



Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the
early childhood years

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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 Term one of the 2012 teaching year came to an end I hope ECTA members

were able to enjoy a well-earned holiday and recharge their batteries in preparation for the new term ahead. It has been a very busy term for all our colleagues and for ECTA as members in primary schools begin to deliver the new Australian Curriculum for English, Mathematics and Science and those in before school settings come to terms with the new NQF requirements.

ECTA has sought feedback from members around the C2C units and lessons used in Education Queensland State Schools and have met face-to-face with Mr Mark Campling, Assistant Director-General, School Performance, and other senior officers in the C2C project during the holiday period to discuss member's feedback in detail.

There have been many mixed messages received by our members working in Education Queensland settings about the process around 'adopting or adapting' the content of the C2C lessons and units and the recommended pedagogy to be used in a Prep classroom. The ECTA coordinating committee therefore appreciated the clarity of the content regarding C2C and early childhood pedagogy during the Prep year outlined in the March edition of the Teaching Learning Connect e-Newsletter published by Education Queensland. To view the full document click the link posted in the Advocacy section of our website under C2C. The article stated:

The five contexts for learning continue to underpin curriculum delivery in the Prep year ... opportunities for negotiated learning remain important. Prep students should be provided with opportunities to make choices about their learning, to share ideas about what they have learnt and what they want to learn, and to share the ways they like to

learn. Importantly, the school can decide how to manage time and the classroom setting when delivering the Prep curriculum. Longer blocks of time for engaging students in active learning through the contexts of play, investigations and real-life situations should be planned for, and they should be interspersed with meaningful routines and transitions and focused teaching and learning.

During first term ECTA provided a response to the document *P-2 curriculum, assessment and reporting: Advice and guidelines 2012-13* currently being developed by QSA. We will post a link in the Advocacy section of our website to the document once it is released by QSA. This document outlines the requirements as we move from the Early Learning Areas of the Prep Early Years Learning Guidelines to the Australian Curriculum subjects.

Several ECTA representatives participated in a focus group organised by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) who were undertaking consultations on the application of the National Professional Standards for Teachers to teachers in early childhood settings.

ECTA is also currently aiding in the development of the *National Principles for Early Childhood Road Safety Education*. If you have any feedback on best practice and delivery of information to parents and children in before school settings please email me directly kim@ecta.org.au

Consultation on the draft *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Technologies and Health and Physical Education* has opened online. ECTA will seek feedback from members via eNEWS and use this to formulate our organisational submission. We ask all ECTA members and ECTA Groups to make their own individual and group submissions via the ACARA website <http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum.html> Feedback

is data driven therefore the more submissions received the louder our voice and in turn the more influence we can have on the outcomes. Submissions close online on 3 June.

ECTA is proud to announce that we will once again partner ECA in co-sponsoring the Under Eight's Week Regional Tour. The theme for this year's Under Eights Week is *Language – actively connecting children to their world* and the dates are May 21 – May 28 2012. Information about the tour, once finalised, will be published on the ECTA and the ECA-QLD websites.

Conference registrations opened on 9th March for 2012 ECTA financial members and to the public on 30th March. Workshops are filling quickly so I recommend you go online to register ASAP. Once again the conference committee has done an amazing job with a huge selection of interesting presentations to choose from. I hope to see you all at Sheldon Conference and Entertainment Centre, Taylor Rd Sheldon, Brisbane on 23 June for the conference. We will publish the recipients of our Remote and Regional Sponsorship to attend the conference on the website. ECTA will once again sponsor

two office bearers from each of our regional ECTA Groups to attend the conference and ECTA Group breakfast this year. I look forward to once again meeting with you all to gain feedback as to how we can best support our regional members. ECTA now has ECTA Groups in Cairns, Townsville, Yeppoon, Gladstone, Hervey Bay, Cooloola, Logan and Bayside and the Mackay group currently reforming.

We have included a DVD of the three ECTA videoling presentations held last year with this journal mail out. The DVD is viewable on a computer only. Links to our first videoling for 2012, *Maintaining play based pedagogy using the Australian Curriculum* by Anne Pearson, can be found on the ECTA homepage and on the videoling section of the site.

It was with great sadness that I attended the funeral of ECTA Life Member Von Davis last month. Von was an amazing women and advocator for early childhood. Fellow life members Mark Cooper and Gail Halliwell have written a vale to Von which is published in this journal.

Kim

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From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

If you were asked to share a 'gem' from your experiences as an early childhood educator what would it be – to listen, to respect, to wonder, to believe, or to make the most of every moment? In this Issue of *Educating Young Children* we get up close with members of the ECTA co-ordinating committee to hear about the most important thing they have learnt as educators of young children. We would like to hear from you to – so if you have a 'gem' please share it with us through journal@ecta.org.au

Getting this journal off to a great start, *Educating Young Children* regulars Lisa Sonter and Leanne Hunter offer their thoughts on leadership and sustainable practices. Look out for their new book *Progressing Play: Practicalities, intentions and possibilities in emerging co-constructed curriculum*.

Continuing this jam-packed issue Mathilda Element, Sue Webster, Melissa Lee and Carol Ruskin join in conversation to reveal the

challenges and stimulations of reflective practice while in 'environments' we visit the new vegetable gardens at St Margaret's Anglican School.

In 'partnerships' we are pleased to introduce C&K's *Building waterfalls: teaching and learning guidelines for educators of children aged birth to three and kindergarten programs*. Endorsed as an approved kindergarten learning program by QSA the guidelines capture the essence of C&K and communicate the belief that early childhood education and care settings are places where children come first.

Libby Gaedtke introduces our newest ECTA group and Coeliac Queensland offer useful advice for educators of children with coeliac disease.

In 'feature articles' Valerie Warwick explores the magic of drama, Ronit Baras advocates for the individuality, strength and talent of every child and Helen Wilkie approaches 'calm' through Tai Chi and relaxation. And to further tantalise, Ann Heirdsfield and Sue Southey each explore approaches to maths in Prep and kindergarten while Melinda Miller delves into holistic approaches to sustainability in early years settings.

To finish Mathilda has sourced yet another inspiring collection of media reviews for your deliberation. Turn to page 45 to find out more.

... finally as you sit down to read please take a quiet moment to acknowledge ECTA life member Yvonne Davis our friend and colleague. Vale.

The Editorial Team

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Getting to know your committee

What is the most important thing you have learnt as an early childhood educator? Educating Young Children asked members of the ECTA co-ordinating committee for their insights.

The most important thing I have learnt as an early childhood educator ...



... is to listen. Listen to children, parents and colleagues to create an exciting, engaging and relevant learning environment as they all have amazing ideas that can enhance learning. Listen to governing bodies and the ever changing curriculum and expectations and adapt but, wherever possible, don't compromise your philosophy. Listen to yourself, as you reflect and continually evolve as an educator.

Kim Walters – President



... is that children experience childhood in ways that are not always equal or just. Every child has the right to education and care that respects their cultures, languages and capabilities to the fullest. Early childhood educators should never underestimate the potential of their influence in affecting the life chances of our youngest citizens. Every moment counts.

Lynne Moore – Editor *Educating Young Children*



... is that there is so much to be learned and valued in Early Childhood Education! I think the sense of *Belonging* that children develop is vital to their happiness in Early Years settings, and this is something that we continue to need throughout our lives, whether teenagers, adults and even into old age. Fostering connections with staff, parents and other children in our settings is a worthwhile investment in their happiness, well-being and learning.

Libby Gaedkte – ECTA groups coordinator



... is to listen, observe and build upon the inquisitive minds of each individual child that I teach! These children already come into our classroom with ideas and a creative spirit with which we need to engage and support. In the evolving world of these digital natives we need to balance real-life experiences with support for the technology rich world in which they live - modelling how they can engage with and use digital tools safely and ethically. My main ambition in life has been to pass on the skills and knowledge I have learnt to other people. Young children learn new skills and knowledge at an amazing rate - we need to encourage this and support the child as a whole and for who they are.

Allison Borland - coordinating committee member



.. is that we should always act with a lens of respect. That the places and spaces children play in, the ideas they have and the things they say should all be viewed and responded to with respect. Through laying a foundation of respect, children are taught its importance and a culture of respect is nurtured. Through mutual respect, we can build an effective partnership with educators, families and children in the learning process.

Nebula Wild – coordinating committee member



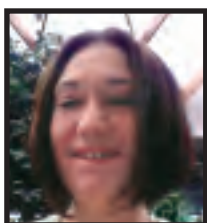
... is to support, inspire and ignite.

Support ... continued understanding with respect, open-mind and compassion.

Inspire ... wonder, thirst for knowledge and belief in self.

Ignite ... passion, rights and hope for a future that believes in play as an essential and integral part in our lifelong journey.

Barb Skinner – coordinating committee member



... is to truly value and utilise the abundant diversity of our children, their unique characteristics, capabilities and dreams, to assist them in developing their own potential so that they are empowered for the future. 'I believe the children are the future. Teach them well and let them led the way.' This is my favourite song quote as it reflects my early childhood education philosophy.

Nichole Kranz – secretary



... is to take the time to seize the '*teachable moments*'. Engaging students in learning involves understanding how children learn and the importance of building interconnectedness between learning experiences and the direction the new learning may take, giving children ownership of their own learning.

... *learning how to learn, and having a grand and satisfying time along the way* (Bess-Gene Holt).

Lisa Cooper – Treasurer



... is from children – a sense of humour, different ways to see the world.

... from parents – listening to parents' feelings, not always agreeing with them, but respecting their decisions.

... from my colleagues – enthusiasm, passion and new ideas.

... from myself - how to drink lukewarm coffee and how to 'hang on' and wait to visit the bathroom.

Sue Southey – Vice president

... is that political and organisational agendas change and may be beyond my control but it is my beliefs, my actions, my commitment and my responsiveness that defines me as an educator and positions me in partnership with children, families and communities.

Mark Cooper – coordinating committee member and life member



37th ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference Saturday 23rd June 2012



Keynote Address:

“Love, Fear and Shame in Education”

Presenter: Robin Grille
Psychologist and Writer



Robin Grille is a father, psychologist in private practice and a parenting educator. His articles on parenting and child development have been widely published and translated in Australia and overseas. Robin's first book: 'Parenting for a Peaceful World' (2005) has received international acclaim and led to speaking engagements around Australia, USA and New Zealand. His second book, 'Heart to Heart Parenting' (2008), is published by ABC Books. Robin's work is animated by his belief that humanity's future is largely dependent on the way we collectively relate to our children.

ECTA Members ONLY:

Pre registration
9th March 2012

General Online
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Sustainable leadership

Leanne Hunter and Lisa Sonter

Leanne Hunter and Lisa Sonter are both recipients of Community Merit Awards (National Excellence in Teaching Awards) for Leadership and Innovation in Early Childhood Teaching Methods. In this interview Leanne and Lisa share their leadership capabilities as they reflect on the journey of introducing sustainable practices to their preschool.

Do you see yourself as a leader?

As early childhood educators, we are challenged to take on a leadership role daily with children, families, administrators and other stakeholders. However, we often discount our leadership abilities. Sometimes, challenging the lens through which we view ourselves and others, enables us to see leadership potential and to feel more comfortable with the label of leader.

In fact, Rhonda Forrest's study of beginning directors in child care centres focuses on self-awareness. She suggests that

becoming a leader involves the exploration of one's values and beliefs, which, in turn, informs leadership behaviours. (2002, 74)

Do people choose to be a leader or is it something that just happens?

Taking on a leadership role is a choice. Sometimes an idea, a passion, or a niggle will be the stimulus for our desire to make a change. However, Wendy Lee (2011, 1) believes that leadership belongs to everyone. She states that

using magic, being moral, creating merriment and mobilising others are all part of creating strong pedagogical leadership practices in early childhood settings ... Good leaders have a significant effect on the success of children in

education and, as teachers, we therefore all have an obligation to be good leaders ... Every teacher, child and parent has the right to be engaged in leadership.

As a leader, do you believe you have a role in supporting aspiring leaders?

Working in teams is very much part of early childhood education. Supporting the leadership potential in others by mentoring and building their knowledge, confidence and capacity can only strengthen and improve learning possibilities for adults and children.

Describe how you lead?

Being an effective leader requires you also to be a good follower. Yu, Cox and Sims (2006, 378)

believe that the empowering leader emphasizes follower self-influence, rather than providing followers with orders and commands; leads others to influence themselves to achieve high performance and that followers themselves are an influential source of wisdom and direction.

Being a leader or follower is not a permanent either/or way of being. We may be leaders in some situations but that doesn't always define our position. We make choices.

What's stopping you or someone else taking on a leadership role? Is it situational? Are you controlled by others or is it a self-imposed restraint? Is it confidence?

To answer that question I would like to draw on the wisdom of the Dalai Lama. He is considered by many to be an inspirational leader who has insights about confidence. He believes that

true leaders have the ability to look at an issue from many perspectives and, based on that expanded view, to make the right decisions. They have a calm, collected, and concentrated mind, undisturbed by negative thoughts and emotions, trained and focused.

He further explains that if your mind is influenced by anger, jealousy, fear, or lack of self-confidence you become disturbed and inefficient. He provided the following advice.

Lack of self-confidence is a waste of time because it does not contribute to finding the right solutions. To combat this, leaders must apply the concept of dependent origination in everyday life. This means that all factors, considering consequences both short-term and long-term from different perspectives, must be taken into account when making decisions. Once those in charge start thinking in this interconnected way, they feel the rightness of their decision and self-confidence builds from there. (Dalai Lama & Van Den Muyzenberg 2008, 33)

Can you share your leadership in action when introducing sustainability practices?

Leading the process of embedding sustainable practices at Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre has and continues to be a journey with its own highs and lows, trials and celebrations. This has been a relatively recent



Opportunities to connect with the natural environment.

journey for us although some staff members have a longstanding interest in the environment and have been dabbling for many years in improving our natural environment. This is challenging, as our playground is quite small.

We strive to make the best use of what we have to provide space, time and materials to ensure children have opportunities to be connected with the natural environment.

