



Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the
early childhood years

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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.

Online access to journal

Educating Young Children is also available online via EBSCOhost and Informit databases.

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From the President

Kim Walters

As 2011 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 3rd edition of *Educating Young Children* for 2011. 2011 has seen the finalisation of the *Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline*, *Australian Curriculum English, Mathematics and Science* and the *National Quality Framework and National Regulations*. It has been a very busy year. ECTA is committed to supporting our members through the implementation of these changes so please send your suggestions as to how we can best support you to kim@ecta.org.au.

Following our Annual Planning Day, this year held in July, the State Coordinating Committee decided to continue ECTA's focus on supporting our regional and remote members and ECTA Groups and to strongly advocate for appropriate pedagogy in early childhood settings. To this end we are currently investigating best ways to advocate our message. This year we allocated a proportion of the profits from our 2010 conference to sponsor a regional tour by past conference presenter Laurie Kelly. Laurie provided a stimulating workshop to early childhood educators in Cairns, Townsville, Gladstone, Hervey Bay and Gympie and inspired participants to maintain the balance in their lives. Laurie's tour was a great success. Not only did it deliver a highly qualified and engaging presenter to regional early childhood professionals, it also increased the profile of ECTA within these regions.

This year we continued to offer sponsorship to two ECTA group office bearers from each ECTA group to attend the conference and the ECTA group breakfast meeting on the Sunday after the conference. This year office bearers from Cairns, Gladstone, Cooloola, Hervey Bay and Logan attended the breakfast along

with regional and key members of the state coordinating committee. The regional group office bearers enjoyed renewing ties with each other and the meeting proved to be very productive as they shared ideas for promoting ECTA and supporting early childhood professionals through group membership and events. This year we have established new ECTA groups in Townsville and Logan.

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. The streamed recordings of the presentations allow immediate access to videolinq presentations to members in remote areas. The link to each videolinq presentation is posted on the ECTA website for public viewing until it is stored in the members only secure area of our website and may be accessed at anytime thereafter by members using their login and password. If you have forgotten either your username or password email ECTA and we will send a return email with the information. Members will receive a copy of all four videolinqs held this year with the first issue of *Educating Young Children* in 2012.

Five nominations for conference support were received this year from ECTA individual members. The state coordinating committee, using the guidelines on the application form, awarded sponsorship to Kerri Groves (Rockhampton - partial funding), Angela Bulmer (Gordonvale), Bev Gwyner (Mossman), Liz Smith (Weipa) and Rebecca Zigterman (Dirranband). Congratulation to these winners and I am sure your regions and colleagues will benefit as you share 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 our six ECTA life members, Gail Halliwell, Mark

Cooper, Toni Michael, Pam Fulmer, 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 once again as ECTA Groups Coordinator. These groups provide invaluable networking opportunities for our members and other early childhood professionals in regional and areas. 2011 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.

Robbie Leikvold and the conference committee are to be congratulated on the success of this year's conference. Moving to a new venue caused many additional issues for the committee but the end result of all their work and commitment was an amazingly successful and professional event. The coordinators and committee are already well on their way to planning next year's conference with selections of presenters being finalised shortly. Next year we will once again hold the conference at Sheldon Convention and Entertainment Centre in Taylor Road Sheldon, in the grounds of Sheldon College on 23rd June. ECTA's eNEWS will keep you updated so don't forget to let us know if you change your email address. Once again next year we will be emailing an invitation to register to members three weeks before registrations open to the public. If you require administrative approval before you register for the conference I strongly suggest you try to gain preliminary approval from your school before March so that you don't miss out on your workshop of choice. Registrations will once again be done online through the conference website. If you would like to support the conference team email conference@ecta.org.au and we will pass on your information to the committee. The DVD recordings of the conference master classes presented by Dave Brown and John Gougoulis (ACARA) accompany this journal.

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 a three professional publications per year of *Educating Young Children*. Maintaining the quality of the journal takes considerable time. 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 2012 will receive an invitation to register for the 2012 conference via email in early March.

I hope you all have a wonderful and safe Christmas holiday and we look forward to supporting you during 2012.

Kim



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From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

Please enjoy our final edition of *Educating Young Children* for the year. Before going to print, as I look through the pages for a final time, I am reminded of the vast extent of knowledge and expertise that flourishes amongst our profession.

Educating Young Children is a journal 'for educators by educators'. The stories, conversations, articles and reviews shared in these pages reflect the lived experiences of early childhood educators and professionals as they are touched by children and their families. Each has found the time in their busy lives to put pen to paper.

As you turn the page to engage with the content that follows we invite you to 'play' with the ideas, theories and experiences of your colleagues – and, as Dave Brown suggests, allow room for some 'whimsy' to provoke, tickle, prod and beguile your thinking.

The editorial team has worked hard to capture a range of voices and viewpoints in this issue. Remember what it feels like to start something new? Our conversation on 'transitions' for children will prompt your thinking from the perspective of the researcher, an early childhood educator, deputy principal and parent. While, in our regular section about environments, Prue Walsh will have you reflecting on the ways you use 'space' in supporting children's learning and development.

In 'partnerships' we introduce a range of organisations that provide practical and professional support and resources for early childhood educators. In this issue, Nebula test drives the Bicultural Support Services accessed through the Multicultural Development Association, at C&K QUT Kelvin Grove.

As always our feature articles provide a wealth of practical ideas. Kath Lloyd introduces some

'fab and feisty' music. Debra Verstege keeps 'assessment' in context and Ann Heirdsfield demonstrates effective ways for engaging children in mathematics learning. Felicity Day revisits the social and emotional value of Circle Time, Jill Kearney shines a light on science and Gwenyth Beale provides some technical advice to assist in recording children's learning.

Our final feature article for the year will take you on a delightful journey to Cannon Hill State School where the children are engaging in some beguiling philosophical inquiry.

To complete our journal, Mathilda and our team of reviewers bring you another absorbing collection of contemporary media.

Before we leave you for 2011 please make sure you note the date claimer on page 25 for the 2012 Annual ECTA conference. We hope to see you there.

From the editorial panel we wish you a safe and peaceful holiday.





Every day, I go to work to play? What am I?

Dave Brown

Not many people get to say they go to work every day to play – can you please tell us what you do?

I am a theatre director for Patch Theatre Company. We create and produce theatre for 4-8 year olds. It's as good as any job I can imagine. I've had the pleasure of seeing Patch Theatre productions enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of children in places like Japan, Korea, Singapore, USA, New Zealand, Canada and all over Australia and I'm amazed at how universal children's responses are to our shows. If ever anyone questions me on the future of theatre, I invite them to sit in an audience of 4-8 year olds and be amazed! Children respond to good theatre experiences with such immediacy, joy and exuberance, you can't doubt its power and impact.

Why is early childhood such a wonderful time to engage with children through the arts?

It's a period when enormous learning and development takes place and our challenge is to make theatre for them that's relevant in content and appropriate in form.

Many people's view of children's theatre is framed by commercial children's entertainment. There is a big difference between the two. Children's entertainment is commercially driven and often linked to a television series and mass merchandising. It's usually big, noisy, colourful and empty. I believe it's the worst we can do for children and it doesn't belong in any school's curriculum.

Creativity is a word that features a lot in your life. Why is this so?

It's a word that describes the process of making something new. As humans, we're hardwired to make sense of things. We seek to find patterns in everything. We're driven to make meaning from our world. Creativity is at the core of what makes us human. Creativity is expressed in everything we do; it has many languages including dance, music, mathematics, genetics, knitting and football coaching.

Early learners are completely at home with creativity. When Picasso said, *"Every child is an artist; the challenge is to keep them so"* he was celebrating the way children see the world as an amazing and wondrous place beckoning exploration. The challenge of keeping that *love of learning* and *joy of discovery* alive is the challenge Picasso refers to.

What does it take to create a theatre production for children?

When we set out to make a new theatre production for children, we undertake a creative process that invites us to play like children. Let me explain.

There are two essential partners in creativity. I call them whimsy and logic. Whimsy is daydream ... flights of the imagination ... out of control thinking ... magical thinking ... intuitive, impulsive, fanciful thinking. Most early learners are naturally whimsical.

For adults, whimsical thinking is more difficult because we live in a world where logic is much more valued than whimsy. Why? Logic is much easier to deal with. It's solid and reliable and

you know what you're getting. You can also measure it and grade it, so it works very well for educational institutions and businesses and policy makers. The downside is that logic can dominate proceedings, which is a travesty because without its counterpart – whimsy – the gift of creativity can't express itself.

Whimsy and logic sound familiar?

Whimsy is at the hub of our creative processes when we create a new theatre work for children. We have a core idea, which we explore in a whole range of ways in an open-ended exploration of possibility. Does this sound familiar? Yes, it's not unlike the way good kindergartens function. In fact, in my role as theatre director, I find many of the notions expressed in the *early years learning framework* are part of our creative process. The idea is "*we all teach and we all learn because we all know something and together we seek to know more.*"

In the whimsical phase of our process, we set tasks for actors, like "*discover six ways to express worry and anxiety using a chair.*" The rules are: "*don't censor your ideas, work through your body not your head, be playful and believe that if you leap a net will appear.*" In other words "trust" that whimsical play will deliver the goods and let the possibilities unfold.

But how does an idea become a story?

We accumulate lots of ideas. We video everything. At some point much later in the process, we shift slowly from the playful, whimsical phase to a more logical phase, where we start to shape and refine selected bits of the accumulated material into a meaningful outcome – an outcome that gives form and expression to the idea or story we set out to explore. We use about 1/50th of the ideas we generate. There is a lot of disposable nonsense that comes from whimsy; that's the nature of it – it's unpredictable, which is another reason why it tends to be mistrusted. However, I re-iterate, creativity won't happen without it.

You say that time and time again, you are reminded that the life you lead making theatre for children reflects the lives of teachers and children in their processes of learning and development?

There is a great synergy between our worlds. Especially the challenge in both our worlds to

hang onto the whimsy that is such an important part of the creative process. The essential ingredient of whimsy is letting go of our need to be in control. The science of whimsy tells us it's a process that works in the creative unconscious and to access it we need to stop trying to control things. This applies as much to early learning as it does to theatre making. The teacher-responsive, child-centred approach to early learning so beautifully articulated in the *Early Years Learning Framework* requires educators to let go of a need to control outcomes.

All the educational theorists tell us that the most effective learning environments have at their heart the *invitation to play* – to play with ideas, with problems, with materials, with story, with movement, with colour, with numbers, with words, with images – in processes shared with peers and led by our innately human, *exploratory drives*.

What do you hope to achieve through Patch Theatre Company?

Children **have** those drives in bucket loads but the challenge is to keep them alive against the odds. As they grow older, children are set upon by an increasingly rational, adult world that often feels *out of sorts* with *creative* and *whimsical* play as a serious endeavour. Our aim at Patch is to preserve and foster these drives; to give children the space, the time, the resources and the encouragement to imagine, play and create.

We seek to provoke, tickle, prod and beguile children with performances that celebrate their experience of childhood, the joys of play, the whims of the imagination, the struggle to make meaning and the challenge of children growing and developing through the most complex and telling phase of their lives.

Thankfully, we are in sync with our *early years learning framework* and the wonderful work done in kindergartens and child care centres as together we work at *keeping the artist alive in the child*.

Dave Brown is Artistic Director,
Patch Theatre Company
– keeping the artist alive in the child



A story from ECTA Hervey Bay Group

Libby Gaedtke – ECTA Groups Co-ordinator

Our Hervey Bay group was formed over a decade ago by Di Small and Lindy Austin, both early childhood lecturers from the University of Southern Queensland's Wide Bay Campus. Di and Lindy were guiding lights, encouraging our Early Years community to network together as professionals. These wonderful ladies have now moved on in their careers, but eager members have readily stepped into their shoes!

Since this time memberships have grown steadily, and we continue to meet together both formally and informally throughout each year. This growth has facilitated change in our committee and a sharing of the load, enabling all to stay fresh and keen. We meet semi-regularly for coffee meetings at a local coffee shop, and have occasional social networking evenings. These provide a chance to connect and catch up with colleagues and meet new people in our profession – over a glass of wine!

This year in Hervey Bay, thanks to the assistance and sponsorship of ECTA, we have been very fortunate to host workshop presentations by Laurie Kelly and Sue Southey. Bringing these renowned speakers to our area has benefited all who attended, highlighting one of the roles ECTA plays in supporting regional communities.

Laurie Kelly educated and entertained as he talked an enthusiastic audience through ways to excite children to learn and the importance of maintaining a balance in our lives. Comments such as *"I came to get my QCT (Queensland College of Teachers) hours up, but I'm going away with so much more than that"* from one supply teacher, and *"Can you please give Laurie's detail to our Admin"* from a fellow teacher, were forthcoming after the presentation. The wonderful thing is that all of these people then go out into their own education environments and share their learning with colleagues!



Members and Friends of ECTA Hervey Bay Group enjoy a music session with Sue Southey.

Sue Southey breathed life into many music programs around Hervey Bay when she visited in September. Armed with hoops, balls, egg shakers, ribbon sticks and smiles, educators from all sectors sang and danced together. Following the workshop Sue joined our committee for dinner at a local restaurant.

We at ECTA Hervey Bay would like to thank ECTA for their continuing support of our Early Years community, and we look forward to more involvement in the years to come.



