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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



As 2010 draws to a close, it is exciting to look back on another successful year for ECTA. It gives me great pleasure to present the ECTA Annual Report to our members in this edition of *Educating Young Children*.

Following our Annual Planning Day last year, the State Coordinating Committee decided to focus on supporting our regional and remote members and ECTA Groups. To this end, we allocated a proportion of the profits from our 2009 conference to sponsor our 2009 conference keynote speaker Loretta Giocelli to tour Gladstone, Hervey Bay and Gympie Cooloola Regional Groups. Loretta's tour was a great success, not only because it delivered a highly qualified and engaging presenter to regional early childhood professionals, but also because it increased the profile of ECTA within these regions and led to increases in regional group membership.

Another key initiative trialled with great success this year was the offer of sponsorship to two ECTA group office bearers from each ECTA group to attend the conference and the ECTA group breakfast meeting. Seven office bearers attended the breakfast along with regional and key members of the state coordinating committee. The regional group office bearers enjoyed meeting each other and sharing stories and ideas for promoting ECTA and supporting early childhood professionals through group membership and events.

We hope to offer this sponsorship again next year to office bearers. Also, next year we hope to provide a Laurie Kelly tour for all regional groups and to once again offer sponsorship for office bearers to attend the conference and breakfast meeting.

Our Partnership with the Open Learning Institute of TAFE and QUT has once again allowed us to provide high quality videolinq presentations to members across the state. Our new streamed recordings of videolinqs are proving extremely popular with 100s of downloads recorded from our site. The streamed recordings allow immediate access to videolinq presentations to members in remote areas. The link to each videolinq presentation is stored in the members only secure area of our website and may be accessed at any time by members using their login and password. If you have forgotten either of these, email ECTA and we will send a return email with the information. Members have received a copy of all four videolinqs held this year with this journal.

We thank the Australian Dental Association Queensland (ADAQ) for their continued support in providing ECTA with a venue for our committee meetings. This is invaluable for facilitation of our meetings.

Four nominations for conference support were received this year and the state coordinating committee, using the guidelines on the application form, awarded sponsorship to attend the conference to Connie Duncan from Atherton, Melissa Rudder from Tannum Sands and Margaret Riddle from Charters Towers. Congratulations to these winners and I am sure your regions and colleagues will benefit from you sharing your insights with them.

Thank you goes to the members of our state coordinating committee and our regional group coordinator and sub-committee coordinators for their dedication to ECTA and early childhood throughout the year. A special thank you to seven of our ten life members, Gail Halliwell, Mark Cooper, Toni Michael, Pam Fulmer, Carole Wilde, Noeleen Christensen and Von Davis who continued to be actively involved in ECTA during the year. We thank them for their continued dedication to early childhood and, more specifically, to ECTA.

Libby Gaedtke has done a marvellous job in her first year as ECTA Groups Coordinator – These groups provide invaluable networking opportunities for our members and other early childhood professionals in regional and areas. 2010 has seen our ECTA Groups becoming more active with most holding conferences or workshops. Anyone interested in setting up an ECTA Group in metropolitan Brisbane or a regional area please contact libby@ecta.org.au. All necessary forms are available on the website.

Toni Michael and Robbie Leikvold and the conference committee once again held a successful, and for the first time, booked-out conference of extremely high quality. The coordinators and committee are already well on their way to planning next year's conference with selections of presenters now finalised. Next year, we will be moving to a new venue and Robbie will coordinate the conference with the support of her committee. eNEWS will keep you updated so don't forget to let us know if your email address changes. Once again next year, we will be emailing an invitation to register to members three weeks before registrations open to the public. You should try to gain preliminary approval from your school so that you don't miss out. This year saw 150 delegates fail to secure a place at the conference. Registrations will once again be done online through the conference website. If you would like to support the conference team

email info@ecta.org.au and I will pass on your information to Robbie.

Gail and her very active web weavers committee continue to improve and expand the website. This year we added an online email link so that emails can be sent directly to ECTA via a link on the website. The committee is always looking for ways to support members and utilize our Form feature so please email in any ideas to gail@ecta.org.au. The ECTA website continues to grow and become more refined and sophisticated and eNEWS is now issued monthly. This is due to the work and dedication of the weavers. If you would like to join the team, email Gail. The committee meets via Skype so distance is not a barrier to joining in.

Lynne Moore and her panel continue to provide our members with three professional publications per year of *Educating Young Children*. Maintaining the quality of the journal takes considerable time and we celebrate the work of the EYC committee with this full colour edition. Thank you to the ECTA members who have volunteered to write a book review for the journal. Mathilda Element now has a small army of volunteers ready and eager to try out new publications and review them for our members. You can nominate to be a book reviewer, or to help support the committee, by emailing lynne@ecta.org.au.

In November, all members were emailed their annual renewal notice. If you did not receive this, please email info@ecta.org.au as soon as possible so that we can forward it on to the correct email address. All members who have renewed their membership before 1 March 2011 will receive an invitation to register for the 2011 conference via email.

I hope you all have a wonderful and safe Christmas holiday and we look forward to supporting you during 2011.

Kim

From the editorial panel

Mathilda Element



Mathilda and Toby

Hello from the editorial team and thank you once again for reading *Educating Young Children* – with our first full colour edition! As early childhood

teachers, we stand on the brink of exciting times ahead across the early years, with change and transition a constant in our fields. In such times, it is great to sit down with a cup of tea (or coffee) and read this journal and take inspiration, comfort and support from our fellow practitioners.

This issue is no exception. Although slightly delayed due to our editor's fabulous international trip to Reggio, Italy amongst other places (and I for one am hoping to hear more in later editions about this great trip), we feel we have brought a great group of articles together for your end of year reading. Our teacher story in this edition, shines the spotlight on some of our talented media reviewers, who road-test new resources in their classrooms to bring us insight. As part of my role on the editorial team over the past few years, the media reviews section has been my pet project and I've seen growth from a small team to a large database of reviewers across the State, as well as

further strengthening our connections to the publishing industry. I'm passionately committed to seeing more resources finding their ways into the hands of teachers, especially those in schools or centres that might be under-resourced, and so I'm excited to acknowledge two ECTA members who also review materials, Tanya Dawson and Kylie Plant. (I'd also like to acknowledge the many others who review materials for ECTA, as well as all the teachers who contribute profiles, stories and features over the year. Your words help us all to become better educators as we share in each other's stories, strengths and strategies.)

In another important acknowledgement of fabulous ECTA members, we are delighted to read about the exciting work Libby Gaedtke is co-ordinating with our ECTA regional groups. Read more in the Partnerships section of the journal.

Our conversations topic in this issue is all about well-being, which includes many diverse aspects of health. Four practitioners respond to this in various ways, covering some of the social, emotional and physical ways early childhood educators care for children's wellbeing.

Our feature articles this issue cover a range of interesting topics. Several practitioners share different perspectives about literacy issues, from Archana's Sinh's inclusive discussion of contemporary literacy practices to Julie Dunn's insightful article about harnessing picture books as quality teaching tools, and Karen Johns' incisive

examination of the role of explicit teaching in the pedagogy of reading and writing. Other practitioners address equally critical and powerful issues, including Louis Bradfield's passionate plea against the bastardisation of play, Geraldine Harris' astute explanation of the *Building Foundations* project, which aims to help practitioners work with emergent curriculum using the EYLF and Caroline Fewster's practical and intelligent focus on designing quality routines for infants and toddlers in care. Tenille Drovandi also provides us with a fantastic reflective article about a project in her centre that involved digital storytelling and sustainable pedagogy in *Gerald Goes Green and Digital*.

Across all these articles as always is the strong thread of children's voices – of advocating for the best possible practices to enhance early childhood education and care.

Finally, our media reviews include a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books for both teachers and children, including a timely look at an Australian picture book that uses a variety of famous Australian illustrators to tell a Christmas story.

Thanks for reading. Have a happy and safe holiday period and a promising start to the New Year!

Mathilda, Lynne, Ros, Angela, Sue and Archana (and Toby!).



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Spotlight on media reviewers

The journal committee is very proud to have a database of over thirty reviewers for *Educating Young Children* – talented, wonderful professionals who work with young children in positive ways. Their contribution to the journal is inspiring to other educators, as they test out new books and resources and offer their professional opinions to our readers. Here, we interview two of our regular reviewers, both of whom have reviews in this current edition. If you would like to be added to our database of reviewers, please email mathilda@ecta.org.au

Tell us a little about yourself and your work.

My name is Tanya Dawson and I have a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood. I have now been teaching for ten years and continue to enjoy working with young children. My first job was teaching at a Kindergarten/Preschool with C&K (fantastic). I then joined a Private College and taught Year Two, then Prep. I loved Prep so much that I stayed for five years. I am currently relief teaching ages 15 months to Year three which keeps life interesting!

How long have you been an ECTA member?

I have been an ECTA member for two years now. I decided to become a member when I began relief teaching, as a way to keep up with my professional development requirements for teacher registration.

What do you like about being a reviewer for ECTA?

I enjoy learning about brand-new resources and picture books that I can use when



teaching young children. I also think it's important to contribute professionally to early childhood networks and associations.

Anything else you'd like to add about yourself, ECTA or early childhood education in general?

I am passionate about children aged 3-5 and believe that they are truly capable of contributing to and negotiating, their learning programs and curriculum. A favourite

teaching tool of mine is "The Project Approach" in which children become researchers of topics of their choice and interest. Working with children on these Projects, highlights their capabilities and new learning is explored.