We take moments as they arise to appreciate the visiting wildlife. Over time, water conservation and grant applications for water tanks became another focus as well as looking at other sustainable practices such as recycling and energy saving.



Gardening in small spaces.



Appreciate visiting wildlife.

Knowledge and enthusiasm were shared as various staff members attended conferences and workshops. We formally and informally looked at our environment through a 'green' lens which enabled our shared vision to solidify.



Interest in the environment.

How do you both sustain yourselves as leaders?

Each year we are provided with challenges in sustaining passion and leadership. The year began with many ideas and projects to continue our journey with sustainability. Parents were invited to join an environment and sustainability group. Ideas grew and action was taken. However as the year unfolded, I was disappointed with my own progress as other pressing matters were taking my head space.

How do you manage this? Do you reflect upon it?

Yes, I asked myself questions. For example, were our sustainable practices continuing or stalling? Was this just me or were others thinking the same? I was reminded of the parallel dilemma when looking at supporting some children's play. If I step out, will the play continue? Do all players in the scenario have the skills, motivation and confidence to continue? Similarly, if I step away from a lead role with sustainable practices, will they continue?

It was a time for reflection and a dose of reality! It was a time to seek some thoughts from other stakeholders. Firstly I asked the children who clearly expressed ways we 'help to save our earth'. We added their words and drawings to a wall panel and asked parents to add their thoughts. Staff members also kindly responded to a quick survey to gauge their understanding of where we were and where we might go.

What did you learn through this process?

- To take time to reflect. As Kathleen Noonan once reported,

*Do not now look for the answers
... At present you need to live the
question. Perhaps you will gradually,
without even noticing it, find yourself
experiencing the answer, some distant
day.*

- To accept the natural ebb and flow of projects. Be realistic!
- To see what we have achieved rather than be overwhelmed by what we still wanted to achieve. We now have better processes



Childrens ideas to help save our earth.

for sharing information with parents; a sustainability management plan; and commitment to our shared vision.

- To celebrate the truly amazing shift towards embedding sustainable thinking and practices with children and adults.



Sharing information with families

- To acknowledge the ripple effect of young children's influences within their own families.
- To recognise the gradual shift to team leadership where different team members take a lead role depending on the idea, project and passion.
- To accept that our sustainability journey is ongoing, fluid and multi-directional and that moving towards our shared vision, regardless of pace, is still moving forward.

To look is one thing. To see what you look at is another. To understand what you see is a third. To learn from what you understand is still something else. But to act on what you learn is all that really matters.
Talmud

... and finally you are about to release a new book.

Yes, we are excitedly looking forward to the release of our book *Progressing Play: Practicalities, intentions and possibilities in emerging co-constructed curriculum*. It is in press as we speak. Readers can find out more by going to our website at www.consultantsatplay.com

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Vale Yvonne Davis – ECTA Life Member



It is with great sadness that ECTA acknowledges the passing of Yvonne Davis ECTA Life Member and an original member of the State Preschool Teachers Association, the precursor to ECTA.

Yvonne dedicated much of her professional and personal time to volunteering and it was through this commitment that Yvonne's immense capacity for compassion, social justice and empowerment of others shone out. While staying out of the limelight, Yvonne was always willing to put up her hand and assist ECTA in any way she could. Yvonne was a member of the State Coordinating Committee for many years, hosting meetings at the West End State Preschool and, following her retirement from teaching, continued as an active ECTA volunteer at the conference and most significantly coordinating the mail out of *Educating Young Children*.

Yvonne began her teaching career in 1973 after being selected to undertake Queensland's Preschool extension course, readying teachers to work in Queensland's new State Preschools. Yvonne commenced work as a preschool teacher in the first year of their operation. After teaching for many years Yvonne undertook a Teacher Librarian course and was appointed as the Teacher-in-Charge of the Brisbane South Preschool Resource Centre (later the Early Childhood Resource Centre). It was in this role that Yvonne was able to share her passion for early childhood teaching practice and her underlying belief that all children have the right to a childhood that includes quality education and equitable opportunities.

In her quiet and collaborative way Yvonne became a mentor to the many teachers, young and old, who passed through the Resource Centre. Under her direction the Resource Centre was a hub for networking, the sharing of ideas and professional development.

Shifts in government policy did not faze Yvonne. Remaining true to her values and beliefs, she adjusted to change and embraced it, always with an eye on what was best for children. One such change saw Yvonne return to teaching at West End State Preschool. Again, in this diverse setting, Yvonne demonstrated the importance of listening to families, assisting them not only with their children's education but with their inclusion into the school community.

Yvonne will be long remembered by those touched by her insight, compassion, dedication and commitment. She will be remembered by ECTA as a long serving and willing volunteer who epitomised all things that ECTA stands for. Our lives are sadder for the loss of Yvonne yet brightened by the memory of one person's contribution to early childhood education in Queensland and to ECTA.

We bow our heads in acknowledgement of Yvonne's life.

Reflective practice

A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when early childhood educators and those with whom they work are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which current practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. In such a climate, issues relating to curriculum quality, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised and debated (EYLF 2009, p.13). In this Issue of Educating Young Children we ask four educators to provide their thoughts about this crucial element in the teaching and learning process.

Mathilda Element

Mathilda has taught in the early childhood years of school (Prep to Year Three) for several years, and is currently working part-time as a Curriculum Support Advisor at Pine Community School while raising a young family.

We show we value reflective practices when we ...

make time to reflect on what we are doing, where we are going and the 'big picture' of our teaching goals and aims. This can be done in written forms (e.g. personal teaching journals, reflective diaries, 'learning stories', etc.), verbal forms (talking to supportive colleagues and friends, attending reflective staff meetings or forums, etc.) or visual forms (drawing, mapping or brainstorming images and text about our teaching practice, etc.).

We involve all members of the teaching team in reflective practice when we ...

actively listen to their reflections – learning to really 'hear' what they are saying, to synthesise information and to ask pertinent questions that demonstrate understanding and empathy. When we are asking questions of and to each other in a collaborative environment, we are promoting a culture of reflective practice amongst the teaching team. The biggest factors in this are time (giving ourselves time to talk collaboratively, to listen responsively, to share, debate and build on ideas) and skills (e.g. reflective and active listening skills, skills in asking 'good' questions that open up dialogue and generate solutions to problems). Involving all members of the educational team also means acknowledging and listening to the reflections of parents and children, and using them to further our practice.

In an environment that values reflective practice you would see ...

teachers being supported to feel valued as professionals, parents feeling empowered to offer their own reflections on the classroom culture and children being taught the skills for reflecting on their own learning journeys. There would be lots of time for talking, and people asking each other how their day/week/year/unit topic/problem was going, and time given to listen to the answers!

We involve children in reflecting on their own learning by ...

skilling them with the words to reflect on learning, asking them pertinent questions and listening deeply to the answers. Challenging them to think metacognitively about what they are doing can be tricky at first, but quickly becomes a habit when they are used to being asked to articulate what they are thinking, feeling and learning. Processes such as reflective journals, learning stories or portfolios with student input can help create a reflective learning culture in children's classrooms.

We are challenged/stimulated by ...

the time constraints in the busy world of early childhood education. Making the time to reflect on our practice, to listen to our colleagues and offer support and advice, and to listen to the input of children and parents is time-consuming but ultimately valuable and worthwhile as it only strengthens our skills as teachers and learners.

An experience or moment I remember ...

when I started teaching, I would write every night in my personal diary about

my experiences – all the heartaches, woes, problems, joys, exhilarating a-ha! moments, everything. This was extremely hard to do in a busy year, but I made the time because it was this process that helped me become a better teacher. As my confidence grew, I found I no longer needed to reflect in written forms, but I still enjoy getting those old diaries out and seeing how far I've come (and how far I've still got to go!)

Sue Webster

Sue is a Prep Teacher at Wellers Hill. She is also a member of the Educating Young Children editorial panel.

I show that I value reflective practices when I ...

spend time at the end of the day reflecting on a particular lesson or child to further my ability to make informed decisions in my planning and to improve my pedagogy. I like to analyze, reconsider and question the decisions I made during the lesson and the way in which I prepared, conducted and concluded my lesson. Particularly now, with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum and our schools decision to adopt the Curriculum to Classroom documents, I spend even more time reflecting about what I do in the classroom, why I do it and if it was successful.

I also discuss this with my teacher aide on a daily basis and fellow prep teachers formally, once a week, and many times a day in informal settings like classroom visits, during lunch breaks and over the photocopier.

I endeavour to not only reflect with teachers who are likely to agree with my own views but with those who will challenge my ideas and beliefs and lead to my children's, and my own ongoing learning.

I am trying on a daily basis to engage with the new curriculum whilst still holding onto the ideas and proven techniques that I have learnt over 25 years of teaching - this involves evaluating my own practice so as to further develop the skills, knowledge and approaches to best achieve quality outcomes for my children.

I hope to broaden my professional and personal knowledge by engaging with the new curriculum and thus use it to develop even better practices and pedagogy.

I involve my children in reflecting on their own learning by ...

questioning children individually and in a whole group about our focused lesson sessions and investigations. Questions include - what we learnt, why we learnt it, did we learn something new, what did you enjoy about what we investigated today, what else would you like to investigate? I use these answers in my own reflection to further enhance my planning for future learning experiences for individuals, small groups or whole group activities.

I also like to reflect on children individually after a focused learning session and reflect on whether or not I catered for each child and whether I added to each child's personal knowledge.

I encourage my children to feel independent, confident, powerful and capable and thus know that they have a role in their own learning by sharing their ideas, interests and personal reflections.

This way they themselves can add to their own learning through my planning – showing that learning and teaching involves cooperation and communication between teacher and children.

I feel that listening to children is one of the most powerful tools in being able to engage in personal reflection.

Not only listening and hearing the most vocal children - but valuing each child's voice.

Also, I like to reflect on the possible limitations to the lesson. Was it limited by behavior of class members? What could I do to best achieve an environment where all children feel they can listen and learn in a supported and protected environment? Were there any other inhibitors to children learning such as space, appropriate setting, temperature, use of staff/resources and my own time management?

I am challenged/stimulated by ...

evaluating the learning experiences I present, thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of my teaching and then linking them to professional readings. When I do this, I feel very stimulated to further develop my skills and knowledge and aim to translate these insights into effective practice. Unfortunately, I do not do this nearly enough because of time restraints.

I am fortunate to belong to some professional panels/groups of educators – including ECTA – and always value the time I spend in discussion around the theory and practice of teaching.

I also find spending time at professional development sessions, such as the ECTA conference, gives me an opportunity to strengthen and questions my own ideas about theory and practice and thus create the more effective practice in my classroom.

Melissa Lee

Melissa is a kindergarten teacher at the Gowrie (Qld). She has enjoyed working within the early childhood sector for 15 years, across a variety of settings, and has been part of the Lady Gowrie community for several years. More recently, Melissa has taken particular interest in the National Quality Framework and curriculum support.

We show we value reflective practices when we ...

- encourage questioning and thinking 'outside the box'.
- give children options and promote wonder and possibilities, and then act upon them.
- listen to suggestions and remain open to change, and the positive opportunities it might present.
- learn from our mistakes and celebrate our collaborative successes.
- acknowledge that our own personality and life experiences will inevitably result in us having our own bias and prejudices, just as we each have our own strengths and

weaknesses, and that these will influence the choices we make in the workplace. When we can accept that it's okay to have these, we can then challenge them and strive for a more objective or balanced approach.

We involve all members of the teaching team in reflective practice when we ...

- use reflective diaries in which all educators can contribute, and make the time to engage in conversations which focus on gaining diversity of perspectives.
- value the eyes and the ears of everyone in the learning environment; inclusive of casual, part-time and relief staff as well as students, volunteers, family members and visitors. We feel strongly about a community approach to learning and, with this in mind, everyone contributes towards creating a safe and stimulating place for children.
- allowing time for teams to converse about issues specific to their own learning environment during staff meetings

In an environment that values reflective practice you would see ...

- thoughtful and purposeful changes
- calculated risk-taking
- a genuine rapport between staff who value each other's differences and strengths
- discussion: not just among staff but also involving the children and the families in casual reflective conversations. For example 'How do you think that went today?'
- an evolving array of displays and spaces which not only cater for individual interests, but also appeal to everyone who is directly linked to that learning environment; staff, families, children and visitors.

We involve children in reflecting on their own learning by ...

valuing their opinion: asking them for their perspective and showing how much we respect it by writing their viewpoint down, then empowering them by making changes

based upon their suggestions. We find this also makes a big difference in the day-to-day management of behaviour and social interactions; because they are accustomed to reflecting, they are more conscious of what a harmonious learning environment should look like and keep each other in check as the day progresses. It impacts not only the learning, but their own personal ethics and how they conduct themselves as a person. It sets the conscientious foundation for our learning community.

We are challenged/stimulated by ...

hearing other people's perspectives can be quite confronting, especially when it relates directly to your practice. It really is about separating the personal feelings, and looking at things objectively with the outcome of best practice in mind.

It also helps when your colleagues are on the same journey of self-reflection with you, and the workplace takes on a culture of enquiry where everyone feels confident and comfortable enough to ask each other questions in a positive, safe and supportive environment.

An experience or moment I remember ...

was one of those moments that as teachers, we cherish, because everything just came together perfectly. It was in September last year and the children were at a stage where all the foundation work that we lay down in the initial months of the year to encourage active engagement and sharing of ideas and collaborative learning just blossomed, and I was run off my feet sourcing materials to extend upon so many creative ideas. We ended up constructing a ten-metre long pirate ship almost entirely out of recycled cardboard, complete with a hoistable Jolly Roger, fireable cannons, a rear wooden deck with perspex portholes, and even a beautifully-crafted treasure chest which a five-year-old pirate had craftily pilfered from his unsuspecting grandmother's house.

On top of that, the families and other educators felt very connected to our program and knew that their input was always welcome and valued, and so we had so many amazing

donations to enrich our play and enable this fantastic concept to take off.

