni Michael, our long-term conference coordinator, is taking a year off next year and we wish her well on her well-deserved break and look forward to her return in 2012. If you would like to help the Conference Committee please email info@ecta.org.au and I will pass on your offer of support to the committee.

This year Remote and Rural Conference Support was given to three ECTA members to attend the conference Connie Duncan – Atherton, Margaret Riddle – Charters Towers and Jan Curran – Yeppoon. Each received a grant of up to \$500 to cover expenses and their conference registration was refunded. Selection was made on Remote status and information on how they would share the knowledge gained during the conference within their local area.

ECTA continues to represent its members at national and international levels. With the National Curriculum to be released shortly, we hope that the ECTA submissions and those of our members and colleagues were used to inform the final publication. The consultation for the Geography Shaping Paper begins in August. The Cambridge Primary Review UK research and Kindergarten in Crisis Report USA both highlight the negative effects of a curriculum that removes or reduces contextualised play-based learning in the early years. You can find links to the research on the ECTA website.

ECTA is concerned about the growing number of reports from our members across

the state who are experiencing pressure to introduce more formal teaching methods into the Prep curriculum. We hope to have a QSA representative present at our AGM videoling on 17th November.

The Queensland Studies Authority and Education Queensland have each confirmed that play will remain the key context for learning in the early years. QSA has also confirmed that the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines will remain the curriculum for our Prep classrooms.

Over the next year we hope to collect and distribute examples from members who are using pedagogy based on the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines within their settings. Of special interest are those strategies used to reach prescribed outcomes.

Our Website committee is working on ways for you to submit your ideas. The website also has guidelines for articles to be submitted for this journal. Learning from our colleagues in the field via articles, forums and face-to-face networking is a key to developing innovative strategies which allow us to stay true to our early childhood philosophy whilst meeting prescribed outcomes.

ECTA continues to advise government on behalf of our members working in childcare and kindergartens on how federal and state government initiatives will affect children, our members and centres across the state. If you have any concerns, please email me directly at kim@ecta.org.au.

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Free Lunchtime Forum - Managing Staff Performance: A practical perspective

12.15pm to 1.30pm,
7 October 2010,
Flower and Hart's boardroom*.

To register your interest and receive an invitation with full details, email events@flowerandhart.com.au or ring 07 3233 1280. Seats are limited.

If you are unable to attend, Tracey may be able to attend your workplace (within South East Queensland) and present this seminar to your management team for a set fee.

Presenter:

Tracey Jessie heads the Employment and Industrial Relations Law practice at Flower and Hart.

Prior to joining the firm, Tracey was employed in the education sector and was a school principal for nine years. This 'on the job' experience allows Tracey to understand the unique personal, practical and commercial interests of the education sector. She also understands the importance of delivering high quality, commercially astute advice in a timely, efficient and cost effective manner.



She has experience in the traditional employment and industrial relations legal services, including workplace health and safety, anti-discrimination and statutory and corporate compliance.

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From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore



Hello from the editorial team.

We hope you enjoy reading this bumper conference edition of *Educating Young Children*.

This Issue is jam packed with memories of the 2010 conference held at John

Paul College on 26 June. *Educating Young Children* editorial panel member Ros Heywood was there to capture the day and provide some wonderful photo memories. It provides some insight into this enjoyable and rewarding professional learning and networking opportunity. Please note our sponsors. Their contribution is invaluable.

Our teacher stories come from Libby Gaedtke and Caroline Fewster. Both examine the possibilities ahead for early childhood education and care in Australia. Libby 'plays' with the national curriculum to identify some challenges and the opportunities. Early childhood educators, she reminds us, 'are very creative and clever thinkers' who will 'continue to foster quality learning'.

Editorial panel member, Archana Sinh, found some time in her busy schedule to interview Caroline Fewster. Many of you will have attended Caroline's innovative and practical workshops. In this interview Caroline also reflects on the possibilities ahead for early childhood educators in Australia.

Last year we introduced a new section to the journal on environments. We hope you are gaining as much as we are from this addition. In this Issue Mathilda visits the Seven Hills State School Adopt-a-Farmer project where 'real life farmers show children how to produce their own fresh food'. Readers seeking practical information about starting food gardening in their early childhood education and care setting will be pleased to see the Peter Kearney article that follows.

Our 'conversation' this Issue is with Sharon Meehan, environmental sustainability advisor at C&K. Sharon writes from the head and the heart

in this very personal and informed reflection on children, nature and the future of our environment.

The feature articles begin with the Modern Teaching Aids 2010 keynote address by Professor Tony Attwood. Tony provides an overview of the latest developments and strategies in behaviour guidance available to educators. Leanne Hunter and Lisa Sonter return with more on the natural environment. These popular contributors to our journal provide a useful framework in structuring thinking about practices, actions and strategies for education in, about and for the environment. Readers will also value the very useful and practical resource list.

Pam Linke explores the latest research about resilience in young children. In this article, Pam explores why some children who are exposed to adversity seem to be able to cope and why others do not. Valerie Rogers and Lynelle Whittaker take us on a journey to Reggio Emilia and Caroline Fewster returns to provide expert advice for educators of infants and toddlers.

ECTA Vice-President Sue Southey completes our feature articles with an examination of creative music making. Sue encourages educators to 'find a space for music, engage children and enrich their play'.

Where practical we have included links to the national Early Years Learning Framework. We hope this addition is useful.

For an international perspective Archana shares a recent trip back to her old school in Shimla, India. Mathilda, once again, has sourced an interesting range of media for review. Thank you to our reviewers. We now have a team of over 30 reviewers who receive complimentary copies of the books they review. Please contact Mathilda for more information mathilda@ecta.org.au

We would also like to congratulate Mathilda on the birth of little Toby - our newest member of the editorial team.

We hope you enjoy our journal as much as we enjoy bringing it to you.

Lynne, Mathilda, Ros, Angela, Sue and Archana

ECTA Conference 2010

Roslyn Heywood

The 2010 Early Childhood Teachers Association (ECTA) Conference was held at John Paul College, Brisbane, on Saturday 26th June. The children of John Paul College participated through their shared artwork, stories and photographs which were displayed in the Coleman Centre.

Over 530 delegates from northern, central and southern Queensland joined with their Brisbane associates to experience professional development opportunities that were organized by a dedicated team of early childhood teachers for early childhood teachers.



Conference Committee member, Kate Mitchell of John Paul College, is seen enjoying the company of Fei Yu, (Conference Committee member) and ECTA Life Members Carole Wild and Toni Michael, (Conference Convenor).



Participants from regional areas, who are separated by distance from many others, are given support at the Conference and by ECTA. ECTA members, Connie Duncan of Atherton and Margaret Riddle of Charters Towers received remote Conference sponsorship for 2010. They are photographed with Kim Walters, ECTA's President.



ECTA President, Kim Walters from Gympie, connects with regional group office bearers from Gympie, Cairns, Hervey Bay and Gladstone who were sponsored to attend the Conference. They are seen here together: (Marion Sillett, Kim Walters, Leonie Mitchell, Deb Hancock, Liz Fallon, Lynne Ireland, Michelle Watson).



Kim Walters (President) and Libby Gaedtkke (Regional Groups Coordinator) from Hervey Bay facilitate the regional and remote delegates networking (right side of photograph).

MTA was the 2010 Platinum Sponsor. MTA sales attendants were kept busy by a steady flow of delegates who were able to purchase some of the latest resources for the children in their care.



2010 Conference

The ECTA Conference Committee had, over the past twelve months, worked tirelessly to present a world-class conference. A handful of dedicated members throughout 2010 created an early childhood conference which was practical, addressed critical issues, enabled professional networking, enriched early childhood knowledge with cutting edge. "Thank you" is extended to all of you.

Various levels of sponsorship provide businesses with an opportunity to support the development of strong Early Years' provision in Queensland. Their support enables teachers to enjoy well-organized and top class professional development.



*Flower & Hart Lawyers Stand
Flower and Hart Lawyers were the gold sponsor and provided information and advice to various delegates. Elizabeth Manwaring is pictured handing out information.*



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Early childhood teachers look for professional development which embraces creativity, practicality and which addresses critical issues. Not only is it a requisite for continued teacher registration, but "contributes to the quality of care and education". (Zaslow & Martinez-Beck, 2006)



Global Kids Oz



Shopping for delegates, Julia Meara, Stephanie Carlson, Rebecca McAlister enjoyed the trade displays.



Ocean Life stand



It is encouraging to see staff teams engaging together. Sheldon College staff: Toni Johnson, Gaylyn Goodall, Elizabeth Macintosh, Kasey Cowell & Sarah Slade



Jenny Dumigan, Debbie Thomson and Kerry Martyn who attended Conference 2010 are caught by the camera:



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2010 Conference



ECTA is managed by a Coordinating Committee and with two working subcommittees – the Journal Committee and the Conference Committee. Committee members manned the ECTA stand. On the day, 15 new members joined ECTA. Lisa Cooper, (Treasurer), Mark Cooper, (Secretary), Anne Pearson, (Committee member) and Kim Walters (President) are seen manning the ECTA stand.



After ECTA President, Kim Walters, presented her opening address, Abbey Hewitt of MTA introduced the 2010 Keynote speaker, internationally renowned researcher and clinical psychologist, Dr Tony Attwood.



In addressing early childhood practitioners, TAFE and University lecturers, Dr Attwood presented cutting edge research into behaviour guidance and affective education. He referenced a research colleague, Dr Caroline Gray, recommending her new 'Social Story Book.' Delegates were left reflecting on best practice for their early childhood family. The ECTA website has Dr Attwood's Master class slide show – a valuable teaching resource.

Australia is undergoing an astounding transition where, 'change is inevitable and the education of the young must keep pace with these changes.' (NAEYC 2010). What we do today affects what will happen tomorrow. Awareness of this fact affects our decisions and dictates best practice. Best practice is networked practice. Best practice is research based-practice.



Professor Tony Attwood, presented the 2010 Keynote Address entitled 'International Trends in Behaviour Guidance' and also engaged reflective thought amongst those who attended his Master Class. Flower and Hart lawyers were sponsors to Dr Attwood's Master Class address.

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2010 Conference

The child's natural abilities of exploring and learning were the focus of the lunch time presentation by Brendan Gilmore. Brendan is seen at play during his session: 'Beat Bus'.

'The balance of organized practices and play should complement the child's sense of curiosity and discovery, competence and tenacity in creating, having an active social life and negotiating ways to cooperate,' (NAEYC, 2010).

This statement was true yesterday and is true today and is true for the children of the future.

Other lunchtime presentations included 'Play Perspectives for Adults' with Jan Ungerer, Dani Reidy's 'Kalm Kids through Kindness', regional networking with Libby Gaedtke and 'Early Childhood Reform Agenda' update with Anne Reddell.



Anne Reddell, in her lunch time presentation, gave the latest Early Childhood Reform Agenda Update. The concern of practitioners on the push for academic achievement is being strongly felt in the workplace.

'We need to ensure that the focus on the academics and the push for achievement doesn't crowd out unexpected experiences that ignite the power of multiple skills or deny children the opportunity to explore, to play in surprising ways, or have joy shape their day,' (NAEYC, 2010).

Anne's lunchtime presentation was well received. Fei is pictured thanking Anne for her presentation.



Another workshop, which addressed the astounding transitions in early childhood education in Australia was given by Anthony Shearer from the Catholic University. Queensland teachers were given the opportunity

to gain greater discernment about the Australian Curriculum. Practitioners were encouraged to see Education Queensland's commitment to the early years.

Linda Conlon, Jennifer O'Mullane and Sarah Harvey presented the workshop: 'Approaching Science in the Early Years.' A child's senses of curiosity, wonder, competence, discovery, tenacity and creativity are nurtured when teachers are equipped with practical skills. This practical workshop was enjoyed by delegates.



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2010 Conference

Workshops were well-attended by delegates, who had chosen to further ignite their passion for early childhood teaching and provision. Below are photographs of various workshops which took place throughout the morning and afternoon sessions.



Dr Caroline Fewster is pictured with some of her amazing early years resources. Her resources focus on valuing the whole child with special attention to beauty and practicality in every situation.



Caroline's apron holders.



Geraldine Harris presenting 'Intentional Teaching in an Emergent Curriculum Using the EYLF'.