Thank you ECTA for being an awesome advocate for young children. It's encouraging to have an association that supports our ideas about how young children should be educated.

Teacher Stories

Tell us a little about yourself and your work.

My name is Kylie Plant. I am a beginning teacher, having completed a Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood last year at



QUT. This year I am working as an Inclusion Teacher for Years Four and Five. This has been a great year of learning for me and I have found my knowledge of Early Childhood practices has been particularly useful when developing my approach for working with children with special needs. I am very passionate about early childhood practice and philosophy and am looking forward to further developing my early childhood pedagogy next year.

How long have you been an ECTA member?

I have been an ECTA member since early 2009. Although I am a newcomer, I find ECTA to be an invaluable resource on many levels. This year I have attended several ECTA Workshops, viewed videolinks online, developed my professional networks with other ECTA members at meetings and of course, enjoyed reviewing for, and reading the ECTA magazine!

What do you like about being a reviewer for ECTA?

Being a reviewer for ECTA has been fantastic for the resources I have had the chance to review, as well as the opportunity to see how these resources work practically in the classroom situation. Some of these resources are items that I would not normally consider for my students but it has been surprising how well these have worked in the classroom. (See my current review!)

Being a reviewer can give you the ability to step outside your normal practices and try something new and different that may be outside your usual repertoire!



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Inspiring environments

ECTA member, Melindi Robertson, talks about outdoor play at C&K Mt Gravatt Kindergarten and Preschool.

Our centre has two water tanks which are about to be connected to the watering system. The raised vegetable garden is located close to one tank and the worm farm. With all the staff being conscious of using lighting only when necessary, the power bill is low, but an application has just been submitted for solar power panels to offset costs of cooling an extremely hot office. The children know which bin is for recycling their paper rubbish and they also sort their morning tea and lunch scraps correctly, with fruit scraps going to the worms, along with some of our paper towels. We collect used printer and toner cartridges which earn us funds at the same time, and paper used on one side is always used on the other.

As well as recycling we also try to reuse. With all our families supplying hundreds of used milk bottle caps, the children recently threaded them onto lengths of fishing line and we have a 'curtain' of bottle tops hanging down across a window. Many other items are reused for collage, as we all do.

The kindy is 53 years old and the previous Director, Miss Mary Luddy, was here for 40

years. This playground was a bare sloping area with a few trees, but it was her vision that



slowly built the playground up to what it is today. She firmly believed that all children should be



in a natural environment – full of adventure and challenge – and all children had a right to play in a place that offered this with lots of trees, bushes, flowers (a multitude that flower at different times of the year) and hidey holes. And she succeeded.



I have been here for nearly two years and, after working with three groups of children here, I can honestly say their outside play is calmer as it is a very peaceful place and there is a great deal of room. Play seems more imaginative and creative and of a longer duration. Lastly, play in this natural play space is safer than in a playground with lots of metal and plastic manmade structures. It might appear that some things may be too high and too challenging, but there are definitely less bumps and bruises here. Mostly, this is because the children are



better at monitoring their own safety limits. I have learnt to trust the children – they are very responsible at setting their own safety levels. We do spend time at the beginning of the year encouraging this.

The children become fascinated with nature – our copy of *Wildlife in Greater Brisbane* is well worn as they try to identify a variety of insects, spiders, lizards and birds. The kookaburras, butcherbirds, tawny frogmouths and rainbow lorikeets frequent the poinciana trees, with the odd scrub turkey visiting us and making a mound next door. The collage table is also stocked with many seedpods, gumnuts and bark pieces. The children often safely use sticks and twigs in their play, especially for making ‘campfires’.

Kay Monteith talks about how the children at Junction Park State School value their natural environment.

When I was little, our community was sustainable; we recycled and reused and always in engaged in sustainable practices. This has influenced how I’ve raised my family and now how I’m using these experiences in my classroom.

When children care for their environment as a matter of course their awareness continues throughout their lifetimes. Experiences can engage them in recycling and reusing, building productive gardens, bringing the broader community together in sustainable practices and, by default, educating families about the environment. Schools can become self-sufficient and reduce their waste, contribute to the electricity grid (thus saving money on the costs of electricity), use rainwater instead of town water for watering and toilets.

At Junction Park we build each child’s connections with nature by engaging in raising their awareness of the environment from their very first year in school. Children engage in practical, hands-on projects that allow them to see and experience first-hand how nature works and the rewards they can gain from these experiences. Children have been involved in creating a no-dig vegetable garden; composting; creating a worm farm; raising chickens; cleaning up and re-vamping our frog pond; enlisting the assistance of Planet Ark to plant more trees generally throughout the school; ensuring that all lights are turned off when we leave the classrooms; applying for a grant to get a rainwater tank for the vegetable garden; rainwater tanks in the main school; solar panels; and regular ‘emu’ parades to keep the grounds clean.

We are always thinking of ways to build and expand on our sustainable practices and encouraging our school community to participate and embrace sustainable practices.



ECTA groups around the regions

Libby Gaedtke



Hi! I'd like to introduce myself – my name is Libby Gaedtke, and I'm the Co-ordinator for ECTA Groups around this great state of ours!

ECTA believes that networking between colleagues from all sectors of early childhood education and care, provides a key component to successful professional development. Currently we have groups in the following regions:

- Bayside (Moreton Bay area, Brisbane)
- Cooloola (Gympie and surrounds)
- Hervey Bay
- Gladstone
- Fitzroy (Yeppoon area)
- Cairns.

My role is to liaise between the ECTA Groups and our State Co-ordinating Committee, disseminate information on upcoming Professional Development and issues in Early Childhood Education to the Groups, update the ECTA Groups section of the website with any upcoming events our Groups are holding, and generally assist our Groups with any needs they may have.

Our ECTA Groups organise many and varied get-togethers, ranging from bi-annual conferences to workshops with guest speakers in the Early Childhood field, to coffee meetings to catch up with other Early Years professionals. Particularly in the regions, there's nothing like getting together with other like-minded people to share ideas and discuss issues that impact on our sector.

Being part of an ECTA Group has many benefits. Not only are you in contact with other Early Years colleagues in your area, but you are kept up to date with the latest Professional Development.



L – R – Debbie and Liz (Gladstone), Leonie and Libby (Hervey Bay), Kim (Cooloola), Lisa (Hervey Bay), Roslyn (Web Events), Lynne (Cairns), Marion and Michelle (Cooloola), and Sue (Brisbane) at our breakfast meeting.



Above: ECTA Fitzroy Group facilitated a music workshop by Sue Southey, which was very well attended and enjoyed by all.

Other benefits include:

- ECTA Groups are able to apply for a \$50 petty cash grant and grant of \$500 per year to go towards facilitating workshops in their local areas.
- We get together to share ECTA's Videolinks in conjunction with OLI four times a year, and sites where we have an active group are always given priority.
- As part of a new initiative, this year for the first time, two ECTA Groups Office Bearers were sponsored to attend the Annual ECTA Conference. The following morning, as part of ECTA's sponsorship, we all attended a breakfast meeting to discuss the directions our groups are taking and get to know each other better (see photo).
- To become an ECTA Group, there must be three ECTA members who have Individual Membership.
- Office Bearers must also have Individual ECTA membership.

- ECTA also sponsors regional tours of excellent educational speakers to enhance Professional Development in regional areas. Earlier this year Loretta Giorcelli visited Gladstone, Hervey Bay and Gympie and spoke to enthusiastic audiences on the development of resilience in children and teens. We are currently planning a future Regional Tour ... watch this space!
- ECTA provides professional, legal and financial support to Group Executives providing meetings, workshops and other forms of networking among local members.

Visit the ECTA website (www.ecta.org.au) for further information about our ECTA Groups in the regions, and to find contact details for each group. If you are interested in forming an ECTA Group in your area, please get in touch with me (libby@ecta.org.au) and I would love to assist you in getting started – the benefits are well worth it!



Above: Stacey and Leanne discussed the Draft National Curriculum when ECTA Hervey Bay Group provided feedback to ACARA.

Health and wellbeing

As early childhood educators we are responsible for developing the children in our care across all areas of the curriculum. One extremely important area of development is that of each child's health and wellbeing. Our broad notion of health encompasses all aspects of an individual's wellbeing, inclusive of social, mental, physical and spiritual health. This area is largely determined by social, environmental and economic influences and covers such areas as children's healthy eating, active play, safety in the environment, family support and relationships.

We must not undervalue the impact a child's early experiences have on their future health and wellbeing. Once again we gain insights through our conversations with early childhood educators from a range of contexts.

Ann Pearson

Prep demonstration teacher at Kelvin Grove State College, working in partnership with QUT. Anne has taught in Queensland since 1986, in rural and city schools. She is passionate about the Early Years, working collaboratively with families and the broader school community. Anne is Mum to four beautiful girls.

How do you support the adult-child relationships at school and home to enhance the child's social and emotional well-being?

From the very first opportunity, I communicate with the families I work with to demonstrate how open communication between teacher and parent will enhance their child's education and allow me to maximize the effectiveness of my teaching. I use several methods of communication to allow flexibility and ease of communication between myself and parents:

- a message folder and book in which notes from school to home can be sent and in which written messages can be exchanged.

- email between myself and parents for quick communication.
- documentation within the room showing my planning with the children and the projects we do.
- open door policy where parents can be part of the class when they can, as well as a roster for times when extra help is needed.
- parent interviews throughout the year.

A focus on building children's resilience is part of my communication and teaching practice. I work to model actions and language that promote the children's strong sense of self and an understanding of their own well-being as well as confidence in their own abilities.