Leanne Trace, Romaine Boniface, Leonie Mitchell, Lisa Cooper, Libby Gaedtke.

Transitions

Starting school is a major life transition for children and their families. It is a period of change that can be both challenging and exciting, in which children and families adjust to new roles, identities and expectations, new interactions and new relationships. But, as Sarah Ohlsen, from Clayfield Childhood Development Centre reminds us transitions for children are happening all the time. In this Issue of *Educating Young Children* we look at transitions from a range of perspectives.

A researcher's perspective



Bob Perry and Sue Dockett

In October 2010, Professors Perry and Dockett gathered key education researchers from USA, UK, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia in a week-long international conference at Charles Sturt University in Albury-Wodonga. Over the week, researchers shared their research and major developments in early childhood education around the world. They used this information to develop a draft position statement. The researchers then met with policymakers from around Australia and local early childhood educators, seeking feedback and incorporating suggestions and changes. The result is the *Transition to School: Position Statement* which urges all concerned with the education, care and wellbeing of young children to think about their transition to school in terms of social justice, human rights, educational reform and ethical agendas.

The Transition to School: Position Statement aims to promote increased recognition of the important role of transition to school and ongoing engagement with education, and to provoke changes to the ways in which this transition is viewed. It reflects worldwide recognition of the significance of the early childhood years for later development and wellbeing and argues that those of us who are involved in the transition have responsibilities to promote positive transitions for all.

Starting school is a time of opportunity and challenge for all involved. We need to be aware of these challenges and opportunities if we are to promote children's wellbeing, learning and development.

This position statement has been developed as an aspirational document targeted to all concerned with the education, care and wellbeing of young children. This includes policymakers, educators, health and other professionals, families and communities. The position statement reconceptualises transition to school in the context of social justice, human rights (including children's rights), educational reform and ethical agendas, and the established impact of transition to school on children's ongoing wellbeing, learning and development. These principles support a range of educational entitlements around the transition to school.

Thinking like this changes the way we view transition. It encourages reflection on the transition to school as a way of providing a positive start to school education – for all involved.

Position statements offer a clear statement of a position on an issue, particularly when varying or controversial opinions exist. They act as a form of advocacy, arguing for a particular position that is supported by research and/or professional practice. The most effective position statements are developed through consensus, with opportunities to canvass diverse perspectives and areas of expertise and for a range of input and feedback.

The Transition to School: Position Statement has been written in conjunction with a group of eminent national and international transition-to-school researchers and research students, as the culmination of an intensive think-tank in 2010. This was followed by consultation with, and input from, a broad group of policymakers and practitioners. The final version of the statement is informed by input from each of these groups.

The statement argues that the transition to school is a time of opportunity, expectation, aspiration and entitlement. This same framework is applied to all involved – children, families, educators, school and prior-to-school systems and organisations and communities.

For example, the transition to school provides opportunities for all these people or groups.

The intended purpose of the position statement is to inform those involved in any way with the transition to school and to encourage reflection on transition practices. Groups or individuals who adopt the statement – whether as a guide to their own practice or as a position adopted at an organisational level – are encouraged to examine the ways in which they plan, implement and evaluate transition strategies.

The *Transition to School: Position Statement* provides a means to make a clear and concise statement to those involved in education, and those outside education, about the importance of a positive start to school. It offers a clear, unified viewpoint that represents an agreed position among researchers, policymakers and practitioners. It is intentionally aspirational, urging all involved in the transition to commit to promoting a positive start to school for all concerned.

The statement can be downloaded from:
<http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ripple/research-groups/etc/Position-Statement.pdf>

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An educator's perspective



Sarah Ohlsen, talks about 'transitions' in the 2-3 years room at Clayfield Childhood Development Centre

Growing up as one of five children, I always knew I loved caring for children so, when I finished Grade 12, I began working as an assistant at a day care centre and studied my Certificate 3 in Children's Services. I worked as an assistant for four years and then moved onto working as a Group Leader and did that for a year. I worked in Brisbane for five years at three different centres gaining as much experience as possible!

Life then led me to Melbourne where I worked casually at a few long day care centres, gaining a different perspective on the settings there. I worked as a Nanny for two different families during the rest of my time in Melbourne. Working as a Nanny has opened my eyes a little on how things at home work for parents and their children. This has made me a better educator. I returned to Brisbane about a year ago and have been working as a Group Leader while studying my Diploma. I am coming up to seven years in childcare now and I can't wait to see where the next seven years will take me!

We show we value transitions for children when we ...

In our 2-3s room we use transitions throughout the day, everyday. We try to keep them similar each day to make as little disruption to the children as possible. Change is hard for all of us, especially children. We need to ensure we are organized each day for our transition times to have a less stressed environment for the children.

We acknowledge and support children as active participants in their own transitions by ...

Each day we include the children in the transitions. It may be to choose the song we sing or to choose the next action for our music and movement time. We always include the children's interests, wants and needs during transitions.

Each time I ask the children which song they want to sing they always say 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' which is fine but does get a little repetitive. To give us some variety I make picture

song cards for the children to hold and to look at. This gives the children the chance to make their own decisions about the songs we sing.

In an environment that values the strengths of all involved in transitions you would see ...

An environment that is successful in transitions has all children actively involved. Educators would be with children at their level and respectfully engaging all children. Children would display a happy disposition and key things such as smiles and laughter would ensue.

A transition that always gets our children smiling is 'group dancing', especially when we do the hokey pokey or when we join in and do what the children like to call 'crazy dancing'.

We honour the central role of relationships in transitions when we ...

Involve all of the children in the process of the transition and try to connect with each child. If something isn't working for a child we try our best to modify the transition to ensure they are not feeling stressed. We do our best to help all

Conversations

children through transition times, helping build our relationships in the process.

We sometimes use games that involve naming colours. But rather than asking the children, 'What colour is this?' we model and support their learning by saying 'Do you have this colour on your shirt? This colour is red, do you have red on your shirt?'

We are challenged/stimulated by ...

Transitions that don't quite work out. We also find it stimulating when we can overcome the challenge. It makes us feel that we are doing a good job especially if we can make that particular transition run smoothly.

I had chosen a really lovely book that tied in with our program to read to the children just before lunch. My co-worker was getting lunch ready, and I had all the children listening intently to the story, when all of a sudden one of the children vomited right in the middle of the group. Having to think fast, I grouped the children together and we headed outside. We found a shady tree and read our story there. It was an exciting adventure

for all of the children and we ended up doing it quite a few times after that.

An experience or moment I remember ...

I remember when I had just started out as an assistant in a room with children from two and a half to three and a half years and my group leader let me have a chance to run a transition time. I felt I could do it until things began to fall apart a little. My group leader guided me through the transition time, taking the time to show me what works well and she taught me some very valuable tools.

Teamwork is an essential tool during transitions and I don't know what I would do without it!

Always be prepared for the unexpected. Have a few favourite books on hand just in case things don't go to plan.

Keep an open mind – don't think something won't work. You don't know until you try.

... And if all else fails, we find a game of 'Simon says' always saves the day, and it can be as energetic or as calm as you like.

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A deputy principal's perspective



Louise Hart, talks about transitions at Wellers Hill State School

Louise Hart is one of the two Deputy Principals at Wellers Hill State School in south-east Brisbane.

Louise has worked in this role for the last three years. Before this, Louise worked in curriculum support after a long and successful career in the classroom.

We show we value transitions for children when we ...

... are well-organised with a specific purpose in mind and are mindful to the children's needs at any given time. Whether the transition is from Prep to Year One in the same setting or across settings, it is vital that all teachers meet to discuss individual students' needs and the goals identified for a particular session or number of sessions. To be able to gather information from parents and children about what they would like to know is also valuable in order to promote open communication.

We acknowledge and support children as active participants in their own transitions by ...

... engaging, encouraging and supporting children through new experiences to broaden their individual experiences.

In an environment that values the strengths of all involved in transitions you would see ...

... all team members planning and contributing to a high quality experience that supports, at the same time as extending, every individual child.


We honour the central role of relationships in transitions when ...

... we take the time to meet with all key stakeholders, including parents, teachers and students to discuss, plan and implement a process that is meaningful and supportive of all and achieves the goal of a smooth, informative and stress-free transition from Kindy to Prep or Prep to Year One for all students.

We are challenged/stimulated by ...

... many factors, including time constraints, distance and individual needs and perceptions.

A smooth transition process is reliant on time – time to meet with key stakeholders and time to plan. Time is imperative in order to achieve a successful transition program. Distance can also play an important role in challenging a transition process. If children are unable to attend sessions, or if parents are unable to gather important information this can challenge the process. Planning for individual needs can also challenge a smooth transition process. An individual teacher's perceptions of what a transition program means can also challenge the process.


**Great for early childhood programs**

Be EYLF ready. Show children how to grow food, herbs and flowers in your program!

Learn about recycling water, sell produce to families or use what you grow in cooking, science and art programs using the following essential resources.


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W: www.childisplayconsultancy.com.au
T: 0412 525 426 OR (07) 4153 5149

A parent's perspective

Tamara Neil is a Registered Nurse, Doula (Birth Support Attendant) and home business operator.

Her three gorgeous children are six, four and two. As a family they have experienced many transitions over the past six years, some managed better than others, and through this they have learnt a great deal about their children and themselves.

Educators show they value transitions for children when they ...

... respect that this can be an upsetting/challenging time. I believe the healthiest way to do this is by comforting children and acknowledging their feelings for as long as it takes for a child to finish feeling sad and move on. When educators attempt to distract a child or try to talk them out of feeling upset it tells me that they do not respect a child's need for emotional expression, it tells me they don't value (or aren't aware of) the importance of this expression being allowed to come to completion in its own time and it tells a child that feeling sad isn't okay and should be stopped.

Educators acknowledge and support children as active participants in their own transitions by ...

- supporting them as they process a variety of emotions in this new environment
- exploring some new perspectives that could assist the growth of the child's sense of comfort and safety
- assisting them to become familiar with their new environment gently at the child's pace
- engaging with the child and exploring his/her perception of what's happening around them
- conversing with the child about things they can do for themselves to create a sense of belonging in this new space
- exploring ways of engaging with other children.

In an environment that values the strengths of all involved in transitions you would see ...

... clear communication between educators and parents demonstrated by discussions around the positive ways both educators and parents can listen to and support the child to feel comfortable in their new surroundings

Educators honour the central role of relationships in transitions when they ...

... take time to come to the child's level, engage

with them and build a trustful rapport. Also by respecting their individual needs and emotional intelligence.

I am challenged by ...

... educators who view 'undesirable' behaviour as something that needs correcting. I am challenged by learning environments that dictate to children what they need to learn and turn what could be an exciting exploration into a boring, loathsome task.

I am stimulated by ...

... educators who are genuinely interested in how my child views and interprets their surroundings and the world. I am stimulated by learning environments that nurture my child's innate yearning for more knowledge and educators who view every experience as a valuable learning opportunity.

An experience or moment I remember ...

1. Taking my two year old son to a day care centre when our family carer couldn't fit him in for an extra day each week. I would stay with him for as long as I could but when it came time for me to leave for work, he would cry and cry and cry. His educators would take him from me then walk away with him trying to draw his attention to other 'exciting' things. The discomfort of this situation ate away at me until the day I was finally able to find alternative care arrangements. My departure was never like this with our family day care provider who respected my wishes for my child to be allowed to cry for as long as he needed whilst being comforted. In fact, with the exception of a few times, he never cried when I left. He would happily run to our carer and then start playing. I am so glad I listened to my child, he was telling me all along what was best for him.

2. My shy, reserved daughter starting school at Pine Community School. Her transition from Pre-prep to Prep was seamless. Her educators valued her thoughts and respected her feelings. I couldn't have found a more perfect learning space.



Making the most of the physical environment

Prue Walsh

Play Environment Consulting Pty Ltd

Prue Walsh is an experienced Early Childhood Educator who specialises in designing physical environments within early childhood settings. Prue has consulted on over 2500 projects both in Australia and overseas, and her approach gives paramount importance to meeting children's play and developmental needs. She has lectured at many conferences, including the ECTA annual conference, and has consulted on a number of government and non-government working groups, policy reviews and submissions. Her approach to how the physical environment can support educational programs is based on children's developmental needs and an understanding of how and why they play.

The objective of the new National Quality Standard is to support the education and care of young children, and to improve the quality of the sector's services. This initiative is very welcome and represents the greatest advance within the field for many years. It has widespread support in principle yet, in at least one area – *National Quality Standard Area 3* – it could fail in practice. Why?

Mainly it is:

Space and organisation of space

The Draft Education and Care Services National Regulations [clauses 107 and 108], which underpin the Quality Standard perpetuate

the myth that play spaces of 3.25sqm per child indoors and 7sqm per child outdoors will deliver a workable early childhood facility. These figures, while not based on research, are expected to support teaching and learning programs regardless of how that space is presented. In practice, many educators report rooms or playgrounds in which it is hard to keep children happily and actively engaged and that behavior is more difficult to manage. A check reveals they are actually battling with spatially-related problems.

Perception of physical environment

The 'physical environment' is often regarded as the context in which the social and educational

107 Space requirements – indoor

(2) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that, for each child being educated and cared for by the service, the education and care service premises has at least 3.25 square metres of unencumbered indoor space.