Jodie Muraca presented the workshop entitled, 'Considering Art as a Language with young Children Birth to Four Years'.



Dr Jenny Cartmel chats to delegates during her workshop 'Contemporary Issues for OHSC Services with Pre Prep to Yr Three Children'.



Rosina Stensness with 'Team Building and Teamwork'.



'Having fun with Numeracy in the early Years', with Archana Sinh.



'What Bugs you about Teaching Reading in Prep and Year 1?' Michele Chandler and Karyn Johns.



'Making a Space for Music in the Environment' with Sue Southey.

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2010 Conference

At the end of a busy day, wine and cheese was served amidst the active buzz of hundreds of motivated and tired delegates social networking and enjoying the last minutes ... until next year. Sponsors of the wine and cheese evening and of the end of day prizes enabled a grand finale to Conference 2010. 'Thank you.' As winners received their prizes, squeals of delight from the more garrulous members and quiet handshakes by quieter members said more than a thousand words.



QIEC Super's Mark Frankel welcomed delegates to a fantastic Wine and Cheese evening and was photographed enjoying the evening with Rachel Alexander, Marion Sillett, Kim Walters, Rita Svensson (QIEC Super) and Michelle Watson.



Abby Hewitt presents a prize to Debby Steer on behalf of Modern Teaching Aids (MTA), our Conference Platinum Sponsor.



Elizabeth Manwaring presents a prize to Charli Jenkins on behalf of Flower and Hart Lawyers, our Conference Gold Sponsor.

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Council for Professional Recognition, National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2010, *Children of 2020 Creating a Better Tomorrow*, Council for Professional Recognition: Washington DC.

Martinez-Beck I. & Zaslow M. 2006, *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Professional Development*, Paul H. Brookes: Maryland.



The Bastardisation of Play and 'The Arts' - Identifying elements of the arts that present children with opportunities to tell 'their stories' Masterclasses by Louis Bradfield.



Rita Svensson presents a prize to Sue Reynolds on behalf of QIEC Super, our Conference Wine and Cheese Sponsor.



Professionals networking together over wine and cheese: Donna Vale from Jimboomba Kindergarten, Robyn Lane of Sunnybank Kindergarten, Kris Bishop of Springwood Kindergarten and Sue Southey, Vice-President of ECTA, celebrate together with regional ECTA representatives from Gladstone.



Kerrie Smith and Robbie Leikvold of the Conference Committee are seen enjoying friendship and well deserved aperitifs.

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'Playing' With the National Curriculum

Libby Gaedtke



Libby Gaedtke is a Prep teacher at Xavier Catholic College in Hervey Bay. She has been teaching for over 23 years in Preschools and now Prep, through both Education Queensland and Brisbane Catholic Education, and her philosophy and practices have evolved over that time. Libby is also the ECTA Groups Coordinator, and the Coordinator of ECTA Hervey Bay Group, and loves to see the world through the eyes of her five-year-old friends.

With the introduction of the National Curriculum into our Queensland schools just around the corner, there seems to be some uncertainty in the air surrounding Early Childhood Education and the expectations on our young learners. Many teachers are facing changes in content that they may not feel equipped to deal with, many are worried that all they have strived for and believe in, that is child-negotiated experiential learning, may 'fly out the window'. Concerns about the 'push-down' of the curriculum to children who are not developmentally ready to take on this type of learning, are present and strong.

We must remember that PLAY will remain one of five contexts for learning. As we are well aware quality, scaffolded play does not mean letting the children run riot and do whatever they please. It is a carefully crafted and monitored environment where caring adults facilitate learning experiences and episodes for their students, based on interests and current events in their

lives and in the wider community. It is an opportunity to make sense of the complex world in which they live. Smith (2010) in *Children and Play* cites two very good reasons why children's play should be encouraged and supported: firstly, because it is fun and enjoyable, and secondly because it is useful. He believes that this enjoyment of play should be celebrated and treasured, and anthropologically it occurs in the early years of life, gradually diminishing with age. In terms of usefulness, Smith states:

Play is one way in which children get a lot of experience about the world.

The current climate of educational change is not the time to suddenly give up on what we believe so strongly in – that young children learn best through play. As educators of young children, we are very creative and clever thinkers. We will continue to use play as a tool for quality learning, and strengthen our programs with authentic literacy and numeracy

experiences. This is not to forget all the other equally important learning that our children need – how to listen; how to follow directions; how to interact in an acceptable way with peers; how to solve everyday problems such as how to get help when I can't open my muesli bar wrapper at lunch time, how I can get friends to make space for me in the circle at group time; how to develop the confidence to try something new – like writing! These are the everyday 'little steps' that we encourage and help the children in our care to take.

Reading in Prep is not a new addition for some, for others it's a looming challenge. How can we educate our parents to understand that reading environmental print – road signs, the latest toy catalogue, the shopping list, a letter from Grandma – is authentic and very valid for their children, perhaps more so than commercially-produced 'readers'? Why not produce together with the class, little books which are relevant to the areas of interest that they are investigating? Creating an environment rich in literacy is something we have done beautifully in the past, and this will continue with the introduction of the National Curriculum. Signs and labels that have purpose and meaning are valuable tools, and will encourage children who are ready to take that next step into reading to do so.

Writing can also take an exciting leap into play scenarios – using whole writing, having real reasons to write (for example: writing a letter to our groundsman to find out how the power comes into our classroom, writing to our manual arts teacher to ask him to come and teach us how to hammer nails safely, sending an email to Eric Carle to find out if his illustration is of a crocodile or an alligator – a much-debated point

one year!). In '*Kid Writing*' by Feldgus and Cardonick (1999), the importance of making writing relevant for young children is evident. Many practical suggestions and examples are shown to demonstrate how teachers make the transition to 'creating authentic literacy challenges for children'. The concept is based on the notion that 'children learn best when their work is personally meaningful', and has strong arguments against the use of worksheets in early years classes as they *lack* relevance and are often out of context and unconnected to real experience.

Mathematics is an exciting element in early years classrooms, with concrete, hands-on materials used to explore ideas, formulate concepts and help the children move towards symbolic understandings. By grasping opportunities as they arise each day they begin to understand and connect learning. Using the clock to help develop understandings about time ('when the long hand is pointing straight up to number 12 and the short hand is pointing at 11, then it will be lunchtime'), introducing different types of clocks, looking at online calendars (there's a good one at www.starfall.com) are all opportunities for mathematical understanding that relate to *themselves*. And it happens whilst encouraging the children to 'have a go' in a non-threatening environment !

In my own Prep classroom the students have recently been exploring their world through their play. In our hospital, which was set up after one of our Prep children had a broken bone, and therefore was relevant to the children, evidence of exciting learning is in abundance – computer generated signs and props made through Sparklebox (www.sparklebox.co.uk),



Teacher Stories

waiting room magazines there to read, emergency phone numbers, time schedules, photo stories with captions written by the children in their amazing 'kid writing', notebooks for listing ailments (which are many and varied!) and patients, to name a few. Following the release of several movies over the holidays they returned to Prep keen to create a cinema. My teacher-aide and I sat back and observed as our class of five year olds organized themselves and each other, to produce posters, 'NO SMOKING' and 'NO MOBILE PHONE' signs, tickets and money, to monitor time, to arrange the room to suit their project, which incorporated the Interactive Whiteboard. Funnily enough, many of the hospital patients got better suddenly and popped next door to the movies swathed in bandages! This was a hive of busy creative learners at their best,

with literacy and numeracy happening in authentic and relevant ways!

So let's not throw out our philosophy with the bath water! Yes, the National Curriculum IS going to happen and it will bring with it many challenges, but let's remember how creatively we as Early Childhood Educators are able to solve problems ourselves, and continue to foster quality learning for these precious people in our care.

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www.starfall.com

www.sparklebox.co.uk

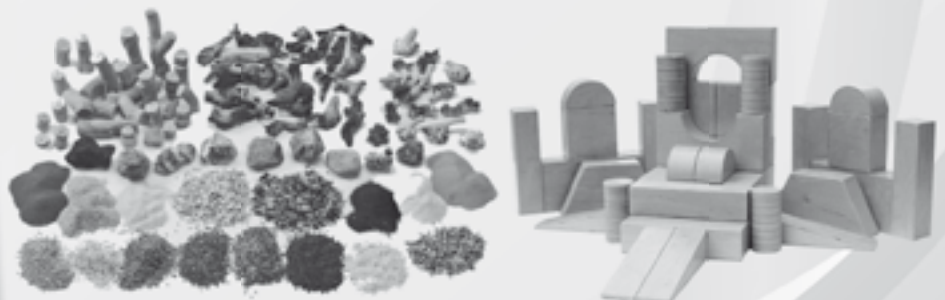
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Caroline Fewster



Archana Sinh

EYC editorial panel member Archana Sinh talks with Assistant Professor Caroline Fewster, early childhood academic, author and presenter. Caroline is Head of Program, Children's Services and founder of the Bachelor of Children's Services degree at Bond University. She has worked at the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE as a lecturer and Program Director of Diploma and Certificate Courses in Early childhood education. Prior to that she has worked as

a Director/Teacher in a diverse range of long day care and occasional care centres, kindergartens, and preschools in Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Queensland from 1967 till 1989. She is a regular contributor to *Educating Young Children*. You can read more from Caroline in this Issue.



Professor Caroline Fewster

How do you view yourself?

This is all I ever really wanted to do. I consider myself to be a working practitioner with a passion for creative thinking. Even as a child I would pick up things and try and make something out of them. I used to look at how I could best present what I had made. To me it was important to make it visually more appealing and attractive. It is something that is very important. For example, as a consultant, I encourage staff to maximize their environment and make it visually inviting and appealing so that children and families would want to explore it.

Tell me a bit more about yourself as a practitioner and consultant.

I have a strong interest in the age-group of Under 3s, and I do a lot of work with that age group. I am advocating that we set the scene in infant and toddler age-groups, developing their creativity, and not a watered-down version of preschool. When

things are presented well, they are inviting and this can maximize the use of learning. I also believe that there are many low-cost/no-cost things that services can use to create an inviting environment.

My philosophy for learning with young children is to inspire children's learning. I like to include the context of community (respecting) beyond setting out learning materials. I like to create learning opportunities that children would enjoy and building relationships. I believe in leading from the positive.

I also think that I look at things differently. That is, I like to challenge a lot of assumptions that happen in our day-to-day interaction with young children and their families. I also challenge my own understanding and long-held assumptions. I guess this is due to use of reflective practices. I encourage people to think, to maximize learning at every time of the day in their environment.

For example I looked at practices of orientation; what impression does a family get from the orientation? Do they see what we want them to see in our setting? Is sufficient information given to families? Did we listen to the families and include their ideas in our environment? To help children settle in their environment, we included a CD of stories from the parents that the children could listen to whenever they wished. There was a very positive response to this from children and families. Even the children who had been at the centre for a while enjoyed listening to their parents' voices as they heard the stories.

Caroline believes that the presentation of play and learning materials and resources makes a difference in how children respond to them; her ideas are designed to complement and extend the use of traditional early childhood education learning materials, and are presented in unique ways.

Could you share with us one of the assumptions that needed to be challenged?

I feel most challenged to move away from practices where children are not participants in decision making, for example at rest time. There are many gaps during the day where learning can happen. This can also be an opportunity to encourage children's participation. I believe that we should put the theory into practice where we believe that children are competent learners. We should then be thinking about how this theory would work in practice. For example, we could invite children to set up tables for meal times, or be involved in other preparations, such as designing

routines and spaces within fixed parameters such as recognizing staff ratios.

At another level the leadership, should be encouraged to challenge practices. For example, what could it look like if we included social learning opportunities."

The generous provisioning of learning materials for infants and toddlers can spark their imagination as they explore many ways to use objects and materials.

Briefly could you share your views about the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)?

I believe the EYLF offers a wonderful opportunity to consider things that we do, to build on our existing practices. The EYLF encourages thinking in different ways. I think it is a wonderful time to be working with early years in Australia.

I am delighted to be working with Early Childhood Educators in the implementation of the EYLF in Queensland.

What is next?

