



Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the
early childhood years

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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

Welcome to the second edition of *Educating Young Children* for 2012.

On behalf of all ECTA members I would like to congratulate the Conference Committee on the success of the 2012 ECTA Annual Conference. In this journal you will find the first of our presenter papers. The remaining papers will be found in the third journal for 2012 and the first journal for 2013. Included with this journal is a DVD of the recording of Robin Grille's keynote address *Love Fear and Shame in Education*. 49% of delegates rated Robin's keynote address as excellent, with a further 45% rating it as very good or good. The following quote sums up the general feedback received

Very inspiring. A new slant on an old topic, which made me rethink some of my philosophies. To me, that's what a conference keynote should achieve. My congratulations in choosing such a relevant speaker with a great style of presentation.

Recordings of Masterclass presentations will be included in our next journal.

410 ECTA members joined 65 non-members, six early childhood student volunteers and 36 presenters, along with 55 traders at the ECTA Annual Conference this year. Sectorial breakdown of conference delegates shows that Kindergarten educators were the largest group represented (43%) followed by those working in Preparatory classrooms (24%). We also had significant representations from Childcare (9%) and Lower Primary (16%), with the balance of delegates working in Secondary (2%), Tertiary

(4%) and other settings (2%). The conference committee is committed to offering a balance of workshop selections which have relevance across all early childhood sectors.

We thank those who took the time to fill in the online Conference Evaluation form. Your feedback is valued and is used by the conference committee to finetune the conference facilitation. Congratulations to Julie Gleeson - Urangan Point State School who won a complimentary 2013 conference registration for submitting her evaluation online.

127 delegates provided feedback via the online tool. 98% of delegates providing feedback rated the venue as either excellent or very good. 91% rated the conference as either excellent or very good value for money. 92% rated the conference overall as either excellent or very good.

It was very rewarding for the committee to read the multitude of glowing reviews from delegates for the work of the committee. Feedback received rated the organization of the conference as 78% excellent and a further 20% as very good. This quote sums up the overall feedback received

Once again, everyone on the Conference Committee needs to be congratulated for a wonderful event. It is such a pleasure to attend such a professional, yet friendly event. I always come away inspired and challenged and fulfilled that I've spent a great day with friends, new and old. I look forward to next year's conference.

The Conference Committee are a very dedicated group of professionals who work together to make everything run smoothly on the day. They are already busy evaluating feedback and will now begin working on next year's conference. If you would like to join the Conference Committee email Toni at conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au.

Several workshops were booked out within two weeks of registrations opening to members. Members are reminded that the earlier they book, the better chance you have of securing your workshop preference. Those who have paid their 2013 membership fee before the end of February will receive a personal invitation to register three weeks before registrations open to the public.

This year Remote and Rural Conference Support was given to five ECTA members to attend the conference Jane Dickson - Barcaldine, Emily Craig - Whitfield, Wanda Guy - Ayr, Tennille Drovandi - Mt Louisa and Lynne Smith - Cairns. Each received a grant of up to \$500 to cover expenses and their conference registration was refunded. Selection was made on remote status and information on how they would share the knowledge gained during the conference within their local area.

Office Bearers from our rural and/or remote ECTA Groups in Cairns, Gladstone, Fitzroy

(Yeppoon), Cooloola (Gympie), Mackay and Townsville, attended the working breakfast the morning following the conference. This was facilitated by ECTA Groups Coordinator Libby Gaedtke and attended by ECTA President Kim Walters and ECTA Treasurer Lisa Cooper. Logan regional group Office Bearers also attended to contribute to the discussion.

Once again, ECTA supported our regional and remote groups by offering sponsorship for two Office Bearers from each region outside Brisbane to attend the conference. This included conference registration, accommodation and partial expense reimbursement. Pictured below are the Office Bearers and State Coordinating Committee (SCC) members networking the evening after the conference.

To date, 20 presenters have submitted handouts to be uploaded to the Members Only section of our ECTA website. Login; then click the link in the left pane to the Members Only Secure Area which has handouts and PowerPoint presentations submitted to us from the 2012 presenters. This area also has past conference Professional Development along with PDF copies of previous journals and links to recording of streamed Videolings.

Kim Walters



Kim Walters (ECTA President), who lives in Gympie, and Lisa Cooper (ECTA Treasurer) and Libby Gaedtke (ECTA Groups Coordinator), who both live in Hervey Bay, joined Sue Southey (Logan ECTA Group) to welcome Deb Hancock & Liz Fallon (Gladstone RG); Leanne Trace, Romaine Boniface (Hervey Bay RG); Angela Bulmer & Carleen de Jong (Cairns RG); Marion Sillett and Michelle Watson (Gympie Cooloola RG) and Kathy Wright (Fitzroy RG) Leanne McGregor & Keriann Reissenberger (Townsville RG)



From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

The theme for this edition of *Educating Young Children* is 'inspire' as we celebrate the joy and passion of early childhood educators. We begin with a beautifully documented photo story of the 2012 ECTA conference. For readers lucky enough to have attended we hope it provokes memories. For others we hope it will inspire the curiosity to attend next year.

From Kathryn Mannion and Rosetta Brim, we bring a 'story' about the award winning Families as First Teachers program in Kuranda.

Reflecting the belief that families are children's first teachers this inspirational story points to the importance of family involvement in children's learning.

This year's key note presentation *Love, fear and shame in education* by acclaimed author and psychologist Robin Grille is the subject of

our 'conversation'. For insight and inspiration we ask four educators to share their key learning moments.

Carrie Rose takes a candid look at 'environments' that inspire and intrigue. While the inspirational 'Out of the Box' festival creating enchanting, bewildering play spaces for children is a feature of 'partnerships'.