108 Space requirements - outdoor

(2) The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that, for each child being educated and cared for by the service, the education and care service premises has at least 7 square metres of outdoor space.

Education and Care Services National Regulations draft approved for publication 14 Oct 2011

objectives of early childhood programs are pursued. As defined by Barblett (2010):

[it is] ... the physical layout of space, furniture and resources. Consider how you will construct and present activities and materials so they are arranged in provoking and inviting ways to encourage exploration, learning and inquiry.

But what is the cost to the child's development when there is not enough space, or there are not enough setting-up areas inside, or insufficient variety, diversity and number of play options outside, or where good sub-spaces and facilities are not provided, so that they are

constantly being intruded upon by pedestrian traffic?

Educators are often faced with unworkable layouts of playrooms or playgrounds that are compounded by the practical difference between [total] and [workable or available] space. For example:

- playrooms cluttered with lockers or bed storage – due largely to insufficient storage within the building
- playgrounds with insufficient pockets of space – resulting in children not focusing on an activity and running around aimlessly
- playgrounds totally 'hardscaped' that deprive the children of a sensory-rich environment to arouse their interest and exploration.

Indoor play provision

SPACE



3.25 sqm per child: This meets minimum licensing requirement but is proving to be an ineffective room. In reality the furnishings [refrigerator, built-in computer] and doors to the storage cupboard, prevent the availability of unencumbered corner and wall space for setting up play activities

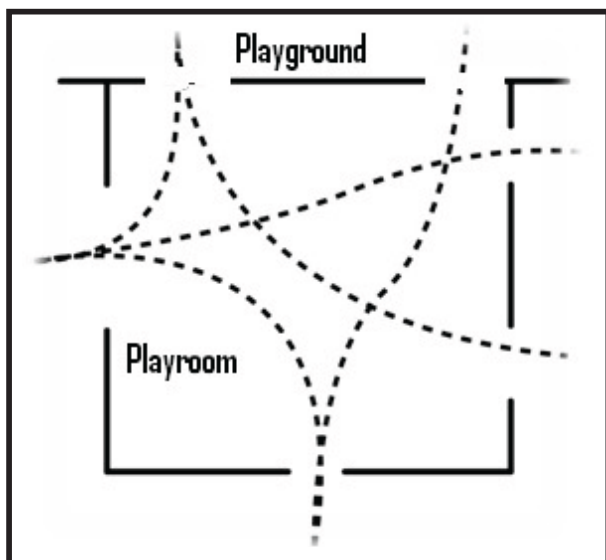


3.5 – 4.5sqm per child: This is based on best practice, and staff / children benefit e.g. by clear sighting lines, small group activity areas and flexible use of space

A secure and predictable environment with adequate space and appropriate facilities and resources enables children to choose what they will do and take increasing responsibility ... Environments also support positive relationships when space is arranged so that small groups of children can play and talk without undue distraction from children engaged in other activities.

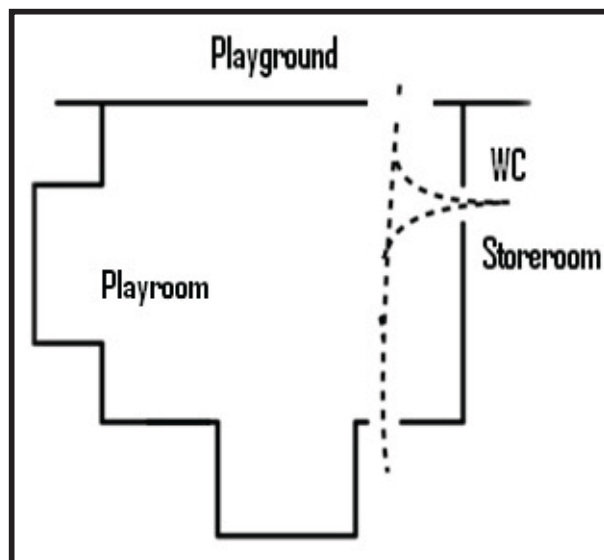
http://acecqa.gov.au/storage/THREE_Guide_to_the_National_Quality_Standard.pdf

ACCESS



INTRUSIVE: This playroom has six doors and many cross-routes, preventing unencumbered corner and wall space for setting up play zones and marked intrusion to play activities.

= unsettled distracted children



EFFECTIVE: This playroom has clearly defined access from the corridor out to the playground leaving potentially a large amount of unencumbered wall space for setting up a wide range of play activities.

= quiet concentrated play

Outdoor play provision



7sqm per child of outdoor space: Minimal spatial provision of 7sqm results in cramped activities with limited variety and number of play options; vegetation cannot survive in high density usage space.

= distracted, hard-to-settle children



15sqm per child: A minimum of 15sqm and up to 25sqm per child produces sensory-rich, exciting, interesting options developmentally.

= children actively engaged in sharing focused play

Licensing requirements that do not sufficiently define usable outdoor space can vitally affect the provision of play facilities and supervision in many services. Sometimes services include verandahs as part of the outdoor space. This limits the variety of outdoor activities. Sometimes playgrounds are on three sides of a building which creates problems with supervision. Sometimes there is a change in level across a playground which leads to access and, often, drainage problems.

Additional space offers more leeway so disadvantages in one context can be seen as an advantage in others.

It is important that teachers and other early childhood professions have an early childhood voice on the design briefs for their services. Remember, 3.25sqm and 7sqm per child are minimum standards which can inhibit the achievement of effective teaching outcomes on many sites.

If you are finding that your children are hard to settle or the centre is hard to work in, seek expert help. You may find that simple

changes within your room, or additions to your playground, will resolve your problems but, in some instances, alterations to the building and playground may be required. Informed early childhood advice in conjunction with other disciplines, such as architects and planners, is often the best long-term solution.

Physical environment is not 'minor' – it can underpin or work against your teaching and learning program.

References

Barblett, Lennie (2010) Why play-based learning? In Every Child Volume 16, Number 3 pp 4-5

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Education and Care Services National Regulations draft approved for publication Oct 2011
<http://acecqa.gov.au/research-and-publications>

Questions to guide reflection about the physical environment:

- What messages are given to children through the environment, materials and resources (and how they are cared for and maintained) about what is valued at the service?
- How do we ensure that indoor and outdoor areas can accommodate a variety of uses?
- In what ways is there an interaction between the indoor and outdoor environments at the service?
- What elements and features in the physical environment invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery, connection with nature and what additional resources can be introduced to provoke interest and more complex and increasingly abstract thinking?
- How is the environment equipped and organised to cater for all levels of capabilities?
- How can we organise our physical environment to encourage children to explore, solve problems, create, construct and develop environmental awareness?
- How can we organise environments and spaces in ways that allow children opportunities to play, on their own as well as promote small and large group interactions and meaningful play and leisure?

from Commonwealth of Australia (2010) *Draft Guide to the National Quality Standard Education and care services – Centre-based and family day care, Phase 2*, Revised 2 November



Supporting culturally inclusive practices

Nebula Wild, C&K QUT Kelvin Grove, reflects on partnerships that promote and support culturally inclusive early education in early childhood settings.

Due to the location of our centre on a university campus, a high percentage of children and families from culturally and linguistically backgrounds (CALD) attend.

This diversity adds to the richness of our centre and is a unique feature that is sought by many families and educators.

Currently our children come from over 15 countries and speak just as many languages. But this diversity, while adding a positive feature, can present a challenge that needs to be addressed proactively to ensure effective

communication, inclusion and acceptance. We ensure success through partnerships with organisations such as Multicultural Development Association (MDA), who provide support, resources and funded support workers.

The enrolment process is often the first time direct verbal communication occurs with new families. For many of our families, who speak English as a second language, we use visual aids, written words and discussions to communicate effectively in the enrolment and orientation process. Some families, however, require additional support to understand the process, as well as what their rights are within our service. To assist in this process we have used interpreters. This allows the families to be able to articulate any questions they may have and also supports us to feel confident that they have understood the permissions they are signing.

Orientation and those first days for children, family and the educators can be exciting but for some, may also involve apprehension or uncertainty. For children who don't speak or understand any of the words the educators or other children are speaking, it can be frightening. Bringing in a cultural support worker during this time can be a valuable tool for the child, the educator and the families as well as an opportunity for other children to learn about other cultures in positive ways.

Yelana's story

When Yelana started in our 'kindy' room she spoke Korean and no English. During her first weeks a Korean cultural support worker spent some time with her in the room. She incorporated culturally familiar experiences, such as Korean cooking, Korean songs and making Korean flags with the children. She also helped us with key 'survival words'



Creating a welcoming environment for Yelana.



become exciting and fun to learn about. The educators felt confident in their ability to communicate with her and in their understanding about the Korean culture and ways to implement further planning ideas into the program. The service also benefitted from this support through increased understanding about

which assisted in meeting Yelana's needs such as 'toilet' and "water". This created a welcoming environment for the child while "normalising" her culture and language within the early childhood centre. It also provided an opportunity for Yelana to share aspects of her culture and feel pride in her cultural practices.

***Learning Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
(EYLF 2009, 20)***

Yelana's family was very appreciative of our support of their child and were excited to see the Korean flag the children had made in my window. However, for some families, it is important that their children learn English. In such cases it is important to communicate that children learn new languages quickly, and that bringing in a support worker will not make it harder for them to learn English. Rather, it is about supporting them during the first few weeks and making them feel like they "belong".

***We are connected to family and community when we share satisfying and reciprocal interactions through partnerships with families and communities.
(Building Waterfalls 2006, 30)***

Yelana was made to feel comfortable and included and was able to communicate her needs to the educators. The other children were welcoming of her and her culture

how to provide practical support to new children and families.

***A kindergarten child who has a strong sense of identity is building a confident self-identity. Significant learning involves pride and confidence in who they are, their family and their culture.
(QKLG 2010, 35)***

It is important to note that the provision of a support worker must be supported by permission from the family. They are available for the settling in period only and do not replace the bond or attachment that the child has with the permanent educator in the room.

Additional support and other agencies

Aydan, from Bicultural Support Services also came and spoke at our centre about cultural competence and worked with the educators to address their own biases and the ways they can impact on their interactions with children and families. This provided our team with an opportunity to critically reflect on their own practices and consider what is 'best' practice and improvements that could be made.

Noah's Ark will also provide key survival words for new families who may not support the use of a cultural support worker. Our centre has found this very useful. Go to: www.noahsark.net.au

What is the Bicultural Support service?

Aydan Inal

The Bicultural Support Service was developed to support the access and inclusion of children from diverse cultural backgrounds in early childhood settings. It is a free service of the Professional Support Coordinator Queensland (PSCQ), operated by Multicultural Development Association (MDA).

The program coordinates a state-wide pool of Cultural Support Workers (CSWs) who provide practical cultural and linguistic support to child care services in Queensland.

MDA can assist your service by:

- Providing cultural support workers
- Providing information about access to resources
- Organising free Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS).

Who are CSWs?

CSWs are people who provide cultural knowledge and understanding as well as language support that will facilitate effective linking of services with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families. They are not trained as child care workers and won't be able to provide the tasks that the child care staff usually provides. While they are in the centre, they work very closely with the educators and support them in their service's inclusion programming.

What will the CSW do?

Working in partnership with Inclusion Support Facilitators and the educators, CSWs will:

- assist in building confidence of service staff in working with and including (CALD) families and children
- assist the children to settle into the service

- support communication between the educators and the family including during the enrolment process
- assist to break down barriers for staff and family members, and build trust and confidence
- engage the educators and the other children in cultural experiences and support the service to embed these into 'good practice' supporting these aspects of the National Quality System and the respective Learning Frameworks
- encourage consistent use of the child's first language to promote and maintain the child's own language and identity.

How can I arrange this service for my centre?

When a family from a CALD background is enrolling or have enrolled their child/ren, the service can either contact their local Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) or call MDA on 07 33375429.

The ISA will then organise an Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) to visit the centre and assist with completing a Cultural Support Request form, identify the need for a Cultural Support Worker (CSW) as well as discuss the service's inclusive programming needs. The ISF will also support the centre through discussions to devise a Service Support Plan (SSP). The ISF will then send the request form and relevant information to Multicultural Development Association (MDA).

MDA will find a Cultural Support Worker (CSW) from their large pool of workers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to support the service's needs.

For more information please contact the program coordinator Aydan Inal.

Phone: 07 33375427

Mobile: 0434 356338

Fax: 07 33375444

Email: aydani@mdabne.org.au



Play a part

Coby Charters

Child abuse cuts across all communities within Australia. Frightening statistics remind us of the lasting personal, social and economic costs of child abuse and neglect. The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) plays an active role in preventing child abuse and neglect in the community. Through their programs and collaborative work with researchers, governments, professionals, communities, businesses and the media, NAPCAN strives to break the devastating cycle of abuse. NAPCAN's vision is for every Australian community to be child friendly. Coby Charters, *Play a Part* project facilitator for NAPCAN explains how.

International research demonstrates the best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is through building communities where children and families are supported and valued. Connected healthy communities are able to identify and support children and their families in times of stress and can therefore help to inhibit the cycle of child abuse and neglect.

Play a Part is a project of NAPCAN funded by the Queensland government. The program aims to:

- promote the benefits of a child-friendly culture
- support communities to create and sustain unique child-friendly environments and child-friendly practices
- promote a universal prevention focus to child abuse and neglect.