I am completing a book with Geraldine Harris titled *Delightful learning ideas – thinking differently about learning materials for young children*. We want to share the approach of looking differently at learning approaches using everyday ideas, ideas that are simple and innovative. We are using a practical approach grounded in Early Childhood contemporary theories.

Dr Margaret Carter and I have just completed a research report describing a professional development program for early childhood educators in guiding children's behaviour. We look forward to publishing our project results soon. And next, a book for Family Day Care.

Adopt-a-Farmer Project

***Words by Mathilda Element in conversation with
Ann Boon, Project Coordinator***



Franco showing the children how to eat sugar cane

At Seven Hills State School, the outdoor environment is a living, breathing, learning classroom, thanks partly to the wonderful efforts of the Adopt-a-Farmer project. Run in partnership with Food Connect (a community-shared agricultural enterprise that aims to connect organic food consumers with local farmers), the Adopt-a-Farmer project has been going for two years at Seven Hills, and the families, children and teachers are reaping the rewards.

Project coordinator Ann Boon describes the project as 'all about real life farmers meeting children and showing them how to produce their own fresh food'. The two farmers, Franco Cencig and Michael Pettitt, nicknamed the 'Barefoot Farmers' by the children, are much loved members of the Seven Hills Community, who willingly give their time and expertise as organic farmers. In the past two years, they have helped the children to weed, compost, mulch, plant and grow seasonal produce, revitalise an orchard and start a worm farm. They have introduced the children to new experiences, such as trying sugar cane for the first time, and developed a culture of respect for the natural environment as well as an understanding of the growing process, through real-life learning and participation in farming projects. Ann Boon writes 'Every week the farmers come to school I watch them develop as teachers. They are becoming masterful and it constantly amazes me how they can take the simplest things like a worm burrowing through the soil, or sweet corn plants sprouting from an old corn cob, and transform them into something educational, amazing and incredible for the kids.'



Franco helps the children to plant the seeds

This year, the school has focused further on learning links in the classroom, with teachers following up the outdoor learning with curriculum connections, and planning with input from Franco and Michael. The 2/1 teachers write 'In Term 2, 2010, our unit of work looks at two questions – How do we keep ourselves healthy? and Why do we need farms in Australia?



Watering is an important part of the growing process

We are looking at the topics across a number of key learning areas and this includes science. We would like to plant items that can be used to make a healthy lunchbox, for example, tomatoes, celery, beetroot, lettuce. We are looking at the farm in the latter part of the term and our focus will be the people and resources used in the production of goods and services. The Adopt-a-Farmer Program gives children such a valuable opportunity to meet and work together with real farmers who are passionate about the environment and the work that they do.

The Prep teachers are using the outdoor experiences to explore learning about insects and, across the school, art experiences have developed (such as making banners for the farmers to display at their weekend Farmers Markets, making colourful flags to decorate the garden, and crayon and colourwash still life pictures of fruit and vegetables).

Franco and Michael also enjoy their interactions with the children. For Franco, 'One of the best things for me is listening to the Mums. They all tell me that their kids will eat more vegetables now and try new foods. If it helps in the home, that is a great outcome.' Michael agrees, saying 'It's exhilarating being with the children in the gardens and watching them grow.' Parents are impressed with their children's enthusiasm and love of learning in the outdoor environment. As Kate Flamsteed, parent, states, 'It's hard to imagine you get two farmers and put them in front of a bunch of kids and it just works. Just like that! They were both so natural and so easy and the kids are so engaged.'



Michael provides a juggling demonstration



Franco and the children with the wheelbarrow



Recording the process using clipboards

But truly it is the voices of the children that matter the most, and in this instance they are overwhelmingly positive in their support for the program, and for the connections they have made. They write ...

- Franco and Michael are the best farmers in the world.
- I just like to chat and chat and chat with Franco.
- Michael taught me how to be a seed saver.
- Thank you for coming to plant the vegetables so that when they're ripe we can taste some.

(Safia Schamburg)

- Thank you for helping us learn a little bit more about growing things.

(Sophie Disteldorf)

- Thank you for helping us learn all about the things that you have planted.

(Kaden Cetenic)

- I appreciate you helping us grow the vegetables and fruit at our school.

(Milla Webb)

- Thank you for helping us grow our plants.

(Dylan Mobbs)

- Thank you for helping us to grow our nature at Seven Hills State School.

(Sophie Prestidge)

- I appreciate the way you help us grow tomatoes.

(Max Shearer)

- Thank you for helping us garden.

(Lucy Vaschina)

For more information about the Adopt-a-Farmer program, visit www.foodconnect.com.au/inspiration/adopt-a-local-farmer/.

Environments



The children excitedly find sweet potatoes hidden in the undergrowth from last year.



Franco and Michael share some show and tell with the children, bringing fresh produce and answering lots of questions about farming.



Watering the lettuce

Michael works with the children to prepare and plant beans in the orchard (above and right).



On a rainy day, the children learn to mix soil indoors for later planting.

Environments



Franco shows the children how to plant lettuce.



Making time in the classroom to answer children's questions helps build understanding of the learning.



Working in the orchard with the farmers, the children construct a spider web among the bean trellis, to help their plants to grow.



Gardening gloves in all sorts of shapes and sizes provide protection for little hands!



At the end of their hard day's work, the Barefoot Farmers enjoy a basil footsoak that the children have prepared.

Food gardening in early childhood education and care settings

Peter Kearney

The growing interest in food gardening around the world is a heartening trend. Our modern society is sensing the need for transformation after many years of disconnection with food sources, food growing and care for the earth.

Introducing food gardening into early childhood education and care settings is an important step in this transformational process. When our preschool age children become adults, they will hopefully live in a world of more localised food systems, with food being grown organically and all communities, no matter their size or location, being part of this new and more sustainable food growing environment.

One only has to watch a young child in a food garden for a few minutes to see how they know it is good for them to be connected to this most fundamental aspect of human existence. To see their wonder in planting a seed, to experience it sprouting, to care for plants and have their hands in the soil and taste the fresh produce, is a treasure indeed.

At a recent C&K conference where I facilitated a workshop on introducing food gardening into early childhood education and care settings, approximately one third of the 80 workshop participants had already begun working with food growing in their settings. They commented on the need for knowledge and community support, but were all very positive about their experiences.

Here are some basic tips we talked about at the conference for getting a food garden underway in a pre-school setting and keeping it productive.

What to grow

Vegetables, herbs and fruit trees and, if you have enough space, some chickens. Only use plants

that are easy to grow, don't need a lot of space to be productive and, most importantly, the children like to eat. Always plant in season, so the children become aware of seasonal influences and your food plants have the most chance of success.

Site selection

Getting enough sun away from shade structures is a challenge, especially in warmer climates where outdoor shade is vital for a workable play area. Fruit trees should be in full sun; vegetables and herbs can have dappled sun. In the planning phase for the garden, it is very important to get the children and their parents involved, as their enthusiasm will add a foundation to the garden.

Resourcing

You need garden bed and shade structures and some way to protect your garden

from local creatures that love eating healthy food grown in their territory. Add to the list: soil, seeds, seedlings, seed-raising trays, garden tools for adults and children and one or more compost bins. This list could be funded by the service or preferably by donations of materials or money from parents or local businesses.

Garden management

Stick to using organic methods in the garden, no chemicals at all. Plant according to your local climate, practice crop rotation in your garden beds, make compost and use natural soil tonics to continuously improve soil. With these basic organic practices you can demonstrate sustainable soil management to the children, the 'staff of life on earth'.

For further information visit www.cityfoodgrowers.com.au.





Sustainability.... an educator's and mum's reflection

Sharon Meehan – Environmental sustainability advisor C&K

We show we value the natural environment by ...

Let's be clear: Education for Sustainability (EfS) is not environmental education. They are two separate yet closely intertwined curriculum threads.

Environmental education in Australia has developed from a strong base in ecology and has traditionally focused on the very important 'green issues' of endangered species, nature conservation and forests. There is clearly a shift taking place between conservative approaches to informing people and students about the environment (commonly practised as environmental education) towards educating to think more critically and reflectively about change and how to engage in change for sustainability (Tilbury 2004).

The Qld Dept of Training, Education and the Arts in their statement on Sustainability for All Queensland Schools define sustainability as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs', or simply as 'enough for all forever'. In short 'we have moved away today from the need to teach young people about the nature or causes of environmental problems. The task of consciousness-raising of the last twenty years in environmental education has, by and large, been successfully completed'. (DET, 2009)

Put simply, sustainability is about reducing our ecological footprint while simultaneously improving the quality of

life that we value — the 'liveability' of our society. It is both present- and future-oriented. It's about learning to design and implement actions for the present, in the knowledge that the impact of these actions will be experienced in the future. (Sustainability Curriculum Framework, 2010).

We build each child's connections with nature when we ...

You have to love it if you want to protect it and you can't love it unless you're connected to it. If we want

children to feel a sense of belonging with nature we have to let them get outside and explore it. This means letting children of all ages use all of their senses to explore the natural world on a regular basis. As opportunities arise, exemplary educators interact with children, pose questions, formulate plans together, discuss ideas, test theories and assist the children to understand their developing concepts and skills about the natural world and their impact on it.

In a sustainably responsible environment we would see ...

The scope for sustainable practices is extensive and educators should try and avoid falling into the trap of engaging in



tokenistic practices (which in themselves are often not sustainable). A sustainably responsible environment involves more than vegetable and herb gardens, water tanks and worm farms, though each of these contribute substantial value towards sustainability. To move from being tokenistic these practices must become part of the culture of the service.

A sustainably responsible environment has sustainable practices ingrained within the everyday experiences of the service. For example, just as we teach children to put on sunscreen and a hat before going outside, so should we be teaching children to turn off lights and fans before they go outside, turn off taps during hand washing and how to use dual flush toilet cisterns.

A sustainably responsible environment gives consideration to the use of materials. This includes thinking before you dispose of and purchase resources, recycling materials (food and manmade), reducing waste practices such as packaging, using all of what is bought, considering the carbon miles of resources as well as use of energy-efficient materials to name just a few. For those fortunate enough to be planning a service from the ground up or undertaking major renovations, ventilation, natural lighting and building materials are also worthy of consideration.

Whilst these are a few simple areas to consider, there are many others. In fact, all aspects of an early childhood service, from management through to curriculum pedagogy, can be viewed and audited from a sustainability perspective with startling results. In a sustainably responsible environment, issues of sustainability are given time and consideration with children.

Educators lead by example and make conscious efforts to engage in reflective practice as well as to educate the wider community.

We are challenged/stimulated by ...

In an era marked by concerns about the future of the planet, education for sustainability can be empowering, and an antidote to a sense of helplessness (Sustainability Curriculum Framework, 2010). Perhaps the biggest challenge I see for an educator seeking to address issues of sustainability, involves a complex problem which challenges them personally. Speaking with a child about child poverty and all that it entails can be much harder than addressing recycling, yet both fall well within the scope of Efs. The challenge of Efs therefore, lies with the educator's ability to not shy away from hard topics when they present themselves.

If an educator's pedagogy encompasses post-modern and post-structuralist, critical science and reflective perspectives where 'children are active agents in the construction of their own lives' then they are more likely to be effective educators of sustainability. Taking these perspectives the teacher understands the need to explore the constructs of children's sustainability understandings from personal viewpoints through to global context.

Educators reading this may consider tackling tough Efs issues too confronting, outside their realm of expertise, and/or beyond the understandings of the children with whom they engage. My answer to that is simply to challenge those teachers to engage in some honest critical reflection, investigate Efs and view children as global citizens who are 'competent and capable'

Building waterfalls (2006). When viewed from that standpoint, discussing issues of waste reduction and water management through to child poverty and pollution becomes less daunting and far more necessary.

A rich experience or moment that I remember was

To understand my take on education for sustainability, I had to engage in some critical reflection and transport myself back to 1970s Australia. Like many people of my era, my childhood involved roaming the streets with friends, playing in each other's swimming pools, vacant lots and around the local streets until dusk when everyone would be called in to have their dinner. Supervision was primarily the responsibility of the group (though we didn't know it at the time) and Stranger Danger was as the title suggested - something dangerous that involved a stranger.