In choosing 'feature articles' for this issue the editorial panel have focused on social and emotional wellbeing. Andrea Ashford presents six steps to being happy and productive in a rapidly changing world. Robyn Dolby reflects on the emotional exchange required in creating a secure base for children to explore their world. Judy Gregory gives her top ten tips for communicating and Anna Tullemans promotes the value of early friendships for children with ASD.

Completing our 'feature articles' Michelle Bugler looks at deepening children's engagement with the visual arts and Paula Camilleri explores the fusion between drama, dance and music.

In 'International perspectives' Grace Qui looks to her father for inspiration about the significance of music in early childhood education. Finally Mathilda and our team of reviewers introduce a selection of titles suitable for our youngest readers.

We hope you are truly inspired.

The editorial team.

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37th Early Childhood Teachers' Association Annual Conference

Lisa Cooper

The 2012 ECTA Conference was held on Saturday 23 June, 2012 at Sheldon College in Brisbane. Over 520 delegates from Southern, Central and Northern Queensland as well as Interstate attended the Conference. Many Queensland delegates were showing their professional commitment to Early Childhood by attending the conference on their first day of holidays.



A panorama view of delegates listening to key note speaker at the lovely Sheldon College Complex.

The ECTA Conference Committee worked tirelessly over the last twelve months to plan a professional development opportunity which was enriching in current early childhood topics, informative and practical. The conference provided a chance for professional networking across the state.

Feedback received from delegates such as 'I love the range and number of workshops offered at this conference. It is my favourite conference of the year!!! As there are so many workshops I want to do almost all of them' bear testament to the hard work of the ECTA Conference Committee.

Congratulations and thanks for a job well done.



Delegates arrive at the 37th Early Childhood Teachers' Association Annual Conference for a day of professional learning. Delegates attended a keynote speaker session to start the day and then were able to choose 2 workshops.

Delegates were able to choose to attend two workshop/master class presentations from the 38 offered. Workshops were practical and relevant.



Kim Walters (ECTA President) welcomes delegates to the 37th Annual ECTA Conference.



Abbey, representing Platinum conference sponsor MTA (Modern Teaching Aids), outlined the extensive range in the MTA catalogues for delegates before introducing the Keynote speaker Robin Grille.

Robin Grille's keynote address 'Love, fear and shame in education' was thought provoking and challenged some thinking around dealing with certain children in certain situations. It opened ones eyes to how we are teaching the children in our care.



On the 'wild side'... at the 'Johnny the Jester' stand Angela (Cairns), Lisa (Hervey Bay – ECTA Treasurer), Jill (Gympie), Carleen De Jong (Cairns) and Nebula (ECTA Committee Member) brave holding the carpet snake on display.



Gladstone ECTA Committee members Debbie and Liz take a moment to network at the conference with ECTA President Kim Walters.



Participants at the Learning Connection workshop by Maureen Hawke experienced first-hand some of the activities which support brain development and learning.

ECTA Committee Member – Nebula enjoyed the chance to discuss how the conference went with Conference Committee members Jenny Daniloff and Chris Cook during the wine and cheese session.



Libby Gaedtke (ECTA Regional Groups Coordinator), Kim Walters (ECTA President) network with Cairns Regional Group ECTA members Angela and Carleen



Sponsored Regional Office Bearers from Cairns (Lynne Smith) and Barcaldine (Jan Dickson) discuss the conference with Kim Walters (ECTA President).





Libby Gaedtke (ECTA Regional Groups Coordinator) and Virginia Ward (Blackbutt Kindergarten) catch up.



Each year traders generously donate prizes for the Wine and Cheese. During the drawing of the prizes delegates reflect on the learning. Thank you to Educational Experience for sponsoring the wine and cheese.

Hervey Bay Early Childhood Educators celebrate the great number of delegates who attended from the Hervey Bay network area. (back) Julie, Tracey, Romaine, Donna, Di, Libby, (front) Lisa, Melissa, Jo are all smiles with the days success at the wine and cheese.



During the 'homemade morning tea' of freshly made muffins and delicious sausage rolls, delegates were able to network with other professionals and wander around the trade displays. Delegates enjoyed shopping at the vast array of trade displays on arrival, and during morning tea and lunch.



Sponsorship provided businesses with an opportunity to share up to date resources and support, at varying levels, professional development amongst early childhood professionals.



Abbey, representing Platinum conference sponsor MTA (Modern Teaching Aids) at their stand ready to talk with delegates about the variety of resources available.



Maree Russo and Chris Milburn, representing Gold conference sponsor Dance Fever at the Dance Fever Stand at the conference discussing the resources and visits to schools which are offered.

Hart Sport, conference Supporting Sponsor Xavier Levy displaying resources for delegates.



JJ Stranan of Global Oz Kids, conference Supporting Sponsor enjoyed showcasing her multicultural mats as well as many other resources with Virginia Ward (Blackbutt) and Sue Southey (ECTA Vice President).



State Coordinating Committee Members Kim Walters (President), Lisa Cooper (Treasurer) and Allison Boland working on the ECTA stand during the conference. The ECTA colours of yellow and blue make a colourful statement.



Families As First Teachers: Giving Indigenous children a strong start for a brighter future

Rosetta Brim and Kathryn Mannion



Kathryn Mannion is coordinator of Families As First Teachers (FAFT). She has a Masters degree in Aboriginal Studies, a Doctorate in Teaching, and a Masters in Applied Linguistics. She has combined all these skills, as well as nearly 30 years of educating experience, to create a program which has greatly increased the chance of future success for many young Indigenous students. Kathryn is the national recipient of the NEiTA 2011 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards in the category of community engagement.