Through the *Play a Part* program, community-led action plans have been developed that are driving the social change needed to support and

enhance the community's capacity to be child-friendly. The *Play a Part* team engages with and supports natural community gatherings – schools and early childhood communities, community organisations, sporting groups and clubs, local businesses and workplaces – to develop and implement Child-Friendly Action Plans that are unique to the strengths and needs of that community.

The *Play a Part* project highlights how the community can play a part in preventing child abuse. We subscribe to the belief that it takes a village to raise a child and that child protection

is everybody's business. The project encourages community members to think about their role in society and how they can work towards creating communities that are child-friendly and promote the value and wellbeing of all children.

For instance, implementing family-friendly workplace policies for your organisation, organising child protection training, encouraging children to share their views and wishes and be included in decisions as much as possible or being a support for a stressed friend or neighbour.

We want to encourage people to think about how individuals can play a part to foster child friendly communities. Sometimes it is necessary to act on suspicions of harm for a child. But even simple things like getting to know our neighbours, making a connection with the families on our street, being aware of family support services in our suburb or helping a parent who may be struggling at the supermarket with young children can make a difference.

Imagine what it would be like to live in a world where every child is able to reach their potential and be valued for all that they are and all that they can be and where children are free from harm. We want you to join others in creating that community – join the social movement to create child-friendly communities and cities across Australia and the world.

Each of us must *Play a Part* in preventing child abuse and neglect by taking steps to make our community child-friendly.

If you would like the NAPCAN *Play a Part* team to help you help your community please contact the QLD NAPCAN Office on 07 3287 3533.



Big steps

Caitlin Deakes

Caitlin Deakes is the Queensland based National Convenor for the Big Steps in Early Childhood Education and Care Campaign.

Hundreds of childcare directors, professionals, educators and community supporters around the country are joining the Big Steps in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) campaign to solve the crisis that is confronting our sector.

This crisis has arisen because dedicated childcare professionals are leaving the industry in droves for jobs with less responsibility and more pay. And who would blame them? A qualified childcare professional earns around \$17.50 an hour to educate and care for our greatest resource.

The *Big Steps in ECEC* campaign is being coordinated by our union, United Voice and aims to transform our profession into what it should be: stable, respected and well-paid. It can only be fixed by paying directors and educators what they are worth.

Just read these stories from our members, educators past and present. Their stories are typical of the experiences being shared as we meet in sector-wide crisis summits throughout the country:

'These are some of the challenges I face budgeting on such low wages. I have not bought any clothes or items for myself for a number of years. I am constantly paying off loans because I am always unable to fully cover most of my bills. I pay \$70 per fortnight to Radio Rentals because when I moved in I didn't own a fridge. Since I am unable to save very much money toward the cost of a fridge, I have no option but to rent. I have some fortnights without the money to purchase sufficient food to last

me until the next pay period. I have been told by others to change my profession to one that pays better. I will not do this because I feel that I am in one of the most important professions that exist.'

ACT—Amy Brady, Educator

'As an educator I went to monthly staff and parent committee meetings, fund-raising events, and workshops to enrich my knowledge in my own time. And I was one of the lowest paid workers in the nation. I dreamt of being an average wage earner, it does not seem too much to ask for.

I have now left the sector and work as a cleaner. I get paid much more per hour for cleaning, and there is minimal paperwork and flexible working hours. My part-time work as a masseuse also pays more per hour than an educator of young children. It just doesn't make sense.'

Andrea Neilsen—former educator

'I work full-time as an assistant director at ... I'm also studying full time for my Degree. I can't get by on the pay from my full-time work, so on weekends I sell pies, pasties, chips, and drinks at the football, where, ironically, I earn almost a dollar an hour more than my assistant director wage. Tell me why I should have to work selling pies on the weekend to pay my mortgage.'

Jen Shegog, Assistant director

These stories are all our stories. We all know exceptional educators who have left. Too many of us have second jobs. Too many of us rely on a subsidy from our partners. Too many of us put off the big decisions because we don't earn enough – when to have a baby, when to buy a house, when to get a better car. Too

many of us can not afford for our own children, the education and care we provide for other people's children.

That isn't right. We do an essential job. We bear an enormous responsibility of educating and caring for children. We work really hard and put in many hours of unpaid labour. How is it then that our professionalism isn't acknowledged in our rates of pay?

Why isn't every early childhood educator angry? Why do we just nod and agree when we hear stories like this? Why are we okay with the injustice of earning babysitter wages?

Enough really is enough.

If you agree with us; if it is true that a wage of \$17 an hour is an insult; if a Director getting paid half the salary of a small primary school Principal is an insult, then it's time to admit that you are indeed angry. We can't afford to continue to sit back and watch our colleagues leave a job that they love. We have to do something about it.

We ask you to join our union, United Voice, and our *Big Steps in ECEC* campaign.

The time for sitting back and letting a few enthusiasts speak for us is over. The time for asking nicely is over. The time for self-sacrifice and putting on a brave face is over. It just won't work. To fix this problem, to get us to be paid what we are worth, will take one of the biggest public campaigns in Australian history. We have to create an ongoing wave of reasoned argument that wins community support for the essential role we play.

In Queensland, we have just had a hugely successful Crisis Summit in Brisbane with almost 200 educators and directors sharing their stories and committing to the Big Steps campaign to improve our wages.

Additional regional summits have occurred in Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Cairns.

Please join with educators and directors across Australia and keep up-to-date with the Big Steps campaign by:

Checking out the BigSteps website:
www.bigsteps.org.au

Joining our union - United Voice:
www.unitedvoice.org.au

Finding and 'liking' us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/bigstepscampaign

Following us on Twitter:
www.twitter.com/bigsteps



Recent Brisbane Summit

Having conversations with children about sexuality

Vonda McDougall

Children are wonderfully curious and naturally want to learn all about the world around them. While most adults are comfortable answering questions about animals or dinosaurs, when it comes to questions about sexuality, many grown-ups find these conversations a little harder to have. Vonda McDougall, Health Promotion Officer and Education for Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) offers some advice.

As an early childhood educator, how many times has a child told you that they loved you or wanted to marry you? Or you've had to explain why boys and girls go to different bathrooms once they get to school? Or you've told a child why it is not okay to look at or touch someone else's private body parts?

Children naturally ask questions about sexuality, and it is important that these questions are answered in a safe and supportive environment. When answering questions, simple, honest, positive information is best. If they want more they will ask. If you can't answer the question then there are strategies you can use:

- ask what made them think of the question – this will help to determine what they know or don't know.
- seek clarification if you are not sure what they are asking. Establishing what they are asking about is the key to answering correctly.
- if the child asks a question at an inappropriate time, tell them that their question is important, but it could be discussed at break time when you are both not so rushed. It is important to make sure to follow up when the time is appropriate.

Many educators find it uncomfortable to discuss the topic of sexuality with children due to their concerns about parental backlash. However, a recent study shows that 91% of parents and carers are in favour of *Sexuality and Relationships Education* (SRE) being addressed in schools by educators. 72% of parents also indicated that it would actually be easier to communicate with their child about SRE if it had been addressed initially at school (Footprints, 2011).

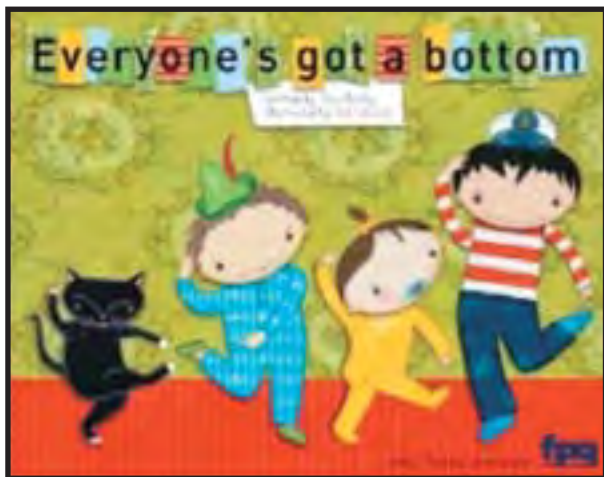
Educators are in a unique position to interact with students daily, which allows them to provide sexuality and relationships education in a consistent and thorough manner (Milton, 2003). This education may involve talking to a child about their behaviour in a positive manner or having to implement behavioural strategies to manage behaviours of concern.

SRE encourages open, clear communication to provide a foundation for the development of healthy sexual behaviours (FPQ, 2006). Topics for early childhood and lower primary may include:

- body parts – public and private
- public and private behaviours, and places
- self protection
- types of touch

There are a number of resources available that are designed to assist teachers with delivering SRE:

- *Everyone's got a bottom* storybook for children aged 3-8 years assists educators to start conversations with students about self protection.



- *Where do I start?* DVD and guide assists early childhood professionals to create a positive environment in which children learn about bodies, relationships and safety.
- *I have the right to be safe* flipchart is designed to promote self protection skills for children aged 5-10 years.
- *I Can – Promoting Self Protection* posters are designed to communicate about sexuality and self protection.
- *Bodies and Relationships Education Essentials* is a resource for primary school students from Prep to Year 7.
- *Positive & Protective workbooks: Lower Primary Years 1-4* are a series of workbooks designed to teach SRE.

Having conversations with children about sexuality is essential to develop healthy attitudes towards their developing sexuality.

The way in which educators respond ... can have a strong influence on the child's developing sexuality and their own perceptions of healthy sexual development (FPQ, 2006).

To assist educators to have these conversations means that necessary resources, training and support are required. FPQ aims to support educators in the early childhood sector to access resources and training opportunities. FPQ

advocates for all children's rights to sexuality education and safety. More information and forums for discussion can be found at the FPQ Teacher Resource Centre www.fpq.com.au/teachers/index.php

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Music for the fab and feisty fours to fives

Developing an understanding of the building blocks of music - Beat, Rhythm and Melody.

Kath Lloyd

Kath Lloyd is an early childhood music specialist, with a particular interest interpersonal development. She has been a registered KMEIA (Kodaly Music Education Institute of Australia) teacher since 2000. She teaches children at Griffith University Young Conservatorium and runs 'Do Re Mi, Music for Children' classes from her home studio and at day care centres in Brisbane. Kath also presents Professional Development seminars to peers and childcare centre staff, and mentors graduates.

We are constantly immersed in a sonic environment. A baby may appear oblivious to background noise and conversations but they are steadily absorbing, internalising and gradually developing a comprehension of the source and meaning of the sounds that surround them. Their internal database of sounds expands and forms the foundations for their own language development. As understanding blossoms, along with physical capabilities, so does the child's ability to communicate.

Music is a language. The developmental

stepping stones of absorbing, internalising, processing, comprehending, conscious interaction, exchange and creative expression are built upon in the same way that our speech skills develop. By four years of age, cognitive pennies begin to fall into place regarding literacy and numeracy concepts, and with well integrated foundations in place, musically.

In the Early Childhood setting music is ideally a regular part of a child's environment. It relaxes, redirects focus, swings a bad mood, aids the transitioning from one activity to the next, and

effectively engages a child's attention to then follow directives. It is 'fun and movement' time, as well as 'listening and relaxation' time.

At around four years of age, if a child has been immersed and engaged in a *consciously directed* musical environment, they become ready to take a more *consciously focused* approach to their music making.



However, as the fours to fives are generally a very “active” age group, each song, rhyme or musical game needs to incorporate an accompanying element of physical engagement, alternating between fine and gross motor movement activities, as well as opportunities to completely relax and diffuse their energies.

As with any area of learning it is necessary for the teacher to plan a *thorough* period of **Preparation** before *any* concept is **Made Conscious**, and then provide many opportunities for the children to **Practise** the new skill or concept, from various angles and approaches, including encouraging the children’s creative input.

The following is a sequential parallel approach to developing the children’s awareness and understanding of *Beat, Rhythm and Melodic Contour*.

1. Build on all known songs, games and rhymes e.g. clap, pat, stamp, gallop, tippy-toe, sway, sweep, see saw, bounce etc.
2. Use songs which mirror the ‘shape’ of the melody i.e. the highs and lows, and ascending and descending melody.
3. Use a repertoire whereby the children vocally and physically experience ‘opposites’ i.e. high and low, loud and quiet, slow and fast e.g. *Hot Potato*.
4. Make opportunities whereby an individual child has a percussion instrument e.g. claves and you match *their* tempo.
5. With accompanying movement, talk about ‘not moving faster than the song’ e.g. model and encourage Beat in feet by saying ‘Put your heavy pirate boots/dinosaur feet on’.
6. Once it becomes clear to the children that the Beat determines the tempo, plus it is clear that they are consciously able to move and tap in time to the music >> **MAKE CONSCIOUS BEAT:**

Every song and rhyme has a heartbeat. It is strong and steady like your own heartbeat. If the Beat goes slowly the song goes slowly. If the Beat goes quickly then the song does too. Like you, if the heartbeat stops, the song stops. The Beat is the pulse of a song.