Cuts, bruises, skinned knees and the odd sprained ankle were all part of childhood play experiences. As kids we were sent outdoors at every possible opportunity to the tune of 'Go outside and play'. My friends came from Italian, Greek, New Zealand and Aboriginal backgrounds though, if you were to ask the child version of me, I wouldn't have said that as my analysis was based on the simple fact that we all played the same games together. World events were something you heard about occasionally if you were in the room when the 6pm news was on and learning about the environment was predominately the domain of science and geography lessons at school where information was presented to you with little or no student discussion, questions or feedback.

The reason why my childhood is important to my take on sustainability is twofold. Firstly my formal education was predominantly education about the environment and I lived and played outdoors far more than I did indoors. I learnt to love the natural environment because I was in it every day exploring its possibilities. One of my fondest memories involves climbing the huge (perhaps only to the eyes of the child) maple tree growing in the back yard and the sheer thrill when the wind would pick up and sway the branches beneath my feet. When my family moved from that house to the country, one of the things I remember missing most was the maple tree.

Secondly, I am a mother of two small children and, like all parents, I want all that I cherish about my childhood and more for my children. I am, however, a realist too. Society has moved on, taking with it the constructs of what an Australian childhood looks like. I know that my children's childhood is already vastly different from mine. They will, for example, have more information given to them about world issues than I ever did. It will be pretty hard for them to ignore the fact that they are global citizens and nor would I want them to. I know they will be required to engage in conversation about issues, have opinions and work collaboratively with others during their schooling years, far more than I ever did and, sadly when I tell them to 'Go outside and play' I will probably mean 'Go and play in the back yard' rather than in the street or down at the vacant lot.

The other day I watched my two-year-old daughter tentatively walk down the back steps then run squealing across the back yard and tumble in the grass. I grabbed



my camera and took a photo, not because it was an unusual experience for her, but because her face was filled with the sheer delight of being outdoors. She is learning to love it because she is in it. That in turn provides me with a great sense of comfort. The more she and her peers learn to connect with their natural world, the more likely they are to preserve it for generations to come. Letting my child tumble and feel the grass beneath her feet seems such a small and easy legacy to leave for future generations.

As a parent my wish list for my children goes beyond the natural environment. I wish for them a sense of social responsibility beyond the people they see day to day, I hope they grow to feel empowered to investigate and where necessary find the courage to change what is not right; I hope they live in a world where extinction of animal species and pollution was something

their parents got around to fixing up. I hope their days are filled with predictable weather patterns, their food is safe and their water supply is affordable, clean and consistent.

This balancing act between my cherished memories and my hopes for my children brings me to an understanding of education for sustainability that is grounded in a sense of hope and empowerment. The intricate mix between past, present and the future, with all of its uncertainties means, as an early childhood educator and as a mum, I will make a commitment to address the complex and sometimes confronting issues of sustainability. It means I will actively teach my children that there is always more than one solution to a sustainability problem and that the solution is not always the final answer.

As I finish this reflection, I realise I have a very important task to do with my children this weekend. If you are looking for us we will be down at the local nursery buying a tree to plant in the backyard so that they too might know the fabulousness of a branch swaying beneath their toes.

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International trends in behaviour guidance approaches

Professor Tony Attwood



Professor Tony Attwood is a clinical psychologist who has specialised in autism spectrum disorders since he qualified as a clinical psychologist in England in 1975. He works in private practice in Brisbane, but is also adjunct professor at Griffith University, Queensland. His book *Asperger's Syndrome – A Guide for Parents and Professionals* has sold over 300,000 copies and has been translated into twenty languages. He has worked with over 3,000 individuals of all ages with Asperger's syndrome. Tony presents workshops and runs training courses for parents, professionals and individuals with Asperger's syndrome all over the world and is a prolific author of scientific papers and books on the subject. His latest book *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* was published in October 2006.

Over the last few years there have been significant developments in the areas of affective education and improving social understanding. Affective education was originally a part of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) to help children understand and manage emotions. The latest developments are for the strategies to now be available to teachers for classroom activities that can benefit the whole class or specific individuals. The social understanding programmes have been designed to help children who have difficulties making friends and understanding social situations, recognize the social codes, and the thoughts and feelings of others, using a variety of strategies such as Social Stories™, Comic Strip Conversations and computer based programmes.

Affective education

In affective education the child learns about different emotions and the identification of

the different levels of expression in words and actions, within the person him- or herself and others. A basic principle is to explore one emotion at a time, starting with a positive emotion before moving on to an emotion of concern such as anxiety or anger. The teacher often chooses the first emotion, usually happiness or pleasure. One of the first tasks is to create a scrapbook or collage that illustrates the emotion. This can include pictures or representations that have a personal association with the emotion for the child. Young children can cut out and place in the book pictures of happy people from magazine advertisements and pictures of enjoyable actions and events. The affective education program also explores the sensations associated with the feeling, such as aromas, tastes and textures. These should be recorded in the scrapbook, which can also be used as a diary to include compliments that the child has received, records of achievement such as certificates,

and memorabilia associated with enjoyable occasions. The scrapbook is regularly updated.

Another important aspect of affective education in CBT is to enable an individual to discover the salient cues that indicate a particular level of emotion in terms of his or her body sensations, behaviour and thoughts. These sensations can act as early warning signs of an impending escalation of emotion. Affective education includes information on the facial expression, tone of voice, and body language that indicate the feelings of another person. The face is described as an 'information centre' for emotions. To learn how to identify mood from verbal cues, children can listen to audio recordings of someone's speech, and note the changes in prosody and emphasis. Another activity is for the same sentence to be repeated using a different tone of voice to indicate the person's mood: for example, 'Come here' can be whispered, shouted, accompanied with a sigh or said quickly, and has very different meanings.

The affective education activities are also designed to increase the child's vocabulary of emotional expression. What may often be missing are the subtle expressions of feelings, for example the states in between being mildly irritated and being in a rage. Once the key elements that indicate a particular emotion have been identified, it is important to use a measuring instrument to determine the degree of intensity. The teacher can use a model 'thermometer', 'gauge', or 'volume control', and a range of activities to define the level of expression. For example, a series of pictures of faces expressing varying degrees of happiness can be selected, and each placed at the appropriate point on the instrument.

Alternatively, a variety of words that define different levels of happiness can be generated, and placed appropriately on the gauge.

Social stories

A strategy to learn how to express emotions and social conventions is to write Social Stories, which were originally developed by Carol Gray.

A Social Story describes a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives and common responses in a specifically defined style and format.

The intention is to share accurate social and emotional information in a reassuring and informative manner that is easily understood by the child. Social Stories use positive language and a constructive approach. The suggestions are what to do rather than what not to do. The text will include *descriptive sentences* that provide factual information or statements, and *perspective sentences*, which are written to explain a person's perception of the physical and mental world. Perspective sentences, which are one of the reasons for the success of Social Stories™, describe thoughts, emotions, beliefs, opinions, motivation and knowledge. They are specifically included to improve Theory of Mind abilities. Carol Gray recommends including *cooperative sentences* to identify who can be of assistance, and *directive sentences* that suggest a response or choice of responses in a particular situation. *Affirmative sentences* explain a commonly shared value, opinion or rule, the reason why specific codes of conduct have been established and why there is the expectation of

conformity. *Control sentences* are written by the child to identify personal strategies to help remember what to do. Carol Gray has developed a Social Story™ formula such that the text describes more than directs. The Social Story™ will also need a title, which should reflect the essential characteristics of the story.

Strategies for guiding children with aggressive behaviours

An emotional toolbox

From an early age, children will know a toolbox contains a variety of different tools to repair a machine or fix a household problem. The idea is to identify different types of 'tools' to fix the problems associated with negative emotions, especially anger. The range of tools can be divided into those that quickly and constructively release or slowly reduce emotional energy, and those that improve thinking. The teacher works with the child to identify different tools that help fix the feeling, as well as some tools that can make the emotions or consequences worse. Together they use paper and pens during a brainstorming session in which they draw a toolbox, and depict and write descriptions of different types of tools and activities that can encourage constructive emotion repair.

Physical tools

The emotion management for young children can be conceptualized as a problem with 'energy management', namely an excessive amount of emotional energy and difficulty controlling and releasing the energy constructively. Very young children appear less able to slowly release emotional energy by relaxation and reflection, and usually prefer to fix or

release the feeling by an energetic action. A hammer can represent tools or actions that physically release emotional energy through a constructive activity. The teacher devises a list of safe and appropriate physical energy release activities. For young children this can include bouncing on the trampoline or going on a swing or dancing to 'let off steam' or release emotional energy.

Relaxation tools

Relaxation tools help to calm the child, lower the heart rate and gradually release emotional energy. Perhaps a picture of a paintbrush could be used to illustrate this category of tools for emotional repair. Relaxation tools or activities could include drawing, reading and especially listening to calming music to slowly unwind emotions.

Social tools

Supportive social contact needs to be with someone who genuinely admires or loves the child, gives compliments (not criticism) and manages to say the right words to repair the feelings. Some people can be an 'emotional sponge' to soak up the anger or despair.

Thinking tools

The child can nominate another type of implement, such as a screwdriver or wrench, to represent a category of tools that can be used to change thinking or knowledge. The child is encouraged to use his or her intellectual strength to control feelings using a variety of techniques. We can control feelings and behaviour by talking to ourselves, an internal dialogue, and self-talk is a valuable emotion management strategy. The child

is encouraged to use thoughts, or 'inner speech', such as, 'I can control my feelings' or, 'I can stay calm', when under stress. The words are reassuring and encourage self-esteem.

Inappropriate tools

When explaining the concept of an emotional toolbox, the teacher and child discuss inappropriate tools (noting that one would not use a hammer to fix a computer) in order to explain how some actions, such as violence and engaging in retaliation, are not appropriate tools or emotional repair mechanisms.

Putting the emotional toolbox into practice

When the child has a list of emotion repair tools, the teacher can make a replica tool box. This can be an index card box, with each card representing a category of tools. Each card can have a picture of the type of tool, for example a hammer or screw driver, and the list of tools or strategies that belong in that category. As the programme evolves, new tools can be discovered and added to the list.

Finally, the concept of a toolbox can be extremely helpful in enabling young children to repair their own feelings but also to repair the feelings of others. They often benefit from tuition in learning what tools to use to help friends and which tools others use, so that they may 'borrow' tools to add to their own emotional repair kit.

Oppositional and defiant behaviour

A young child can appear to oppose the decisions of others and defy their priorities.

This characteristic can be due to many factors such as:

- a difficulty conceptualising the other person's perspective and priorities
- limited skills in persuasion
- a tendency to be confrontational and rigid
- reluctance to change a decision and admit making a mistake
- an aversion to being interrupted
- a compulsion for completion
- a tendency to punish rather than praise
- a tendency to avoid demands
- a lack of knowledge of alternative strategies.

The child may have a history of pursuing their decision until the other person capitulates, and not recognize the signals that it would be wise not to continue the argument. Other children can recognize the other person's perspective, priorities and be accommodating of the request and decision of their teacher, parent or friend. The child may need guidance in when and how to make a request, to listen to and absorb the point of view and priorities of the other person, to negotiate some areas of agreement and compromise and to seek and accept the decision of an adjudicator. Above all, they need to learn not to let emotion, especially anger, inflame the situation. Role-play games can be used to illustrate inappropriate and appropriate conflict resolution strategies.

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Children and the natural environment

Leanne Hunter and Lisa Sonter



Leanne Hunter and Lisa Sonter are early childhood teachers with many years experience in a variety of early childhood settings. They offer educators practical strategies, information and support in order to enhance learning environments which empower teachers and children. They are both recipients of Community Merit Awards (National Excellence in Teaching Awards) for Leadership and Innovation in Early Childhood Teaching Methods

'Look ... that frog's got army colours.' A comment made by a child with a look of joy who was carefully examining the striped marsh froglets we had been watching since they were a pile of eggs in jelly.

'I like digging a hole, there's not much dirt at my house.' A comment made by a child who spent many hours playing in the mud patch: exploring, experimenting, solving problems, working together with others, making up games, incorporating other natural materials and enjoying the whole sensory experience.

Both these children were making significant connections with and appreciation of nature and natural materials. Aside from the obvious delight these children were feeling I wonder what impact such experiences have on their

future understandings about the natural world around them.