Rosetta is a Djabugay woman, the traditional people of Kuranda. She has lived in the area all of her life and is a community liaison teacher aide for the Families as First Teachers in Kuranda. Her story follows on page 11.

Families As First Teachers (FAFT) is a program developed by Kuranda District State School to engage families in their children's early literacy and numeracy development and help make the transition from home to school a little easier. It is about building new educational opportunities for our little ones and it is about making links with Indigenous families who, for many reasons have felt excluded from Western education systems.

The Families As First Teachers program began in 2005 when Kuranda District State School undertook a whole school review. In line with Education Queensland policies to promote the importance of the early phase of learning and implement greater support for Indigenous students, the school commenced a range of consultation meetings with the community to better understand the needs of the children and their families.

From this review we embarked on a commitment to establish stronger links with the Indigenous community and try to involve families in their children's formal education.

Our aims were:

- to promote notions of shared and proportional responsibility in the teaching

and learning of formal pre-literacy and numeracy skills

- to skill the adults in supporting their young children's early formal literacy and numeracy development
- to create an early years program for students who for many reasons did not attend established pre-school programs
- to acknowledge the existing cultural capital and literacy practices of the Indigenous families and other local families
- to engage in mutual learning where teachers, families and Indigenous workers work and learn from one another
- to create a program that was inclusive, sustainable and transferable.

It has been widely reported that one in two Indigenous four year olds miss out on pre-school across the nation. In Kuranda we suggest that the statistics are higher in that almost all of our Indigenous students come to school without attending preschool. Indigenous students begin their schooling at a clear disadvantage to their non-Indigenous peers with a difference in academic performance apparent



Tiana watches her mum Janita making a star puppet. This puppet goes with a Djabugay song called 'Gaway' meaning star.

from Year One and the gap continuing to widen throughout school years.

Restricted literacy levels are insufficient to empower Indigenous students in negotiating the Western World. Access to higher incomes, economic and social power and improved life chances are largely dependent on a student's repertoire of literacy skills and competencies. Without this competence a cycle of disempowerment, marginalisation and associated political, economic and social disadvantage ensue.

We believe that the early years of a child's life are critical learning years and cycles can be changed through early intervention. The FAFT program attempts to be culturally responsive by operating within a framework that provides workshops with families filtering through their own cultural experiences, child rearing practices, modes of teaching and learning and frames of reference.

Our program is a place-based solution that focuses on the needs of Indigenous students and their families.

Families As First Teachers guiding principles are:

- the first years of a child's life are critical learning years
- families learn together
- healthy bodies equal strong learners
- building links between home and school is vital to school success
- positive parenting skills are critical to a family's wellbeing and child development
- intergenerational activity is key to learning support for young Indigenous children
- play is the best way for young children to learn
- enhancing and developing pre-literacy and numeracy skills leads to a strong start in school
- localised programs enable a 'good fit' for each community. There is no 'one size fits all' model
- valuing and building on families' cultural capital helps them see themselves as an important part of the teaching and learning team
- valuing culture enables families to see that the school community acknowledges the many different knowledge systems that the children bring to school
- participation in the FAFT program will lead to improved educational outcomes.

Families As First Teachers is based on a simple model.

Family involvement: programs successful in improving outcomes for Indigenous students are derived from genuine partnerships between the educational setting and families. In a learning community, teachers, administrators and parents are envisaged as equal participants in the dialogue where the boundaries between

learning in and out of school are increasingly blurred. Parent participation in school is a relatively new development for many Indigenous parents, many of whom have had negative experiences with their own Western schooling.



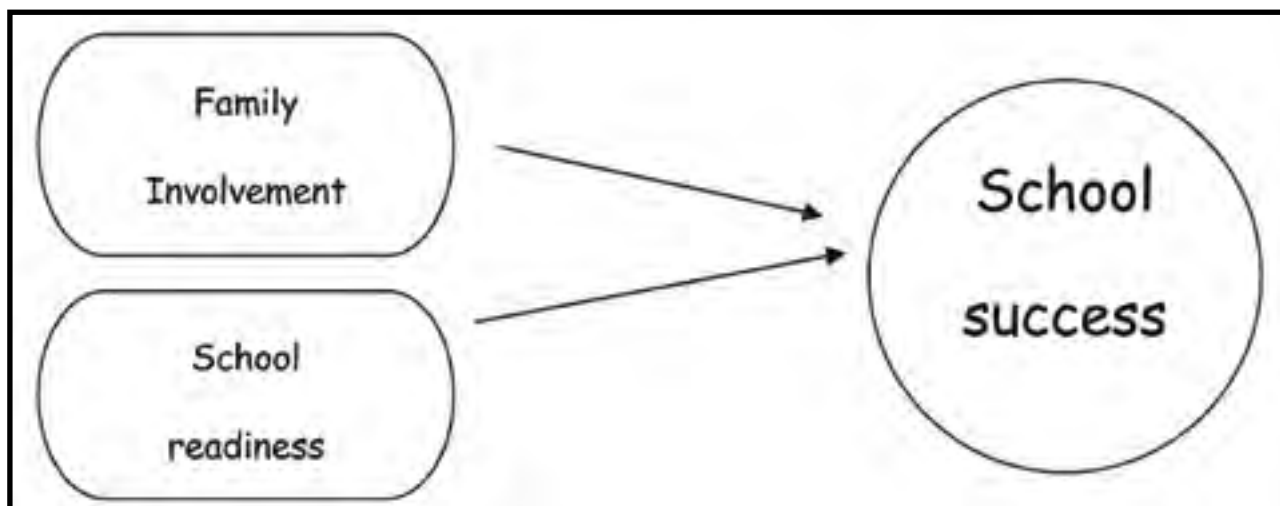
Dad Phillip gives some helpful painting tips to Tashawn.