7. *Practise* the Beat in both known and unknown songs and activities whilst beginning to Prepare Rhythm e.g. clapping sounds in colours and names.
8. *Preparation* of Melodic Contour, abstract actions in space of intervals greater than an octave, charts mapping the ‘shape’ of a sound e.g. brrrm and boing. Talk about the sounds or tune going up and down. Play and sing whilst demonstrating on the stepped chime bars.
9. Beat in Feet games > ‘foot print path’ > ‘bounce the Beat’ using a prop around the circle >> beat charts.
10. *Preparation* of rhythm continues, clapping and counting ‘the sounds in the words’ > clapping the words of songs whilst singing > inner hear the lyrics i.e. ‘thinking’ the words whilst clapping.
11. Once the children clearly understand that ‘it feels different clapping the words’ to performing the Beat of the same song >> **MAKE CONSCIOUS RHYTHM:** ‘clapping all the sounds in all the words is called the Rhythm. The Rhythm is the pattern of the sounds.’ Continue to practise and compare Beat and Rhythm.
12. When the children can demonstrate the ‘shape’ of the tune, abstractly, visually and on their bodies >> **MAKE CONSCIOUS MELODIC CONTOUR:** ‘the Melody is the shape of what you can hear. It is the (demonstrate by singing with accompanying movement) *going up the mountain*, and the *going down again*, it’s the *highs* and the *lows*. Sometimes the Melody is called the Tune.’

The intrinsic beauty of providing music experiences for the very young is that you are helping them connect with their past, present and future selves, whilst at the same time connecting with your own! Every opportunity flows on from those prior, to enrich the here-and-now, and prepare the ground for experiences yet to come. Invest time, thought and heart into the learning opportunities that you hope to offer to the children in your care because, as Zoltan Kodaly said (1929),

“Often a single experience will open the young soul to music for a whole lifetime”.



Assessment – keeping it in context!

Debra Verstege

Debra Verstege is an early childhood professional with over 25 years experience in early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs. She has directed a long day care service leading a team who was involved in both the trial of the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the Educator's Guide. More recently she has returned to a professional support role within Gowrie Queensland and the wider early childhood community. Over the past two years she has been involved in participating and facilitating an Action Research Model of professional development. She believes that this model is one that fits extremely well with implementing early childhood programs that require reflection and ongoing learning to be part of educators' pedagogical practice.

Assessment is a word that many educators in early childhood services would have once seen as an anathema to our way of working with children to ensure that they were making progress in their learning. It was often equated with the notion of school and testing.

In the current climate we are required to show how children are progressing against Learning Outcomes within the approved frameworks used by early childhood services across Australia. This article looks broadly at assessment in relation to meeting the outcomes in the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline*.

To make the word 'assessment' one that we can have a common understanding about, we must define what this word means in programs for children in before-school services. We need to make it '**our word**' and know what assessment means in practice for the educators, children and families who are part of our learning communities. What will not serve us well is a narrow definition of assessment; therefore examining assessment processes that support educators to find out about each child as a learner can really make assessment work for us and for children. Through using **assessment for, of and as learning**, educators are finding this gives a holistic picture of each child as a learner. This requires that we include the context in

which the learning takes place so the picture supports meaningful teaching responses as educators plan rich learning environments for children.

Assessment for learning is about the ongoing, on the spot type of judgements we make about a child or groups of children as we interact, notice and record what we see during everyday moments during the daily program. This formative process is a familiar one and provides us with many firsthand instances about learning. As we watch, listen and interact with children we are often reflecting 'in the moment' about the significance of what we are noticing. We also engage in many of the intentional teaching moments as we respond to children immediately to support their learning (Gowrie Australia 2010 pg.4). When many of these 'moments' are gathered, over time, the assessment becomes holistic in nature rather than one-off observations with the expectation that you should plan some experience for the child.

In a practical sense this information needs to be recorded. Many educators note this in a reflective diary or a child's portfolio to be used later on for some longer term planning. It may be in the form of dot points or sentence form, could include some narrative, may have a photo of the child's participation or play with

materials. If the information tells a story then it may also be recorded as a learning story with an interpretation about the learning and a link to one or more learning outcomes and some planning possibilities e.g. 'Where to next?'

Assessment as learning helps educators provide feedback to children about their learning and is often what we share with families. This assessment process makes visible the achievements, learning strategies and the dispositions a child uses (Gowrie Australia, 2010, pg 6).

Recording this assessment can include wall documentation, learning stories, group project work, discussions and information and reflections from children and educators, written information or ideas that families have contributed or that an educator has recorded (with permission) after a conversation with a family. It can add rich ideas, theories, thinking and understanding to the original documentation. It is a powerful way to sustain the learning as children are supported to further investigate and discover as new learning emerges.

Assessment of learning is a summative process where children's learning is described in a broad way. It shows what children know, can do and understand at particular points in time (Gowrie Australia 2010, pg. 9).

In practice, this type of assessment is usually done when children transition from one room to another, an educator has a scheduled or requested meeting to discuss a child's learning with a family during the year or when educators are preparing a transition statement before the child makes the transition to school.

Summary

Whatever type of assessment you are using, it is essential to remember to keep that assessment in context, to tell the real story of the child as a learner. To do this there must be room for the voices of children and families in the assessment process.

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Jonty and teacher Melissa Lee share the assessment process



Developing number concepts in Years 1-3

Ann Heirdsfield

Ann is a mathematics education lecturer in the School of Early Childhood at Queensland University of Technology. Her research focuses on supporting teachers engage young children in mathematics learning.

The importance of enhancing children's mathematical reasoning processes and the ability to represent, communicate, and connect ideas cannot be overestimated. These are components of high-quality mathematics education for young children (AAMT & ECA, 2006; NAEYC & NCTM, 2002).

Around the world and within Australia there is growing support to focus on number sense and the development of mental computation as a major component of computation. Mental

computation is a relatively new topic in mathematics curricula in Australia. By mental computation I refer to multidigit calculations performed mentally (e.g. solving $56+38$ mentally). It is an important skill because it enables children to learn more deeply how numbers work, make decisions about procedures, and create strategies for calculating (Varol & Farran, 2007; Verschaffel, Luwel, Torbeyns, & Van Dooren 2007). The emphasis in teaching mental computation should be on children developing their own strategies by exploring, discussing, and justifying their thinking and solutions.

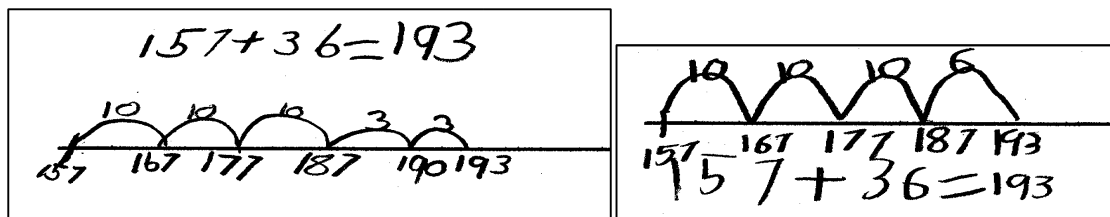
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99

$52-28$: $52-2=50$, $50-6=44$; $44-20=24$

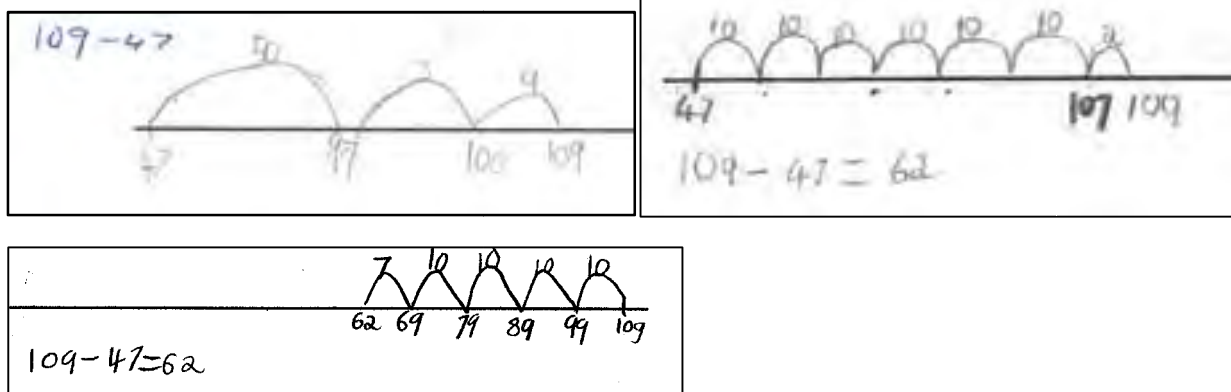
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41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

$38+25$: $38+20=58$, $58+2=60$, $60+3=63$

100 chart and 99 chart – useful models/representations for assisting in the development of mental computation strategies



Children's solution strategies for 157+36, using the ENL



Children's solution strategies for 109-47 – counting up from 47 and counting down from 109

Representations/models are used extensively in mathematics. Representations that children can use to support mental computation strategies (Blöte, Klein, & Beishuizen 2000) include the 99 chart, the 100 chart, and the empty number line (ENL). The Dutch (who have a long history of teaching mental computation) prefer the use of the ENL over the 100 chart, as the ENL assists in the development of effective and efficient mental computation strategies. However, the 100/99 chart has also been used in Australian schools to develop mental computation strategies.

While representations can assist children develop mathematical understanding, understanding is developed through thinking about the action. The teacher can assist by encouraging the children to explain their solution strategies and compare their strategies with others' strategies. For instance: 'How did you solve this example? Who solved it a similar way? How is your way similar? Who solved it a different way? How is your way different?'

Planning for learning

Effective maths instruction requires thoughtful planning. Planning is based on children's existing knowledge.

In order to determine children's existing level of knowledge, there are several methods that can be used, for instance, by observations, by speaking with the children (one-on-one, small group, whole class), or by setting a task that can be solved at a variety of levels. Pen and paper tests often identify what a child does not know, rather than what they do know.

Take the example of a Year 2 teacher who was introducing multiplication and division concepts to her class. She chose the book, *Monsters*. This book focuses on the array model for multiplication. Stopping on one page, she questioned the children about how many rows of monsters there were, and how many monsters were in each row. And then asked the children if they could tell how many monsters

there were altogether. One child immediately stated that there were 24 monsters. When asked how he knew that, he stated, 'I know that 8 threes are 24.' Other children explained their strategies.

'I went 3, 6; then 12; then 24'.

'I did it by 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18; 19, 20, 21; 22, 23, 24'.

Others said they counted 1, 2, 3... 4, 5, 6...7, 8, 9...until they reached 24.

It was obvious that several children already possessed sophisticated understanding of multiplication, while others were counting by ones to calculate the product. The teacher realised that for all children to progress in their learning, learning experiences would have to be pitched at different levels of understanding. Her planning became far more complex than she had originally anticipated, but she was determined that all children should progress in their learning.

Communicating with parents

Teachers sometimes say that parents question the 'new ways of doing maths' and feel frustrated at not being able to help their children. Teachers are aware of the need to work with parents and carers, but sometimes communication can be difficult. The following are some suggestions:

- photograph the child completing a maths task. Send the photo home (email/print out) with the message, 'Ask (child's name) to tell you about what he/she is doing in this photo.'
- email or print out 'We are doing ____ in class. How do you solve this problem? These are the ways children in the class solved the problem ... Ask your child to explain how he/she solved it.'
- parent information night. Have the parents solve similar tasks to the ones the children solve in class. Ask them to share their methods/strategies with each other. They usually find that they have some similar to and some different strategies from each other, and are interested to hear these. They are particularly interested to hear how their own children approach the

problems. I have used a similar technique at a parents' meeting to convince them of the benefits of children developing their own computational strategies, rather than following set procedures.

- family maths night:
 - provide activities that can be completed using a variety of methods, and attempted at a variety of levels.
 - play maths strategy games that can be played by all ages.

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Numeracy is the capacity, confidence and disposition to use mathematics in daily life. Children bring new mathematical understandings through engaging with problem solving. It is essential that the mathematical ideas with which young children interact are relevant and meaningful in the context of their current lives. (EYLF 2009, 38)



Circle Time for social emotional learning

Felicity Day

Felicity became an early years educator in 1997 and has taught classes from Prep through to Year Three. In 2009 Felicity joined the North Coast Region Behaviour Support Team as a Behaviour Support Consultant. This role was unique in its brief to Engage Early Learners (EEL initiative), with a focus on working pro-actively with teachers, administrators and schools around behaviour challenges in Prep. Felicity has specialised training in functional behaviour assessments, non-violent crisis intervention, essential skills for classroom management, classroom profiling, restorative practices, Circle Time, mediation, Fun Friends and more.

Most educators are familiar with the need for their students to develop appropriate social skills. In my role as a behaviour support consultant, I have had many requests for a specific program or set of steps that will hopefully assist to develop the social and emotional literacy of selected students or groups. Some schools are choosing to adopt Circle Time as a framework for developing these skills and are experiencing extremely positive results for both the students and their teachers.

The use of circles for social purposes is evident throughout history and in a range of cultures. It has long been a way for people to come together and demonstrate unity, equality and inclusion and to participate in decision making. They have been utilised by the business world since the 1960s and became popular in education in the 1970s (Roffey, 2006).