A study by Wells and Lekies (Lester, S 2006. p.38) highlighted the significance of playful unmediated contact with nature before the age of eleven as a 'particularly potent pathway towards shaping both environmental attitudes and behaviours in adulthood.'

Kathleen Noonan (2009) echoed my perspective when she wrote about the return of some curlews in South Brisbane saying, 'Being connected with nature isn't just some airy fairy hippy notion. We need these encounters. It's an island of sanity in a city of madness.'

As educators, our personal understandings about and connections with the natural environment have a significant impact on the environment

This article relates to *Early Years Learning Framework*

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

– *children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment*

we provide. Asking ourselves questions to frame reflection can clarify thinking. What were your childhood experiences? What is your state of mind and heart when in a natural environment? What gives you a feeling of happiness? To create a feeling of peace/joy/contentment, where do you go in your head? Is it a natural place? What is your degree of understanding about the natural environment and sustainability? Are there aspects about the natural world that you find distasteful, such as mud or spiders, but want children to experience? How do you encourage such experiences without children picking up your vibe?

Reflecting on perspectives of colleagues and families as well as ourselves may give a fuller picture of how understandings about the natural environment can be introduced or embedded within the curriculum. There is no right or wrong way as it depends on where we are at in our own personal journey.

Brooks (cited by White, 2004, online) argues that it is imperative that we provide natural experiences as, *a childhood of unsupervised loitering, wandering and exploring has been replaced by a childhood of adult-supervised and scheduled improvements. Children are losing the understanding that nature exists in their own backyards and neighbourhoods, which further disconnects them from knowledge and appreciation of the natural world.*

Using a 'green' lens when viewing the inside and outside environments we provide for children in our care, may enable us to see other possibilities, changes and additions which we can action over time. Julie Davis(2003 p.6) believes that environmental education involves all stakeholders in the early childhood setting and that *it is about values, attitudes, ethics, and actions. It is not a subject nor an "add-on." Neither can it be an option. It is a way of thinking and a way of practice ... In Australia, as in other parts of the world, environmental education involves three broad but overlapping approaches — education in, about, and for the environment.*

I have found education in, about, and for the environment to be a useful framework in structuring thinking about potential practices, actions and strategies.

Some plans may be long-term, other less complicated. For example, building a mud patch may require planning and money whereas providing a container with dirt and water may allow children to experience these natural elements with little outlay of effort or money.

Collections of smaller pieces such as shells, rocks, driftwood, sponges, dried seaweed, pebbles, nests, seedpods, bark, leaf fronds, flowers, petals, sheep wool, small barky logs, smooth little trunk pieces, feathers, sand may prompt possibilities for discovery, play and creativity.

Aside from providing materials, consideration needs to be given to the amount of time children have to explore and think. Is there time for slowing down and looking for detail?

'We don't have lizards at home. I like watching them.' This child's comments highlights the importance we place in spending time looking together at lizards or for possums in the tree or ants carrying their eggs or visiting birds.

How we engage with children at such moments sends a clear message about the natural world. Do we also take a moment to appreciate their discovery or move on to other matters? We have an amazing opportunity to further support their respect, interests and understandings in, about and for the ever-changing natural environment. We do however need to hold a realistic attitude about the practicalities of children playing with natural materials. Allowing time to establish cleaning-up and re-sorting procedures, acknowledges the great potential for learning at these times. Often less explicit learning, such as building an atmosphere of helping, co-operation; respect for each other and materials; responsibility and interdependence, can develop.

When reviewing an environment and providing natural materials, consideration must be given to the age and dynamics of the group to assess potential risks.

It is important to remember, however, that over-protection is now considered

a risk factor. Looking at children's interests, capabilities and personality traits individually may give a more comprehensive picture of children who may need closer support or supervision. This may reduce the perceived need to restrict all children's access to challenges.

Tom Mullarkey (accessed 2009 online), chief executive of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), *warned against wrapping children in cotton wool. The head of a charity that normally raises the red flag about children having accidents made a very sensible comment: 'A skinned knee or a twisted ankle in a challenging and exciting play environment is not only acceptable, it is a positive necessity to educate our children and to prepare them for a complex, dangerous world.'*

Children build on their knowledge and understandings about the natural environment with continued experiences over time. However it's the connection and love for the earth that must be felt rather than taught and that connection is pivotal for children to contribute to sustaining our earth.

'Mummy, I know how to save the world. You draw on both sides of the paper.'

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Promoting resilience in young children

Pam Linke



Pam Linke is a social worker who has spent many years working with families and young children including acting as a consultant to early childhood services and schools. Pam is on the national executive of Early Childhood Australia and the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health. She has written a number of books for early childhood educators and parents and is chair of the Early Childhood Australia Publications committee. Currently she works as an early childhood and parenting consultant and part-time lecturer in early childhood at the University of South Australia.

Resilience can be defined as the ability to recover after adverse events. In any group of children who are exposed to risk factors for their future health, education, social adaptation and wellbeing there are many who grow up able to cope with living, caring for themselves and contributing to the community – these are considered the resilient children. Studies on resilience have focused on the factors which seem to separate these children from others with similar risk factors but less positive outcomes. Research has been prolific, including the pioneering work of Emmy Werner, in Hawaii, in following a 700 sample of children with risk factors, from pregnancy to adulthood. (Werner, E.E. 2005).

Resilience is the ability to cope in spite of adversity. Over recent years there has been a great deal of research into resilience, looking at why some children who are exposed to adversity seem to be able to cope and why others do not. Many of the risk factors and the resilience factors occur in early childhood.

The concept of resilience is a move away from a deficit model of responding to risk or to problems, towards enhancing those factors and processes which protect children and promote health, wellbeing and positive lives. This is very important; focusing on risk factors of particular children can lead to stigmatising children and their families. Resilience, however, is about positive qualities and positive stories and prevention rather than being problem-oriented. Further, the concept of resilience leads to a basis for practice and intervention. Werner (Werner E.E & Smith, Ruth S. 1992) noted two trends: that the impact of early stress can diminish with time, given appropriate care, and that the developmental outcome of almost every biological risk condition is dependent on the quality of the rearing environment and the support provided by family and other adults in children's lives.

Resilience, however, can be used as a way to minimise negative events that happen to children and we hear statements

like 'Don't worry, children are resilient.' Child trauma specialist Dr Bruce Perry states that 'children are not resilient, they are malleable' that is capable of being changed and formed by what happens to them. (Perry, B 1997) This does not mean that children who undergo negative events while very young have no chance of recovery. There are opportunities for change throughout life, especially in childhood. However, the concept that children are resilient and hence will not be affected by negative events or trauma in their lives, is dangerous because it leads us to overlook the importance of protecting children and responding to their needs.

Emmy Werner's (1992) research showed that about a third of the children did not seem to be affected by the risk factors they suffered from. Many of the others had problems as children and teens but by adulthood had overcome these and were living similar lives to their peers. However, when asked, they talked of issues such as anxiety or depression that affected their enjoyment of life, although not their ability to contribute to society.

Children who have undergone early stress or trauma are likely to have difficulties in school with attending, concentration and processing information as well as social relationships. The more risk factors they have the more likely they are not to be able to take their place fully in society. Resilience research is usually based on children who do well in spite of having four or more risk factors. There are no invulnerable children. Even resilient children are vulnerable when there are too many stressors in their lives.

Examples of risk factors include disability, brain damage, birth trauma, separation from the main carer in the early months of life, parental mental illness, severe marital discord, parental alcoholism and parental drug addiction.

Personal protective factors and processes include problem solving skills, attractiveness to adults (such as easy temperament), general ability, identification with competent role models and "planfulness" and aspiration. (Masten, A, Best, K, & Garmezy, N 1990) Environmental protective processes include care that encourages trust, autonomy and initiative, a close nurturing relationship with a parent or other family member e.g. grandparent, and community support systems such as school and church. (Werner, E.E. & Johnson, J. 1999).

Werner and Johnson (1999) found that the relationship between protective factors and processes is complex. An "easy" baby or child who is sociable and capable (protective factors) is likely to elicit the kind of nurturing care (protective processes) that also supports resilience. Parental education (protective factor) is likely to encourage the child's competence and problem-solving skills. This could be by parenting skills, access to good services, reading with their young children etc. (protective processes).

Personal traits affect resilience but many of these attributes are in turn shaped by experiences and relationships in the early years. A baby may be quiet and withdrawn without the sociability that draws relationships. This will be exacerbated

if the adults caring for this baby don't make the effort to interact with the baby. Or a sociable mother or carer may make opportunities to give the baby pleasurable interactions and so enhance the baby's sociability. It is easy to see this potential in early childhood settings with quiet, undemanding children and with very quick-to-react children.

Early childhood educators are in a crucial position to be able to build protective processes into the curriculum with the understanding that without this some children are unable to gain full benefit from their education in all other areas. Rutter (1985), among others, found that a positive school experience can have very beneficial long-term benefits. Children need educators who not only build protective processes into the curriculum but also enable children to feel cared about and worthwhile and provide positive role models for expressing and managing feelings and problem-solving. These are educators who are able to hear the underlying message of pain or stress or fear or lack of confidence that is conveyed by a child's behaviour or misbehaviour. They

make time in a busy schedule to be with that child so he or she feels understood and is able then to use that teacher as a model and support for making new and positive pathways.

When adverse events occur children need adults to listen and 'be with' them. Children still need the safety of their routines and boundaries to behaviour and, together with this, they need understanding of the underlying feelings, removal of any extra pressures and help with managing feelings. Self esteem comes from feelings of belonging and being wanted and cared about and from feeling capable. It comes from real experiences, not just words. It comes from taking time to show a child who has been away that she/he has been missed by hearing about what has happened in his/her life and letting the child know what has been happening in the service. It also means helping the child to re-integrate with her/his group and their activities.

Children learn in the context of caring relationships and they need opportunities to feel valued by making meaningful contributions.

This article relates to *Early Years Learning Framework*

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- *Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency.*

Educators promote this learning, for example, when they:

- *provide children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours*
- *promote children's sense of belonging, connectedness and wellbeing*
- *maintain high expectations of each child's capabilities*

With this comes the knowledge that you expect that they will succeed and you have faith in them and their abilities. These opportunities come from watching when a child is trying something new in order to encourage when you can see that she/he is going to make it without your help and, when needed, offering just sufficient assistance to enable the child to feel a sense of personal achievement.

Children react differently to different happenings. This is partly dependent on their age: what worries an older child, for example losing a friend, will not worry a baby. And what upsets babies, such as being separated from their main carer, is not so likely to worry an older child. It also depends on what has already happened in the child's life and been programmed into his/her brain as an expectation, and what supports are available. So if an older child has experienced earlier painful separations from his/her main carer, or if the child is worried about something happening at home, there might be unexpected distress when the child starts school. It is when a child cries or lashes out unwarrantedly, that the child needs a caring adult to show that hard things can be helped. Children need to know that they will not be allowed to hurt anyone, including themselves and that whatever has happened will not be retribution nor drive the adult away. In the context of a caring adult staying with them, children have the best chance of managing feelings derived from the past and learning new ways to cope.

Research into resilience is ongoing. Schools and early childhood services are making important contributions to this. There have been successful interventions in helping children to learn social skills. More work needs to be done in learning about the factors that 'enable some teachers to bring out the best in their at-risk students'. In the meantime, what is known is that preventive interventions, such as high quality early childhood education, do produce positive emotional, social and cognitive benefits for children.

Pam Linke

Early Childhood and Parenting Consultant

For further reading: Mary Sheedy Kurcinka (2007) *Raising Your Spirited Child: Rev Ed: A Guide for Parents Whose Child is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent, Energetic*, NY: HarperCollins

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Keeping kids keen: being influenced by the Reggio Emilia philosophy in a P-1 classroom.

Valerie Rogers and Lynelle Whittaker



Lynelle Whittaker and Valerie Rogers are currently teaching Prep and Yr 1 at Seven Hills State School. Both teachers are experienced early childhood educators who are continually exploring and discovering ways to deepen their understandings to build a community of learners who are challenged and engaged. In 2009, Lynelle and Valerie travelled to Reggio Emilia, in Italy as part of an Australian Study Tour where they attended workshops and visited schools and centres to gain an insight into the philosophy of Reggio Emilia.