School readiness: school success is contingent upon school readiness. It is a well established fact that learning begins before the formal education of school. As educators we know that the types and forms of literacy practiced in the homes are frequently incongruent with what children encounter at school. This presents a struggle for families who can become confused with the school environment and the literacy events practiced there. The sociocultural patterns of literacy that many Indigenous students bring to formal education are often undervalued by teachers which can make it difficult for them to achieve academic success.



Mum Esther and Sharnell share a book together during a FAFT session.

Schools success: school success is an important avenue for improving the life opportunities of people. All who compete for a place in a world characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, complex social and environmental change and enriched population diversity, need to be given an equal place at the starting line. School success can help to provide that equality. FAFT is attempting to mediate between the home and school environments in order that the cycle of underachievement does not continue to be maintained.





Mums making alphabet charts to use at home.

Diversity has become a frequently-used term in our school and indeed in education. This diversity extends to socioeconomic diversity, religious beliefs, gender, disability and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It became clear to us that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching did not meet the needs of all



Jaylene watches as mum Anna makes a photo book about her daughter.

our students. The recurrent theme of lower educational outcomes for Indigenous students meant that as a school we had to acknowledge that past patterns of attributing the causes of poor academic achievement to students and their families was inappropriate and what was needed was the development of teaching and

learning models that reflected the student's home and community practices and engaged families in their children's school learning.

Learning about literacy is acknowledged to occur in any social situation – home and community, school and playground. The interconnectedness of language, culture and learning in these social situations is highlighted and diversity is considered a resource rather than a problem. FAFT is a place-based solution that focuses on the needs of Indigenous students and their families, where two cultures work together to share accountability for children's learning.



A finished alphabet chart is hanging up and ready to use with son Kostas.

Rosetta's Story

I come from Kuranda. The traditional people of Kuranda are the Djabugay people. I am a Djabugay woman who has lived in the area all my life. There are a number of small communities in the Kuranda district most of which are occupied by Djabugay people. This area is mostly rainforest with many short rivers, waterfalls and swamps. I was born at Mona Mona Mission. This Mission was started in 1913 as a Seventh Day Adventist Mission. It is 25 Kilometres north west of Kuranda. All the Aboriginal people who were put on the Mission were captured by the police and black trackers. My great grandfather was only a small boy at the time but he was one of the original people sent to the Mission.

My parents were born at the Mission. My mother remembers the Mission days fondly. She has sometimes talked of her life as a child at the Mission and these are some of her memories. Young children were put in the dorms at six years of age. My mother went in when she was ten. Children were not allowed to talk to their parents after they moved into the dorms except for ten minutes on Friday evenings. If they talked to them at any other time they were punished.

Mission life was strict. My mother got up in the morning at 5:00 am and milked the cows. They were milked again at 5:00 in the evening. They worshipped at 6:00 am and 7:00 o'clock at night. Mission life was ruled by the bell. The Mission administration was strict. If you wanted to go to town for the day then you had to apply for permission. You applied for a Certificate of Exemption which let you out for a certain time. If you didn't come back by the right time, you were in trouble. Children would be caned and adults were punished by being sent away to Palm Island.

In the 1960s the Queensland government decided that they were going to build a dam on the Mona Mona site. The missionaries encouraged the residents to leave. Those who wanted to stay were told that the police would come and take them to other communities if they did not go of their free will. The dam has never been built. The change came overnight and was hard for many people to adjust to a life outside. They had not been paid proper wages so their experience with money was limited. The Mission sawmill that many of the men had worked in was sold. The houses were sold off and removed. The promise of hope had led to much disappointment for many of the Djabugay people.

The effects of the Mission life have been lasting. Not talking to our parents and grandparents meant that over time, our traditional language was almost lost. The bells told us when to get up, when to eat and when work and when to go to church. This meant we could not practice sacred rituals, dances or hold Djabugay ceremonies. Our way of life changed. People who were sent away to the jail lost their connection with the land that had belonged to their ancestors. My people have since felt feelings of great loss and disconnection. This has carried over to many aspects of our lives.

The past experiences of my people still impact on our lives today. We experience disadvantage in many ways but we can and must move forward. This can be done by working together to understand Western knowledge and school systems. Our program FAFT is attempting to bridge connections. One connection is linking families and the school. We are also linking Aboriginal families to their children's formal literacy and numeracy learning. We are creating opportunities for Indigenous families to improve outcomes for Indigenous children at school.

Reflections on Robin Grille's keynote presentation 'Love, fear and shame in education'



This year's ECTA conference keynote speaker was the acclaimed author and psychologist, Robin Grille. After his engaging talk *Love, Fear and Shame in Education*, we asked random educators to reflect on what they had learned. Here are four of those conversations.

Bronwyn McGregor

During this presentation, what was a key 'learning moment' for you – it could have been a new idea, a challenging point or a particular moving or emotional statement?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could change the education paradigm to be more like what Robin described! Why isn't that the REAL WORLD? Why can't children be enabled to learn via their interests? Why must children learn what is prescribed by adults in a way that is determined by adults?

We don't seem to be able to appreciate the power of passion in our lives. We seem to be so strongly entrenched in carrot and stick behaviours that they are difficult to eradicate them from our thoughts and actions. I wonder if there will ever be a time when early childhood philosophy, pedagogy and practice becomes the norm throughout all education – particularly primary education. I hope more educators and policy makers can rise to Robin's challenge rather than be threatened by it.

What have you taken away from this talk as important to use in your own setting?

I have heard Robin speak on a number of occasions now and this time I took away the comment 'Say yes to the emotions; say no to the behaviour'. This is a wonderful way to

validate our natural emotions. What we need to do is guide children to understand and express their emotions in personally fulfilling ways, rather than encouraging them to suppress or ignore their emotions. The range of emotions Robin's keynote raised in the room is proof that we all can feel differently about the same thing – and our feelings are valid for us.