I like to acknowledge the achievements made each week by the children to help parents recognize the importance of the exciting changes their child is making, and promoting a respect for the child and their gifts.

I have a very diverse group of children who are from a minority of Australian, and a majority of multicultural, families and some of my group also have special needs. From the beginning of the year, an ongoing discussion of difference and acceptance is held with the children. We focus on how we are from different backgrounds and the exciting things each of us brings to our group. The children are very proud of their cultural heritage and often share similarities and differences in discussions and conversations. An awareness and acceptance of this, means the children support each other and their belief systems without bias or ignorance as they know why there are differences and accept these as part of their friendships.

With one of our special needs children, the children were concerned that he had difficulties managing some of the activities we did and were concerned about his wellbeing. After a lengthy discussion, we decided that he was like our little brother; there were times when we needed to help him, and it was okay for us to help him. The children readily volunteer to support this little boy and take great pride in his achievements. Just like proud siblings would!

Hugs are a special part of our day.

Every morning we sing and dance to an old Hap Palmer song "So Happy". In this song we have to greet our partner and welcome them to the class that day. We also give each other and ourselves a hug. The children happily hug whoever they're

next to, and if parents are in the room they are expected to give lots of hugs to the children nearby. I make sure everyone has a partner, including me!

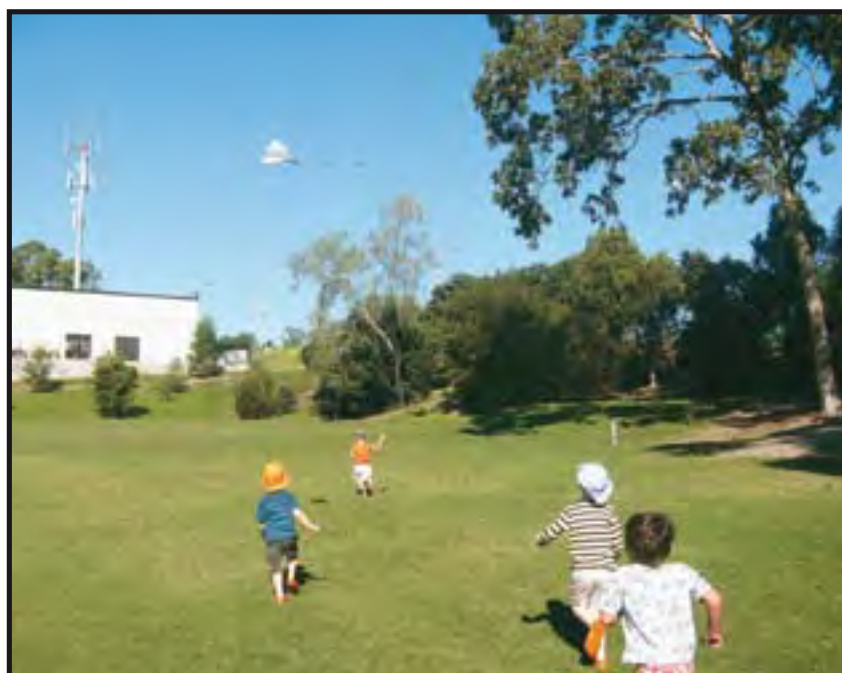
Through the year we develop a close bond that lasts well after the year is over. The children, parent and staff relate on multiple levels and even though we are very different we are very much one special class group.

Jessica Richards

In her second year of teaching, Jessica currently teaches Year One at Warrigal Rd State School in Eight Mile Plains. She has an undergraduate degree in Psychology (Honours), as well as completing a Graduate Diploma in (Early Years) at QUT in 2008.

How do you encourage children to develop a love of movement that will strengthen and improve their health?

I am very passionate about The Arts and one of the ways in which I share this with the children is through dance. Not only do



we play games and dance to songs that are familiar to the children, but I also share my favorite songs and bands with them. I teach dances. We learn together using websites such as YouTube, and the children also share routines with the group. They just love it, and this has also helped to build their confidence, which has been great!

Bronwyn MacGregor

During 2007 – 2010 Bronwyn was involved in the development and implementation of the Social Emotional Early Development Strategy (SEEDS), a mental health promotion initiative undertaken by the Mental Health Promotion team of Brisbane South Public Health Services, Queensland Health. As an early childhood educator, she gained a multidisciplinary approach to understanding health and wellbeing in young children and their families.

How do you encourage children to develop a love of movement that will strengthen and improve their health?

For children, particularly infants, when adults provide opportunities for children to move and have physical contact with others, they are also providing opportunities for the child to develop a sense of connectedness or attachment. The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) has developed a set of activity cards 'Connecting with kids' cards. These cards contain a number of strategies for promoting

health and wellbeing through physical activity. These include: *Infant Massage, Nappy Aerobics, Moving and Grooving, Cooking, Playing with Boxes and Paper, Getting Outdoors* and *On the Floor for Tummy Time*. For more information about these cards, contact Alice Brown, Mother & Early Childhood Education Professional, USQ.

How do you support the adult-child relationships at school and home to enhance the child's social and emotional well-being?

SEEDS recognises that parents play a critical role in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of their children. The SEEDS fold-out flower contains a number of needs that parents will have in relation to being able to balance their knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to managing their own social and emotional wellbeing. These needs include the need to: recognise how important they are in their child's life, to build quality relationships with



family and friends, to know about the influence of their own upbringing on their parenting. SEEDS supports educators to meet these needs through strategies such as: making 'time to talk' with parents more 'relational' and less 'operational', modelling self-awareness by sharing how they manage their own triggers, telling parents that they understand difficult days – we all have them and by facilitating friendships between parents by identifying common interests.

What safety measures do you put in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children within their environment?

SEEDS would view safety in the environment in term of its *emotional* safety. This relates closely to the concepts contained in *The Circle of Security™* graphic developed by Marvin, Cooper, Hoffman and Powell (2000), University of Virginia USA – based on work by Bowlby/Ainsworth and promoted through the SEEDS Resource CD. In relation to this graphic, aspects of the environment that contribute to its *emotional* safety include elements such as: opportunity for/and encouragement of a child's natural need for exploration, that the child's explorations are 'delighted in', that the adults in the environment are a 'secure base' from which to explore, and they are a 'safe haven' to return to when their exploration is over. According to *The Circle of Security™* graphic, an emotionally safe environment can be created when adults recognise and meet children's needs; thus they watch over them, delight in them, help them and enjoy with them they protect them, comfort them, delight in them and help them organise their feelings. For more information on *The Circle of Security™* graphic visit www.circleofsecurity.org

How do you encourage the use of positive social behaviours within your environment?

SEEDS promotes the use of positive social behaviours in all relationships through nurturing self awareness, nurturing connectedness and nurturing communications – with children, parents, staff and the community. SEEDS values TIME, and recognises that making Time to Talk, Time to Reflect and Time to Connect enables and enhances positive social behaviours. Again, the SEEDS fold-out flower contains a number of strategies for educators to nurture self awareness, connectedness and communication amongst children, parents, staff and the community. Some examples include: engaging in one to one conversations with children about their interests; 'being with' a child; letting them know they are important and special; encouraging attachment by getting close and being involved; making staff meetings more 'relational' and less 'operational'; encouraging staff to ask for feedback about themselves from trusted people; staff doing something fun together on a regular basis; promoting the importance of good social and emotional wellbeing through local media; offering the centre as a venue for community events; advocating for early childhood education and care ... the list goes on! For more information about the SEEDS Mental Health Promotion Framework contact: Alanna_Stewart@health.qld.gov.au or SEEDS@health.qld.gov.au

Or to order your copy of SEEDS go to:

http://www.health.qld.gov.au/industry/school_carecentres/seeds.asp

Stephanie Kennedy

School Chaplain

Wellers Hill State School

How do you encourage children to develop a love of movement that will strengthen and improve their health?

I am a school chaplain with a background in dance and the creative arts. I also teach RE and my passion for the pastoral oversight of the young students at my school includes, amongst other things, their spiritual wellbeing.

I have found the use of dance and movement to be highly effective in engaging children's attention, energy and understanding. When I teach RE, I will sometimes take the class outside and teach them a simple Israeli folk dance – something that would perhaps have been a feature of village life in Biblical times. It is fun, inclusive, instills a sense of "community" and may even raise some cross-cultural awareness. The kinesthetic nature of dance (involving

touch) can also be helpful in breaking down gender barriers.

I tend to choose songs with actions – even within the confines of a classroom, engaging in movement makes the learning process much more enjoyable, and even more so when you add props into the mix! Cheer-leader pom-poms, short ribbons, flags – basically anything that can be shaken, waved or twirled. Even the most uncoordinated child is usually eager to participate when they see what fun it can be!

Some time ago, to mark the World Day of Prayer, I sought permission to present "The Lord's Prayer" in dance, at morning assembly.

I selected twelve students – all non-dancers, with a mix of achievers and non-achievers, both boys and girls. We practiced hard and developed a real sense of teamwork. Then, on the day, they held the assembly mesmerized as they created



Conversations

beautiful patterns and movements with long colourful lengths of fabric. It was a prayer without words – yet through the universal language of dance, it was both powerful and eloquent. Some were moved to tears. And at the end of the day, through the medium of movement, there were 12 ordinary kids who'd added a new set of skills and understandings to their kit-bags and were swelling with pride in the affirmation of their teachers and peers.

How do you support the adult-child relationships at school and home to enhance the child's social and emotional well-being?

Chaplaincy, is about "relationships, relationships, relationships!" Children have many adult figures in their lives – at school, most of them are "authority figures".