Introduction

Since 1964 Reggio Emilia has become one of the most important early childhood experiences in the world. The early childhood educators of Reggio Emilia developed an approach based upon insightful theory which focuses on the potential of humans to collaborate, construct, think, interpret, express and communicate. This philosophy values family, culture and a curriculum that builds upon the interests of children using pedagogies which include listening, relationships, the environment as a teacher, making thinking visible through documentation and the hundred languages of children.

In 2009, we participated in the Australian Study Tour which visited Reggio Emilia where we attended workshops and visited schools and centres to gain an insight into the philosophy of Reggio Emilia. We learnt that Reggio is a body of pedagogical practice underpinned by the cultural values of community and the broader social context.

For a number of years (in our primary school setting) our strong belief in

children's competencies, the value of community, and of relationships – led us on our professional exploration of the Reggio Emilia Approach.

Listening

Pedagogical Consultant and President of Reggio Children, Carla Rinaldi, talks about how the value of listening is profoundly important for building a sense of identity and that to be listened to is to exist.

We have been inspired to implement new ideas and develop our skills in providing opportunities and experiences to enable us to listen, really listen, to what our children are saying to us and to each other. Through the pedagogy of listening, we are able to gather valid evidence to support judgments for reporting.

Examples of ways to record children's thinking and gather evidence include:

- Joint planning/easels
- Thinking routines
- Literacy diaries
- Recording explanations, (using parents as scribes)
- Planning for projects and reporting

- Writing what children say during everyday explorations
- Asking the question: 'What makes you say that?' rather than 'Why?' promotes a deeper response.

Documenting and Reporting

The value the Reggio schools place on documenting children's thinking with the notion of publishing, has provided us with inspiration and purpose for listening, noticing and recording. The goal to share and publish truly values children's learning beyond the classroom walls. In addition it promotes collaboration between staff and deepens the experience for all.

Examples of documentation (or ways to collect evidence for reporting) include:

Literacy groups diaries, folders, scrap books, visual diaries, art books, class-made books, posters, checklists for dismissal activities (transitions), annotated photos.

Relationships/Community

Strong community links and relationships have always been a part of the Seven Hills School culture. Our experience with Reggio has provoked us to engage in discussions with staff and parents about our image of the child and our beliefs about teaching and learning to help form and document our school values.

We challenge ourselves to further develop our relationships with parents and the school community through collaboration and listening. We endeavour to involve families as much as possible.

Using projects (individual and group) has inspired a wealth of community involvement and inquiry. Consequently, families have contributed provocations to our classrooms and gardens by donating, fish, fish tank, hermit crabs, shells, plants,

craft materials, furniture, time and expertise to enrich children's learning.

Environment

As a result of our visits and research, we have had discussions with staff about how we could best create the environment as a third teacher and provide an inspirational space for our children to investigate, to wonder, to explore and share experiences.

We considered how we would provide provocations for both Prep and Year One students in our new learning spaces. For example, we use an overhead projector to create images and shadows on one of our walls and ceiling to provoke wonder and imagination. Use of light sources is also a valuable tool for focussed teaching and learning experiences, such as handwriting, making words, sorting and matching, patterns.

We have created a discovery room which actively engages children in looking closely, making observations, testing theories and participating in investigations. Parents often help to record children's observations and annotate their drawings in a discovery room book.

We plan and provide provocations for wondering and thinking so children can show what they know and what they can do. This especially links to scientific and mathematical investigations and enhances literacy and social skills.

Time

Within timetable obligations, we endeavoured to make time for children to explore and investigate open-ended materials. It became apparent that, as teachers, we needed to plan for listening time. We are surprised how much we learn about our children – their



Using technology such as a digital microscope, a light box, or an overhead projector as a provocation for investigations and looking closer keeps kids keen.

previous experiences, their theories and understandings in a variety of contexts.

To this end we created multi-aged multi-literacy groups that run for one hour for three days around a particular topic/investigation, usually based on a picture book.

Exploration and The Hundred Languages

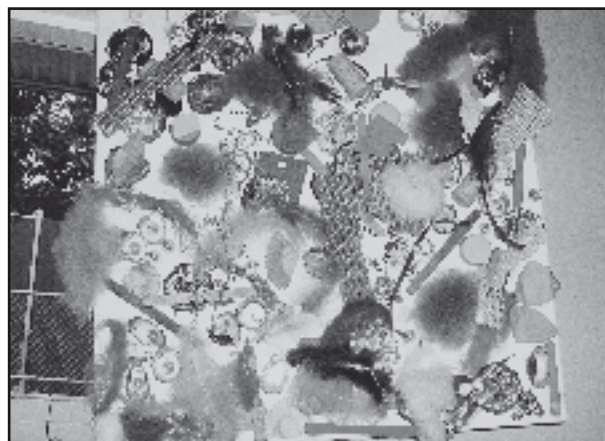
We have been inspired to consider a wider range of media, objects, and materials for children to express themselves and to show what they know.

In *The Hundred Languages of Children*, Loris Malaguzzi talks about how adults can support children's rights to demonstrate their *extraordinary wealth of inborn abilities and potential, strength and creativity*.

Conclusion

The development of our professional beliefs and practices through our Reggio Emilia learning journey, has led us to strengthen our connections with our children and their families. We are constantly surprised at how much we learn about our children and how much they know. Because we believe in children's competencies, we now consciously seek and plan for opportunities to watch and listen. This occurs across

all key learning areas encompassing knowledge and understanding, ways of working, monitoring and assessing.

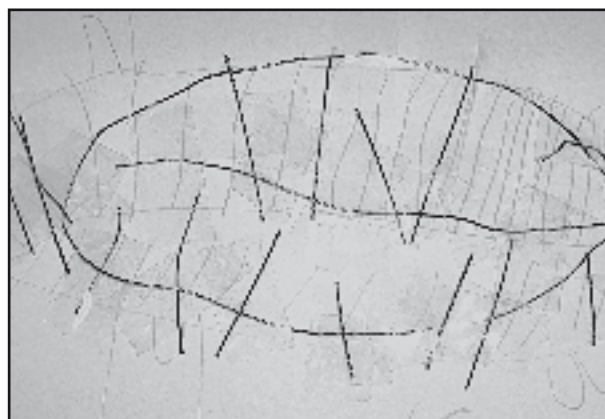


Collage Art works – a whole group project made from items gathered by children and families.

The values of the Reggio Approach have significantly enhanced and enriched the dialogue we now share between each other and the staff of our school.

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A sketch, then the wire representation of a sea creature skeleton: a literacy group response to investigations about lobsters, exoskeletons and the ocean environment.

Designing Routines and Transitions with Children In Early Childhood Settings

Assistant Professor Caroline Fewster, Bond University



Caroline Fewster has enjoyed a long and varied career in children's services. Her experience encompasses all aspects of early childhood learning, from classroom teaching to managing facilities and from educating future teachers to consulting and developing education programs. Caroline continues to consult for a range of non-government, community-based and corporate organisations, as well as local, state and federal government. In 2006, Caroline received the prestigious Carrick Institute Award for innovative and collaborative approaches to student learning in the field of children's services.

In Infant and Toddler early childhood services, it is estimated that up to 80% of the day can be dedicated to routine and transition times. For the early childhood educator, routine and transition times can provide opportunities to consider children's active participation in designing routines; routines that offer children and families a sense of belonging, wellbeing, identity and a connection to others.

It is likely that more than 50 percent of the time in early childhood educational settings is dedicated to routine and transition activities, about 1,320 hours or more per year. This means that, during the pre-school years (0 – 5 years), a child in an early childhood setting spends up to 6,600 hours engaged in routine and transition experiences. These numbers reveal the important role routines have in the early childhood curriculum, and a necessity to

devote attention to these times of the day. Malenfant, (2006).

Despite the amount of time that is spent in routines and transitions, they are often not valued at the same level as other curriculum experiences.

Routines and transitions are often described as 'taken for granted' parts of the day that are rarely challenged or studied to ensure their relevance to the particular group of children in the service. Although ideas of co-operation, collaboration and reciprocity are common in the early childhood literature practice, some research studies suggest that routines are adult-directed with an aim of encouraging particular types and levels of participation. Nyland (2002) concluded *that cultural messages with routines that caregivers had deliberately and carefully designed, were largely to do with power relations and levels of compliance by the children.*

Danby (2002) suggests that children's services are often operating within physical boundaries of space, resources and time, all framed by adults and institutional practice.

The challenge, therefore, is to design routines and transitions with children rather than for children, thus creating a sense of community within the early childhood setting.

Including children in the planning of routines and transitions, supports children to progressively become independent, develop their capacities and talents and become members of a group.

It is also important to take a new look at established routine methods and procedures and consider their relevance to children's active participation in routines and transitions.

In practice, generally we ask children to pack away play materials as a group and sometimes only four or five children actually 'pack away'. In analysing this routine example, we may perceive the routine to be unfair to a small number of children and create a lot of packing away for the early childhood educators.

Instead of expecting all children in the group to pack away as a group, each child could have a more precise role in caring for the environment. Children may work together to complete a task, a task they have chosen themselves. A democratic pedagogy would advocate giving choices to children. The design of this routine promotes ongoing care of the setting, a

sense of responsibility for the environment and an opportunity for a child to work together with another child.

Critical reflection on practice means questioning what is said and not said in daily interactions with children and what children have or have not learnt from these interactions (MacNaughton & Williams, 2008). This results in informed curriculum decision-making and more equitable outcomes for children.

A set of tasks assigned to children each day could be:

- two children designing the morning tea table as a team
- folding paper napkins for lunchtime in many different ways
- setting out the beds together with the staff
- dusting shelves with a fun duster
- feeding fish each day
- listening to a small radio for the weather forecast to be able to tell the group this important information
- toddler small baskets – given to each toddler to collect a few items from the floor!
- watering plants each day

This article relates to *Early Years Learning Framework*

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- *Children's wellbeing can be affected by all their experiences within and outside of their early childhood settings. To support children's learning, it is essential that educators attend to children's wellbeing by providing warm, trusting relationships, predictable and safe environments, affirmation and respect for all aspects of their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, linguistic, creative and spiritual being. (EYLF p32)*

- recording rainfall in a rain gauge even in a drought!
- making play dough, selecting the colour and texture each week
- select a small group of children to plan, organise and present a birthday party for a friend
- planning sitting arrangements for group time – children can cut out pictures and match them to each child's name, to give each child a place to sit in the group
- photograph the routine expectations to provide visible cues for children as to what is expected of them in routine situations
- creating a Packing-up Message Box – with messages for children to guide the packing up system – photo messages can guide the actual task.

It takes time to design routines and transition. However, planning strategies to increase the children's co-operation at packing away time may be beneficial for children and staff.

A democratic 'system' or routine advocates giving choices to children. The goal is to invite children to select a task, or part of it, from several tasks.

Co-operation increases when children are convinced they have a place and voice in the experiences. For example: which task would you like? Working out a system of tasks

distribution is a good way to introduce the essential jobs to be performed in being part of a social group.

A Packing-Away Map (see below) is a visible sign of each child's contribution to the groups, e.g. Adopting a co-operative approach to packing-away time encourages children's learning in social situations, such as expressing their needs, making choices, solving problems at their own level and respecting the rules of the group. These active experiences contribute to each child's sense of wellbeing.

Educators who question taken-for-granted ways of doing things, are more able to develop a curriculum that is responsive to their unique context. (Arthur, L. 2010).

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A packing-away map

Planning Circle Time Picture of Activity Names of Children	Designing Morning Tea Picture of Activity Names of Children	Planning a Birthday Party Picture and Activity Names of Children	Collecting Data each Day Picture of Activity Names of Children
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Making a space for music in the environment creative music making: a project to stimulate singing

Sue Southey



Sue Southey is co-director, and PrePrep teacher at Springwood Kindergarten, where she has taught since 1980. In 2009 she was awarded a NEiTA State and Territory Award Inspirational Teaching Award. Sue is currently completing her Masters in Early Years at QUT and is a sessional lecturer in the School of Education at Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus.

In Sue's consulting business she works with early childhood professionals and music organisations to provide training in early childhood music education and classroom management skills. Sue is vice president of Early Childhood Teachers' Association and a member of their web-weaving team. Sue is a regular presenter of music workshops at seminars, conferences and teachers meetings in Brisbane, regional areas of Queensland and Melbourne, and can

be contacted at suesouthey@optusnet.com.au.