I try to listen more to my own emotions and, rather than ignoring or suppressing them, I respect them, and try to direct them towards actions that align with my values.

For children, I try to model and respond empathetically, validating the feelings and then working on different ways to express those feelings in a positive way. I have never been a fan of the word 'naughty' and I would love to eradicate it from our society ... along with smacking. I see children's behaviours as a form of communication. What is tricky is working out exactly what the child is trying to say and then helping them say it in the best way they can.

Any other thoughts about this presentation?

I would love to have Robin address primary school staff, Principals and education policy makers – along with a panel that included other early childhood spokespeople and, of course, Sir Ken Robinson from the TED videos.

Finally, can you describe your practice as an early childhood educator, including where you work?

I have been an early childhood educator for twenty-four years, and have taught in a range of settings, across a range of ages (including adults), in three countries.

Julie Edgerton

During this presentation, what was a key 'learning moment' for you – it could have been a new idea, a challenging point or a particular moving or emotional statement?

The idea about expressing what is inside yourself and 'living from the heart' – the connection between mental, emotional and physical health.

That grading and ranking is a burden for the child; including the high- and low-graded achievers. That rewards (money, rewards, stickers) work when you're watching, but kill the joy and passion for intrinsic learning and motivation.

What have you taken away from this presentation as important to use in your own setting?

Education comes in spite of school. Relationships and socialisation are paramount. Education is evolving. The awareness that in this modern age it is not federally illegal to hit children and that 'shame' shuts relationships down, creates rage and can lead to bullying.

I also took away the notion of learning more about yourself, your own style of learning and motivations for learning, and the need to listen to your inner voice.

Any other thoughts about this presentation?

He covered interesting areas about loving and teaching from the heart, using our humanity and the ability for our thoughts to change our lives. He illustrated this by saying 'the heart is a brain' and connecting to emotional literacy. The heart rules the head, so use it for your good. Show young children empathy, recognition to help them create more neural pathways and deeper emotional understandings.

'I feel therefore I relate'. Share what you love with the children you teach.

He also directed us to TED.com as a great source of educational talks and videos.

Finally, in one sentence can you describe your practice as an early childhood educator, including where you work?

I am a full-time Prep teacher aide and have been working in early childhood for twenty years. I am currently studying part-time externally at QUT.

Kaylene Courtney

During this presentation, what was a key 'learning moment' for you – it could have been a new idea, a challenging point or a particular moving or emotional statement?

I have always believed that the social and emotional skills of children are most important in the years before school. I found Robin's speech about empathy and emotional intelligence heart-warming. Governments are so focused on outcomes and the 'smart state' that the skills of getting along with others, caring for each other and behaving respectfully towards each other are seemingly not as important as pushing children into the school system before they are ready or have not yet attained socio-emotional skills. I firmly believe in letting the children play, for through play they will practice these most important skills!!

What have you taken away from this presentation as important to use in your own setting?

I shall listen more carefully to children's feelings and validate them so they feel 'heard' and valued.

Any other thoughts about this presentation?

Robin mentioned democratic schools around the world and, how in these places, children being valued and not shamed or graded has led to less school bullying. Grading seems to be so important to governments, colleges and schools. His take on star charts and gold stars at home would be an interesting talk to have for parents, I think.

Finally, can you describe your practice as an early childhood educator, including where you work?

I am an early childhood teacher of forty years teaching experience, currently working a five-day fortnight programme.

Robyn Lane

During this presentation, what was a key 'learning moment' for you – it could have been a new idea, a challenging point or a particular moving or emotional statement?

'Love is the most powerful driver of learning. When children learn something they want to share it with someone else. Emotional literacy comes first. I feel; therefore I relate'.

These were all statements made by Robin throughout his talk that pulled together in a learning moment for me. He opened his talk by asking us 'Who are you really? Know who you are and live from your heart, know how to get along, love ourselves, love humanity and be in love with the natural environment. It works better to be creative rather than obedient. If you change your thoughts you change your life that way.'

What have you taken away from this presentation as important to use in your own setting?

I thought I had done a good job at getting to know my children and their families this and every year I have taught. However, after hearing Robin speak, I think I can improve on how I get to know what I know about them as individuals and as families. I don't think I know how each child feels about themselves and the world. I don't think I know how I feel about myself and the world either. I'm so busy being in it I've forgotten to stop and reflect and think and feel – not only about the children in my care but about the most important person in my care – ME. I plan to commence our yarning

circle this term with us sharing one thing each morning about ourselves that we love, and one thing about our world that we love. I hope this communal sharing will allow all of us to learn a little more about ourselves and each other.

Any other thoughts about this presentation?

Someone once said, 'It takes a lot of slow to grow.' Well this educational revolution that Robin speaks of will take a little longer than I think he was hoping for. I think we in early childhood have been the lucky ones in that we have always delivered play-based, cooperative rather than competitive, heart-driven, intrinsically rewarding and non-coercive guidance for young children. We have always tried to develop emotional connectedness between children, staff and parents. Now we realise the importance of that connectedness with our community and environment as well and hope that someone involved in the writing of the new national curriculum gets to hear Robin speak and reflect on his message before it is too late.

'Look for the joyous way for them to do things!' he suggested.

Is anyone listening?

Finally, can you describe your practice as an early childhood educator, including where you work?

I am a full-time kindergarten teacher who has been teaching for thirty-five years.