My role is more that of "friend." It is comforting for children to know that when they have been in trouble, feel sad or upset, or just need a place to "chill", I can provide a soft place to land!

Parents too, will often confide in the chaplain, and find it comforting to know that their children have a place of refuge, if needed, at school. Actually, some of my best customers are parents and members of staff!

My strong connection with refugee students and families has led to many home visits. As I am bilingual, I have been able to communicate between school and home with the non-English-speaking families. Remaining impartial and confidential is a key to maintaining the integrity of the role. Knowing my limitations and when to refer is the other!

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‘Play Bastardised ... children’s voices silenced.’

Louis Bradfield



2010 marked 22 years of Louis's involvement with the Maridahdi Community in Toowoomba. Originally, Louis was Director of the community kindergarten and now he is principal of Maridahdi Early Childhood Community School. Currently Maridahdi is working with families to establish a second campus at Mount Tamborine to begin in 2011. Louis has spent 27 years reflecting on a way of teaching that best supports children as thinkers and learners. During this period, he has had opportunities to ‘think out loud’, ‘to share his story’... as a lecturer, tutor and consultant. In 2002 Louis was a National recipient of a NEiTA (National Excellence in Teaching Award) for his ‘passionate’ dedication and contribution to early childhood education. In 2003 he received a Centenary Medal for Distinguished Service to Education. In his other life ... he is a parent of three amazing young adults, is a fitness fanatic and a successful artist!!

Maridahdi teachers are always on the lookout for research to inspire; to increase clarity or challenge the work we do. The most exciting piece of late is this discussion, inspired by the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari:

In contemporary educational contexts young children and learning are tamed, predicted, supervised, controlled and evaluated according to predetermined standards. Contesting such intense governing of the learning child, this book argues that the challenge to practice and research is to find ways of regaining movement and experimentation in subjectivity and learning.(Olsson, 2009)

Everything becomes ground and sea when children learn; everything becomes movement and experimentation. Letters, light, numbers, colours, everything is thrown up in the air, nothing is wrong and everything is potentiality. Sense and nonsense walk together hand in hand. (Olsson, 2009: 5)

The use of the word ‘bastardised’ has been chosen with intent. It is a powerful and emotive word that reflects the nature of this discussion about play.

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines ‘bastardising’ as ‘changing something

so its value declines'. This definition best describes bastardisation in relation to the discussion of play.

It is 'bastardised' when children's access to play becomes increasingly limited with their removal from the play equation. Opportunities for thought rapidly decline in environments that are dominated by adults. The industrialisation of education is an adult agenda; schools liken children to vehicles in a Toyota production line, with a narrowed focus on measurable outcomes. Politicians strive for increased productivity under the guise of 'transparency' with outdated methodology chosen as the preferred vehicle to drive home such limited signs of success.

Maridahdi challenges the current construction of play, and it questions the existence of play in the current educational landscape. Play is now being hijacked by adult agendas, limiting the opportunities for children to explore possibilities and their own potentiality.

At Maridahdi, play implies ownership, a voice for children. Play gives children permission to explore their own desires.

For the purpose of this discussion, it is my intention to equate play with thinking, as an expression of a child's desires.

Very often there seems to be an idea of the child wandering around in the world ready to imitate and repeat what family traditions, formalised school systems and cultural heritage pour into them. Children's own desires are rarely considered important or valuable. The only desires taken seriously seem to be what comes from the

outside: family, school and cultural imposing their desires on to the children. (Olsson, 2009)

Neill (1995) contends that in the early 1900s 'every child had been hothoused into being an adult long before he had reached adulthood', supported by 'adults' underlying belief that play was a waste of time'. While the current discourse around play acknowledges its power and preaches its benefits, in action it seems little has changed.

Definitions create much of the current rhetoric supporting play's bastardisation.

Current curriculum litters itself with play references more concerned about ensuring palatability, successfully disguising adult agendas while extinguishing the voices of children, furthering evidence of the advancement of 'schoolification' (Dahlberg, 1991).

References, on one hand, acknowledge play as a means for children to make sense of their world, and that play is platformed as a credible 'context for learning and development'. But this construction of play is lost in action.

The term *educational play* (Queensland Studies Authority, 2006) illustrates how jargon adds supposed weight to the value of play, while devaluing its true origins. Play no longer has standing in its own right, it requires additional support to prop it up (which presents further evidence of 'bastardisation' to increase acceptability and adaptability, so it is recognisable as an acceptable educational form). The sad reality for children is that if we link play to

children's desires, then that play, in any form, is almost non-existent in current educational settings.

A shift in culture to accountability, to a more industrialised approach to education, has been projected onto the early childhood landscape. While research now presents play as the more preferred method to direct instruction, it rarely translates to children's daily reality. The dichotomy between what is said and what is done further supports play's 'bastardisation'.

Materials are no longer presented and selected for the possibilities or the potential they present but to ensure an adherence to clearly articulated goals and measurable outcomes.

Materials viewed as symbols of play, litter educational landscapes; play opportunities for children often cease on contact. The ever-increasing prescriptive nature of materials presented to children shut down opportunities for thought. The inclusion of these resources is carefully orchestrated to ensure deliverable outcomes. For children, these materials send immediate messages about what needs to be done, inviting limited and controlled responses. Encounters with the unknown or the unfamiliar, are non-existent.

Deleuze, with inspiration from Nietzsche, saw thought as a matter of creation that takes place when the mind is provoked by an encounter with the unknown or the unfamiliar, forcing us to think. (Olsson, 2009)

The power of consumerism is a further contributor to play's 'bastardisation'. The messages attached to toy and equipment

catalogues are that whatever you desire for your child can be granted with the purchase of the appropriate resource. Messages warn children's learning potential is severely comprised without the latest gimmicky resources. Parents are pressured to comply in order to make children perform. (If anyone has seen the latest Fisher Price advertisement on television, you will know exactly what is being referred to).

Out-of-date routines continue to reinforce and repeat messages of control, rigidity, and conformity. No longer are there opportunities for children to explore, to risk take and explore possibilities.

Insulting messages of control and rigidity continue to restrict. Early childhood programs position themselves as holding the preferred approach; as the only educationalists who value the child, who allow them to learn through play. Yet in reality, 'they act as an extension of the state, a tool for governing and educating citizens'. (Olsson, 2009: 35)

Play bastardised, children's voices silenced, opportunities for thought limited.

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Designing routines especially for infants and toddlers in children's services

Assistant Professor Caroline Fewster, Bond University



Professor Caroline Fewster

Prior to developing Bond University's Bachelor of Children's Services program and joining its academic team, (Assistant Professor) Caroline Fewster has enjoyed a long and varied career working with children in a wide range of day care and teaching situations. Starting out as a pre-school teacher in the ACT, Caroline progressed to advisory and consultancy roles with regional and government education authorities. Her experience encompasses all aspects of early childhood learning, from classroom teaching to managing 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.

Caroline enjoys working extensively with many children's services throughout Australia, developing customised professional development programs for early childhood practitioners. Feedback indicates the success of her workshops and the 'wonderful, practical and creative ideas' she brings to demonstrate to participants during workshops.

In early childhood education settings, routines and transitions constitute a unique opportunity for maximising meaningful learning possibilities, especially as much time is dedicated to routine and transition times during each day.

Infants and toddlers and early childhood educators may spend up to 80% of the day in routine and transition times. This means that during the pre-school years (0–5 years), a child in an early childhood setting may spend up to 6,600 hours engaged in routine and transition experiences (Malenfant, 2006).

Designing routines especially for infants and toddlers presents a new dialogue

about what is important about routine and transition times. Reflecting on a number of questions and ideas invites early childhood educators to examine their current practices in designing routines and transitions, and take an active approach to incorporate the vision of the *Early Years Learning Framework* into their work (EYLF, 2009).

Considering the importance of routines and transitions, especially for infants and toddlers, begins with giving them an important place in the early childhood curriculum.

Without question, early childhood educators can greatly influence children's learning of many life skills through pedagogical experiences embedded in routine and transition times of the day.



Feature Articles

Let's start at the very beginning!

Three meaningful routines can begin the relationship with families:

1. providing families with a CD, highlighting the particular program which has been designed especially for infants and toddlers and their families.
2. inviting families to sing a song, send a message, tell a story on a CD so that their children can listen to their parents' voices ... all day.
3. designing and creating a 'welcome bag' for the children and families as they prepare for entering the early childhood setting.

Educators create a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with educators about curriculum decisions in order to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful (EYLF, 2009:12).

Designing and implementing routines and transitions and making changes to our daily practices can be opportunities for children to learn more about themselves, the world and other people. The key to successful routines and transitions may be to think through each part of the routine and pose questions for reflective practice.

What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work in designing routines and transitions for infants and toddlers?

Thinking about some long held assumptions about the design of routines and transitions can be an excellent starting point.

The pedagogical approach of the concept designing routines and transitions uses routines and transition experiences to encourage children to develop their capacities, respect their unique styles of learning, and consider their own rhythms. This contrasts with the autocratic approach, in which children are asked to meet the expectations of adults, and at the other end of the spectrum, the free pedagogy approach which leaves children to make choices they are often not able to make.

The 'democratic approach' is a pedagogy centred on children realising their potential (Malenfant, 2006).

Introducing 'thoughtful routines' to the infant and toddler program is one way to represent the diversity within the particular setting. It demonstrates a contemporary approach to designing routines and transitions especially for infants and toddlers.