It was a lovely reminder that self-reflection isn't always about looking for ways to improve; it's also about acknowledging and celebrating successes, and seeing and feeling how magical things can be when everything ties together.

It's about recognizing the elements that went into that success and thinking about how these can be strengthened, tweaked to meet changing dynamics and needs, but still remain as core components of your program.

Carol Ruskin

Carol is a passionate early childhood teacher with 25 years experience in New Zealand and Australia. She currently teaches at C&K, Perry Street, Coolum.

We show we value reflective practice when we ...

are prepared to put our personal pedagogical practice through a cyclical process of formal and informal reflection with our 'community of learners'. This in itself reflects respect for children, families, colleagues and the early childhood profession. Reflective teachers are progressive thinkers who are always willing to refine and modify their skills. Reflective teachers recognise that reflecting on one's practice provokes further analysing and it is the impetus for generating new ideas, producing positive change and raising the level of meaningful learning for children.

We involve all members of the teaching team in reflective practice when we ...

establish collegiality, trust, open mindedness and reciprocal support. We do this by valuing information from our 'community of learners'. Professionals striving for excellence do not see reflective practice as criticism. Teaching team members should recognise that collective reflective energies produce meaningful positive

changes. To support the notion of involving all team members in reflective practice, organisational cultures need to change and bring about equitable involvement in reflective practices. More professional development amongst all employees in early childhood centres would contribute to teachers, group leaders, assistants and directors understanding the process of reflective practice on the same level. The disparities between qualifications in early childhood centres means that colleagues can have varying levels of understanding of what reflective practice is and therefore value it differently.

In an environment that values reflective practice you would see ...

a fluidity of continued improvement in all aspects of individual teaching and team teaching practices supported by the organisational culture. High quality reflective teaching environments have high professional expectations and strive for excellence. There is always an inspirational leader with strengths in relationship connections, team building and extensive knowledge of quality reflective practice processes. Collegially, the 'community of learners' identify where improvements are needed. There is reciprocity to the reflective process and everyone has a voice as there must be an inclusive context for positive reflective practice. Inclusivity ensures each team member will take ownership of the outcomes of the reflective discussions. The environment should inspire challenge where long-held beliefs, assumptions and values are unpacked, refined, modified and changed if need be to lead to improved professional practice and organisational effectiveness. It is a continuous cycle and time to do this should be included as professional development.

We involve children in reflecting on their own learning by ...

valuing and recording as often as possible what children have to say. Thus, when a picture is presented, ask, 'Tell me about your picture or what can you see in your picture.' Record what the child says. Engaging children in group discussions, always valuing each child's input, establishes a context of inclusivity and encourages children to reflect

their knowledge and learning in their unique individual way. Again, recording every child's input, reflects that we value what they say. A portfolio being readily accessible and up-to-date, gives children opportunities to revisit previous learning to share with others and reflect on it.

We are challenged and stimulated by ...

striving for excellence and being prepared to change by reflecting on our practice. Identifying areas that need improvement, or incidents that involve our colleagues, is challenging. If colleagues all equally value reflective practice, then it will be less threatening and seen as professional inquiry, not as judgements of poor standards. Reflecting to find patterns and connections is challenging, as perceptions can differ. To do this, we must also look at our own history and unpack long-held notions and beliefs. This can be challenging as this process can undermine our upbringing and education.

An experience I remember ...

and one that is ongoing, is technology in the early childhood educational setting. The reflective process has been on-going and stimulated by the rapidly changing face of technology. My reflections have included:

- the time allowed on the computers for educators and children
- being confronted by a growing number of children who have exceptional computer skills and the broad spectrum of children's technological abilities
- the child who memorised every password for every computer, who could turn all ten computers on, access the internet and a great educational program and type in different subjects for friends to watch
- emailing family and friends of children
- connecting to centres and friends around the world
- the global connectedness of computers.

Each challenge, reflection and change has created a new set of circumstances that have consequently brought about new challenges that would benefit from reflection.

Good to Grow

Angela Drysdale and Melissa Garbutt
St Margaret's Anglican Girls School

'Life begins when you start a garden.' Chinese proverb

The school playground was renovated with new gardens and vegetable boxes were built. As educators we know the best place to find a challenge, beauty and pure joy is in the garden.



Getting hands dirty.

Therefore the Early Childhood students decided to get their hands dirty and began gardening. Alongside the school gardener, each class selected plants, prepared the soil and planted the plants. The gardens included vegetable gardens a native garden and a sensory garden which provides joy for all who walk past.

The gardens have become places of interest and excitement and provide a sense of wonder and



A sense of purpose.

exploration. Together the students and their teachers have the chance to share anticipation, success and failure.

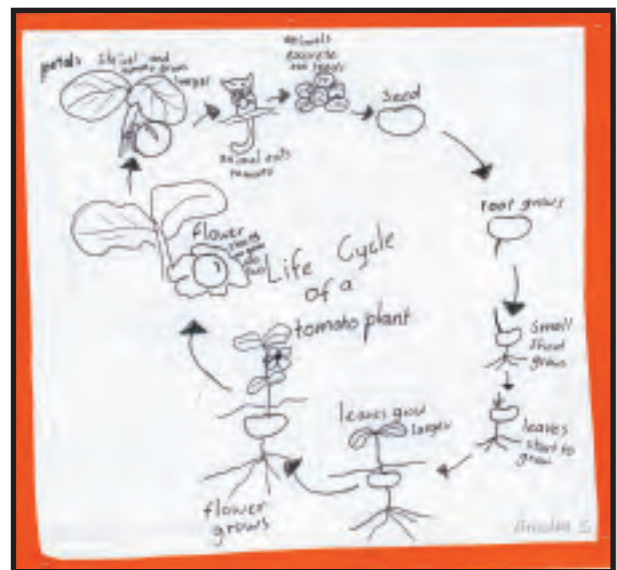
"We were learning about seeds and plants and how they grown and exactly what to do to grow a garden."

As educators, we believe that including gardening in the school curriculum sets a strong foundation for life skills as it provides children with a sense of purpose and a meaningful way to explore and develop an appreciation of nature. It is one of life's great experiences.

Year two's and three's planted a garden.

Here is what the students found:

Our plant investigations led us to ponder how living things grow, change and continue the circle of life. Through examining seeds growing and the process of germination we explored what a plant needs to help it to grow. We planned and planted our vegetable patch.



Plant investigations.



“We took some other plants out of their boxes like tomatoes and lettuce, bean seeds and more and some girls got to put them in and watered them”.

We turned the soil, planted the seeds, bulbs and seedlings, tended the garden and revelled in the growth we witnessed. We even ‘planted magical gardens’ in the classrooms, brimming with colourful fruits, detailed vegetables and exquisite flowers. Many of us were inspired to plant our own seeds at home, research our interests in plants and share our experiences and knowledge.



Tending the garden.

The vegetable garden was even officially opened by the “Queen”.

When the vegetables were ready to be harvested we picked the veggies and then made coleslaw. It was tasty!



“We are planting the garden because it will be an interesting experience to learn about, also so many people love the garden”.



Harvesting.

It was satisfying and motivating to care for and observe with excitement the marvel of new life.



We love our garden.

C&K Building waterfalls: teaching and learning guidelines for educators of children aged birth to three and kindergarten programs.

Kim Davis

C&K research and development coordinator

C&K has a long and proud history of providing quality education and care programs for Queensland's children for over 100 years. The organisation has a strong tradition of providing quality support for families and children across the State, from metropolitan centres to rural and remote communities. Our tagline, '*Where Children Come First*', demonstrates the commitment the organisation has towards quality education and care for young children and their families.

In 2006, C&K's first curriculum framework was published – *Building waterfalls*. *Building waterfalls* was born from a desire to translate what was unique and special about a C&K experience. *Building waterfalls* is '*Australia's first collaborative birth-to-school-age curriculum created by and for educators, parents and children. Informed by beliefs and principles shaped over 99 years, it captures the essence of C&K and communicates the belief that early childhood education and care settings are places where children come first*' (C&K 2011, 4). To ensure that the framework was contemporary and encompassed current theories and practice, in 2009 a project was begun to write the second edition of *Building waterfalls*.

A changing landscape

The 2009 project was implemented at a critical time in the wider early childhood landscape of Australia. The Federal government was introducing wide sweeping reform to the early childhood sector. Nationwide policy initiatives were introduced. For the first time, Australia would have one national curriculum framework which would support children's education and care. *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (EYLF) describes '*the principles, practice and outcomes essential to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school*' (www.deewr.gov.au 2012). The EYLF is one aspect of the reform for universal access to ensure nationally consistent quality early childhood programs for all children.

During this period, Queensland (Qld) also undertook state-based initiatives to improve educational outcomes for Qld's kindergarten-aged children. Queensland's low level of kindergarten participation was identified in the 2008 McMeniman report *Early Childhood Education and Care*. In response to this report, the Queensland government published the

Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (2010) (QKLG) and its companion document, the *Continua of learning and development* and received approval from the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) as an approved learning guideline. Kindergarten program providers are required to implement learning programs that align with the QKLG and are accredited by the QSA.

Consultation, collaboration and partnerships

C&K had a mandate, from the Qld and National governments, to ensure that the learning program designed for the kindergarten years met the national framework requirements, as well as QSA requirements. C&K undertook this obligation as an opportunity to consult widely with our education and care sector, and to provide collaborative opportunities to ensure it had a learning guideline that was responsive to the contextual and geographical identities of the programs being delivered across a wide and diverse state.

In late 2009, C&K held consultations across the state. These forums provided opportunities for

educators to reflect upon the first edition of *Building waterfalls*, and identify the:

- elements that supported them in their teaching practice
- elements that supported them with family and community engagement
- structural and design elements that facilitated ease of reading and knowledge transfer
- characteristics of a teaching and learning guideline that inspired and embraced their perspectives, understandings and cultural contexts.

The project was also informed by two additional elements:

- an expert panel, comprising partnerships with state and national representatives of universities, government agencies and other organisations working with children in the early years.
- a trial of the new curriculum decision-making model, as well as a small longitudinal trial entitled *100 Pairs of Eyes*.

There is a mix of old and new ...

One of the major findings of the consultations and panel was that the original underpinning philosophy of *Building waterfalls* was highly valued, and still provided a relevant basis for pedagogical practice. This philosophy is still found in the second edition.

Building on the perspectives of children and adults moving forward together, and recognising the diverse developmental and learning needs of children aged birth to five years, C&K published two teaching and learning guidelines:

C&K Building waterfalls: a guideline for children's learning and for teaching in kindergarten

C&K Building waterfalls: a guideline for educators living and learning with children aged birth to three years

The 'birth to three guideline' strengthens the foundation of the kindergarten guideline, and supports the transition from the early years to the kindergarten setting and learning environment.

C&K Building waterfalls describes an approach to living, learning and teaching that communicates:

- *children as competent and capable*
- *families as each child's first and primary educator*
- *teachers as knowledgeable and respected educators of young children*
- *early childhood education and care settings as inclusive and sustainable living and learning communities.*

The consultation process also evidenced a need for a clear direction on curriculum decision-making for educators. A new curriculum decision-making (CDM) model is proposed within the second edition that takes a holistic view of children's

- development and cultural identity
- rights to learning
- parents as children's first teachers.

Embedded within the model are the phases and elements that educators need to use to make decisions about learning.

The CDM model is communicated through the overarching phases of:

- to Know
- to Relate
- to Progress
- to Imagine.



The CDM phases acknowledge that children live complex lives; lives which intersect with the kindergarten program in many ways, and that encourage educators to connect in real and meaningful ways. Therefore, the phases are supported by the following elements, which provide educators with opportunities to critically reflect upon the elements that affect CDM.

- understanding context
- personal beliefs and values
- professional knowledge
- being responsive
- collaborative partnerships
- active involvement
- coordinating living and learning environments
- making plans and creating possibilities for learning
- documenting, assessing and communicating for learning
- reflective practice
- supporting transition to school.

The CDM model was trialled in 13 kindergarten, long day care and family day care settings.

The Currents of Thought and Shared Understandings

Central to *C&K Building waterfalls* are four unifying themes and, unchanged from the first edition, are the *Currents of Thought* – Connecting, Enlarging, Listening and Exploring. They still convey our shared understandings about children, families, community, teaching and learning. The *Currents of Thought* guide educators to make curriculum decisions that are socially just, meaningful and responsive to their context.

Each *Current of Thought* conveys three shared understandings. Together, the shared understandings focus educators approaches to learning and teaching. Reflected in these shared understandings are the principles of the EYLF.



Alignment of C&K Building waterfalls, the QKLG & EYLF

Integral to the project was to ensure that the guideline aligned with the EYLF and the QKLG. The table on page 23 is provided to illustrate how this alignment is evident.

Companion documents and resources

To assist educators to make professional judgements about children's learning, and in communicating these judgements to others (parents, community etc.), a companion document was developed: *A Spectrum of learning and development for kindergarten*.

Educators use the spectrum alongside the *C&K Building waterfalls: a guideline for children's learning and for teaching in kindergarten* to map the learning dispositions of children and to inform planning for future learning. The spectrum is designed for teachers to assess children's learning and learning dispositions across the kindergarten year, and to support their transition to school.

The guidelines and spectrum also include templates of possible planning, documenting and communicating learning formats, as well as transition-to-school documents. C&K's advisory team are developing further tools and materials to support educators to implement *C&K Building waterfalls*.

A series of workshops, seminars and professional network meetings have been provided to educators across the state, and will continue to roll out across 2012. Educators also have the support of C&K's advisory team to assist them to implement the guideline where needed.