I have seen many changes during this time, but none so detrimental as the new Prep curriculum

being implemented on four-and-a-half to five-and-a-half-year olds who are developmentally not ready for it, physically, socially or emotionally in a lot of cases. What happened to the promised play-based curriculum. In my opinion, there will be a huge increase in the mental health cases in children between the ages four and eighteen in the next ten to fifteen years. I wonder what reasons will be given for this increase?



Delegates listen to Robin Grille's keynote presentation.



Designing environments – more than furniture arrangement

Carrie Rose

Carrie Rose has worked in early childhood education for over 20 years. Her experience ranges from her current Owner/Director position at Rosie's Early Learning, years of teaching across both private and community-based child care; lecturing in early childhood education; and consultancy work for the past nine years. Her passion focuses on using both emergent curriculum principles, designing educational environments and developing leaders in early childhood. She prides herself on the commitment to provide an engaging educational environment for young children.

As early childhood educators move away from 'boxed-style' programs to more 'child-centred', emergent curricula; thought, planning and collaboration are needed in designing the environment.

When we consider how children feel about the space that they play in then, just like adults, we see how it will guide the way they behave and the success of their learning. In many cases early childhood environments offer very similar materials for children to play with and familiar play spaces to play in. Instead, the environment should reflect the group projects the children are exploring, the games they are playing and the varying levels of their skill.

To do this, learning spaces should promote a variety of options and choices for



The materials we provide should inspire and intrigue.



Environments should provide challenge, be aesthetically appealing and ignite the senses.

children. Children cannot show their skills if we do not give them opportunities through environments that provide challenge, are aesthetically appealing and ignite the senses. The way in which the room provokes wonder and curiosity will assist in firing up the senses and imagination.

As educators we should base our decisions about the environment not on what we think, according to history or developmental milestones, but rather on inspiration, intrigue and function. The materials we offer should inspire and intrigue children to explore their environment. Although there are materials that can be purchased through relevant catalogues, it can be argued that many of these only have one main play purpose or function. Purchasing



Old wooden dining tables and stools with legs cut down create space for children in art studio areas.

recycled or second hand furniture and materials starts to give the learning space a closer connection to the 'home-like feel'.

Providing environments that engage the children in long-lasting play, that are creative and open-ended, with materials of interest, will create a context that will minimise challenging

behaviour and enhance their learning opportunities. As an example:

The children in the junior kindergarten room were investigating the ways in which their families celebrated and engaged in meals. The educators observed children celebrating birthdays, making birthday cakes, having picnics and cooking dinner. To support their investigation, four smaller learning pods within one space were created. After some time the children who had engaged in the birthday play decided to have a 'birthday picnic' with the group of children who had created the picnic play. Would this connection have occurred if the environment had not been intentionally designed to create the opportunity?

Below are the steps used by educators to reflect on the effectiveness of the current environment and the improvements that could be made:

Step 1: Decide on the learning spaces and functions.

Step 2: Draw a plan with materials needed. If you have older children you could involve them in the design and ideas.



This space engages children in a variety of methods to explore their investigation of 'How families share meals'

Step 3: Check you have everything you need.

Step 4: Start the change.

Step 5: Discuss and decide the rules with the children.

Investing time in Steps 1 and 2 is critical for success. When I consider learning spaces, I start by:

- thinking about the challenges the room or an area has and planning spaces that will work in these spaces
- considering the learning spaces I am wanting to develop and the skills the children will engage in
- identifying what the children are really interested in playing with compared with the size of the space
- deciding on how many children the space will accommodate
- reflecting on where the children play in groups, and by themselves
- reflecting on how spaces can be used in different ways

- reflecting on how the space can be more aesthetic and inviting.

Sketching out plans like the examples below will help educators to consider the connections in the room as well as the use of resources. These two examples are of whole room renovations but the strategy can also be used for just changing one learning pod.

Learning spaces indoors and outdoors can have a variety of functions and materials that provide children with opportunities to develop skills over a range of areas, no matter where they are playing.

Spaces are about feeling inspired to explore and discover. Try to remember back to when you were a child ... what intrigued you? This is a great place for teams to start when reflecting on, and evaluating, the current learning space, and thinking about enhancements and improvements.



The sketches identify where particular items of furniture will go including mats, shelving and curtains or screening.

Out of the Box

A conversation with Carol Davidson, Executive Producer

Congratulations on a huge achievement — another big, exciting festival for Out of the Box! Talk us through some of the highlights of this year's festival.

Celebrating a 20 year history of the Out of the Box Festival for Children was such an important milestone for the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and for our current Chief Executive who began the festival in 1992. With an estimated 91,700 attendances across performances, free events, workshops and a symposium, this has been one of the most successful Out of the Box festivals since its inception in 1992

In 2012 we saw QPAC commission page to stage adaptations of three children's books; *The Flying Orchestra* by local author and illustrator Clare McFadden; *Invisible Me* by Wendy Binks and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* by Kath Walker (Oodgeroo). We had such brilliant and dedicated creative teams who captured the magic of these exquisite stories and brought them to life for the stage.

Also this year, part of our theming was to make use of simple and ordinary household items to create enchanting, bewildering play spaces. The Cultural Forecourt literally dazzled as children were lost in a maze of sticky tape and redesigned the city skyline with cardboard boxes. The Polyglot Theatre projects *We Built this City* and *Sticky Maze* saw patrons returning again and again to experience the wonder of these maze-like formations.

As a festival producer, what are some of the ways you work in partnership with the early childhood education sector?

Our partnerships within the early childhood sector seek to promote the festival message of immersive artistic and cultural experiences.

Through ongoing relationships with universities, particularly Education and Creative Industry Faculties, our aim is to provide students with opportunities to facilitate festival workshops: to further their practice as artists, pre-service teachers and future festival advocates. We hope this relationship continues to strengthen as the



The cultural forecourt. Photo by Justin Nichols Atmosphere Photography.