Design briefs could be:

- creating a routine chart for each child with families.
- designing routines with children so that children learn to enjoy times of refreshment and relaxation. Children can take an active role in preparing for lunch and rest.
- introducing individual routines with children, creating spaces and places for children's belongings, acknowledging and developing cultural values.

This article relates to *Early Years Learning Framework*

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity



Feature Articles

- presenting each child with a pack-away basket to collect items for returning to their home.
- sharing the day's learning and interests to ensure that departing the service is a 'meaningful' routine for children, early childhood educators and families. A documentation space where families can comfortably sit with children to share the learning.

It is especially important to take a fresh look at the established ways of conducting routines and transitions in a program especially designed for infants and toddlers.

Habit may be the only reason some practices are still in use, and the underlying reasons for them may no longer be valid. (Malenfant, 2006:21).

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Gerald giraffe goes green and digital

Tennille Drovandi

Tennille Drovandi is Co Director of Rowes Bay Kindergarten, affiliated with the Creche and Kindergarten Association (C&K). A Provisionally Registered Teacher Tennille is embarking on her first year of teaching with C&K. After attending the 2010 C&K Brisbane Conference, *State of the Nation and Future Directions*, Tennille was both challenged and inspired to implement digital story into her pre-preparatory program. This article shares her interest in the power of digital story to provide a keepsake of a child's time at kindergarten, involve children in media play and as a tool to assess oral and literacy development.

My inspiration for this project was drawn from conference presenters, Lisa Kervin and Jessica Mantei from the University of Wollongong who shared their project involving a cohort of children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten and developing personalised digital stories that communicated their learning preferences and interests to their future kindergarten teachers. Shaleen Prowse from the Queensland University of Technology identified the positive opportunities for young children to be involved in media play so that they might consolidate and grow their technological capabilities.

Reflection upon these workshops identified possible challenges to implementing digital technology into my classroom. Identified obstacles were:

- *limited members of staff.* In both projects the research was not conducted by the classroom teacher but external researching staff.
- *limited access to technology.* Our centre did not own a Smart board, media board or more than one digital camera.
- *limited time frames.* The shorter duration and part time attendance at our pre-preparatory program as opposed to a long day care and full time preparatory school setting.

The identified challenges were overcome by:

- involving the parents as research staff in the digital process. Sending a camera home with each child replaced the need for extra staff and created a partnership between the child, parent and teachers.
- obtaining a second camera solely for use in the project and editing and recording the children's work onto my laptop computer. I also purchased a microphone and utilised the pre-existing, digital story creation software on my computer.
- pre-planning to accommodate 22 children into 25 short teaching days by pairing four families together to swap the camera between themselves in between teaching days. A partnership with parents and between parents was the key to the success of this project.

Planning for the project involved looking at possibilities, investigations, my intentions for each child and provocations to achieve these.

I wanted to provide the children with the opportunity to be involved in media play and create a personalised story. I also wanted to extend our Term Two focus on sustainable practices.



I therefore, thought it appropriate to use the children's interest in recycling and their fascination with our class puppet, Gerald Giraffe and send him on a journey of discovery

with the children educating him about recycling in their homes. The first week of term we discussed the project and the children eagerly embraced the idea, using the cameras freely in the classroom and talking to Gerald about recycling. Together we named our project *Gerald goes green at my house*. Gerald was taken home each day by a different child and, with assistance from their parents, was shown how to recycle with 8-15 photos taken of his experiences. Children were able to investigate the concept of recycling in their own environments, use digital camera and computer technologies and I was able to assess their knowledge of recycling, storytelling capabilities and oral development.

Challenges experienced in this project related to:

- project duration. A shorter program meant the children were limited to an overnight experience with Gerald; thus, they may have produced richer outcomes with more time allocated to story collection. Furthermore, each child was given about a 15 minute time frame to recall their story and it was attended during our middle session which was quite often noisy. Technically, a digital story encompasses 250 words

and this could not be achieved in the short time frame.

- media system quality and availability. A Smart board would have made story recall much easier as the children would have been able to manually move their own pictures and clearly see the picture they were recalling.
- program planning. Organisation was required to juggle the workload of producing the digital story discs on a nightly basis, plus keeping up with daily reflective practice, portfolio, individual child mapping and the usual reports and daily operations of directing a centre.

The positive outcomes of this project far outweighed the challenges and limitations. The children increased their knowledge of recycling and, despite the many challenges I was able to assess their story recall and oral development. Importantly, partnerships between our centre, the children and parents were strengthened.

The children were given the opportunity to be involved in media play and successfully created their own personalised story. Positive feedback from the parents included commending our centre on highlighting the importance of recycling and producing a digital keepsake of part of their child's kindergarten year for the family to watch for years to come!



Literacies in early childhood

Archana Sinh



Archana Sinh

Archana Sinh is an educationalist who has been involved with education and learning for more than 20 years. Some of her experiences include that of teaching Art in India and Papua New Guinea (primary); working as a training officer at colleges in Brisbane and Sydney, teaching and assessing units related to Children's Services; as an early childhood teacher in Brisbane and as a Director of a Long Day Care service in Sydney. More recently Archana is relief teaching for Education Queensland and is working as a Kindergarten teacher at Logan Child Care Centre – providing

15 hours of contact time to children. This centre is a pilot for providing the government-funded kindergarten program. Archana's interest in education is diverse and, in that capacity, she has begun providing professional development as well.

There are many understandings of the meaning of literacy in any context. Though Australia is a multilingual nation at a social and community level, it is monolingual within the care and learning environment of education for under-fives and school aged children. Furthermore the meaning of literacy is changing with the change in the way theory views 'child', 'language' and 'literacy' in Australia.

Literacies

The purpose of this article is to challenge the accepted way of understanding literacy, and take its meaning in a broader sense as practice that uses any sign language, oral or written, to communicate meaning and interaction between its participants. From this broad perspective, it would include languages in any form or text, including types such as digital, signage and text books. It could also include the language of technology and that of social and economic interaction.

This discussion includes:

- literacies as a social practice (Arthur, 2001)

- critical literacy (Jones Diaz, et al 2000)
- literacy and social justice

and some newer understandings such as

- multiliteracies; technology; and popular culture (Lankshear 1998: New London Group, 2000).

Literacy as a social practice

Current understandings in theory and research support that literacy is a social practice (Arthur, 2001; Jones Diaz et al 2000). Such a view considers literacy to be context based (Arthur, 2001; Jones Diaz et al 2000; Lankshear, 1998). Thus, family and community practices are significant in children's early literacy experiences. Moreover, since literacy is based in community practices, it includes other forms besides the practices of reading and writing, including oral, visual, written or digital literacy practices, the meaning of which are socially constructed (Makin & Jones Diaz et al 2000). Moreover, children are seen as participants, negotiating meaning – making of literacy (Kennedy & Surman, 2007).

Feature Articles

One learning experience in my pre-school room has been the preschool room book. In this book I am collecting photographs of children and their families. Most children like to come and talk about their family and about their photos. These talks are documented in the journal. The learning from this practice has been the oral presentation of the children while they discuss their family photo in front of their friends. Oral literacy is a great culture in our community.

Critical literacy

There are many views on critical literacy. However, within them, there are some shared understandings referred to as 'family resemblances' (Comber & Kamler, 1997, p. 1).

The commonalities of these understandings pertinent to this discussion include:

- the notion that critical literacy engages in social change at some level
- the meaning of text and word is intertwined in social and thus historical, economic and political practices
- social interpreters and critical theorists agree social reality is constructed
- critical theorists examine how these social realities were the result of unequal social relationships and conflicts of interest.

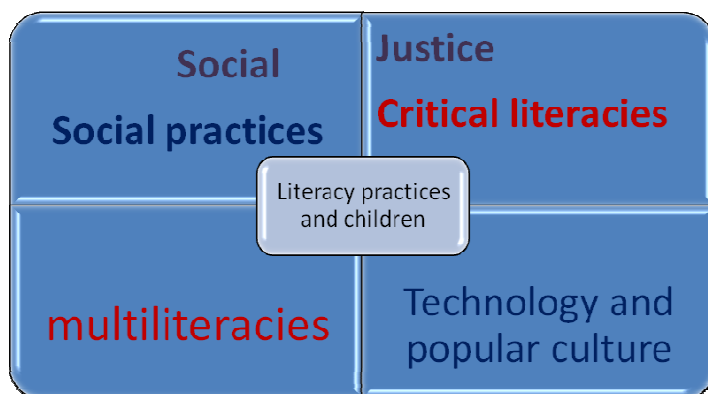


Figure 1: Illustration of literacy understandings in a diagram

Learning experience

The ability to read catalogues and have their understanding questioned is a critical literacy skill evident in some children. I recently sat with two children who shared their knowledge of Xbox games and remote controls. These children were looking at a catalogue from Big W and deciding which games were better. They knew they had to press different parts of the remote to get different results.

My attempt to challenge children's thinking sometimes leads to changing the endings of popular stories like *Jack and the Beanstalk* or *The Three Little Pigs*. After some attempts children have now started to join in the fun of changing and challenging the script of some of these stories. One of my more critical experiences include where I tried to change *Baa Baa Black Sheep* by introducing *One for the little girl who lives down the lane* and was told by most of the children that I was *singing it wrong*.

Social justice

Social justice itself has many interpretations. For literacy in the early years it could mean looking critically at text for meaning and social position. This can be achieved by examining popular culture and written texts for bias and stereo-type and engaging in technology related practices. Children are exposed to advertising, in print and digital format. There can be discussions around the purpose of some popular culture icons like Ben 10 or Bratz dolls. Children can explore and be aware of hidden messages behind the story of *Superman* and *The Incredible Hulk*.