	Shared understanding	Children's learning statements	QKLG Learning and Development Area and key focuses	EYLF outcome
Connecting	We are connected to family, community and country	Develop strong and confident social and cultural identities	Identity: Builds a confident self identity	Children have a strong sense of identity
	We connect with and build upon what we know	Explore and expand ways to use language/s	Communicating: Explores and expands ways to use language, spoken and non-verbal communication	Children are effective communicators
		Extend their understanding and engagement with texts	Explores and engages with literacy in personally meaningful ways	
		Extend their understanding and engagement with symbols, pattern systems and numeracy concepts	Explores and engages with numeracy in personally meaningful ways	
	We are connected to a natural and sustainable world	Discover, connect with and act responsibly to the natural and built environment	Correctedness: Shows increasing respect for environments	Children are connected with and contribute to their world

In September 2011, C&K Building waterfalls: a guideline for children's learning and for teaching in kindergarten received endorsement from QSA as an approved kindergarten learning program.

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From the regions

ECTA Townsville Group is off to a flying start!

Libby Gaedtke

It was with great pleasure and anticipation that we welcomed the ECTA Townsville Group during 2011. Our northern friends were very keen, undertaking the establishment of their Group enthusiastically, and soon had a list of ideas and events ready to go.

I recently interviewed representatives of their Group, and Keriann Reissenberger (Secretary) responded on their behalf:

Libby: What was the main motivation for forming the ECTA Townsville Group?

Keriann: We wanted to increase opportunities for good quality professional development in our region. Townsville seemed to get overlooked by many.

Networking was also a big reason. With all of the changes, it seemed very important that we could share ideas with colleagues. It has also enabled us to connect with the other sectors. Back in the days of preschools there seemed to be more sharing of ideas between schools and early years services. When different curriculums were introduced, there seemed to be a bit of a gap.

Really, it is at this time that it is most important to connect and advocate for best practices and be aware of what is happening in the settings that our children are going to or coming from.

Libby: How did you go about getting the Group up and running?

Keriann: It started with discussions with a past parent who works in curriculum development

for Catholic Education (now our Treasurer) and the staff at our C&K Kindergarten (now Chair and Secretary of the group).

We felt that ECTA was the best way to provide networking and professional development opportunities and the interest grew from there.

We were also aware that ECTA had continually supported regional areas. The Videolink and videostreaming allowed us to access speakers from outside Townsville – all for free. When we looked into what was involved, there were many benefits. Last year we were given the opportunity to have Laurie Kelly from Mindworks come to Townsville – this was sponsored by ECTA and really enjoyed and appreciated by all.

Libby: Do you have any suggestions or advice for other ECTA members who may be considering starting up a new ECTA Group in their area?

Keriann: There are many benefits and lots of support. It is a great way to advocate for children as well as have a say in what professional development that you can access. Kim and Libby are very generous with their time and advice, and are always very patient with my constant questions.

Libby: How has the Group been received in your early years community?

Keriann: We are continuing to grow and there has been support for all of the events we have held. There are a lot of people out there with experience and skills to share. It has also been great for those new to teaching, especially at this time with so many demands. We have also been contacted by other departments and sectors that have been able to share information with us. For example, AEDI (Australian Early Development Index) heard about the ECTA Townsville Group, and are sponsoring an upcoming evening on *Transitions - linking schools and the early years*.

Already this year the ECTA Townsville Group has held their planning meeting, and have several events in the pipeline for the year ahead. At the end of Term 1 Helen Merry, Psychologist and Play Therapist (date to be confirmed); Bec Hutton will be presenting the workshop on *Transitions*, and Jillian Balyntine, Occupational Therapist, will present a session on 18th July. For more information about these sessions, please see the ECTA Group's webpage and click on the Townsville button.

Congratulations must go to these ECTA members for their time and efforts in establishing their ECTA Townsville Group. Best wishes for your continued planning and networking! For further information, or to contact them, please email townsvillerg@ecta.org.au.

If you have several like-minded early years educators in your area, are Individual ECTA members, and are interested in forming an ECTA Group, please contact me (libby@ecta.org.au) or Kim Walters (president@ecta.org.au). We would love to help you get started!

ECTA believes that networking between colleagues from all sectors of early childhood education and care provides a key component to successful professional development. To this end ECTA supports the establishment and facilitation of ECTA groups that promote networking at the local level.



Clockwise from front: Helen Yeates, Kylie Allison, Jenni Hetlam, Louise Wilkinson, Clayton Canes, Storm Bosworth, Fran Parry, Gwen Brasier, Madeleine Anderson, Peggy Robertson.

Coeliac disease and the coeliac child

Cathy Di Bella, Katie Trappett and Kristina Petschel

Did you know it is estimated that one in a 100 children have coeliac disease, although alarmingly only 25% of these have been diagnosed?

Coeliac disease is a genetic condition that causes an auto-immune reaction to dietary gluten. This reaction causes damage to the lining of the small bowel, preventing the proper absorption of nutrients. A number of serious health consequences can develop if the condition is not diagnosed and treated properly, with children in particular at risk of lack of proper development, stunted growth and behavioural problems. Long-term health complications can be osteoporosis, liver disease and some cancers.

For children (and adults) diagnosed with coeliac disease, the prescribed medical treatment is a strict gluten-free diet, as even the smallest amount of gluten (e.g. a crumb) can cause physical illness and over time contribute to damage of the bowel. Accidental ingestion of gluten may have the following symptoms over the short- and long-term:

- nausea and/or vomiting
- diarrhoea
- constipation
- fatigue, weakness and lethargy
- cramping and bloating
- irritability and other abnormal behaviour.



What is gluten?

Gluten is a protein component of wheat, barley, rye and oats and their derivatives. This not only includes bread, pasta, cakes and pastries but can also include processed meats, hot chips, sauces, stocks, gravies, mayonnaise, salad dressings, flavoured milks, soy milks and ice creams as many of these products use wheat flour for coatings, wheat starch as thickeners or barley malt for flavour. Understandably, it can be very difficult for both parent and child to have total vigilance at all times, and your assistance in this respect is invaluable. The gluten-free diet for children diagnosed with coeliac disease is not a choice but a medical necessity.

Helpful tips

- Keep handy a copy of our *Management and Action plan* that succinctly outlines foods to be avoided by children with coeliac disease and what to do if the child accidentally ingests gluten.
- Download a copy of our free *Gluten-Free Catering Guide* on our website (www.coeliac.org.au/qld). This is the perfect resource for the school tuckshop/canteen. Teachers should also have a copy handy when planning any class cooking so that, as much as possible, gluten-free children are not excluded. Many dishes can be made gluten-free with a simple change of ingredient.
- Keep containers which are designated for gluten-free food.
- Parents may like to store gluten-free cakes and treats in the school freezer for special occasions (such as birthdays or Easter/Christmas breakups) so that their child does not have to miss out on the festivities. *Waterproof labels, Baking Cups and Food Flags* can be purchased from Coeliac Queensland.
- Keep the communication lines open with the parents of a child with coeliac disease.

Contact Coeliac Queensland on 07 3356 4446 or qld@coeliac.org.au for further information.



Drama: The magical key to literacy, confidence and self-esteem

Valerie Warwick

Involved in education for 23 years, Valerie is a founding member of Ormiston College, and currently their Director of Marketing and Public Relations. From the UK with a drama background, Valerie has experience in all aspects of stage production as well as journalism. She has written drama resources and performance works and is owner of Playtime Productions. As a member of the Redland Academy of Dramatic Art, Valerie assisted in the development and teaching of drama programs for students with Downs Syndrome and initiated the Special Needs entry section of the Redlands Eisteddfod. Her latest book *Prep – A Class Act* is a resource for teachers of early childhood.

Very young children sometimes make up their own minds whether or not to have face-to-face communication. They can invite their own visual entertainment into the lounge room simply by selecting a DVD and slotting it into a television, rather than interacting and playing with a sibling or talking to a parent.

Our lifestyle, together with technology, has directly affected and influenced the way in which we now communicate. The significant change in modern society that brought about the growth and need for a two-income family,

leading to a greater demand for child care and before and after school care, has resulted in a rift in our communication. Interaction within the family circle often becomes difficult to manipulate due to the busy time constraints that are experienced early morning and after work. Too often, television and electronic games can take over where conversation leaves off.

We now live in an increasingly complex, multicultural society, a technological world with a fast moving, transient lifestyle. For



many of our early learners, this has contributed towards poor communication skills, resulting in low self-esteem, lack of confidence, stress and depression, all of which can lead to behavioural problems and non-performance at school.

There is no doubt that the confident, well-adjusted child will find it easier to interact with other children than the shy, withdrawn child who experiences difficulty socializing. It is also highly likely that confident children, with good self-esteem, will be happier and more likely to progress in the classroom.

The need to provide the skills that can assist in the social and emotional wellbeing of our early learners is more important now than it has ever been. It is no good waiting until we have troubled, anxious teenagers, who find it difficult to sustain relationships due to their lack of social skills or who suffer extreme stress each time they give an oral presentation in front of classmates. By then, we as educators, have already failed them.

The *Early Years Learning Framework* provides us with a wonderful opportunity to introduce speech and drama activities that can cross all curricular boundaries, opening up the acquisition of literacy and developing life skills that are fundamental to success in and outside school. The most important part of the process is for educators to understand the important 'link' and to make the 'connection' between certain speech and drama activities and the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF). This is not a whole new program that needs to fit into what is already a very tight curriculum. Drama ties in perfectly with the five key learning areas and can be used to plan focused learning and teaching episodes.

Tapping into a child's creative capacity, through speech and drama, can result in extremely rewarding outcomes for teachers but, more importantly, it can open up a magical tool box for our children. Once our early learners become aware of those tools and how to use them properly, they can learn how to draw upon them when they need that extra bit of confidence. Speech and drama activities can provide ways in which to improve communication skills, extend the vocabulary, encourage effective speech, improved listening skills, assist with vocal expression and

strengthen group communication. The speech and drama tool box also provides an abundance of life skills which can include a growth in confidence, self-esteem and resilience, a better use of body language, gesture, stance and presentation. It encourages creative movement, stimulates imagination, demands sharing and responsibility, promotes easier interaction, alerts cueing and timing, integrity and trust, attitude, discipline and team work. What other subject can offer so much?

Let's Pretend: *Mask and Mime* is a wonderful introduction to dramatized play, it can bring a great deal of satisfaction and self-worth. *Mask and Mime* is an ideal opportunity for the more reticent child, who, behind a mask, may feel able to abandon inhibitions and embarrassment by taking on a different persona. Because donning a *Mask* is an invitation to be something different, children are able to use their imagination to conjure up make-believe characters and personalities, linking to all of the key learning areas of the EYLF but in particular Social/Personal Learning (identity, independence, understanding diversity), Health/Physical Learning (gross motor, fine motor) and Active Learning Processes (thinking, imagining, responding). *Masks* do not have to be expensive; templates can be downloaded free from 'freefunfings.com'. *Mime* is a wonderful way in which to inform young children about gesture and body language. Teaching them to recognize non-verbal communication, facial expressions such as happiness, sadness, surprise, annoyance and allowing them to experiment with gesture, can bring about a better understanding of their own attitude and an awareness of those around them.



Mask and mime.



Role play.

Improvisation is a wonderful activity for interaction and teambuilding. When pretending to act out an imaginary situation, children often appear better equipped to communicate with their peers. Not only does make-believe help to develop the imagination, it can also assist in breaking down inhibitions. *Improvisation* allows children to experience the fun of creating an imaginary situation, of learning how to explore and share ideas as a team member, how to cooperate together in creative play, whilst drawing on personal experiences and participating in fantasy, all of which ties in with the key learning areas.

Role Play as with *improvisation*, is a natural pastime for young children. Imitating the mother role, animals or television personalities is a regular, and experimental, form of *role play*. It has always seemed the better option for teachers to first tell the story, followed by a request for volunteers to act out the roles, allowing the more reluctant children to watch. Once the story has been played out, the teacher calls for another group to come to the floor, until all have performed. This is an ideal situation for quieter, reserved children, giving them a chance to observe, so they may feel a little more confident in copying. Again, this activity crosses all curricular boundaries.

Creative Movement is just so important and the most wonderful opportunity for self-expression. Adding music to this activity makes it all the more enjoyable. This is an activity that can incorporate the five key learning areas but in particular Early Mathematical Understanding (position, movement, direction, order, sequence). *Creative movement* also requires good listening skills and interpretation of instruction. Mirroring in pairs to very slow music is a perfect example of actions that require concentration, focus, creativity and expression.

I have not even scratched the surface of the knowledge to be gained from drama. I urge all early childhood educators to look to dramatic play for enriching oral language and fostering social and emotional well-being. Children need to be effective communicators. The teacher resource *Prep – A Class Act*, available from Early Childhood Australia (suitable for Preschool to Year Three), provides a full program that can immediately be transferred into the classroom. Each Unit is accompanied by an Early Years Learning Statement grid, linking all activities to the key learning areas, so teachers may plan focused teaching episodes. I am more than happy to assist with suggestions for specific classroom outcomes and welcome questions on any aspect of dramatic play for primary children. For further information please contact Valerie at info@playtimeproductions.com.au www.playtimeproductions.com.au



Improvisation.

Misdiagnosing learning difficulties in the early years

Ronit Baras

Ronit Baras is an author, educator, life coach, journalist and a justice of the peace with over 24 years of experience in education. She specialises in emotional intelligence and using communication styles in teaching and relationships. She has worked around the world and developed a number of educational programs to enhance academic, social and emotional excellence. Ronit owned an early childhood centre in Israel, was the education director of an early childhood centre in Singapore and is currently conducting programs for children.

As educators, we believe in the power of our vision to make a difference in the lives of the students. We think that if we start early, we will guarantee their success in the future. The risky part in education is reducing our evaluation methods to using statistics and making false assumptions about what is normal and what is not.



Lifelong learning.

The official introduction of those assumptions occurred in 1904 when the psychologist Alfred Binet was asked by the French government to develop a test that would identify students with learning difficulties that required special help in school. The original request meant to cater better for students who needed help, but it gave birth to the test that distorted the education system – the IQ Test.

The 'crystal ball' of the Education System

Based on the IQ test, students were positioned in a single, permanent place on the famous bell curve and that determined their potential for life. Shortly after its invention, the IQ test turned into the 'crystal ball' of the education system. Children took the test and their future was decided. The IQ test took over the education system. Instead of being a teaching, educating or learning system, it turned into an evaluation system that focused on scores and taught kids to pass tests.