Sticky maze. Photo by Justin Nichols Atmosphere Photography.



Petting Zoo – Tryannasaur lunch. Credit Earth Visual and Physical Inc.

value and spirit students bring to the Festival is certainly inspiring.

As a leader in early childhood programming it is important to have an awareness of current initiatives supporting childhood development. In 2012 QPAC shares the vision of the National Year of Reading. Recognising the importance of reading, this initiative played a major role in the programming for this year's Festival together with the key organising principle of cultural and artistic literacy: a principle which highlights the fundamental relationship that exists between arts experiences and literacy.

Ultimately, Out of the Box is about connecting children, families and schools to culturally enriching experiences within QPAC and the Cultural Precinct which nurture children's creativity and imagination through narrative, performance, and thoughtful play.

In a cash-strapped economy, many teachers are pressured to justify excursions to a festival such as Out of the Box. Can you give us your top three reasons why arts festivals are important experiences for young children?

As a performing arts organisation, we appreciate the pressures of the current economy and we saw this in its most physical form through a peak in free event attendances. With the transition to the National Curriculum, we also



Dinosaur Petting Zoo. Credit Earth Visual and Physical Inc.

witnessed the pressure teachers are under to deliver and achieve educational outcomes.

The festival began originally with a vision and understanding of the importance of cultural and artistic literacy and in 2012 this vision was stronger than ever. For us, programming involves insights into what is relevant for children and to then make connections that address emotional, social and sensory components that are key for learning and development. To be able to sum up each of these factors and apply them to a festival to provide an active source of engagement ensures the transmission of arts to mind is succinct and delivered.

Schools consider the Out of the Box festival in high regard as a cumulative curriculum event, biennial school excursion or simply for

engaging festival experiences. We appreciate the wonderful support and commitment schools have for the Festival. For those not so familiar, we encourage consideration of the form in which the Festival might fit into the school calendar.

What are some of the ways that early childhood teachers can get involved with the Festival in future years, and what should we be expecting of future festivals?

Programming for the 2014 Festival will begin very soon and the vision of cultural and artistic literacy will continue to resonate through performances and workshops for children eight years and under. This vision is the essence of Out of the Box and one of the reasons why the Festival continues to be renowned locally, nationally and internationally.

In 2010 Arts Queensland initiated a joint venture of a festival blog. The aim of the project was to enable target participants and audiences of the festival (children, parents, carers, and teachers) to step into the role of reviewer/critic/blogger and report on all things Out of the Box. This year the project ran again and in 2014 we hope the project might broaden and include teachers and students from various classrooms across the South East engaging in arts-rich conversations.

As school groups make up a large percentage of attendances, our aim for 2014 is to encourage advocacy amongst teachers and school communities. The festival has an outstanding history and, together with support from schools to extend the Festival message, the opportunities are exciting.

Finally, what's your favourite memory, or experience, as a producer of the 2012 Out of the Box Festival for Children?

Sitting in the audience of one of the first performances of *The Flying Orchestra*; there were more than 900 children in the theatre and their response to the show was exquisite, their appreciation and reactions pitch perfect. It made the journey so very worthwhile.



David Megarrty performs Bear with me. Photo Justin Nichols Atmosphere Photography.



Kid Philanthropy

Bronwyn Sheehan

Founder and Director of children's charity *The Pyjama Foundation*, and 2009 Queensland Australian of the Year, Bronwyn Sheehan shows how children are helping to change the world.

What is this new trend?

Kid Philanthropy or 'Kidanthropy' is not a new social trend, but something that is becoming increasingly popular. More and more children are aware that there are others less fortunate. They are exposed to more concerns through the social world in which they live and the willingness to help is outstanding.

What has been your experience with 'Kidanthropy'?

My first experience of Kidanthropy was a young child of only five or six who donated all of his pocket money (about \$20 which is a lot for a small child!). He wanted to help another child 'who doesn't have the things I have'. This little boy's eyes lit up as he passed over the note and this gesture is one I will probably never forget. Kids are moved to help causes and charities they care about. I think children are inspired by the work of *The Pyjama Foundation* because we are helping vulnerable children who don't have the luxuries our children have.

I also think children are inspired by our cause as they couldn't imagine a life without books, education and learning through fun.

Tell me more about The Pyjama Foundation.

The Pyjama Foundation is a learning-based organisation aimed at supporting children in foster care. Studies have shown that children in foster care are not only subject to a background of trauma and neglect — but are also being left behind by their peers academically. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare there are around 37,000 children in foster care in Australia with 92% below the average literacy level by the time they are seven years old; 87% do not complete Year 12 or its equivalent. This can



Supporting Pyjama Day at St Margaret's.



Wearing pyjamas to school is every child's dream.

lead to long term unemployment, homelessness and involvement in the justice system.

The organisation is centred around volunteers known as Pyjama Angels. Pyjama Angels are matched with a child in care in which they spend an hour a week reading books aloud, playing educational games and ensuring these children are not being left behind.

... and how children can help?

As our Pyjama Angels are going into foster homes with vulnerable children they must have

a blue card, therefore be over 18. We have had so many requests from people, especially children asking where they can help and so we established a fun campaign called Pyjama Day.

Pyjama Day is a great activity that everyone – including children – can be a part of.

How can schools get involved?

We love when schools get involved as our program is education-focused for vulnerable children. Giving Classrooms is part of the Kidanthropy trend and Pyjama Day fits perfectly into this category. Wearing your pyjamas to school is not only every child's dream (and possibly teacher's nightmare) but to swapping their uniform in exchange for a donation has seen some outstanding results.