Multiliteracies

Proponents of multiliteracies (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000) offer

critique to traditional understandings of literacy. They include communication through SMS, email, environmental print, critiquing advertising, oral debating, use of machines like telephone, fax and digital photography.

Many children can already operate a computer for their own purposes before they go to school. Young children can and do send and receive emails and operate mobile phones, even if only for games. Children have the technical skills and literacy. We as educators need to recognise this and adapt our learning environment to use this as a learning strength.

It is also a fact that many children are either exposed to or speak another language at home. Environmental print in the form of bus timetables, shopping catalogues and road signs are a part of children's everyday life. We should include this strength in their care and learning environment.

Technology and popular culture

It is important to remember that children are using technology at a very young age and that popular culture, due to advancement in technology, is impacting on their lives more than it could otherwise. So, for example, a child in a remote place in India will know about Superman or Barbie even if they experience a different childhood from a child in a city in Australia. They may also not have a common language but they do have a shared interest in the form of popular culture. These influences on their understanding and knowledge should be recognised and reflected in their environment of learning and care.

Literacy in a text form

This is not to suggest that we have moved away from the learning of text or that books are not important. Books are very important for children and reading stories, or looking at picture books, is an important literacy practice. However, it is not the only one but one of many literacy practices.

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This article relates to *Early Years Learning Framework*

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

What bugs you about teaching reading?

Karyn Johns

Acknowledgement:- This classroom program approach to emergent literacy and the more formal teaching of letters/sounds for reading and writing combines and integrates many excellent programs and resources from a range of sources. The successful "trial" of this blend of programs was conducted in the three Kindergarten classrooms at Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School in 2008/09. Further opportunities have occurred in other schools in Sydney, the Gold Coast and more recently an early childhood centre in Coomera.



Karyn Johns

Karyn Johns is a Speech Language Pathologist who has worked with children and families for over 20 years. She graduated in W.A and has worked for a number of health and education agencies in SA, ACT and QLD, including Education Queensland for ten years. From 2007-09, Karyn worked part time at Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School on the Tweed Coast with the aim being to support pedagogical change and curriculum development that strengthens the early years of learning, and integrates "up-to-date" teaching practices in the classroom. Since 2005 Karyn has also

consulted for the Communities for Children project which has led to the development of resources and intervention approaches for the 0-5 years sector as well as the delivery of many workshops. Finally, Karyn is a partner in a thriving private practice (S.P.E.E.C.H Pty Ltd) on the Gold Coast, providing services to children in four private schools, as well as clinical services in their rooms in Coomera. Karyn is passionate about sharing information and strategies with families, teachers and early childhood professionals that will support language, literacy and social skills development. Karyn has two children – aged 14 and 10 years. They have taught her an incredible amount and probably have had the most important and significant impact on the work she does and the advice she provides to others.

The current reality (and what bugs us!!)

Never before has there been the level of intense focus and attention on early childhood education, development and care. The media and professional literature contains reference to many complex issues such as:

- providing access to quality care and education for all children (www.deewr.gov.au)
- publishing new frameworks, curriculums and standards (www.qsa.qld.edu.au)
- ensuring school readiness (www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)
- developing literacy and numeracy skills (www.oceccc.gov.au/education/learning_resources.htm)
- increasing incidences of delays, difficulties and "problems" (www.aedi.org.au)
- advances in our knowledge of brain development (www.changingbrains.org)
- supporting the workforce and levels of staff training (www.pscq.org.au).

In addition, the political and economic factors often “cloud” the everyday work efforts of early childhood professionals to simply do a “good job” and enjoy their day with young children and delight in how (most of them) thrive and learn from the many opportunities and experiences we provide. Also, there are the conversations with parents about their child’s progress and, increasingly, parents are asking staff in “non-school” settings when they are going to start teaching the children to read !!!

However, the **reality** is that we are under pressure to deliver (with a smile):

- best practice teaching methods
 - quality early learning experiences
- in a climate of
- increasingly complex child and family needs
 - competitive “education” environments (e.g. My School website)
 - a plethora of new initiatives, projects and early years services
 - pressure to “close the perceived gap” between private centres and more formal “education” settings
 - QLD sector trying to “catch up” to standards and outcomes of other states.

Our reality (and what bugs us!!)

This paper endeavours to provide some facts about early literacy development and share some tools and resources that support the delivery of a fun and engaging approach which we believe is flexible enough to sit comfortably into a variety of curricula including:

- *Early Years Learning Framework* (www.deewr.org.au)
- *National English Curriculum* (www.acara.edu.au)
- *Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline* (www.qsa.qld.edu.au).

In fact, as we write this paper, we are confronted by the many terms and concepts (e.g. *emergent curriculum, developmental curriculums, portfolios, provocation, learning stories etc.*) that are written and spoken about, which potentially conflict or compete for status as the best or correct way to educate young children. Even as experienced practitioners, we were feeling anxious about the words we might choose to use in our paper and presentation since they could be misinterpreted as not being part of the “in” jargon, or our message rejected on the basis of not using the correct or current terminology.

We hope and would prefer the sector “pulls together” in this regard since it may only cause to confuse the community or, worse, even discredit some services.

Understanding reading (and what bugs us!!)

As early educators, we are charged with the responsibility of explicitly teaching a skill since “evolution did not wire us to read” (www.childrenofthecode.org/interviews/tallal.htm#Neuroanatomyofreading). That is, many developmental skills such as walking, and talking are actually pre-wired human capacities that will develop (in over 95% of the population) given a reasonable or “good enough” learning environment. As adults (parents, educators or carers), we are the facilitators in this learning process. However, literacy develops from the result of our teaching (in the vast majority of

cases), but builds from the critical brain capacities we nurture and shape in the critical years **BEFORE** formal education begins. The *learning to read skills* (and thus the teaching of them) cannot be separated from the following early years experiences:

- talking
- listening
- sharing stories
- playing
- singing.

These play-based learning experiences help build the brain capacities we depend upon for future teaching and learning i.e. memory, attention, processing speed, sequencing (Burns, 2010, www.brainconnection.com). Thus, for phonological awareness (decoding) activities, we need children to be able to:

- **attend** (listen for syllables, rhyme, sounds)
- **process** fast streams of sounds (a syllable is only 0.25 seconds in length)
- **sequence** (two sounds in UP; three sounds in boat)
- **remember** what the concepts letter, sound, word, sentence mean

For listening/reading comprehension (After all, isn't that what reading really is?) we need children to be able to:

- **attend** to the story or information
- **process** the words and their meanings (quickly)
- **sequence** the events, ideas
- **remember** what was read

To apply the KISS (Keep it Simple Stupid) principle, then think of as **Reading = D x C:**

D = decoding (phonological awareness and speech skills) and

C = comprehension (vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, talking skills).

The foundations for this reading formula come from the oral language and speech skills that young children bring to "school" or the learning to read context. So are we valuing and nurturing these skills and experiences in the early years or being "pushed" into formal learning structures too soon?

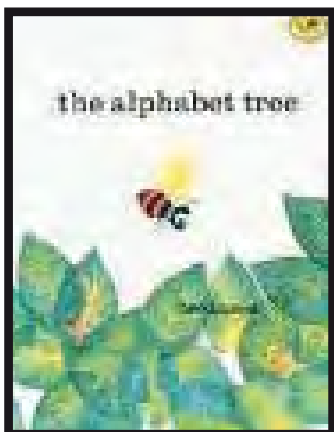
THE ALPHABET GARDEN - A Suggested Framework for the Teaching Process

Research (see <http://inteachershands.education.ecu.edu.au/>) has repeatedly shown that the quality of the teacher and their own metacognitive knowledge about how children learn is the key to achieving the "best outcomes" – not the program (some of which can cost many hundreds of dollars). Incidentally, the other factor critical for good literacy outcomes is your partnership with parents - so once you know what you are doing, and why, then tell the parents !!!!

The remainder of the paper will describe some tools (but there are others that could be used!!) that have assisted early childhood professionals. They should be:

- consistent in the use of their instructional language
- visual and engaging in their delivery of language and literacy experiences
- strategic and incremental in the sequence of skills "taught"
- integrated and connected across "teaching" areas.

The educators who have engaged with the materials we describe have all applied the ideas in their own way with their own



style. It is not prescriptive. However, the tools and resources we utilize, deliver on the current understandings and research knowledge about the strategies,

capacities and knowledge base children need for successful literacy acquisition.

The context or overarching tool is a story book about literacy and how reading works. There are a number of these types of stories available e.g.

The Bear Who Wanted to Read by Lee Davis, *Reading Makes You Feel Good* by Todd Parr, *The Flyaway Alphabet* by Mary Murphy. We have used the **The Alphabet Tree** story book by Leo Lionni, because it provides a framework of reference for critical metalinguistic concepts (word, letter, sound, sentence) for emergent literacy (www.nifl.gov/). It supports the introduction of the concepts of letters and sounds to young children. As the story



unfolds the letters are presented as leaves on the tree that huddle together from the wind to make **words** (introduced by the word bug). Then the caterpillar explains

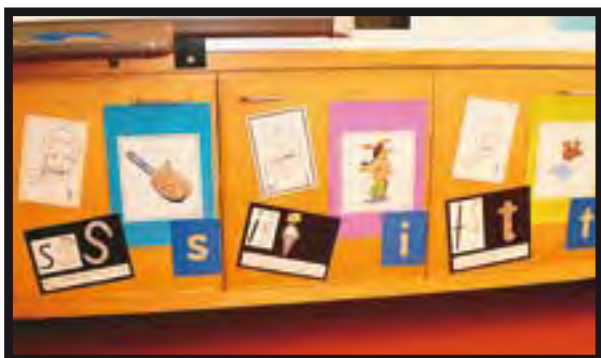
that words should group together as **sentences** to say something meaningful (so the words climb onto the caterpillar's back). The story ensures terminology for important literacy concepts, such as "word, letter, sound, sentence", is supported by visual clues.