Binet never thought his test would result in reducing education to chasing academic achievements. Suddenly, the users of his test created a concept of normality that was very risky. Every child, regardless of age, who did not process information exactly the same way as the majority did, was thrown to the fringes of the bell curve and uniqueness became a negative concept as a contradiction to what was 'normal'.

Binet was shocked by that application of his test and protested its use, saying that intelligence could not be described as a single score and that the use of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

as a definite statement of a child's intellectual capability would be a serious mistake. Binet was worried that the use of his test would label children negatively and would affect their education and livelihood. He led a campaign to fight the misuse of his own test, saying,

Some recent thinkers [have affirmed] that an individual's intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity that cannot be increased. We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism. We must try to demonstrate that it is founded on nothing.

Unfortunately, Binet's test was more widely accepted than his objection and his fears turned out to be the reality of millions of children around the world who were misdiagnosed as 'not normal'.

The double-edged sword of the early years

For years, children in the early years were protected from that fortune-telling test. There was not much expectation of them to show high academic performance and the definition of 'normal' was more fluid. While the rest of the education world worshipped the IQ tests and the limited definition of being normal, the early years could play more. While schoolteachers used evaluations and assessments as key tools, the fact that younger children could not read or write yet, worked to their advantage and they were spared from being put behind the bars of academic scorecards. Parents and teachers 'allowed' their kids to take the time to learn and play and generally avoided labelling.

However, this caution worked as a double-edged sword for children in early childhood. By avoiding labels,

teachers and parents allowed minor challenges to grow into learning difficulties and left giftedness undeveloped. A small and easy-to-fix physical or emotional difficulty that could have been easily eliminated in the early years was ignored with 'He/she will grow out of it' and excellence, creativity and talent were pushed aside, creating the 'Tall Poppy Syndrome'.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligence

The brutal trend that Binet protested against increased its popularity without much interruption over 80 years, until Howard Gardner brought to the world the theory of Multiple Intelligence in his book *Frames of Mind* in 1985. Using Gardner's assessment, students who were diagnosed very low on the IQ scale suddenly had hope.

Based on Gardner's theory, intellectual ability is just one aspect out of seven types of intelligence. Two of them, literacy and numeracy, are in strong focus today, three of them are artistic abilities and two are emotional.

Linguistic intelligence

Ability to learn a language and to manipulate spoken and written words

Logical-mathematical intelligence

Ability to analyse problems logically, manipulate numbers, recognise patterns and use reason to



Individuality, strength and talent.

investigate issues in a scientific manner

Musical-rhythmic intelligence

Ability to recognise, appreciate, compose and perform music and high sensitivity to pitch, tone and rhythms (Gardner claimed that some aspects of the musical intelligence were parallels to linguistic intelligence)

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

Ability to perform and memorise movement and to use the body, part or whole with coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, speed and flexibility, to solve problems and relate thoughts and feelings

Spatial-visual intelligence

Ability to use patterns in space, lines, shapes and colours to absorb and memorise information and to manipulate object images mentally

Intrapersonal intelligence

Ability to understand oneself regarding feelings, fears and motivation and capacity for self-evaluation

Interpersonal intelligence

Ability to understand intention, motivation and desires of people and work well with others

The half-empty glass

While the IQ test created expectations of breeding students who excel in a single dimension, the Multiple Intelligence model allowed excellence in other areas and students with high artistic, physical, social or emotional abilities left the fringes of the IQ scale and gained the increased confidence and self-esteem they deserved.

Thirty years later, the Multiple Intelligence paradigm has not reached centre stage yet. Literacy and numeracy still reign supreme in most schools. However, the education system is gradually taking greater consideration of children's personality, talents and preferences.

Unfortunately, this new trend skipped children in the early school years, so the advantages of being protected from the application of the IQ test, the extreme focus being normal and fitting in with the traditional performance scale was lost. The early childhood educators did not utilise the excellent structure, superior child-teacher ratio, more play, working with children in the first

five years of their life, more individual work and flexibility in teaching methods.

While education progressed (and still does) slowly towards individuality and a wider range of normality, the early years went backwards and restricted the 'normality' scale. Children as early as three years old are labelled and prescribed medication for not fitting into the 'normal' scale of behaviour and performance. A four-year-old child that Gardner would diagnose with high bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is **misdiagnosed** as hyperactive. A child that Gardner would diagnose with high music-rhythm abilities is **misdiagnosed** with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). A child that Gardner would diagnose with interpersonal intelligence, that prefers social interaction to formal learning, is **misdiagnosed** as lazy. A child that Gardner would diagnose as having high intrapersonal intelligence is **misdiagnosed** with some form of emotional/mental disability. And the earlier they are misdiagnosed, the harder it is to erase the labels.

Creating an inclusive definition of intelligence is extremely important in the war against the misdiagnosis of difficulties and labelling in the early years to avoid a vicious cycle of self-fulfilling prophecy, low self-esteem and low confidence that impact children's lives negatively and are extremely hard to overcome.

As educators, we can change the lives of all our students and make a difference by focusing on the full half of the glass.

We should join Binet in his protest against the boundaries put on the concept of normality. We should bravely break the chains of raising 'average' students and find the balance between negatively labelling and supporting students. We can help manage challenges and difficulties by appreciating individuality, strength and talent and allowing children to enjoy their lifelong learning adventure.

Calm in the classroom – using Tai Chi and Relaxation Visualisation

Helen Wilkie

Helen Wilkie has a background of formal music qualifications and extensive theatre experience as well as a 26 year working association with early childhood. Being passionate about the potential for music and drama as a teaching tool, she evolved and introduced a daily program based on this experience, with much success. The introduction of Tai Chi and Relaxation Visualisation Exercise into her program proved to be very successful as a behaviour modification strategy over the last ten years of teaching. This workshop will provide participants with the skills to adapt the program to their individual classroom needs as well as give practical teaching strategies gained from personal experience. It will also include suggestions for extending the program to apply to the upper age early childhood group.

There is a lot of emphasis on adult stress and stress management strategies. Ideally we should be starting at an early age with our children. We teach them how to walk ... talk ... care for themselves ... fine motor skills ... exercise for health and energy etc. Then why don't we teach them how to relax and take time out for solitude? We need to encourage that balance by exposing them to it every day in some form. Children are part of our very hurried lifestyles and we adults often unintentionally transfer our tension and anxieties to them. Whereas adults generally find it easy to verbalise feelings, children, especially the very young, do not always have this ability. Consequently, we often misinterpret children's stress reaction as inappropriate behaviour.

As educators, we are very aware of how this stress can transfer to the classroom. By the time the children arrive they are quite often 'hyped' emotionally and physically. Any parent knows the morning pressure of getting multiple siblings to multiple education facilities, complete with lunches, correct uniforms – not to mention those last minute 'curve balls' such as cooking ingredients or that poem 'Miss' wanted researched for today! All of this ON TIME as well! Add to that the children who have arrived early and have run themselves ragged outside before session commencement! It's not the ideal way to start the day. I might add, this 'rattiness' can also occur during transitioning from one area to another e.g. after outside play or, in the case of the older children, coming to a session requiring focus on the back of a physical education session.

All of this simply reinforces the need for balance. We need to equip ourselves and the children with the skills to achieve inner calm. If we can achieve this, we will be providing them with the ability to deal with the unexpected traumas and emotional upheavals they will experience all through their lives.

There are many reasons offered why some children have difficulty being 'still' and paying attention. Some are professionally diagnosed and some suspected. Either way, the fact remains these children are a part of the group and, as such, they are equally entitled to participate in all aspects of the educational program. The stress this expectation can put on an already 'stretched to the limit' educator can easily be transferred to the classroom.

Consequently, the potential of a relaxation program should be explored as one way to cope with this stress.

A calm educator = a calm classroom = focused listening = learning.

Taking the time to stop and do some relaxation at those difficult times in the day, helps both you and your group reconnect and restores calm.

Remember ... LISTENING IS THE KEY TO LEARNING

If children are not listening, all the planning and preparation is simply a waste of your valuable time. When you feel the group getting away from you ... stop ... do some deep breathing and refocus.

Breathing ... a place to start

Breathing is something we take for granted ... we exist because it happens. What we don't pay enough attention to, is how effectively we use it in all that we do. The choice between deep inhalation or shallow breathing has an implication. The former allows maximum oxygen intake and therefore increases our capacity for performance. Shallow breathing, on the other hand, merely allows us to exist. The majority of people make do with the latter, except when under physical exertion. However, if we were more conscious of our breathing technique, it would greatly enhance our ability to improve areas such as ... voice projection (how many educators acquire voice nodules from improper use of the voice?) ... physical endurance ... and our general sense of well being. Sometimes just taking a few deep breaths can make all the difference to a stressful situation.

Introducing Tai Ch Ch'uan ...

At least one time in our teaching, we will have a class that struggles with the concept of 'listening' and self control. My teaching partner and I had one such class, consisting of 17 'gung-ho/super hero' boys and five girls, which required a lot of thought, planning and experimentation to achieve a sense of 'calm' in the room. At the time I had been practising Tai Chi. It set me to thinking that perhaps the principle of Tai Chi could be adapted to get the children – boys particularly – to focus and achieve some calmness in their behaviour.

Like anything new you bring to your program, it is important to do thorough preparation with the group before introducing whatever change you are proposing. For this particular group I set out to get their attention by talking to them about the principle of Tai Chi and how it was used by the ancient warriors as a preparation for battle. We talked at length about the ritual ... how it made them strong mentally and physically so they could focus on the task ahead etc. We looked at books and DVDs and had a visitor from the local Tai Chi group who demonstrated the various forms of Tai Chi. By then, the children were eager to embrace the program.

We started slowly with the breathing exercises and simple hand movements designed to encourage focus. Over the next few weeks,



Emu stretches.

gentle movements were introduced ... raising the arms, expanding the chest, stretching to the clouds ... taking care not to rush the exercises but rather concentrating on the object of the program i.e. encouraging calm and focus. The children responded well as they embraced the program, often making suggestions for new movements e.g. 'the emu stretches his neck to the sky'. It became part of our daily program and the children eventually became so focused, we were able to move outdoors some days when appropriate.

Relaxation Visualisation ...

The busy lives we all lead in modern society are not conducive to the ability to take time out to relax. In fact, unless we have made a conscious effort to obtain the skills necessary, it just doesn't happen. More often than not we have, somewhere along the line, lost that ability. Should we have the chance to take some time



Experiencing stillness.

out – even a short break – we just don't know how to make the best use of the opportunity. If we start as children to experience the benefits of 'stillness' and discover the interesting places we can go to in our heads, we are developing a life skill that is just as important as all the other skills we will acquire along our journey. It will arm us with the techniques necessary to deal with daily pressures and emotional turmoil.

Remember those magical things you imagined as a child ... being a fairy princess ... flying to the moon in a rocket ship. You had no trouble going to a place in your head that made you feel happy. Sadly, as we grow to adulthood, those wondrous images are replaced with those that we feel would help relieve the constant pressure and stress in our lives e.g. winning Gold Lotto and giving up work! Great as those fleeting thoughts are, they don't quite measure up to the magic of our childhood musings. What we need to do is harness that early imagination and apply it to our daily lives. There is a difference between daydreaming and meditation. What we are striving to achieve here, is the ability to purposefully take ourselves out of a stressful situation and find a calm, quiet inner peace somewhere inside our heads. A place we can go to ... an inner sanctum. We need to encourage our children to make this something that is a normal part of their ongoing lives.

Progressive Relaxation is the form of relaxation we are most familiar with and therefore a good place to start. This exercise focuses attention on individual body parts using tensing and relaxing of muscles remembering to breathe with the movement. When working with the little ones,



Time out to relax.

I found it sometimes worked better to create a visualisation story that incorporated the tensing and relaxing of the body e.g. being an iceblock – freezing and melting.

Visualisation stories are a way of transporting ourselves to a place of happiness and peace e.g. at the beach, walking through a forest, floating on clouds. Here again, younger children need a shorter, more simplified visualisation experience. You could ask them to close their eyes and think of their favourite toy or pet ... what does it feel like ... how big is it ... how does it smell, feel etc. You may find it helps to give them something to hold and observe then ask them to close their eyes so they can 'see' it. The object can then be taken away and you can encourage them to 'remember' it in their heads.

My purpose in writing this is to give you a starting point for developing and introducing a relaxation program into your classroom. Tai Chi promotes focus, body control and co-ordination. Relaxation Visualisation supports the development of imagination and personal 'time-out' abilities. As well as establishing a wonderful connection between you and your students, it also provides an excellent behaviour guidance strategy. I strongly encourage you to try to do something each day ... better to do a few short sessions than nothing at all. I have had many successful years of including this in the program and have no hesitation in telling you ... IT WILL WORK!

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Visualisation.



Mathematics learning in prep

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.

Myths about early childhood mathematics education

Most teachers recognise the importance of mathematics teaching and learning in early years but there is not consensus on how and when this learning should occur. Young-Loveridge (cited in de Vries, Thomas, & Warren, 2010) suggests that quality early mathematical experiences are a key determinant to later achievement.

Lee and Ginsburg (2009) compiled a list of nine misconceptions that early childhood teachers (in the US) held about teaching and learning mathematics for young children. Included in this list were:

- Language and literacy are more important than maths
- Teachers should provide an enriched physical environment, step back, and let children play
- Maths should not be taught as stand-alone subject matter
- Assessment in maths is irrelevant when it comes to young children

I suspect similar misconceptions are held by some teachers in Australia. Some of my preservice early childhood teachers return from their field experience and share stories of their experiences. When I ask them to reflect on their observations and interactions in relation to children's maths learning, some have stated that their teacher indicated, 'We don't do maths here. That's for older children.' Alternatively, 'Children learn through play. So they do

maths in their play.' Opportunities for maths learning might exist, but is the maths learning occurring? Gifford (2005) cites several examples of the potential for maths learning in play contexts – shop play, fast food scenarios, and home corner. However, in most cases, there was very little engagement with maths. The children tended to focus more on power and gender roles, or literacy skills. Gifford concluded that adult involvement is often needed to support maths learning (Gifford, 2005).