Find a space for music in your early childhood setting, engage children and enrich their play. Develop skills that enable you to personalise songs, capture a moment and respond to children's immediate experiences. Tap into your own creativity in easy and accessible ways.

Berenice Nyland in her article *The Powerful Language of Music*, claims that music is a fundamental human activity and part of our heritage (Nyland, 2007). She argues that music is one of the ways in which humans make sense of the world and communicate what they know. Whilst increasing pressure in school settings towards observable achievements in literacy and numeracy seem to be putting the creative arts under threat, music is still an important part of the kindergarten experience. PrePrep musical experiences however, are often dominated by teacher-led music sessions. These offer positive and creative experiences for children through

singing and movement but these experiences are not usually initiated or owned by children. The challenge therefore is to engage children in more spontaneous music making in play contexts.

Barrett, drawing on evidence from longitudinal ethnographic studies of young children's musical thinking, claims that children's invented songs are the foundation of creative thought and activity in music (Barrett, 2006). With this in mind I planned to create opportunities for children to sing known and invented songs within play contexts within our kindergarten programme. Discussion with parents indicates that many children sing spontaneously as they play at home. This echoes my experience as a parent. I noticed that my son as a young child would often hum tunelessly as he tuned out of 'the real world' and engaged in play. This kind of singing seems to occur when children are absorbed in play, often alone and in relatively quiet surroundings. Whilst children at kindergarten are likely to be totally engaged in play, they are unlikely to experience solitude or quiet! So the challenge is to encourage spontaneous



singing and music making in everyday play events despite noise and proximity of other children. Studies on infants and toddlers indicate the importance of singing as a communicative tool for parents and children (Trevvarthen, cited in Barrett,

2009). To take advantage of music as communication, our kindergarten children needed a musical partner to communicate with, so we introduced a 'music loving' bear named 'Patch'. This term Patch has become part of our PrePrep family. Initially Patch was installed on a quiet mat outdoors with both pitched and un-pitched (percussion) instruments. The children used pentatonic chime bars (five notes that can be played tunefully together) to create songs for Patch. Whilst this engaged the children in creative music making, very few children could both sing and play at the same time, so singing was not a feature of this experience. Over subsequent weeks we added picture books based on songs and nursery rhymes. Many of these picture books are designed for toddlers. However, they make excellent texts for PrePrep children who can 'read'

familiar songs and sing them competently. The children brought other nursery rhyme books from home so that during the term we accumulated a library of 'singing' books. This prompted a small group of children to create their own 'singing' book based on one of the group's favourite songs *Five Little Monkeys (Rhythms of the Rainforest, Southey & Kriedemann, 2010)*. Patch has been treated to many renditions of this song!

As Patch became a favourite friend at PrePrep the children began to create buildings and homes for him in block area, adding furniture constructed at collage. This became a recurrent theme in block area, reusing the furniture, cars, ladders and signs created for previous 'Patch' buildings. The children often added musical instruments for Patch, building cupboards and shelves to store these items. Whilst the building itself does not stimulate musical behaviours, it



This article relates to *Early Years Learning Framework*

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators – Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media

This is evident, for example, when children:

- *use language and engage in play to imagine and create roles, scripts and ideas*
- *share the stories and symbols of their own culture and re-enact well-known stories*
- *use the creative arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, music and storytelling to express ideas and make meaning*



does encourage the children to interact with the musical artefacts that are associated with Patch: song books and musical instruments. By encouraging interactions with Patch, the children are gaining a sense that music

is part of what we do at PrePrep, not just in group sessions but also in play contexts. Some children, particularly more confident girls are now creating their own (very long) songs that they sing to each other and the group. Children are singing on the swings, and during transition periods whilst they wait for other children to join the group. Children, including boys are choosing to sing 'books' to Patch in moments when they are not engaged in digging, climbing and adventures outdoors. So the introduction of Patch to our classroom has stimulated spontaneous singing in some children. However, other children's participation in spontaneous singing is only as an audience. Further observation and investigation is needed to establish what would stimulate more of these children to engage in singing as a form of creative expression.

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My visit to Auckland House School, Shimla, in India

Archana Sinh



Archana Sinh

Archana has been involved with education and learning for more than 20 years. Her experiences include teaching Art in India and PNG; working as a training officer at colleges in Brisbane and Sydney and working as an early childhood teacher in Brisbane and as a Director of a Long Day Care service in Sydney. Archana is currently the Kindergarten teacher at Logan Child Care Centre under the Universal Access kindergarten pilot program. Archana is a member of the *Educating Young Children* editorial panel.

I visited Auckland House School in July 2010, during my visit to Shimla. Auckland is my old school and, as an ex-student I visit it whenever I visit Shimla.

Some background information

Auckland House School, Shimla, was founded in 1866. The school began with 32 girls. Most of the students were Europeans. It was first housed in the Holy Lodge at Jakhu. However, in 1869 school authorities bought the original residence of Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General of India, and the school was moved to its new location. In 1905 the original structure was damaged in an earthquake and the entire structure had to be pulled down. It was rebuilt by 1921. Auckland House School was originally a girls

school but now it also has boys up to grade 5 in a separate location. The school in its present capacity has over 1200 students, boys included. While the boys section goes from nursery grade (ages 3+) to grade 5 the girls section goes from nursery to grade 12.



Auckland House perched on a hill against the backdrop of Great Himalayan ranges

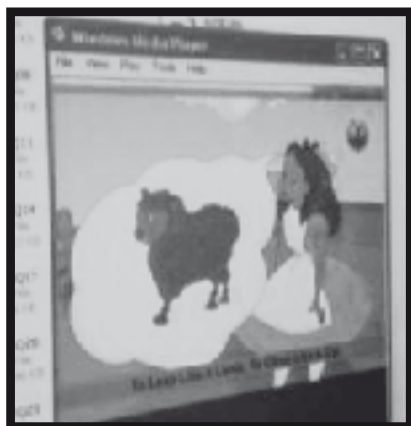


Driveway to the School

Auckland House School is a Christian School affiliated with the Diocese of Amritsar, India. The School motto is 'Altiora Peto' meaning 'I seek the higher things.'

Shimla is the capital town of the state of Himachal Pradesh, India. It was also the summer capital of the British government before India gained independence from the British rule. It is on the foothills of the Himalayas and is seven thousand feet above sea level.

International Perspectives



Mary had a little Lamb on IWB



Alphabet in Hindi on IWB



Teachers Mrs Goel with IWB

Education and Early Years

I visited the early years class rooms to gain an insight on some of the current practices. Nursery A had girls from three years there were 28 students in class, smartly dressed in their chocolate-brown uniforms. There was one teacher, Mrs Indira Goel (trained teacher), and another lady who helped (has had no training). All the students stood up to wish me 'Good morning'. I saw an Interactive white board in the class and asked the teacher about it. She explained that they did a lot of their learning in the morning session which was broken into two one-hour blocks. In the first session they did one or two activities related to language. These could include singing nursery rhymes and doing actions to these or a popular text in English or Hindi alphabets. Children loved singing and repeating these and other activities that were displayed on the IWB. In the second session, after a morning tea break, they did free activities that could include indoor games with construction material or art and craft activities. These children attended school from 8:30 in the morning till 12 noon six days a week. There was some formal learning incorporated in the morning sessions but there were no formal assessments such as tests. Students

learnt both the languages English and Hindi and did some number-related activities.

I then visited the Upper KG (Kindergarten) section. This had about 36 students aged five plus. Their teacher Mrs Thakur said that she tried to teach in a manner that was applicable to everyday life experiences. She said her class year had done a project on trees, and that the students of this year had discussed and looked at that project this year in the first two terms. As a follow-up of last years project, the students this year each planted a tree and took care of it. They could plant it in their backyard or in other public areas if they did not have a backyard. Some children wrote about it, others took photos and brought them to school to share, while others did drawings and illustrations. One child, Divya Marwah, shared her understanding with me. She said 'trees are life, they are precious gift of nature. They are useful in following ways: they release oxygen and purify earth. When we cut the trees there will be desert.' Most children said that we should not waste paper as it came from the tree. Mrs Thakur said that this years class would soon do a similar project on water.

Mrs Thakur said that it was important to teach the younger generation things like saving electricity by switching the lights



Divya on why trees should be saved

off, not to throw rubbish on the road and check others if you see them do it. She also incorporated safety skills like stranger danger and road safety as part of her curriculum. These children did formal learning and some informal learning through play and structured investigations and group discussions. This trend of teaching the curriculum and linking it to the children's experiences can be seen in Grade One where the teacher Mrs Aneshia Jain mentioned that children discussed their day-to-day experiences and related it to their study. She gave the example of how children discussed their school environment. They all went around the school grounds looking at different plants. They then came back to the class and discussed these. The discussion was done in a mixed language where children used English and Hindi interchangeably, they used illustrations to show their understanding. Mrs Jain felt that using two languages at the same time was alright as children were still developing their English language skills and vocabulary. Children from this class were

preparing for a class presentation at school assembly. There was a very strong emphasis on oral recitation for the presentation. Students practice standing in lines as on a stage, facing the audience with hands on their sides. One child introduced the title of the recitation and then all the children together did their actions as they recited. There were two recitations one in English and the other in Hindi.

Mrs Vanita Wilson, teacher of 2B, discussed how her class was looking at global warming. She said that they had spent a few months studying the theme. This included some discussion with children and some information-giving by the teacher that resulted in writing main ideas on the board. Children copied these down in their books and illustrated them. The discussion revolved around climate, some causes for global warming like green-house gases and then looking at the solutions. I asked if children understood what green-house gases meant. Mrs Wilson said that they did not understand fully but had some ideas such as pollution from cars and other vehicles were responsible. She said that, with some guidance and suggestions,



Tree project of 2009 UKG

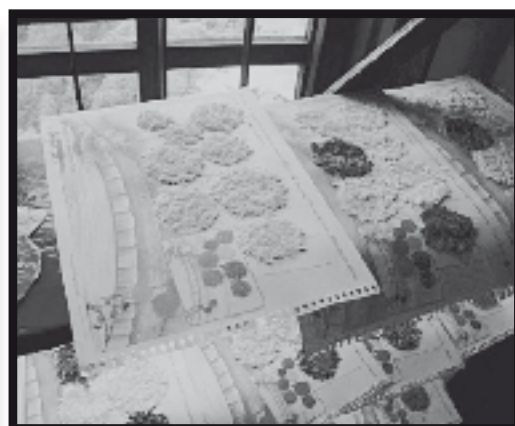
International Perspectives



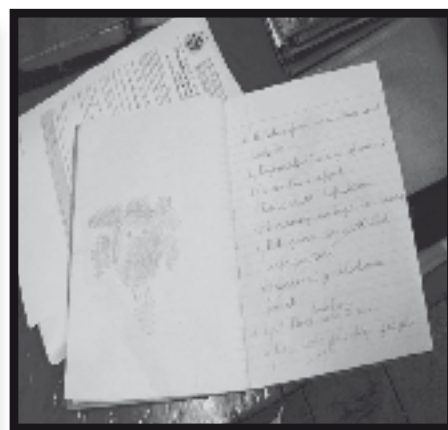
Priyal Sood (1B)



Some creative experiences by 1B



children identified two possible solutions that included planting more trees and using solar energy. I mentioned that in Shimla there was not enough sunshine for solar energy. She laughed and agreed but said that it was important for children to be aware of energy resources and start thinking from a young age. Children in this class were seven and eight years old.



Some work samples on understandings of global warming by 2B

Mrs Wilson said that in the next few weeks the students would be building a model of global warming as a project. She said that this would help build their understanding and add a depth to their knowledge.

All the students were very pleasant and courteous, greeting me with a smile. The teachers were very helpful and happy to share their time. Before I left the school some students of 2B came forward and handed me their drawings and paper flowers, sharing words like 'Thank you for coming to Auckland House school' and 'We love you, Miss'.



A student presenting a paper flower to me

Series Title: **How Australians Eat**

Subtitles:
Breakfast Around Australia
Lunch Around Australia
Dinner Around Australia
Snacks Around Australia
Festival Foods Around Australia

Author: Liz Flaherty
Published by: Pearson Library (www.pearson.com.au), 2009
ISBN: 9781740706193
RRP: \$29.95 each (\$145 for the series pack)
Reviewed by: Tanya Dawson

Why do we eat three meals a day in Australia? What are these three meals? These questions are just a few of the ideas explored in Liz Flaherty's new series *How Australians Eat*.