Multi-sensory learning approach

to sounds. Many young children are struggling with auditory processing and, since the speech stream is so fast, hearing individual sounds can be challenging. There are a number of programs that support the learning of the speech sounds for literacy but we have chosen **Cued Articulation** (by Jane Passy and available from ACER). This system for the sounds of English (for which there are 44 – many more than the 26 letters!!) uses hand movements which relate directly to the parts of the mouth and the way the sound is made. This means that, as children discover sounds in words, they can be related to the tree as leaves and the hand cues presented to them, using the cued articulation approach, helps ensure visual and tactile information about speech sounds is also shared.

Another option is to colour code (arbitrarily) the consonants according to specific features of sounds (e.g. *short* sounds p,b,t,d, k, g and *long* e.g. s,f and others ; *nose* e.g. m, n), so that incidental reference to the type of sound includes both auditory feature information as well as visual prompts. Finally, vowel letters (for short vowel sounds) can be another coloured leaf. It would be recommended that a Speech Language Pathologist assists you in this process or, alternatively, access the ELF program available from UQ (training and materials can be purchased from www.uq.edu.au/literacyprograms/about_literacy-for-life).

Feature Articles



Engaging and sustainable teaching practices

The **word bug** can become a regular classroom visitor (be brave and dress up!!). The concept of rhyme (which children should have acquired in preschool) and the phonological awareness skills of blending and segmenting sounds (in simple consonant/vowel, consonant/vowel/consonant structures) can continue to be reinforced. High frequency words can also be introduced by the word bug but in a contextualized and integrated way (for high frequency words printed on bugs see www.sparklebox.co.uk/cil/keywords/minibeasts.html). Finally, the children are reminded when they are “writing” that their sentences are like the caterpillar in the story. That is, words go together to make sentences that mean something. Children visit the **Principal** with their “sentence writing” attempts and important messages.

SUMMARY

We acknowledge the increasing pressures in the early childhood sector to meet the goals, outcomes and principles described in a plethora of frameworks, curricula and guidelines emerging in the sector.

There is growing pressure from parents and community to start the teaching of reading early. Also, research and knowledge about brain development is also “exploding”, which can add to an overwhelming sense of information overload. However, this paper endeavours to embed and integrate some of the key “facts” about the teaching and learning processes for reading into a framework, with recommended tools, that will assist early childhood professionals and children to grow their own “**Alphabet Garden**” in their setting.



Title: The Edutainer: Connecting the Arts and Science of Teaching

Author: Brad Johnson and Tammy Maxson McElroy

Published By: Rowman & Little Education

ISBN: 9781-60709-612-2

RRP: \$35.00

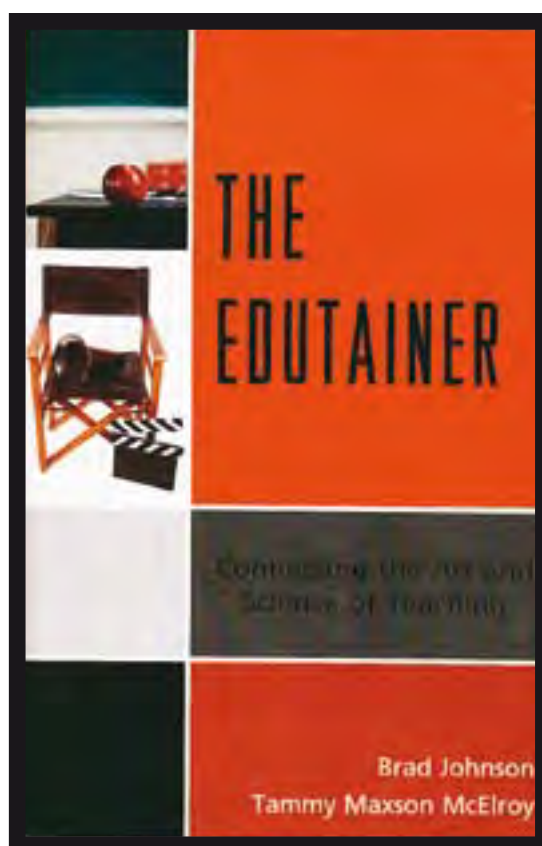
Reviewed by: Susanne Garvis

The Edutainer is text that is suitable for practicing teaching and pre-service teachers. It should be on the recommended reading list for all future teachers interested in catering for students in the current technological age.

The book is written by two veteran teachers (Brad Johnson and Tammy Maxson McElroy) who understand the lives of contemporary classrooms. Drawing on current literature and their own personal experience, the authors create a unique approach to creative and innovative teaching. The authors argue that teaching, like acting, embraces elements of both science and art. They suggest that what separates the Edutainer from the traditional teacher is an awareness of cultural changes and the ability to adapt and flourish in a changing culture. As the authors, suggest the "edutainer doesn't just think outside the box; she throws the box away" (2010, p. 23).

The book is presented in a personal way, engaging the reader. The aim of the authors is to raise the classroom to another level, expanding the role of the teacher to becoming a facilitator who connects with students in learning experiences that are rich and inspirational. Throughout each of the chapters there are detailed guidelines about how to best approach creating a successful environment in the classroom. The book also provides valuable ways to prepare and plan for learning experiences, meaningful go-to-school night programs and how to conduct successful parent interviews. In the appendix there are sheets, checklists and worksheets that teachers could use in their classroom.

Overall, this book brings a refreshing approach to education in the climate of standardized testing. As teachers are being asked to narrow their focus and concentrate on improving standardised test results, this books offer hope that is balanced and practitioner-based. If you are in need of a little inspiration, purchase a copy of the Edutainer.

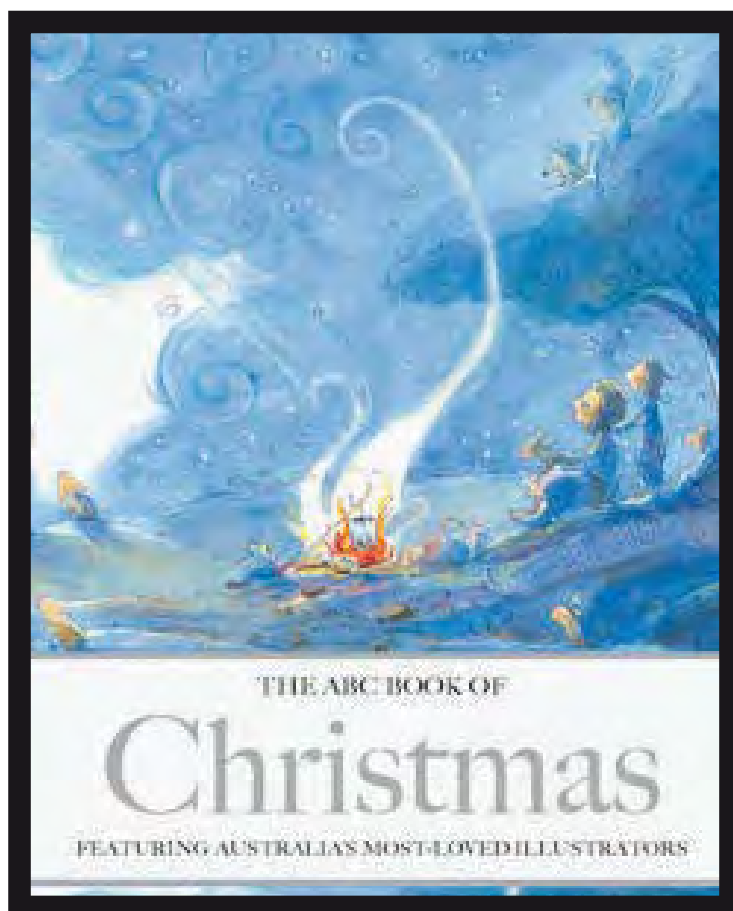


Title: The ABC Book of Christmas**Author: Mark Macleod****Illustrators: Various****ISBN: 978 0 7333 2481 9****RRP: \$24.99****Reviewed by: Rachel Atkinson**

The ABC Book of Christmas is a delightful picture book that narrates the birth of Baby Jesus. Through his writing, author Mark Macleod embraces the true meaning and spirit of Christmas. Each page individually represents a part of the Christmas story. However, what sets this book apart from other Christmas stories, is the wonderful illustrations used to support the text. A range of Australia's most-loved illustrators have chosen their favourite scene from the Nativity story and illustrated that scene using their unique artistic techniques. Each page is so distinctive, providing a great opportunity for children to identify and focus on the artistic elements used.

The simple text and breathtaking illustrations make this book a must-read for children of all ages and an invaluable resource at Christmas time.

The ABC Book of Christmas is available at all ABC stores.