Circle Time is evidence-based and serves as a framework for developing social emotional literacy, whilst also building and improving relationships. Authors such as Jenny Mosley, Sue Roffey, and Theresa Bliss have developed fantastic resources for schools to use in order to implement Circle Time. It has been shown to enhance self awareness, self esteem, resilience, emotional intelligence, anger management and communication skills, a sense of belonging and connectedness, empathy, conflict resolution and problem solving skills and it's fun.

Circle Time is not solely intended for use as a behaviour management tool. However, when implemented effectively, students develop knowledge and skills that may, in turn, have a positive effect on their behaviour. Many schools actually use circle time daily as they find it has a calming effect on the students, particularly after recess. However, even the most beautifully behaved classes can benefit from Circle Time.

During weekly Circle Time participants sit on chairs, preferably of equal height, in a circle and take part in a planned set of activities led by a facilitator for approximately 30 minutes. The time can vary depending on age, skill levels and a range of other factors. A typical session would include a reminder of the Circle Time rules, a meeting up activity, warming up activity, opening up activity, cheering up activity and a calming down activity (Mosley, 2005).

Circle Time rules

In my work with Circle Time in the early years, I have found it useful to break up the rules as follows:

1. **We listen** (eyes watching, ears listening, lips closed, hands in laps/back on chairs/feet still)
2. **One person speaks at a time**
3. **We can pass**
4. **Speak respectfully.**

I also have found it beneficial to take photos of the students in order to create visual supports that illustrate the desired behaviours, which are placed in the centre of the circle. In most classes that I have worked with, I have also used a whole group reward system to acknowledge appropriate behaviour. A chart is placed in the middle of the circle with a set number of spaces to be filled. Stickers are added when appropriate behaviours are observed. The whole class is then entitled to a negotiated reward. This reinforcement is not ever linked to the quality of an answer, as this may create undue pressure on participants. I have often found it another great tool for bringing the group closer, as they are all working towards achieving the goal together.

Meeting up

This is usually a game or activity to mix participants up, get the group working together, release tension, create a sense of fun and possibly reinforce a rule or routine. A strategy often used is the silent statement. This is where participants listen to a statement, stand to indicate their response and then move to another seat in the circle.

Warming up

This often involves the use of a talking object, which is something that participants use when it is their turn to speak. Participants in this step will often take part in a 'round', where they finish a sentence or give single sentence responses to a question. This gives people the chance to hear their voice out loud in a less intimidating format. Generally, if participants have chosen to pass, the talking object will go around again. This allows reluctant students to listen to peer responses and have extra time prior to contributing.

Opening up

This is often the key moment in Circle Time as it provides a forum for groups to come together in order to discuss issues, share concerns, explore thoughts and ideas, generate solutions, share perspectives, set goals and communicate with each other. This section of the circle is also a vehicle for participants to learn those valuable social skills in a forum that is relevant and meaningful. It is extremely important that participants adhere to the Circle Time rules and

that everyone feels safe. Generally, due to the intense nature of this section of the circle, it is recommended that facilitators do not end Circle Time sessions at this step. Students require a cheering up or calming down activity in order to have closure.

Cheering up

This section often involves acknowledging and celebrating successes, giving and receiving compliments and can involve games similar to the meeting up phase, in order to make a clean break from the heavy emotional work undertaken in the opening up phase.

Calming down

The last stage is useful in assisting the transition back to regular classroom activities. It provides an opportunity for participants to have a few minutes to take part in visualisations, relaxation activities and can even include quiet games. I have also found this time to be a great opportunity to teach self calming strategies for use to manage difficult emotions.

The facilitator is an important component of Circle Time and can often be a factor in the success or failure of sessions. The role of the facilitator is to:

- Collaboratively develop rules and explicitly teach expectations
- Carefully plan Circle Time sessions – making them progressive, varied and fun
- Ensure participants feel safe and included
- Participate and model desired behaviours
- Make the connection between games/activities/sessions and learning
- Facilitate rather than control.

When implemented with integrity, Circle Time has been proven to deliver a range of benefits to participants. One of the things I love most about it is how readily students and teachers embrace the sessions and the amazing moments that can happen in those 30 minutes.

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Mosley, J. (2005) *Circle Time for Young Children*, Routledge

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“So where do I put the science?”

Jill Kearney

Jill Kearney has a Medical Science degree and also an Arts degree in English Literature and Ancient History. She has worked in hospital laboratories, public relations and is a published children's author. Jill has been a teacher aide at Gympie South for some years now, where she is delighted to be able to use her multidisciplinary perspective to encourage young children in their experience of the excitement and fun of science and the wonders of the world around them.

With the new national curriculum looming for Prep, and the 'push-down' (Corrie, 1999) of more structured Year One level topics, is there still any time in the crammed school program to foster engaging and exciting, child-led, inquiry-based science?

ABSOLUTELY!!

This curious and enthusiastic early years age group deserves educators who will seize the unique opportunity to promote the delights, the awe and the satisfactions of science. Indeed, according to Anna-Maria Arabia, CEO of FASTS (the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies), as recently as May this year:

Not a moment can be wasted in finding ways to attract and retain talented people to Science and Maths, starting in primary school, where the wonderment of Science can and should fill every classroom.
(Arabia, 2011).

The new national curriculum requirements for Science in the foundation years comprise a lengthy list, namely:

- Science understanding, including Biology (living needs), Chemical science (properties of materials), Earth and space sciences (environmental changes) and Physical sciences (movement of objects)

- Science as human endeavour (using the senses to explore and observe)
- Science enquiry skills (questioning and predicting, planning and conducting, processing and analysing data and information, and communicating)
- general capabilities (literacy, numeracy, ICT, critical and creative thinking, ethical behaviour, personal and social competence and intercultural understanding) and
- cross-curriculum priorities (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and sustainability).

Fortunately, however, many of these broad requirements interweave, since science underpins and shapes so much of our world.

Therefore, various activities may be chosen to perform double/triple/quadruple, etc. duty, to amass a swag of resources to have at a teacher's fingertips for when that relevant, motivating, 'teachable moment' arises. For Queensland teachers, help is on the way in the form of the splendid online *Australian Curriculum Connect*, which will be accessed via Scootle (non-EQ schools) and the 'Learning Place' which already has brilliantly interactive 'learning objects'. Other resources are the inspirational Science Sparks that visit most state schools. Also the *Primary Connections*

science program is a valuable resource, and the CSIRO science and maths by email projects.

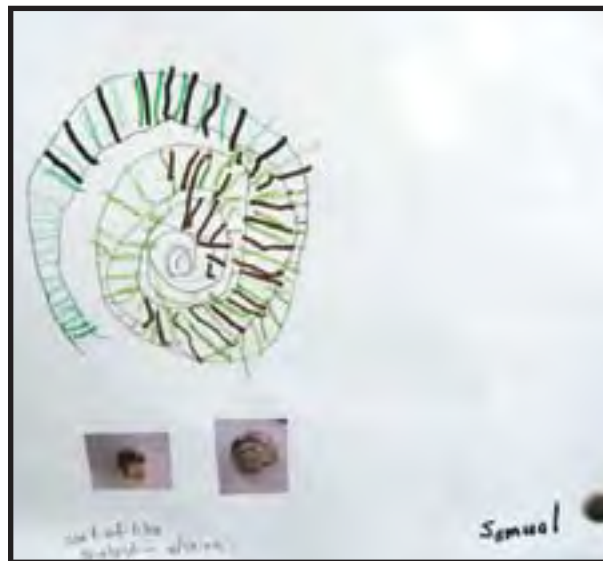
It has been stated that all the elaborations suggested for the coming curriculum are not to be slavishly adopted, so I've used them as stepping-off points for wide-ranging activities that I consider to be relevant to the children as well as being interesting, all-consuming and even thrilling. It's so easy to extrapolate scientific concepts and accurate scientific terminology from riveting provocations. I have enjoyed developing the following 'multi-tasking' activities with our Prep students under the guidance of and great input from Kim Walters and Marion Sillett. Maybe you'll find some of them to be helpful (and time saving) too.

Science Centre and specimen collection/drawing from observation/research.

Since our students are the scientists, it is imperative that they have their own science area (really, the smallest desktop would suffice) to showcase the fascinating science finds that they bring in. This validates their importance as scientists and encourages them to use all their senses for investigation as well as developing their skills of collection, classification (sorting) and observation. Nature collections look great (and are kept safely and neatly) in specimen display showcases, even if the display boxes are just made from joined matchbox inserts.* Providing magnifying sheets and glasses along with pens and paper allows the students to make accurate drawings from observation. Additionally, live pets like aquarium fish, hermit crabs, silk worms, terrariums/wormariums,



Magnified specimen satisfaction.



Spiral snail shell drawing from observation by Sam.

etc. are compelling features, whilst plenty of accessible, engaging, highly visual science books are also essential in the classroom to pique the interest and spirit of enquiry of this age group. Book, internet and ask-an-expert research also naturally arises here.

* See p37, "A-Z SCIENCE Experiments for the Early Years", by Jill Kearney, available from www.digitalpreschool.com.au

'Why Wall' or 'What is this?' display

A 'Why Wall' or 'What is this?' display with lift-the-flaps that disclose simple information and pictorial answers to the student's specific questions is a wonderful provocation for the scientists to importantly communicate the factoids to their friends, relatives or, in fact, any random passer-by at all.



What about this question?



Dressing my figurine.

Clothing as human protection

Using hands-on paper dolls with paper international costumes**, occupational clothing sticker books, weather-suitable clothing games, life-sized sarong and sari dress-ups, fabric clothes on small photographic figurines of the child***, etc. – yes, absorbing dolls and dress-ups-covers a whole gamut of knowledge areas involving a whole lot of fun. Curriculum requirements enjoyably covered include: science (materials, technology, human protection, environmental effects, sense of touch), awareness of other cultures, art and creativity (making paper clothes themselves), fine motor skills, investigation, planning and communicating, social interaction and role play.

**downloadable at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/vmaria40/BridesFromAroundTheWorldTomTierney>

*** available from www.digitalpreschool.com.au

Movement songs, rhymes and finger plays. Physical movements card system

A treasure chest file of all the regular Prep songs, rhymes and finger plays you have collected, but here just usefully sorted under curriculum headings for types of movement in Physical sciences like:

1. ANIMAL MOVEMENT: floating and swimming (eg. fish – '1,2,3,4,5, Once I caught a fish alive', ducks – 'Over the hills and far away' and so on); flying and gliding (eg. birds, bees); running and walking; hopping and jumping; climbing and swinging; creeping and crawling; slithering and sliding.

2. PEOPLE MOVEMENT: Moving position (e.g. 'Running to the corner,'); on the spot with moving body parts (e.g. 'Hokey Pokey'); finger plays; occupations.
3. NATURE MOVEMENT: weather (e.g. 'Rain is falling down'), plants.
4. MECHANICAL MOVEMENT: air, sea and land transport (e.g. 'The wheels on the bus'), other mechanical items.

This chest file card system is great for filling in spare moments, transitions etc. with the triple thread of science, music and movement.

Physical movement of objects combined with human fine and gross motor movements

Obstacle courses and physical skills stations can be combined with observations of how balls of different size and materials move, bounce, roll etc. Also differently-sized beanbags, plastic fruit, frisbees, stuffed toys, darts etc. to throw at/into targets, hoops, containers, holes and nets, or bounce creatively.

Rockets – self-designed experiments

Nothing compares to the drama, the pure joy and the satisfaction of launching and watching a rocket. This is the number one favourite for the children every year – and ask them to design an experiment that requires repeated blast offs – well you just try and stop them. (Don't you love it when children fight over the science resources! Cheap foam stomp-launch rockets are available from National Geographic stores.)



Rockets - the joy, the wonder, the satisfaction

Tribal housing

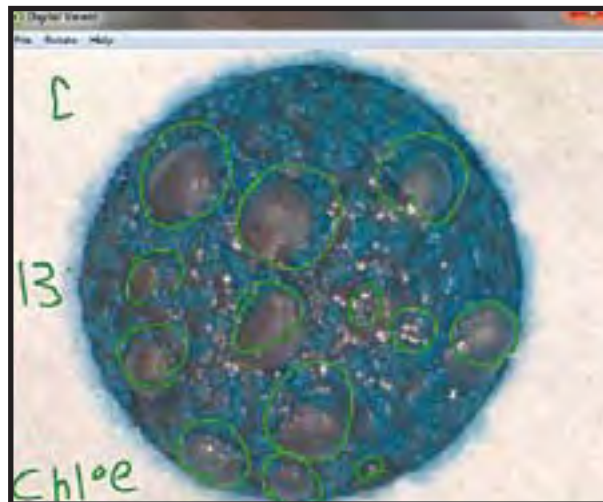
YouTube videos of people building protective shelters from traditional materials may be screened on the interactive whiteboard, then a choice of materials to construct a sugar cube igloo, leaf and stick gunyah, playdough beehive, mud-brick house, or felt teepee may be provided. Materials, human needs, technology and intercultural understanding can be simultaneously and industriously explored.

Blue tongue tasters

This is a very popular experiment (which only disappoints when the blue lizard tongues fade back to normal) which incorporates the senses of taste and sight, healthy food, ITC, numeracy, and literacy in a very novel way. Blue food colouring is swabbed onto the student's tongue in order to show in contrast the large pink 'bumps' associated with taste buds via a digital microscope photograph that can be projected onto an interactive white board or computer screen. If using an IWB the children could then label their magnified tongue photo and draw around and count their own tasting bumps to determine whether they are supertasters, normal tasters



Blue tongue taster



Magnified tongue tasting bumps

or undertasters. If an IWB isn't available, the photo may be printed out for the children to draw onto the image.