Every book in the series is written in a similar way. After introducing the type of meal being investigated, they discuss the healthiest food options for that meal and explain the various food groups at length, emphasising a balanced diet. Then plenty of meal examples are given, relevant to each food group. Simple recipes are also included, encouraging students to apply their new knowledge and to demonstrate healthy food options that are easy to prepare.

At the end of each book, students are encouraged to find out more by exploring the internet. Relevant keywords are suggested for use in a search engine and websites. Appropriate links are listed as well.

This series enhances the idea of a multicultural Australia with photographs of families from different backgrounds preparing and eating their preferred dishes for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and festivals.

Written in a way that is easy to read and understand, these books also include contents, glossary and index pages. New vocabulary (such as nutrients, fibre, carbohydrates and wholegrains) is introduced throughout each book and referred to in the glossary. Also, questions, tips and facts are displayed at the bottom of each page promoting extended discussion and student engagement.

Ideal for use by Prep to Year Three teachers, this series is perfectly suited to a unit studying Health and Nutrition.

Available from: www.heinemannlibrary.com.au and other online book stores.

Additional title coming soon (due February 2010): *How Australians Eat*, Live Text for interactive whiteboards or data projectors. To be used in conjunction with the book series.

RRP: \$149.95



Title: People We Need Series

Author: Cameron Macintosh
Illustrator: Bruce Rankin
Published by: Pearson Library
ISBN: 9781740706537 Nurses
 9781740706520 Police Officer
 9781740707008 Recycling Truck Driver
 9781740706995 Doctor
RRP: \$29.95 for each book; \$115.00 for series of four
Reviewed by: Junction Park Prep Children and Sue Webster

People We Need is a series of non-fiction books – Nurse, Police Officer, Recycling Truck Driver and Doctor – that gives young children an insight into the roles and responsibilities of some of our community workers. Each book looks at a well-known occupation and explains the important work these people perform in the community.

Each book follows a different profession – and in particular, one individual – through a typical working day and highlights some of the special tasks they complete and why they enjoy working at their particular job.

The series is illustrated with large photographs that depict the typical work activities of the respective professions and what these workers do. There is also a hand drawn double page to further illustrate their role.

The series is produced in hardback and paperback. Each book includes a glossary, index, and 'find out more' pages that present ideas for Internet research and further reading.

The series also comes in LiveText™ as an electronic version of this book which includes additional features and resources for whole-class teaching and for use with interactive Whiteboards or a data projector.

The companion website is www.pearson.com.au/schools/library

This series could be used with a wide variety of early education classes and appealed greatly to Junction Park Prep students.

Ann aged six – Super. I liked the police book. It gave real information.

Suzannah aged five – The photos in the books were good to look at. I liked the police on the motorbikes.

Andrew aged six - I liked the pages with the illustrations drawn on them. They were funny.

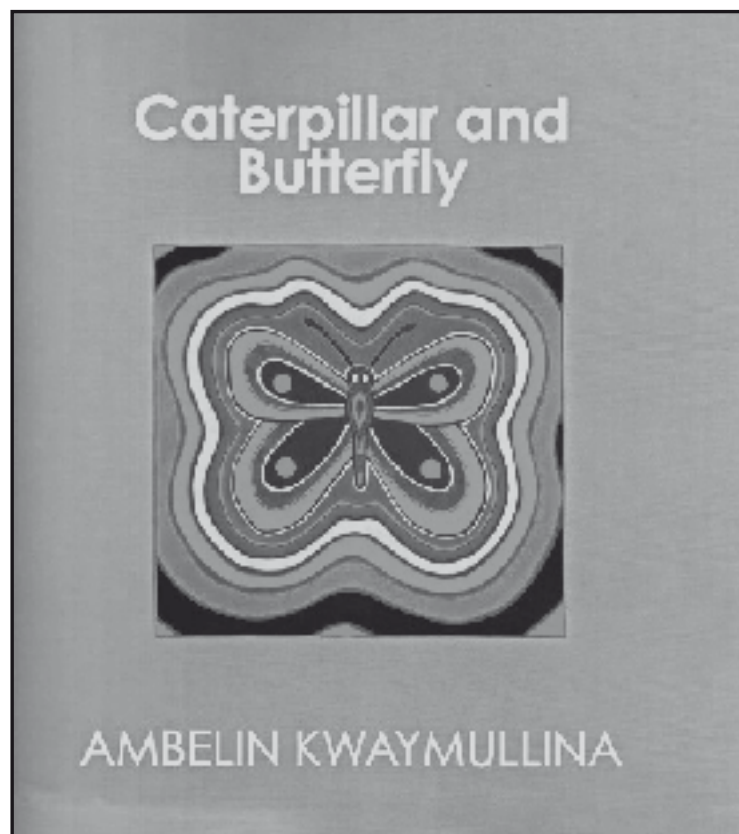
Brayden aged six – Not awesome but pretty good. I like the information. The way they were trying to tell us about the community.



Title: Caterpillar and Butterfly**Author and Illustrator: Ambelin Kwaymullina****Published By: Fremantle Press****ISBN: 9-781921361579****RRP: \$26.95****Reviewed by: Amy Lanchester**

This is a beautiful book and a great way to introduce the lifecycle of a butterfly (although it doesn't cover the egg phase of the cycle). It is also a story about being afraid and missing out on wonderful things. Caterpillar is invited by the other animals to go to different places but each time she refuses because she is afraid of what might happen to her. Eventually, she is so afraid that she curls up and hides in a chrysalis. Inside, she begins to wonder what she might have missed out on. One day she realises she isn't afraid anymore and she wants to go out. As a butterfly she is able to go to many different places and see many different things. The words describe the caterpillar's journey beautifully. The illustrations are beautiful, and have a feeling of indigenous art.

The colours in the illustrations are so vibrant that I really wanted my students to notice them and interact with them. First, I asked them to lie down and I read them the story without showing them any pictures. I wanted them to imagine the story for themselves. It was a great listening comprehension activity. The next day, I re-read them the story, this time sharing the pictures. I got some wonderful comments about the illustrations. I was impressed at the details that the students noticed and the deeper understanding of the story they gained.



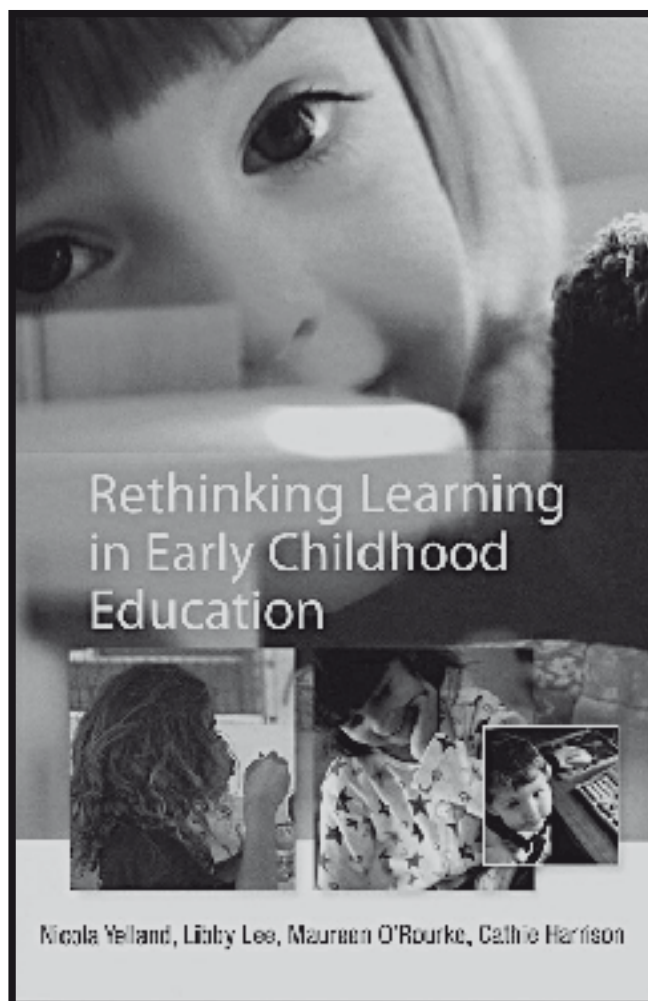
Title: **Rethinking Learning in Early childhood Education**
Author: **Nicola Yelland, Libby Lee, Maureen O'Rourke, Cathie Harrison**
Published By: **McGraw Hill Education**
ISBN: **978-033522882-9**
RRP: **\$56.99**
Reviewed by: **Amy Lanchester**

It cannot be denied that the world our students are growing up in holds different opportunities and challenges than we might have faced in years gone by. As teachers, we are faced with the task of preparing our students for this world. This book is a great resource to support us as we look to review and develop our practice.

The book explores the needs and experiences of students with a view to best supporting their learning. In a world so full of different technologies, it is increasingly important to be multi-literate; to be proficient in using the many different forms of communication available; to acquire and share information; and to determine the most appropriate mode of communication in a given situation. The book explores the use of multimodality as an important factor in developing students' multi-literacy skills.

In my classroom, I am beginning to develop confidence in using different modes of communication with my students. An example of this was as part of a recent restaurant game, we explored advertising and flyers, then created our own by exploring different features of Word and using photographs which the children took in our classroom. We discussed the purposes of advertising as many of the children thought that flyers were sent out so that you would want to cook a pizza (as though it was a recipe). I was also surprised that, although students knew what television advertisements were, they didn't understand the purpose of the ads. We created menus and signs, wrote recipes and followed recipes to make our own pizzas. We explored the roles of different people in a restaurant setting, and used language appropriate for taking orders, having phone conversations and social interactions. I hope to take our investigations further by exploring the use of video cameras, PhotoStory and mp3 players to create our own media advertising and possibly market our restaurant to the other classes.

It can be daunting to try new technologies with young children but I have found it very rewarding.



Title: Ready-to-Use SOCIAL SKILLS, Lessons and Activities for Grades PreK-K

Author: Ruth Weltmann Begun

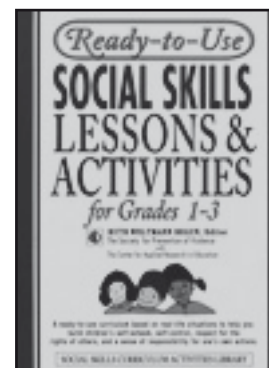
Published by: Jossey-Bass, 1995

ISBN: 0 7879 6638

RRP: \$29.95

Reviewed by: Jade Saddler

Helping young children to develop social skills is crucial to their development and future success as confident and capable individuals. Ready-to-use Social Skills Lessons and Activities for Grades PreK-K is a valuable resource for teachers and parents as it specifically teaches positive behaviour skills through a wide variety of classroom-tested lessons and activities which are specifically tailored to cater for all ability levels. Each lesson has a specific purpose with detailed skill components and opportunities and activities for practise and independent use. In addition, it also covers ways in which teachers and parents can model these appropriate skills and behaviours and provides follow-up activities to further reinforce these skills throughout the year. This book focuses on real problem situations and skills such as sharing, listening, dealing with anger, setting goals, building self-confidence, and dealing with prejudice.



The author, Ruth Weltmann Begun, one of the founders of The Society for Prevention of Violence, is dedicated to reducing the prevalence of violent acts and asocial behaviours in children and adults by educating children and adults in the use of the skills necessary to build their character, helping people of all ages to acquire a strong value system, motivating youngsters and adults to develop good communication skills and to realize growth in interpersonal relationships. Ready-to-use Social Skills Lessons and Activities for Grades PreK-K is an excellent teaching aid for use at home and within the classroom and school environment. It also draws on classical literature for teaching skills. These stories include:-

- Three billy goats gruff
- Little Red Riding Hood
- The mixed-up chameleon
- Good-night owl
- We are best friends
- The bad-tempered ladybird
- Oi! Get off our train!
- Bossyboots
- Angus and the cat

It is a useful resource for early childhood teachers.

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 (6th 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*, 4th 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

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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