Another story related to activity centres. 'We put out resources and set up activities at tables where children learn.' When the preservice teacher suggested that she might interact with the children to focus on some maths concepts using the material, she was told not to interfere.

Of course, there are many positive stories about the significant maths learning occurring in early years' settings. Several preservice teachers voice amazement at the opportunities that teachers seize upon to engage the children in maths learning. There are no missed opportunities. Their teachers recognise teachable moments and capitalise upon them to enhance children's understanding.

Dockett and Perry (2010) suggest that the ability to seize on teaching opportunities in play requires mathematical knowledge, among other things. While play does not guarantee mathematical

development, they suggest it offers rich possibilities, particularly when teachers engage children in reflecting on and representing the mathematical ideas. Significant learning occurs when the educator focuses on the mathematics.

The preservice teachers are also astonished at how much mathematics understanding many young children already possess, the sophistication of this understanding, and the language that young children use to describe and explain mathematical ideas.

Children are competent and confident learners

Given the right opportunities, young children possess informal knowledge of mathematics that is extensive and sophisticated.

Many young children have access to powerful mathematical understandings, and come to formal schooling with sophisticated maths knowledge.

Young children are capable of engaging in mathematically challenging concepts (Balfanz, cited in de Vries, Thomas, & Warren, 2010). For many, incidental maths learning has occurred in prior-to-school settings and in the home.

We should take advantage of their powerful emerging mathematics, and build upon children's existing knowledge to provide opportunities to challenge their thinking.

Teachers need be able to assess what their children know and do not know about mathematical concepts and ideas, for planning for further learning and interventions. There are several forms that assessment can take. We can assess through observations and discussions.

When visiting a class of five-year olds, I overheard a conversation among a small group of children, around counting. I asked the children what they could do in relation to counting. They told me they could count 'a long way' and that they could count in tens. So, I asked them to count in tens. They chanted, '10, 20, 30, ...' and so forth, without effort. I stopped them at 160. I suggested they count in tens from 2. Again, an effortless chant, '2, 12, 22, 32, 42, ...' There was no faltering even when they passed 100. Once they passed 400, I stopped them again, and suggested that they restart their counting from 902. At 992, the children stopped and looked puzzled. After some thought, one child suggested the next number was 1002. The others agreed, and they continued to count. While other children in this class were learning to count to and from 20, these children possessed very sophisticated understanding of number, and required opportunities to challenge their thinking.

Through further conversations with these children, I discovered that some were able to solve addition tasks of the type $156 + 99$, using sophisticated mental strategies. One child stated, 'I add 100 to 156 and get 256. Then I take one off. So, it's 255.' While many children in the class were counting on their fingers (from 1) to solve $8+5$, these children had already developed sophisticated calculation strategies.



It is possibly easier for us to recognise when tasks are too difficult for children, but completely overlook tasks that provide no challenge. But it is imperative that we provide opportunities for learning for all children.

The nature of mathematics

I ask my tertiary students how they view mathematics. Many suggest that mathematics is a set of rules and procedures to follow, and that there's always one way to solve a problem, and there is always one correct answer. They

suggest they have always seen maths that way, and have probably developed this view very early in their schooling. This is an unfortunate view of mathematics, but it comes as no surprise that this view is held. I suggest that the children mentioned above did not see mathematics as a set of rules and procedures to follow. They viewed mathematics as exciting and challenging, where there is space for thinking, and there are multiple ways of arriving at an answer.

How can we develop these attitudes in young children? Rather than always asking for a simple answer to a question, encourage children to investigate multiple answers and multiple ways of arriving at an answer. For example:

Rather than	Do this
'Count out five dolls.'	'Show me five fingers – on one hand; on two hands; another way on two hands; use three hands.'
'What is this shape called?' Triangle	'Draw/make a three-sided shape'. There are many different types of triangles possible. Encourage variety. 'How are these shapes similar? How are they different?'
'What is this shape?' Cube	Provide the children with a variety of 3D shapes. Ask them to sort the shapes, and explain how the shapes have been sorted, e.g., 'These all have flat faces, but these have curved surfaces.'

Conclusion

It is essential that early childhood educators support young children's mathematics learning.

Effective mathematics instruction allows children to develop positive attitudes and provides learning opportunities for all children.

Many children have access to high level mathematics understanding; however, others do not. Identifying children's understandings, and planning effective learning experiences, requires teachers to possess sound content knowledge of mathematics concepts and skills in developing challenging experiences.

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Sustainability initiatives in early years settings

Melinda Miller

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Children bring much knowledge about sustainability issues into the early childhood classroom.

In recent times, I have overheard children as young as three years of age discuss events such as the BP Oil Spill in American waters and extreme weather patterns. While aspects of these events can be overwhelming, responding to children's existing knowledge allows for an educative approach to sustainability issues, and a focus on the multitude of ways individuals and communities are working to create positive change.

Principles of effective practice

Given the global focus on key environmental issues over the past few decades, it is not surprising that the majority of work around sustainability in child care services and schools centres on environmental initiatives. Such initiatives include garden projects, water conservation practices and recycling. Many educators can articulate the value of these initiatives for children and service delivery, but may not be aware of underlying principles of effective practice related to sustainability work. To make links between practice and theory, it is useful to consider principles of effective practice outlined by Davis and MacLeod (2006). These include:

- *Values learning*

Values are the overarching ideals that underpin sustainability work. While children may learn knowledge and skills via curriculum experiences, 'values learning' relates to overarching lessons to do with citizenship, stewardship, empathy, and concern for the world and its peoples.

- *Whole-of-setting models*

Sustainability initiatives have the most longevity and influence when a whole-of-service approach is employed (see Henderson & Tilbury, 2004). Whole-of-service approaches to sustainability invite the participation and support of a range of stakeholders within and outside a service. All stakeholders work toward an agreed goal that will benefit children, families and community.

- *Inquiry learning*

Inquiry learning promotes a problem-solving approach, in that there can be more than one answer or solution to a problem. Hypothesising, testing and finding multiple solutions are key elements of an inquiry approach. Inquiry approaches contrast to transmissive educational approaches that focus on teacher-directed rather than child-directed learning.

- *Real-life learning*

Real-life explorations are relevant to, and extend from, children's daily experiences at home and in the child care service or school. Learning is authentic because it builds from children's existing experiences and knowledge.

- *Democratic/participatory approaches*

A democratic approach to teaching and learning encourages child-initiated experiences. Teachers create opportunities for children to share and act on their own ideas, and the ideas of their peers. In participatory approaches, children make decisions about their learning and take responsibility for key outcomes.

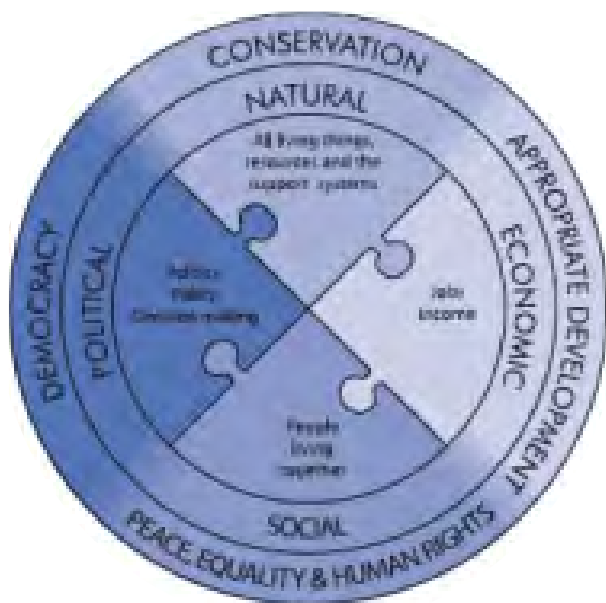
When principles of effective practice underpin education for sustainability, possibilities are created for transformative education that empower children to be 'agents of change' (Davis, 2010). Through sustainability work, children can contribute to actions that benefit people and local environments. They can also influence others in their social circles to develop a positive disposition towards sustainability work.

Thinking about sustainability more broadly

Environmental initiatives are important, but the environmental (or natural) dimension is only one part of a broader picture of sustainability.

An holistic understanding of sustainability considers environmental factors, but also takes in related social, political and economic areas of concern.

A useful model to understand sustainability in an holistic sense is provided by UNESCO



(UNESCO, 2006)

(2006). This model shows the four interlocking dimensions of sustainability.

In the Australian context, social, political and economic areas of concern are broad. However, one of the most pressing social and political issues on the Australian landscape is Reconciliation (see Miller, 2010), as related to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples following the arrival of the British and Europeans.

A useful example of early childhood practice that highlights how the four dimensions of sustainability can be interlinked is provided by Mundine and Guigni (2006) in their text about diversity and difference. In this example, a five-year-old boy (Albert) and a non-Indigenous educator (Miriam) discussed issues of land ownership.

Albert: (touching the ground) This is Aboriginal land of the Gadigal people and their bones and souls are here.

Miriam: Yes, but Council owns the land that our centre is built on, as well as our playground and the park next door.

Albert: Even the road and the train tracks?

Miriam: Yes, they are owned by government departments.

Albert: (picking up a blade of grass and holding it in his hand, he cups it gently and takes it to Miriam) This is Aboriginal grass, but this is Council grass. We have a problem.

Miriam: Yes. That is why we need to think about reconciliation all the time. That's why we need to think about this as Gadigal land, to think carefully about this issue of ownership.

Albert: Me and Bob can draw a sign to show Gadigal land.

The Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI) is a partnership of the Australian Government and the states and territories that seeks to support schools and their communities to become sustainable.

AuSSI engages participants in a whole-of-school approach, to explore through real-life learning experiences, improvements in a school's management of resources and facilities including energy, waste, water, biodiversity, landscape design, products and materials. It also addresses associated social and financial issues.

The Initiative's vision is for all Australian schools and their communities to be sustainable. Find out about the key elements and resources involved at <http://www.environment.gov.au/education/aussi/>

Reconciliation and sustainability are both concerned with relationships between groups of people, and between people and place. For this reason, educators can make strong links between Reconciliation and their sustainability work, and support children to think deeply about broad issues of sustainability relevant to the Australian context.

Here, an educator and a child talked explicitly about the relationship between local environments and issues of ownership connected with historical, social and political acts of dispossession. This conversation led to a study of cartography in which children explored land and place from an Aboriginal and colonial perspective using maps of Australia in a comparative fashion (Mundine & Giugni, 2006). In this work, social, political and environmental dimensions of sustainability were all central. Economic issues were also relevant in terms of the imbalance between non-Indigenous and Indigenous land ownership, as seen through the mapping exercise.

This example of practice shows the depth of children's thinking, and how educators can draw on children's knowledges to develop experiences that promote critical thinking and action; two key elements of sustainability work.

Conclusion

Early childhood education for sustainability enables children and educators to learn about and action issues that impact local and global contexts. When enacted in an holistic sense, this work promotes opportunities for rich and deep explorations on a range of topics relevant to children's lives.

Early childhood educators are well placed to support critical inquiry about issues of sustainability. They are also well placed to support positive forms of action that invite the participation of young children and others within services and local communities.

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Design + play = maths

Sue Southey

Sue teaches pre-Prep aged children at Springwood Community Kindergarten. Recently seconded to the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care, Sue has provided professional support for long day care services working with the Queensland kindergarten learning guideline. Sue is Vice President of the Early Childhood Teachers' Association and a sessional lecturer and tutor at Griffith University, Gold Coast. In 2009 she was a State and Territory recipient of the ASG NEITA award.

Why mathematics in kindergarten?

Traditionally, kindergarten practice has focussed on creative domains such as literacy, visual arts, social play and music. Mathematics, perhaps because it is perceived to be less creative, is often overlooked in responding to children's everyday experiences. However, an increasing focus in literacy and numeracy outcomes for children, is placing pressure on educators to develop mathematical skills and knowledge in young children (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Berk, & Singer, 2009). The risk of emphasising mathematical content knowledge is that educators, who are not confident mathematical thinkers, may revert to didactic forms of teaching such as worksheets, rote and drill to build mathematical understandings. One solution to this challenge is to engage children in active learning that enables them to construct their own mathematical understandings through building and design. Traditionally, this has taken place in block and construction play. However, an alternative form of play is 'arranging' in which children design, using open-ended materials.

What is 'arranging'?

'Arranging' has similarities to block play. In both construction and design play, children are managing and controlling objects in space. Like block play, arranging play can be done either individually or collaboratively. However, in contrast to block play, arranging is done on a smaller scale and allows children to use a wider



Managing and controlling objects in space.



Arranging.

range of materials. Whilst the units of block play are all similar, only varying in size, the objects for arranging are much more varied, and are always offered in sets. Baseboards, such as mats, mirrors or light boxes, provide a manageable space upon which to design.

How does arranging build mathematical understanding?

As children design either in two or three dimensions, they create elaborate and aesthetically pleasing creations. It appears that children's pleasure in this design work is motivated both by a need to impose order on the objects and to create beautiful designs.

Children create rules for themselves that allow them to build features such as lines, matching objects one for one, enclosing space, building towers, bridging, creating symmetry, patterns and tessellating shapes.



Designing.



Imposing order.

These rules and features reflect relationships between objects which can be described in mathematical ways. Experience with these mathematical relationships builds foundations for children's understanding of concepts such as number, patterns and algebra, measurement, shape, and geometry.

What are the intentional teaching strategies?

This creative work supports learning in a range of learning domains. However, of particular interest is the way in which this design work can be used to build children's mathematical understandings. Intentional teaching in this context is more than facilitating time, space and resources. It requires educators to see the



Creating complex designs.

possibilities for connecting children's everyday experiences with mathematical ways of thinking (McLachlan, Fleer, & Edwards, 2010). Although children are conscious of creating their own rules as they impose order on these objects, they are unlikely to have the appropriate mathematical language to describe what they are doing (Gifford, 2005).