My Body measures up

Children collage a life-sized tracing of themselves and show avid interest in recording those useful, real world numbers denoted by their own personal height (measurement chart), weight (bathroom scales), temperature (thermometer), lung volume (peak flow meter), walking speed (pedometer), blood pressure (taking pulse), etc.

With just a little enthusiasm and a discriminating choice of activities, even our early years' students can be captivated and their lives enriched and explicated by science – after all, we all have an innate connection to the world around us. Indeed, according to the luminary astronomer Carl Sagan, 'We are all made of star stuff'.

References:

- Corrie L (1999) 'Politics, the provision of physical amenities, and the 'push-down' curriculum.' Australian Journal of Early Childhood, Vol.24, No.3, September, 1999.
- Arabia A (2011) 'Science spared foreshadowed cuts in the 2011-12 Australian Budget', ABC Science Show, Radio National, 14 May, 2011.



Using PowerPoint in the classroom

Gwenyth Beale

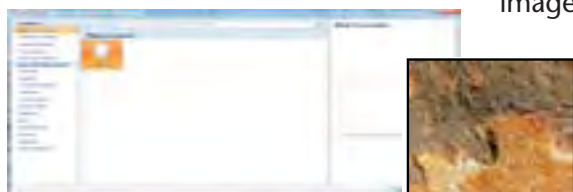
Gwenyth Beale is a teacher/librarian with over ten years experience and is passionate about quality early childhood education. She believes that providing good resources for children, educators and parents will enhance the early education experience for all. She has her own business writing and editing resources and conducting workshops on using various programs such as MS Word and PowerPoint for documenting learning stories, using Movie Maker to create learning story movies that can be played on a DVD and TV and other programs. She has presented at several conferences (including north Queensland ECTA conference in 2009) and other professional development opportunities.

PowerPoint can be used for many things apart from presentations. Many prefer to use PowerPoint to create portfolio documents. You can convert PowerPoint slides into a picture format that can be used like any other picture. PowerPoint is an especially useful tool to quickly load up photos from the day, perhaps with some narration added by you or the children that can then be played as parents come to pick up their kids. Spend a little more time and you can create a special-occasion presentation.

When you open PowerPoint (PPT) there are a number of inbuilt styles you can use, or you can create your own. You could use a photo or logo as a washed-out background or a watermark.

(Note: screen shots used in these notes are made using Office 2007.)

1. Open up a blank PowerPoint and choose Create.
2. Get a photo that you can use. It could be of a natural texture such as sand, stone, tree bark etc, or of the children, a logo or other image.

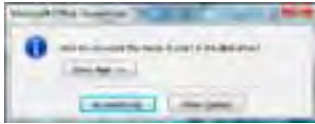


3. Open the photo in Microsoft Picture Manager, Paint or other editing program to create a washed-out look. This is because if you use a full colour photo it will be too bright to see the content of the slide. Sometimes you will need to adjust brightness to make it washed-out or sometimes transparency.

4. Go to Design tab in PPT, then Background Styles. Go to Format background, then the picture option. Choose your picture from the file. Change the Transparency option at the bottom of the window if necessary then click on Apply to all slides.



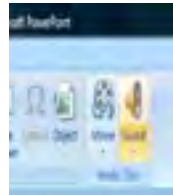
5. Inserting pictures into your PPT is easy. If you would like to do a few at a time, use the Ctrl or Shift keys to select the photos you want to add, copy them, then paste into your slide. They will be stuck together when they go in, but if you click off the photos then you can move each one individually.
6. Inserting video clips is simple. Firstly, make sure that copies of the clips are in the same



folder where you will save your PPT or they won't play when you play your PPT. Then

go to the Insert tab, choose Movie, From File. You can choose to have it start to play automatically or when you click on the slide.

7. You can insert music or other audio files in the same manner. You can use sound from file, from CD or record your own audio. Again, you can start automatically or on click.



A little sound icon appears on the slide which you can move out of the way. When it has been selected, you can go to the Options tab and the Animations tab for more options.

8. You can record your own sounds, narration, children's voices etc. to tell the story. Follow the above steps but choose record sound. A recording button will appear. You can choose the same options or animations as above.



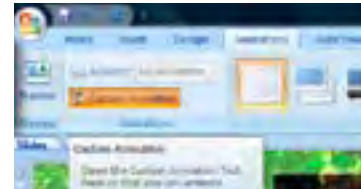
When you are videoing the children you will have their voices on the recording but, if you aren't close, the volume may be too indistinct. One option is to have an MP3 recorder (that plays music etc.) and have someone stand closer to catch the voices or ask them to tell you what they are doing. You can download the audio file by plugging the USB end of the player into your computer.

Advanced options - animations

1. When you click on a picture you've inserted, click on the Animations tab. A number of animation options appear. Moving your mouse over each option will preview what the animation will look like.

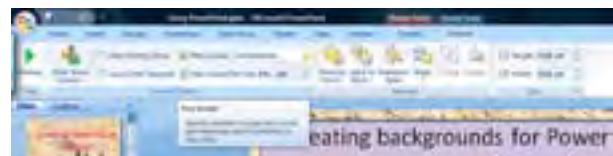


2. You can choose the sound made when the picture moves in and out, from sounds such as clapping, cash register, other amusing sounds or your own audio. Decide how fast the picture is to move in.
3. You can make a number of pictures fly in to



the slide one at a time if you wish. On the left in the Animations tab choose Custom. A window will pop up and you can choose from Entrance, Emphasis, Exit or Motion Path. Choose if it moves in on a click, the direction, the speed etc. Do this for each picture. If there are a number of pictures on the slide, you'll notice that each one has a small number beside it, which is the order in which it will move.

4. Under the Slide Show tab you can set up narration for the whole slide show, practice the timing choosing the volume, making the sound loop until stopped and more.



There's so much more that you can do with PowerPoint. The parents will love seeing what the children are doing and you can involve the children in telling their own story.

Have fun with it.

Reggiosophia: When philosophy and Reggio-inspired practice dance together

Narelle Arcidiacono and Chris Ling

Chris Ling is a school Principal who in 2008 won the State Showcase Award for Leadership. She continues to implement strategies and models developed through her extensive research and participation in two Study Schools at Reggio Emilia, Northern Italy.

Narelle Arcidiacono was the drama teacher and philosophy teacher at Buranda State School when the school received the Showcase Award for Excellence in 2003. Narelle's Masters in Philosophy enables her to consult to the school as a philosopher, bringing with her, early childhood experience.

Chris and Narelle have worked together at Cannon Hill State School to lead the development of a school culture in which children's thinking and enquiry is highly valued and central to the program.

At Cannon Hill State School the practice of teaching philosophy has been in place for a period of eight years and the practice of learning from and through the Early Childhood Centres of Reggio Emilia has been building, layer by layer since 2005. We have learnt that these two practices have a great deal in common and we are coming to believe they are integral partners. In this paper, we explore the approaches to both philosophy and Reggio, as adopted at Cannon Hill, and give examples of children's thinking. We also examine projects that have emerged from this work as well as recent developments that demonstrate the emerging direction of the partnership. In deference to this partnership and by engaging with the work of Plato and others of his time who use the term philo-sophia, which quite literally means the love of wisdom, we have coined the term ReggioSophia to name our process. Plato went so far in his iconic work *The Republic* to put forward the thesis that leaders of a proposed Utopia would be philosopher kings: that is rulers who love wisdom. We can only claim at the moment to be educators who love wisdom, and love nurturing a love of wisdom in our students.

The educational project of Reggio Emilia is built around a set of twelve principles. They are a combination of attitudes, beliefs, values (mental models) and the processes that bring alignment between these mental models and the experiences of the children, staff and parents. The concepts that children are

active protagonists in their own growth and development processes; that they have a hundred expressive languages; that listening is fundamental to participation; that learning is a process of individual and group construction; form the basis on which complex layers of practice have been built. Strategies that support these concepts and bring enlightenment to them include the processes of pedagogical documentation, educational research by all participants in the process; projected curriculum construction (progettazione); the aesthetic and generative nature of the environment; and professional development through collaborative reflection and assessment.

Philosophy for Children (P4C), as with Reggio inspired practice, provides an environment in which children not only think together, but also articulate their thinking together. The Community of Inquiry offers a range of conceptual development triggers that assist in the identification of a tangible and authentic stimulus or provocation. Children's questions are encouraged as are their theories and the connections that might exist between them are discussed. Children are actively engaged in dialogue with each other in a community in which they:

- identify, explore, assess and reassess concepts
- interact with peers with intellectual quality and appropriate and respectful provocation
- use social skills in an environment of quality thinking

- listen to one person speaking at a time and be intellectually reflective of that person's position
- are listened to with quality reflection and mindfulness
- devise, ask and respond to deep questions
- gain appropriate attention for one's reasoned judgments
- respond to deep questions in a manner that shows intellectual quality
- build on the ideas of others whilst avoiding point of view
- practice skills in real and simulated situations
- break a complex process down into simple steps
- follow brief and simple instruction with quality intellectual responses
- follow directions given in a logical and sequenced order
- move beyond point of view to reasoned judgment.

Through the practice of Reggioisophia, children realise the power of their own thinking and the thinking of others as they construct and co-construct meaning. They are encouraged to make connections, seek clarification, recognize the difference between

negative and positive assumptions, provide examples and make distinctions. They take control of their own thinking and use its power to expand their learning, communicate effectively and critically evaluate the world in which they live.

The umbrella protocol for P4C and Reggio-inspired practice is the close observation of each child. The teacher listens, documents and predicts in order to understand each child's authentic potential and personal capacity for quality thinking and meta-cognition. Children are encouraged to use and apply sound reasoning tools and develop positive community and social aspects associated with sound reasoned judgment

Until recently, our work at Cannon Hill has been focused on learning the practices of pedagogical documentation and projectazione within the context of a State Education Primary system. We have attended to the environment, using whatever resources come our way to continually enhance both its aesthetic appeal and its provocation to learning. We have been learning how the collaborative study of children's thinking in documentation can contribute to our adult learning processes and

The following dialogue is offered as an example of the use of concrete materials to explore abstract propositions and create analogies and similes with Year One students.

Narelle: I'm going to give you some straws and some connectors and I want you use them to build something that a thought might look like. For example you might build a tree because you have the idea that a thought is like a tree because it can grow bigger and bigger.

Zak: A thought is like a flower because it can grow bigger.

Dylan: A thought is like a gutter digger grounder because it digs down to the bottom.

Damion: A thought is like a flower because it grows bigger and bigger and bigger.

Jack: A thought is like a flower because if you don't help them along they disappear.

Meki: A thought is like a satellite because it gets bigger and bigger and has more power

Tia: If it has more energy it has more light to shine brighter.

Krishna: A thought is like a rubbish truck because it grabs lots of things

Alex: I get that. I know why they built a rubbish truck because it gets more and more rubbish that might be ideas.

Eden: Clean and bright.

Jai: Mine is a trap because you can trap the thoughts.

Meki: The trap will catch the thoughts and remember what we make.

Ryan: A thought is like a helicopter because?

Zak: It can fly.

Narelle: What happens if your thoughts fly away?

Zak: You might give away one.

Tia: You might lose one.

Alex: You always think lots of thoughts.

Charli: A thought is like an umbrella because it protects you.

our ability to be reflective researchers of our own practice. These years of learning have positioned us well to engage in the practice of layering our learning from documentation. We are confident that we now possess the learning integrity and skills necessary to enable us to address our own research questions. To this end, the Staff Research Project of 2011 into 'How students at Cannon Hill co-construct their learning?' has been instigated. At the same time, we have initiated a research project to bring together our practice of the teaching of philosophy and Reggio inspired Progettazione, in an exciting new endeavour.

Further learning about the work of the Early Childhood Centres of Reggio Emilia, has led to an understanding of the depth of philosophy inherent in the development of Progettazione. For certain projects, teachers start their work with children with a clear shared understanding of the philosophical concepts which are fundamental provocations to children's thinking and theories. For example: the concept of 'desire'.

The project in current development at Cannon Hill is founded on deep understanding of the idea of 'transformation'. Prior to any work starting with students, teachers are engaged in a 'community of inquiry' into transformation.

The Trasformazione (Transformation) Project:

This projects brings together Philosophy and Reggio as the team moves from philosophical inquiry through expressive languages, especially visual arts, to the time when students are developing their own theories regarding transformation, testing their theories and sharing their research findings in public projects. We expect this process to take at least six months, possibly more. An exciting aspect of interpreting Reggio and philosophy in a primary school setting is that we are co-developing this progettazione with five-year-old and ten-year-old children concurrently.

Cannon Hill has progressed from the early stages of changing the physical environment through nurturing skills in pedagogical documentation, to a wider understanding of progettazione while continually creating and recreating an ambience in which the teaching of philosophy to children has progressed. Our Trasformatzione Project is but one aspect of transformation of our entire school experience.

Bibliography:

Edwards C, Gandini L, Forman G 1998, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, 2nd edn, Ablex Publishing: London

Indications Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. 2010, Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia.