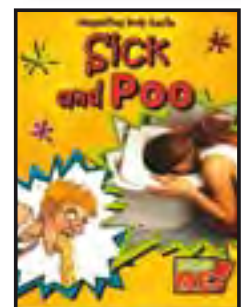
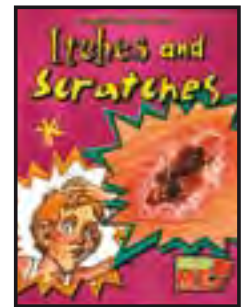
TITLE: Disgusting Body Facts Series
AUTHOR: Angela Royston
Published by: Raintree Publishers "<http://www.raintreepublishers.co.uk>"
ISBN: Various
RRP: \$13.95 each
Reviewed By: Kylie Plant (Grad Dip Early Childhood)
Special Needs Teacher, Kingaroy

This series of five hardcover books are not for the fainthearted, but are guaranteed to fascinate children aged seven and up. These books boast titles such as *Itches and Scratches* (skin and hair), *Mites and Bites* (insects and spiders), *Ooze and Goo* (body fluids), *Sick and Poo* (the digestive system) and *Twitches and Sneezes* (breathing and colds). Accompanied by graphic pictures and photos, these books tell you everything you need to know (and many things you perhaps don't want to know!) about bodily functions and how our bodies work.

The written information presented in these books is informative, interesting and easy to understand. I especially enjoyed reading the 'did you know?' facts provided on each page, which provide fascinating trivia about the body. The 'find out more' section at the end of the books was also especially useful for children who wanted to research or extend their knowledge of particular topics.

My children were fascinated and simultaneously disgusted by these books (my boys were particularly impressed!). The children were motivated to research topics based on the information presented in the books, and our discussions centred around the topic of the body for weeks afterward.

These books are completely gross in a way that most kids love. I would suggest not reading them directly before or after lunch for the sake of your own appetite, but recommend them if you work with children with strong stomachs and a taste for the unusual. A fabulous way of engaging children in learning about the human body.



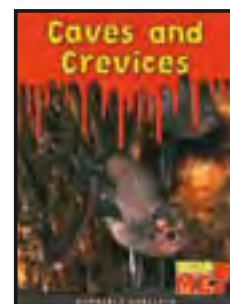
TITLE: **Horrible Habitats**
AUTHOR: **Sharon Katz Cooper**
Published by: **Raintree Publishers "<http://www.raintreepublishers.co.uk>"**
RRP: **\$13.95**
Reviewed By: **Kylie Plant (Grad Dip Early Childhood)**
Special Needs Teacher, Kingaroy

Learn about environments that most people generally try to avoid! *The Horrible Habitats* series of books teaches children an environmental perspective with a difference. Children can learn about animals that live in habitats such as sewers and gutters, streets and alleys, rubbish bins and landfills and other habitats that we don't usually think about.

Once again, these books are designed to capture children's attention through the use of graphic photos and stomach-turning facts. However, the combination of these with informative and understandable text is very effective. The books follow a similar format as the *Disgusting Body Facts Series* and include a useful glossary at the end of each book, and suggestions for further reading and websites to visit.

These books also include a page of suggested activities or experiments. For example, make your own mould bread (*Rubbish Bins and Landfills*) or learn how to follow a snail trail (*Sewers and Gutters*). The fantastic curriculum linkages for each of these books is endless.

My personal recommendation for these books is for children from age seven upwards. Older children will certainly also enjoy the presentation of disgusting facts, and appreciate the interesting and informative vocabulary that is introduced in each book.



TITLE: **Wicked Wizards and Leaping Lizards**
Author: **Mark Carthew and Mike Spoor**
Published by: **Random House**
ISBN: **978 1 74166 177 4**
RRP: **\$14.95**
Reviewed by: **Kylie Plant (Grad Dip Early Childhood)**
Special Needs Teacher, Kingaroy

Wicked Wizards and Leaping Lizards is an engaging book full of jokes, rhymes and riddles, relating mainly to magical creatures. This would be a great book to use as a 5-minute filler, and there are many opportunities for incidental teaching of phonological awareness using strategies such as rhyme and rhythm.

There are also a lot of great examples in this book that could be used to complement the explicit teaching of English in many forms. The possibilities are endless – make a class book of spells, read and write limericks, or simply use individual poems as a teaching tool to demonstrate onset and rhyme patterns. The open ended nature of this book ensures the possibilities are limited only by your imagination!

The book contains some variations of familiar rhymes as well as many new ones, meaning that it is possible to pick and choose depending on the age and understanding of children. The black and white illustrations are a nice addition, designed to amuse small audiences. I would recommend this book to teachers of children Grade One and up. This would also be a great book for older children to read independently.



Title: Mannie and the Long Brave Day
Author: Martine Murray
Illustrator: Sally Rippin
Published By: Allen & Unwin
ISBN: 978 1 74175 886 3
RRP: \$ 22.99
Reviewed by: Penney Taylor

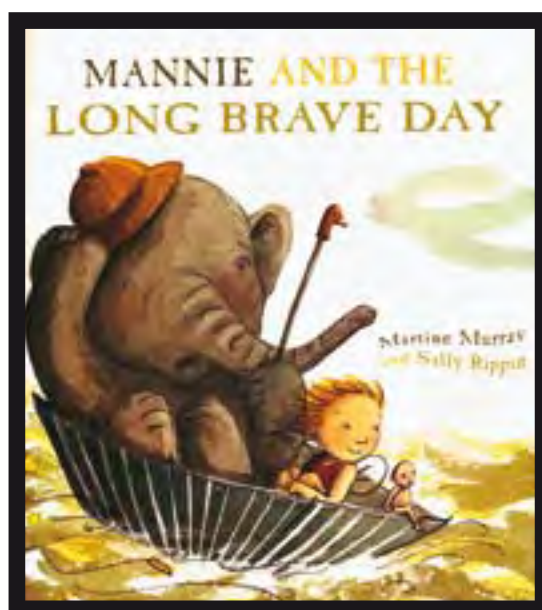
As we were introduced to the main character Mannie, and her friends Lilliput and Strawberry Luca, this delightful story drew us into a mysterious and imaginative adventure. Turning each page, the readers, my Prep class, raised many questions, wondering, "How does an elephant climb a ladder?", "How does a toy walk?", "Is the baby real?" and "How did a ladder come out of her special box?"

Throughout the story, we were entertained by the language of the book. Rhyming and alliteration added fun to the text as we explored each page, and the repetition of phrases drew the children in, to participate in the storytelling and alerting them to further developments in the story.

A beautiful, glittery surprise on the last page of the book, allowed the children to draw their own conclusions and helped to explain many of the questions asked throughout the book. The children experienced wonderment as they found they were able to 'solve' the puzzles that had emerged in the story. It created a great deal of discussion of the plot of the book and definitely prompted a re-read.

The book was made more inviting by the wonderful illustrations by Sally Rippin. She always enhances books sensitively with her illustrations and this one is no exception. The delicate lines drawn, and soft watercolours used to create the pictures, make this a book to enjoy and to treasure on yet another level. The children even loved the endpapers, very cleverly 'twigging' to the fact that they were indeed different, and reflected the journey of the long day for Mannie and her friends.

I love to use picture books to teach and, when focusing on feelings, I will certainly be including this book in my favourite teacher resources to teach the emotion and attitude 'Brave'.



Title: The ABC Book of Cars, Trains, Boats and Planes
Author: Helen Martin, Judith Simpson, Cheryl Orsini
Published by: Harper Collins Publishers
ISBN: 978 0 7333 2392 8
RRP: \$14.99
Reviewed by: Tanya Dawson – Early Childhood Teacher

"Down the road – along the track – over the water – through the air..."

Look, listen and learn with *Cars, Trains, Boats and Planes*. Discover the various types of transport that travel over land, water and in the air.

"Brrm – Brrm..." "Ting-a-ling..."

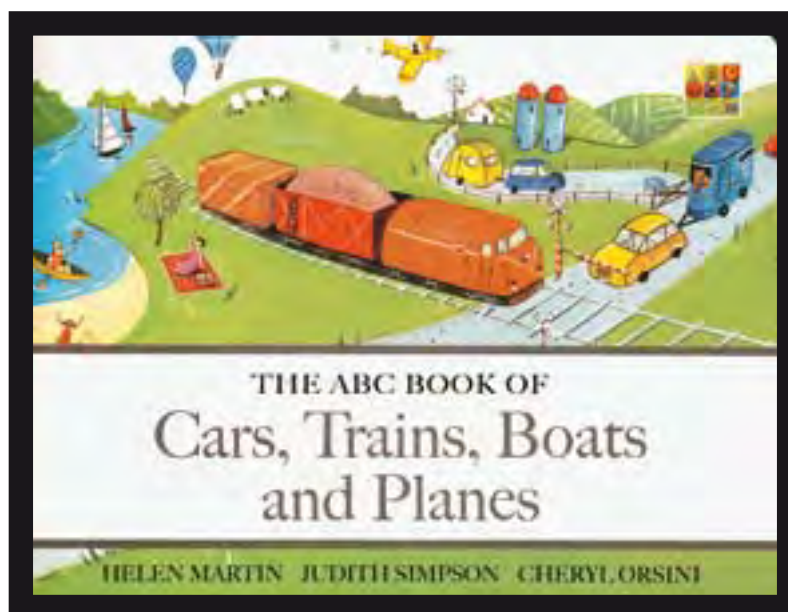
Not only does this book investigate how vehicles look or move, it also explores the sounds they make and where they go (using positional language).

The beautifully drawn illustrations will stimulate children's already growing interests in transport and will further extend their knowledge. What's more, the book endorses many safety practices when travelling in or while waiting for cars, trains, boats and planes.

Recommended for children aged two to five years, this board book is perfect for facilitating discussion about transport. Ideal for engaging toddlers, the simple text includes many questions that encourage interaction while reading.

A great book for educators in early childhood education and care settings.

Available from: www.harpercollins.com.au, ABC Shops and other retail bookstores.



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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