By mediating between the child's creation and the relevant mathematical language, children can be given the tools to think more abstractly and mathematically about their designs.

As children work alongside each other, and collaboratively, they share ideas, describe their actions and problem-solve together. This provides shared sustained conversations (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009) using mathematical language about the children's own designs and creations.

Children's ability to persevere and create complex designs, seems to indicate that many of these designers are engaging in high level thinking that transforms the way they think about everyday objects.

To summarise, 'arranging' provides a useful tool for engaging young children in mathematical learning within a play-based curriculum approach. The educator's role is both to facilitate the play by providing resources, time and space, and to mediate between the child's play and mathematical concepts. In a political environment where

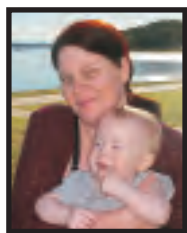
there is increasing pressure to demonstrate mathematical learning, 'arranging' provides a context that both aligns with play-based approaches and facilitates learning.

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Aesthetically pleasing creations.



**Mathilda
Element**

Welcome back to a new year, a new journal and an exciting time in early childhood education and care. With so many changes on the horizon in our different settings, it's good to connect to supportive tools and resources that can make a difference in the lives of the children we teach. In this issue, we are pleased to see a review of an online media application, available free, for use with Iphones, I pads and I pod Touch devices. With the plethora of online tools available, teachers are often overwhelmed by the task of sifting through to find ones that are age-appropriate, open-ended and well-developed pedagogically, so we are thankful to Rebecca Trimble-Roles for sharing her perspectives. I would like to invite other educators to follow her lead, and send us your reviews of any media applications, digital resources, software or websites that you find especially useful.

It's also exciting to see a diverse range of print resources, including multicultural stories, picture books and a teacher diary specifically focused on the planning needs of early childhood classrooms. I am especially excited to include reviews of the Sharing Our Stories Indigenous hardback series by two separate reviewers – it's great to get multiple perspectives on the same resource, being used in both school and prior to school settings. Happy reading!

Title: Innovative Teacher's Companion Early Years Diary 2012

Published by: ITC Publications
ISBN: 9-780980-659863
RRP: \$24.95
Reviewed by: Amy Lanchester

I received this diary to review as the end of my year of maternity leave was fast approaching. I was expecting just a basic diary but I was amazed to find that the diary is filled with fantastic information, professional reading and activities for the classroom, alongside a fairly user-friendly diary. After having a flick through, I found that I was getting excited to return to work and starting to think of ways to put these ideas into practice.

As you would expect, there are timetables, various style calendars, curriculum overview planners, a professional development log and a number of assessment record sheets. However, between each week's calendar (displayed as a school week per opening) is an information sheet, giving either a Professional Reading, Co-operative tool, Lesson Planning suggestion, Cognitive tool or other activity. There is also a section on preparing for NAPLAN and appropriate templates for some of the strategies outlined.

For me, many of the professional readings were things that I already knew about, for example, The Principles of Play-Based Learning, but it was great to read back over and also an excellent reference point for those times at the beginning of the year when trying to explain to concerned new parents about play, etc.

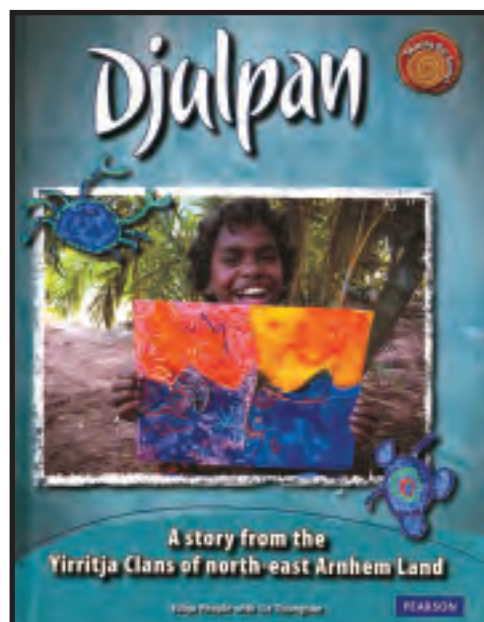
Another interesting feature of the diary is the focus letter or sound included each week with a picture, handwriting example and a focus sentence or rhyme. The letters have been put into a suggested teaching order but could be used to enhance an existing phonics program. Some suggested ideas for using this feature are included as part of the professional reading. All in all, I found this to be a well designed diary, and I'm looking forward to being organised and inspired in the new year!



Title: Sharing our Stories Series

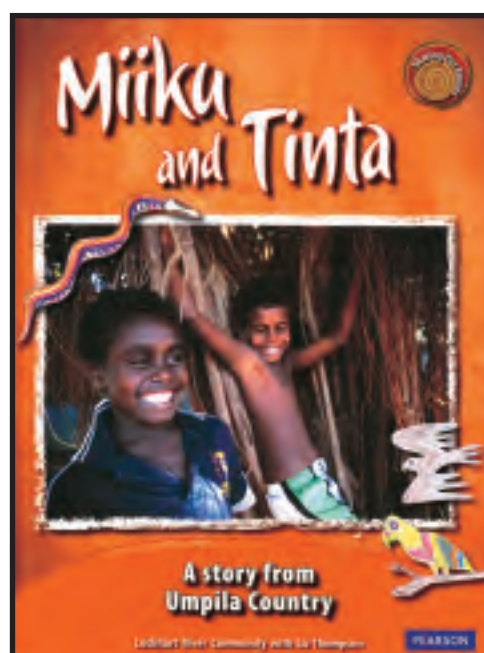
Djulpan - A story from the Yirritja Clans of north-east Arnhem Land

Author: Yolnu Community with Liz Thompson
Illustrations: Yolnu Community and Liz Thompson
ISBN: 9781442546950



Miiku and Tinta – A story from Umpila Country

Author: Lockhart River Community with Liz Thompson
Illustrations: Lockhart River Community and Liz Thompson
ISBN: 9781442546936
Published By: Pearson Australia
RRP: \$24.95
Reviewed by: Rowan Geppert



Sharing our Stories is a series of non-fiction books aimed at middle to upper primary students. Each book focuses on one Australian Indigenous community. Initially each book introduces the reader to the local people, places, values, beliefs, and traditions. This is followed by a traditional story which has been translated into English and illustrated by the local children from the community who share this story. Each story is significant to the community that it comes from and the people who share it and is written in its traditional language at the end of the book. Each book is finished by sharing 'Our Children and Elders' Voices' which is a wonderful collection of interviews and photographs of the local community. Each page has a glossary at the bottom of the page to help the reader with the local terminology and there is a pronunciation guide to help with difficult words. These books would be an excellent addition to any school library as research and reference books.

Liz Thompson won the 2009 Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing for the first six books in the series and also won Best Primary Teaching and Learning package. She is the director of SharingStories which is a digital storytelling project for young Indigenous people www.sharingstories.com.au. Teachers who cannot access the *Sharing our Stories* series will find a wealth of resources and stories at SharingStories where you can read, hear and watch a variety of traditional stories and profiles. Teachers who do use this series of books would find the SharingStories website an amazing resource to complement and extend learning developed through the books.

Title:	The Creation of Trowenna
Author:	the Neunone people of Bruny Island with Liz Thompson
Illustrator:	the book features illustrations by various local children
Published By:	Pearson
ISBN:	978 1 4425 4689 9
RRP:	\$24.95
Reviewed by:	Sandra Taylor

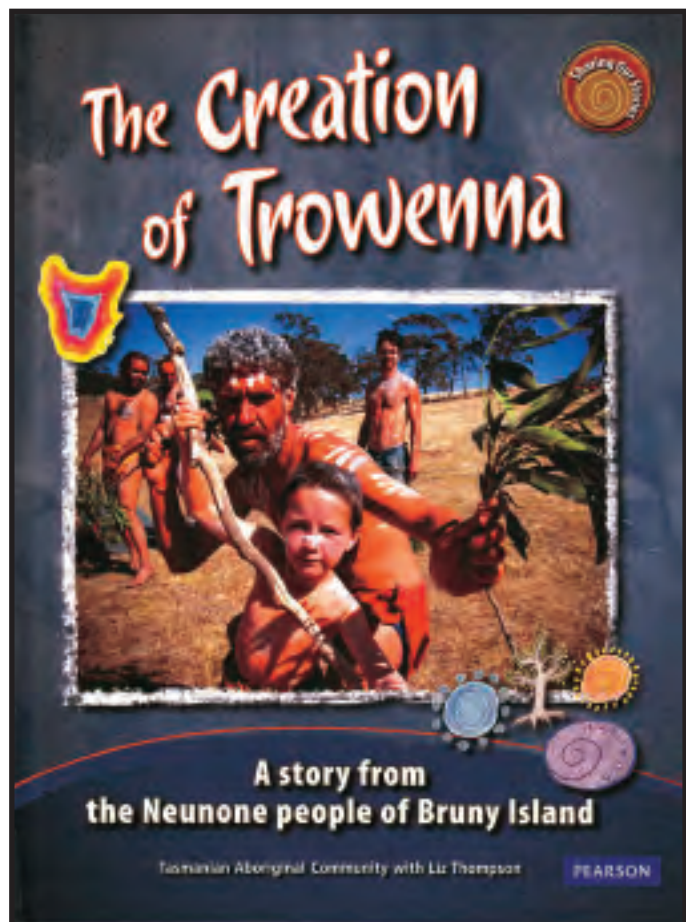
This book tells the story of how Tasmania (Trowenna) came to be.

The book has clearly marked page numbers, a glossary at the bottom of each page, a contents page and an index so it is an ideal introduction to these important literary features for the young. The print is large and the language uncomplicated so it is good for beginner readers and shared reading experiences alike.

Even as an adult, I found this book to be entertaining and informative. It starts with some background about the Bruny Island community, and introduces themes common to many Indigenous peoples such as the importance of Country and the impact of European settlement. Background information is also provided about Leigh Maynard, the storyteller. He explains the significance of story-telling in his culture and the empowerment that can be gained from engaging in the sharing of stories with others. At the end of the book there are sections devoted to the younger and older members of the community describing what the stories of their ancestors mean to them and how this contributes to their sense of identity. I think these sections are especially important because they are illustrating to the young reader how important these – and indeed all – stories are and the role they play in preserving culture. All these ‘non-fiction’ elements of the book are illustrated with photographs of the local landscape and members of the Bruny Island community.

The story of The Creation of Trowenna makes up the bulk of the book. The story is written in a simple format, with any difficult words accompanied by a phonetic pronunciation guide and glossary. The illustrations are provided by children living in the Bruny Island community using water-colour pencils and they make a perfect, colourful accompaniment to the text.

It is interesting to note that The Creation of Trowenna may also be purchased in big book format, and a video featuring the story and associated interviews may be viewed at www.pearsonplaces.com.au.



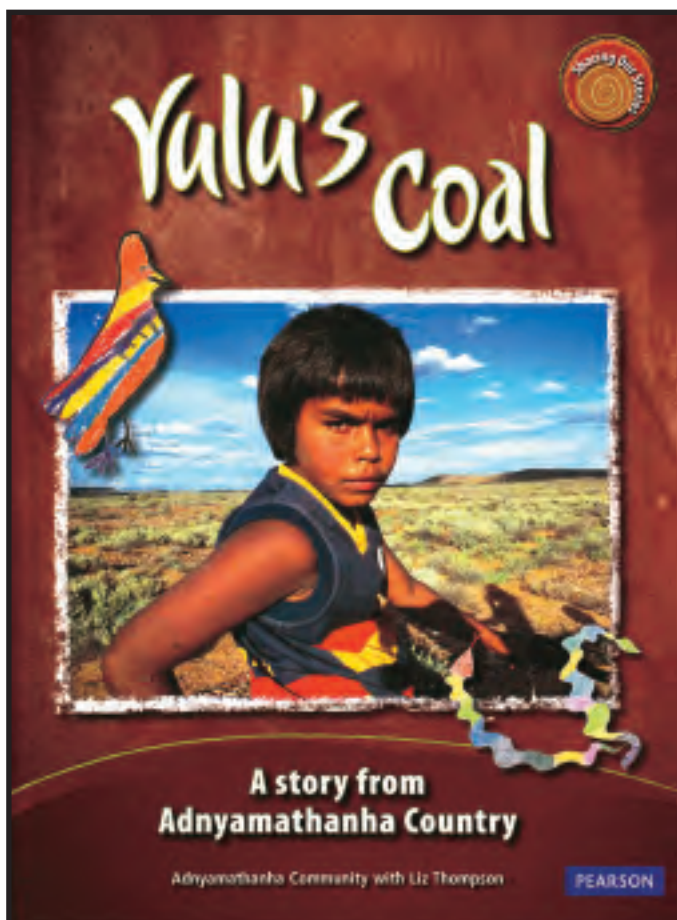
Title:	Yulu's Coal
Author:	The storyteller is Noel Wilton, with assistance from people of the Adnyamathanha Community and Liz Thompson
Illustrator:	the book features illustrations by various local children
Published By:	Pearson
ISBN:	978 1 4425 4690 5
RRP:	\$24.95
Reviewed by	Sandra Taylor

The Adnyamathanha people come from the Northern Flinders Ranges region in South Australia. Noel Wilton explains that the story of Yulu's Coal is one passed down the male line of a family because it deals with the concept of initiation, a traditionally male rite of passage.

As with other titles in the Sharing our Stories series, this book has clearly marked page numbers, a glossary at the bottom of each page, a contents page and an index so it is an ideal introduction to these important literary features for the young. The print is large and the language uncomplicated so it is good for beginner readers and shared reading experiences alike. The illustrations, done in a mixture of pastels, pencil and water colour, have been created by local children. They give the story warmth and complement the written words beautifully. Also characteristic of this series, is the use of simple chapters guiding the reader through the background to the story, the story teller and the culture of the people from where the story originates. I particularly appreciated the explanation of the initiation process as told by Elders, Gil and Linda Coulthard, and the ways it is represented in the story through the use of symbolism and colour. The final chapter of the book presents the story in the Adnyamathanha language. This series of books provides an excellent opportunity for children and adults alike to be immersed in Indigenous culture in a meaningful way, being supported through the process and learning some important factual information. They are also entertaining.