Transformation is the current project being experienced by a Year 1 class and a Year 5 class following the approach of synthesising Philosophy and Reggio practice.

The children were given clay. They were asked the question. What is transformation? How can you show transformation with clay?

Ryan - It's where you make something and turn it into something else....

Mackie - If we turn it sideways... If you put sticks on the clay and then more sticks on the top and bottom you can make a tower and transform it into a fence by turning it sideways.

Alex - Turning something into nothing from nothing to something. The Year 5 students subsequently were given Alex's definition as a provocation for their exploration into transformation. They produced some amazing representations of this concept.



**Mathilda
Element**

Once again, our magnificent team of educator-reviewers has delivered interesting and varied perspectives on a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. I am especially excited to see a review of *Shake a Leg*, as this book is the 2011 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction, and a fabulous comic-book style contemporary Indigenous tale. I personally am delighted to see the wonderful contemporary Indigenous fiction that is coming out of Australian publishing houses at the moment, and it's great to be able to highlight a few of these resources (also included in this edition is a review of *Barlay!*, a chapter book published by Fremantle Press). As the year draws to a close, I would like to take a moment to thank all of our reviewers – those whose reviews you have been enjoying reading over the year, and those whose reviews are yet to come. It has been my great pleasure to see books getting out to classrooms, and into the hands of teachers and children. We all love reading about the interesting activities teachers are doing based on the books they are reading with their children, but even more so we adore hearing the children's perspectives! If you are interested in becoming a reviewer for 2012, please email mathilda@ecta.org.au

Title: Barlay!

Author: Cheryl Kickett-Tucker
Illustrator: Tracey Gibbs
Published By: Fremantle Press
ISBN: 9781921696114
RRP: \$9.95
Reviewed by: Jess Richards

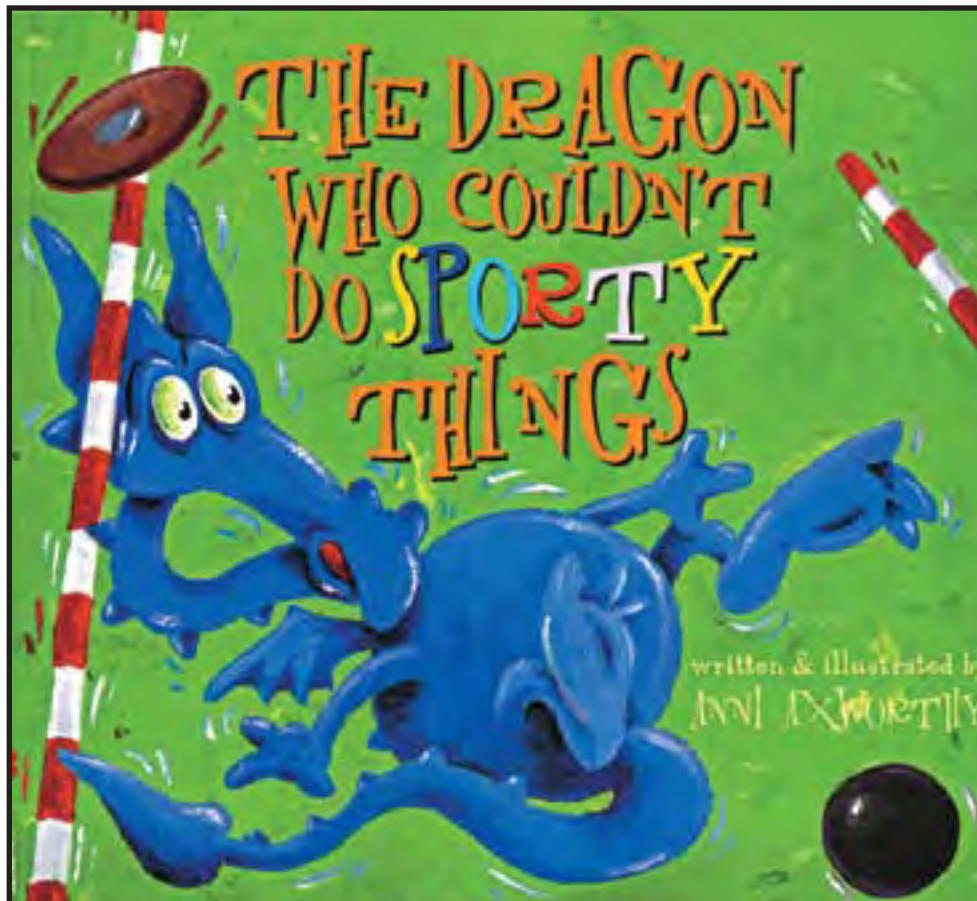
Barlay! is a chapter book that is part of the Waarda series for young readers, a new Indigenous children's series. The series is edited by Sally Morgan and is designed to support the literacy needs of Indigenous children in primary school, by making available to them stories written by Indigenous authors. At the same time, it introduces non-Indigenous children to the richness and depth of Indigenous storytelling and this was the setting in which I used the book. I read *Barlay!* in the context of a unit of work on narrative writing at the end of Year One, but this book would also be suitable for Years Two and Three. I chose this book for two reasons; firstly to incorporate indigenous perspectives and stories into the unit, but secondly because it offers a good example of the structure of a narrative, with particularly good descriptions of settings and characters. Due to this fact, *Barlay!* would also be suitable for work on visualization. The story focuses on Sarah, her brothers, and Nan who is a great storyteller. One story that Nan tells is about the woordatj, whose job it is to make sure children listen to their Elders and behave themselves. Sarah's brothers are convinced it's a fairy story designed to try and scare them, but Sarah is not so sure. On a family picnic Sarah and her brothers are set to find out that sometimes scary stories turn out to be true!



Title: The Dragon Who Couldn't Do Sporty Things

Author: Anni Axworthy
Illustrator: Anni Axworthy
Published By: Zero to Ten Ltd, part of the Evans Publishing Group
ISBN: 9781840895339
RRP: \$9.95
Reviewed by: Jess Richards

The Dragon Who Couldn't Do Sporty Things is an entertaining book that I shared with my Grade One class, but would be suitable for Prep to Grade Three. The story focuses on Little Dragon, who has been watching too much television and eating too many sandwiches. When Little Dragon realizes that he needs to start doing some exercise, he heads to the local athletics club. He tries lots of different events with the help of the coach, but he doesn't think he will ever find something he is good at. This picture book deals with the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, balancing food and exercise to stay fit, and it encourages persistence. Little Dragon is unsuccessful at many sports before he finds the one he likes and is good at. It has a good story paired with entertaining illustrations which my whole class found quite hilarious! Some of their feedback was 'I loved it because it was so fun' and 'I give it 100/100 because it teaches you a lesson and it's funny too!' I would recommend this book to other early years teachers as it has quickly become a class favourite.



Title: Pets series (Cats, Birds, Dogs, Fish, Rabbits, Mice and Rats)

Author: Greg Pyers

Published By: Pearson Education

ISBN: 978-1-7407-0561-5, 978-1-7407-0560-8, 978-1-7407-0558-5,
978-1-7407-0563-9, 978-1-7407-0559-2, 978-1-7407-0562-2.

RRP: \$29.95 each or \$89.95 for the set

Reviewed by: Michelle Tukuafu

This set of books would appeal to children from Prep to Year 3. They are non-fiction books with colourful photos and clear succinct information. There are six books, each book containing detailed information on one pet. The pets include birds, cats, dogs, fish, mice and rats and rabbits. This resource would fit into *Life and Living* in the science curriculum.

The books are physically large (A4 size) and the font is also large, making it simple to read. This series is easy to use as each book has clear titles outlining what the information is about. The information is short and concise with every topic covering just two pages. Every book gives a brief introduction of each pet and then discusses the characteristics, responsible pet ownership and how to choose a suitable pet. Each book has suggestions of further books and internet sites on the topic. There is also a companion website which provides further information on the pets depicted in each book.

I found the books useful with my Prep/Year One class as they found the photos of children and pets engaging. We used the books to investigate pets and work out which pet would be the most suitable to own. It was helpful that each book was just about the one animal as the students could then navigate them easily without having to use a variety of books to find further information about their pet. The students especially enjoyed the profile of a child who owns a pet which is in each book. This part of the book always generated a lot of discussion. The profile also helped provide a model of writing information about ourselves and our own pet. Older children could use the books independently to research pets.

I would highly recommend these books for early childhood educators as I found them a popular informational asset to our unit about pets.



Title: SHAKE A LEG

Author: Boori Monty Pryor & Jan Ormerod

Published By: Allen & Unwin

ISBN: 978-1-74175-890-0

RRP: \$24.95

Reviewed By: Teenah Schneider & Year Two, North Arm State School, Queensland

Shake a Leg is a fiction children's picture book. It is a blend of traditional Indigenous stories with a modern tale. Recently it was awarded the 2011 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction.

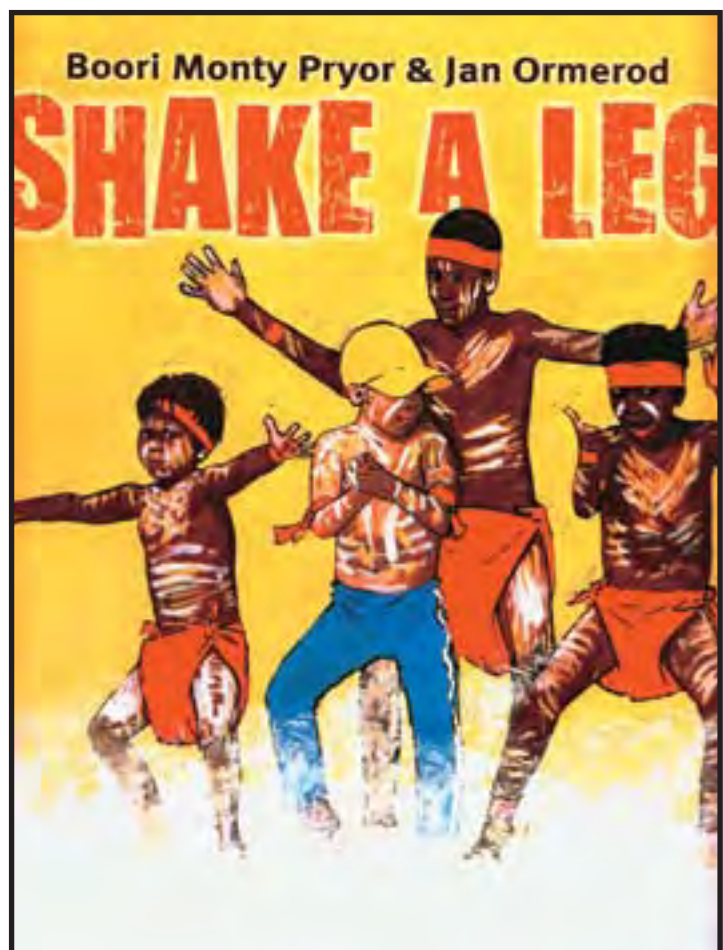
When three young boys go hunting for pizza in Far North Queensland they are surprised to find that Bertie's Pizzeria is owned by an Aboriginal family. While waiting for their pizza they are treated to a Dreaming Story about a crocodile. 'I liked the crocodile pizza.' This whets the appetite of the young boys to hear more stories. While waiting for their milkshakes Bertie shares another story about a bee dance. 'I thought the bee story was funny.' This story introduced the Shake a Leg dance. The repetitive text in the chant drew the students in to the story.

The final message of the book tells of the setting of the story once being a gathering place, but is now a busy street. And how the pizza feeds the soul and keeps dancing strong so the old people can join them.

The illustrations and layout in Shake a Leg really engaged the students. 'It was like a comic and I love comics and the pictures were really good.'

We have been studying Dreaming Stories this term. Shake a Leg offered the students a fresh context in which to connect with the indigenous concepts we have been discussing and viewing.

Ms Teenah and Year Two definitely give this book the thumbs up!



Title: Sounds All Around Us
(including the titles: Making Sounds,
How Do We Hear?,
What is Sound?,
Different Sounds and
Sound and Hearing)

Author: Catherine Veitch, Charlotte Guillain
Illustrator: Photo Research by Tracy Cummins and Tracey Engel
Published By: Heinemann Library
ISBN: 978-0-431-19335-9 / 978-0-431-19337-3 / 978-0-431-19336-6 /
978-0-431-19338-0 / 978-0-431-19392-2
RRP: \$21.05 (singly)
Reviewed by: Andrea Felgendrejeris

This series of non essential resource books would appeal to three-to six-year-olds. The language is simple and informative and the photography clear, colourful and exciting, with images from around the world exploring the concept of sound in various contexts.

The use of topic-specific language is simply explained so that children will understand the clear definitions of the concepts explored e.g. sound waves, and the science of sounds, while simple illustrations provide children with visual images to further enhance their understanding of the topic.

The potential for further curriculum exploration within the classroom based on the information in the book is great with exploration and experimentation by children simply implemented. The possibilities are endless.

These books can be resourced from www.booksdirect.com.au



Guidelines for writers

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

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

Style

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

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

Referencing

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

Maybe you need help with referencing. If so, you should find the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers* (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 20 Hilton Road, Gympie, Qld. 4570. Where original artwork or material has been submitted it will be returned at the contributor's request. All contributors will be sent a copy of the journal.