Yulu was the Kingfisher Man and he was the leader of all the ceremonies of the Adnyamathanha people. One day his leadership is challenged by Wala, the Turkey Man, resulting in the two Muda serpents being awakened and wreaking havoc on the inhabitants of the area! Along the way a number of events occurred and these led to the creation of important customs and landmarks still visible in the area today.

It is interesting to note that Yulu's Coal may also be purchased in big book format, and a video featuring the story and associated interviews may be viewed at www.pearsonplaces.com.au.



iTunes - iPad – Application (APP) – Toontastic

Creator: Launch Pad Toys
Publisher: Lunch Pad Toys and Apple Inc.
RRP:: Free
Age Appropriate: 7+
Focus: Narratives
Reviewed:: Rebecca Trimble-Roles

'Toontastic' is an App, which can be purchased online through the Apple iTunes App store. The Web address is <http://www.apple.com/au/itunes>. Once one has downloaded iTunes, one can then enter the iTunes store and type the word 'Toontastic' into the search bar. The 'Toontastic' App will then appear. One can then purchase the App for free. This App can then be downloaded to a digital device (iPad, iPod Touch or iPhone).

Toontastic is a program which encourages children seven years of age and above to become interactive story tellers, whilst embedding and exploring the structure of how stories are developed and evolve. The key elements of story telling and narrative writing are promoted e.g. setting, conflict, challenge, climax and resolution. Toontastic's 'Story Arc' structure assists children to construct their own stories interactively. The audio component of the 'Toontastic' App allows children to record their own voices as they create their stories whilst the visual component invites children to manipulate their storylines on the iPad screen. Children can create their own story characters and scenarios or select from those offered on the 'Toontastic' App.

I believe that the 'Toontastic' App provides multiple opportunities for children to engage in active exploration and, as a consequence, optimal opportunities for learning are generated. This App provides constructive steps for children to acquire a clear understanding of the processes of how stories are structured and created. This App engages children through visual, auditory and tactile platforms and therefore caters for a diverse range of learning styles. As the children create their stories using the program, they become interactive participants in their own learning and are therefore able to assume ownership of the experience. The App encourages a sense of empowerment for the children and assists them in their journey as lifelong learners. The 'Toontastic' App is a digital resource that assists children to become competent and confident learners as it offers children the opportunity to interact in all aspects of narrative writing.



Title: A Sick Day for Amos McGee

Author: Philip C. Stead
Illustrator: Erin. E. Stead
Published By: Allen & Unwin
ISBN: 978-1-74237-779-7
RRP: \$16.99
Reviewed by: Roslyn Heywood

Within the pages of *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* the author and illustrator portray how true friendship behaves. Human values of compassion, empathy, understanding, kindness, gentleness and love are lived out in the everyday life of an elderly zoo keeper and his animal friends. Softly-colored woodprints delicately direct reader focus to the story. Synergy is created when children relate to the everyday within the pages. Amos McGee is an elderly zoo keeper whose life revolves around his work at the City Zoo. When illness keeps him in bed, his animal friends leave the zoo to find him and care for him.

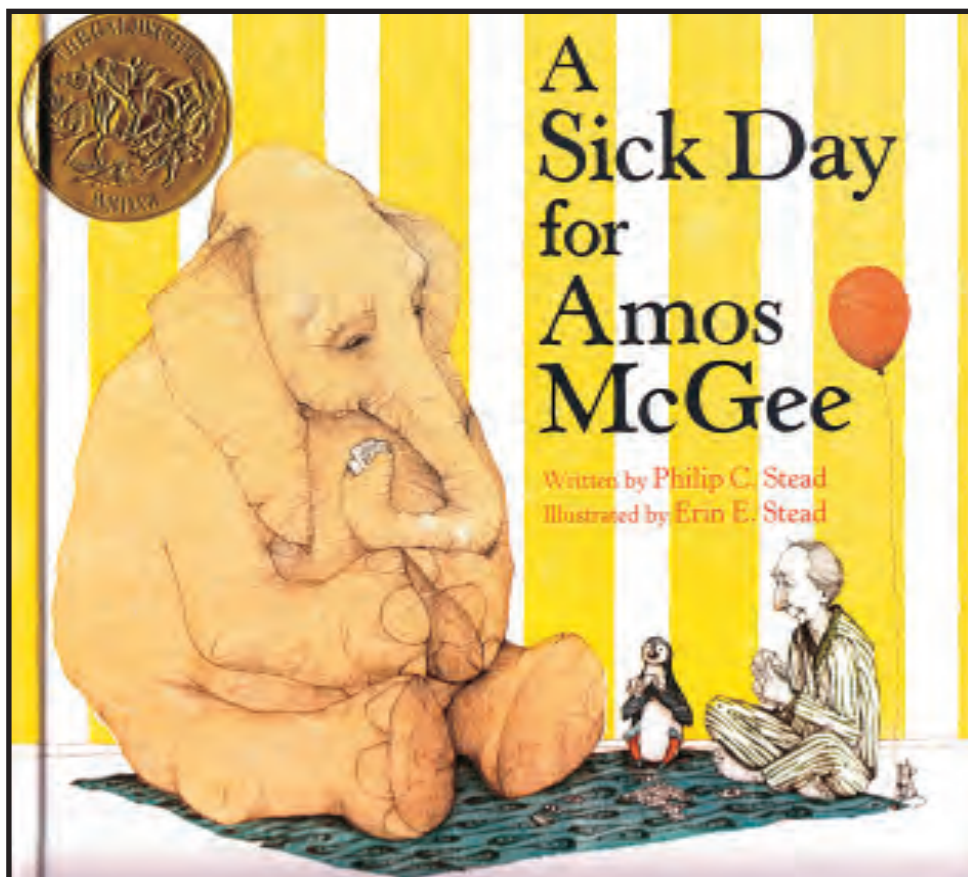
My Kindergarten children identified with the animals as they exhibited authentic empathy towards their elderly friend. One child commented, 'I liked it when the penguin sat quietly because I just like sitting quietly.'

Another child appreciated '... the bear under the bed holding the alarm clock, because it was funny.'

In response to this comment another child stated, 'I liked the part where they played Hide and Seek. I thought it was bit funny because it went a bit backwards at the end ...'

For teachers, this book fits beautifully within the Early Years Learning Framework as it gives children the opportunity to talk about different facets of friendship, belonging, wellbeing, cooperation, connectedness and other principles.

I would rate this Philip C.Stead's Caldecott Prize winner with 4 out of a possible 5 stars.



Title: Quick, Slow, Mango!

Author/Illustrator: Anik McGrory

Published By: Bloomsbury

ISBN: 9781408815618

RRP: \$14.99

Reviewed by: Sue Webster and friends

Quick, Slow, Mango! is a delightful story that revolves around two opposites – Kidogo the elephant, who moves very slowly in everything he does and PolePole the monkey, who moves too quickly through all his activities.

Both their lives are fraught with danger because of their different use of speed - Kidogo, being so slow, misses out on breakfast and PolePole, being so fast, cannot keep hold of all the mangos that he collects and therefore misses out on breakfast as well. This story explores how they work together to solve a problem that neither can solve alone.

The text is simple and easy to follow with some repetition that makes it enjoyable for the young reader – mostly children from 2- 6 years old.

The illustrations are simple pencil and watercolour, but enticing and appropriate for the story. The colours of orange and green – mango colours – are often repeated in the background. The illustrations bring the text to life and add humour to the story.

My prep children enjoyed the cheekiness of the story and the way that Kidogo and PolePole worked together to solve their problem. The friendship aspect of the story also appealed strongly to a couple of the children.

Quick, Slow, Mango! allows for many opportunities to discuss opposites, problem solving, working together, different cultures, friendship and the African jungle/plains.

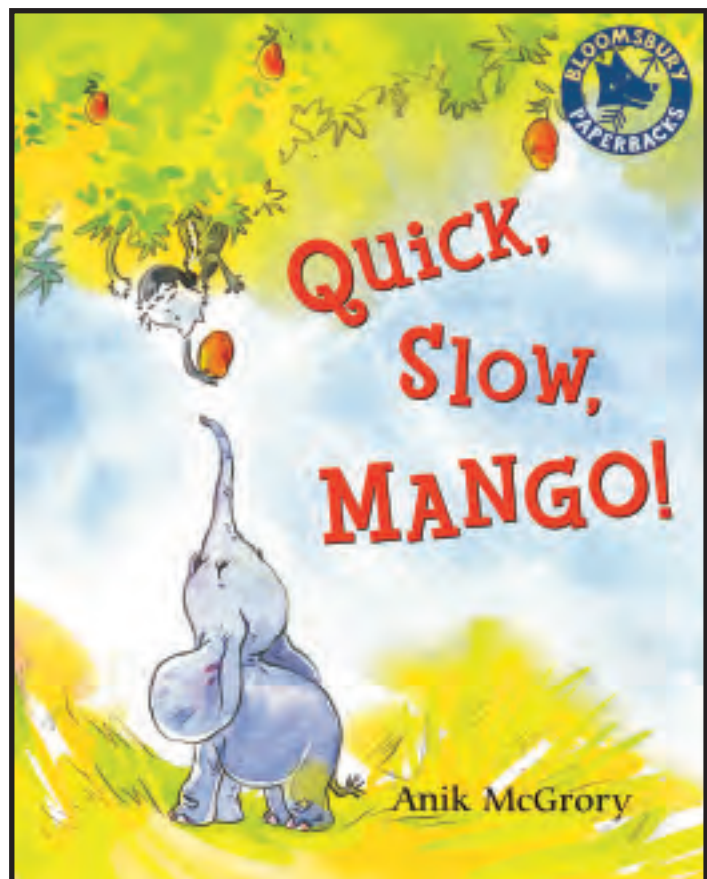
There are several Kiswahili words in the story and it is worth looking at the inside information page of this book to see how to correctly pronounce these words.

Swahili or Kiswahili (known in Swahili itself as Kiswahili) is a Bantu language spoken by 5-10 million people as their first language and 100+ million people as their second language. Therefore, it is rather an interesting topic to discuss with children in itself. I have included a couple of websites that I used with my Prep children when discussing this book.

<http://www.kiswahili.net/>

<http://africanlanguages.com/kiswahili/>

This book is a stand-alone story but a sequel to *Kidogo*, published in 2005.



Title: Ivy Loves to Give

Author: Freya Blackwood

Published by: Little Hare Books

ISBN: 9781921541889

RRP: \$12.95

Reviewed by: Tanya Dawson – Early Childhood Teacher

Ivy Loves to Give is a humorous story about a beautiful blonde toddler who is exploring the concept of giving. It is a warm reminder for parents and carers alike of the typically cute attempts that toddlers make when they are discovering how to 'give' as opposed to 'take'. For example, at first, Ivy tries to give the baby's dummy to the cat. However, by the end of the story she's worked out that the dummy is best given to the baby.

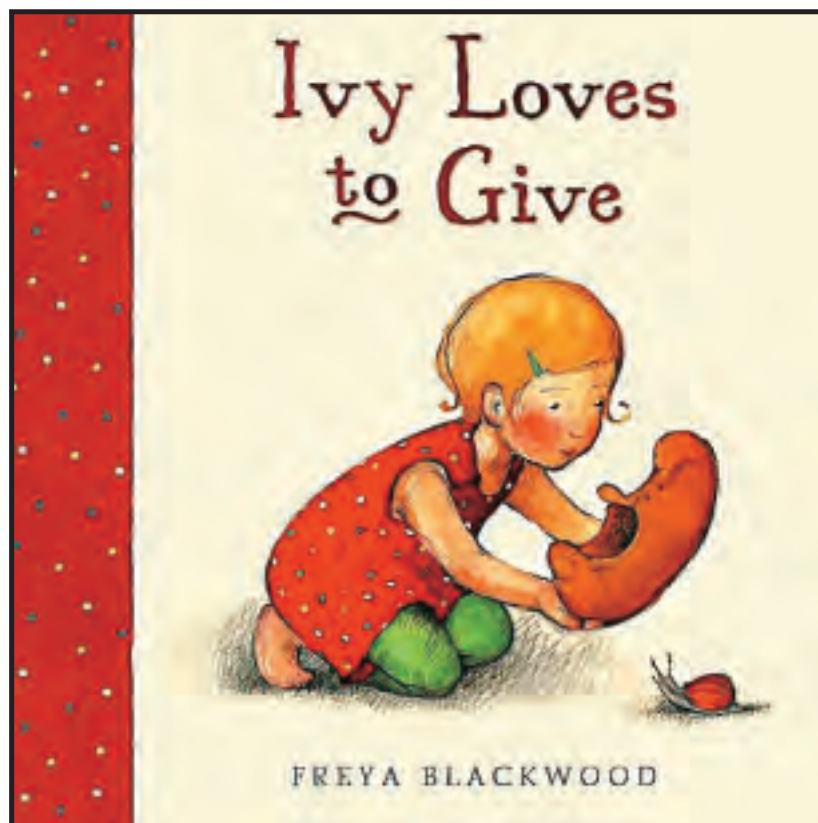
A deeper exploration into the notion of generosity, emanating from Ivy's experiences, could be useful for preschool and kindergarten aged children. For instance, engaging in discussions investigating the idea that not all gifts are perfect for a situation or person and how we can put thought and planning into our gifts. An awareness of empathy, putting ourselves into someone else's shoes, can also be encouraged as children reflect on what others would like to be given.

The story ends brilliantly with Ivy's sister giving her the tutu to play with and Ivy responding with *the best gift of all*, a hug!

Written in simple sentences with minimal words to each page, the uncluttered illustrations tell the rest of the story. This book is therefore suited to children aged six months to five years.

Available from: QBD, Angus & Robertson and other retail or online bookstores.

(Also available in Chinese and Spanish languages)



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.