St Margaret's Anglican Girl's School in Ascot have been supporting the Pyjama Day for the past two years. The day is always something that staff and students look forward to as they are able to swap their uniform for cosy pyjamas for the day in exchange for a gold coin donation to support vulnerable children.

For more information go to www.thepyjamafoundation.com



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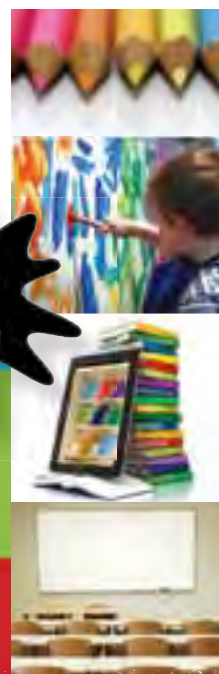
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Being happy and productive in a stressful world



Andrea Ashford

Andrea has worked for over 30 years with families and children, the past 18 of which have been spent as a counsellor and human services trainer. Andrea initially trained as an early childhood teacher, and spent twelve years teaching in early childhood centres. She later completed a Masters Degree in Counselling and a Diploma in Yoga Teaching. Andrea has a private counselling practice in Paddington, where she specializes in the areas of child, adolescent, family and stepfamily issues as well as relationship and individual counselling. In addition, she presents workshops and training seminars in a wide variety of work environments and teaches yoga part time.

Are you feeling more stressed than ever before? If so, you are not alone. I am alarmed at the increasing number of teachers who are seeking my assistance as a Counsellor to manage symptoms of extreme stress, if not, burnout. These symptoms include chronic anxiety, inability to sleep, feelings of inadequacy, irritability and difficulties with professional and personal relationships.

Throughout history, societies have gone through revolutions resulting in dramatic change and we are currently going through one such dramatic and fast-moving revolution. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but adapting to change can be stressful for human beings, particularly if it's rapid change.

The current revolution is all about technological change and the way we generate and communicate information.

Not only are we changing the way we communicate and interact with others, we are also changing the structure of our social networks, the way we solve problems, the way we form our sense of identity and belonging in the world and our physical life in terms of the way we hold and move our bodies.

So what does this mean for early childhood professionals? One major challenge is that we are now required to generate vast amounts of information on a daily basis, as we let people know what we are doing and why we are doing it. The irony is that we then have very little time left to do the job of being mentally and emotionally present for the children we teach.

This reduces the quality of the educational moment, as well as the sense of satisfaction between teacher and child as they engage in the wonderful process of learning.

It is vital now for us to pause and reflect upon the value of the changes we are making to the process of early childhood education. However, the reality is that this revolution has a powerful momentum, so things won't be slowing down.

Therefore, in order to function well and survive in this rapidly changing world, one of the things we must do is become masterful at managing stress.

Six steps to being happy and productive

Step 1. Accept that stress has always been an inevitable part of daily life. It's just that now, this is even more the case.

Accepting this fact, rather than resisting and resenting it is the first step towards reducing stress levels and preserving personal energy. We cannot change anything until we accept it. Resistance doesn't change a situation, it just makes it more stressful.

However, this acceptance does not mean a passive resignation or 'giving in' to the demands being placed upon us. Keep reminding yourself that you have some degree of choice and that you do not need to be an obedient slave to all the expectations that you feel are being made of you. As long as you are being a responsible, hard-working professional, it is reasonable to make decisions as to what you can and can't achieve within the time available in a working day.

Step 2. Clarify the stressors.

Calmly and objectively review the situation and remember that what stresses one person does not necessarily stress another. Further to that, each educational setting will have its unique differences. This clarification process reduces the feeling of overwhelming pressure and empowers you to create a sense of order and priority as you seek ways of reducing the stress.

Take a compassionate attitude by acknowledging that you are a human being doing the best you can. This approach is no different to the way in which you would assist a child who is dealing with difficulties. We must begin with acceptance and kindness towards ourselves.

Step 3. Become self-aware.

Foster increased self-awareness by regularly checking in as to how you are feeling, firstly in terms of body tension (maybe tightness in the head, around the eyes, the jaw, neck, upper chest or upper back). Then, notice breathing patterns. In stressful situations, breathing can become shallow and rapid.

Finally, listen to your thoughts. When we are under pressure, our thoughts or 'self-talk' can become very negative – usually either by being critical of self or of others, or by generating worrisome, fear provoking ideas.

Step 4. Release stress as soon as it starts to build.

As you notice stress building, choose from the following strategies to release stress and prevent further build up:

- **for the body** ... take slow, smooth, deep breaths and stretch out tight muscles.
- **for the mind** ... use constructive 'self talk'! (In particular, watch out for the destructive effects of worry, self criticism and resentment.)
- worry or 'what if' thoughts generate unnecessary fear and the resulting anxiety will stop you taking positive action to address the problem.
- self-criticism will lower your self-esteem and increase your stress levels – thus making it even more difficult to have the confidence to manage a situation.
- resentment will just make you bitter and exhausted – again, making it hard to find constructive ways to deal with the problem.

- use a constructive 'mentor voice' as you guide yourself through the day.

Step 5. Each day, contribute at least one thing (no matter how small) towards creating a positive work environment.

We all make a contribution to the atmosphere of our working environment, so be mindful of the kind of environment you'd like to create for the children, the parents, your colleagues and yourself.

Positive nonverbal contributions include smiles, happy expressions, open posture, laughter etc. Positive verbal contributions include compliments, praise, words of support and encouragement, refusal to gossip, sharing ideas, thank you notes and uplifting written affirmations placed in places you will see them on a regular basis.

Step 6. Work hard at building your resilience ... take this project seriously! It's not mere self-indulgence.

- Be aware of how you speak to yourself. Use the same language you would use with a child or a dear friend.
- Coach yourself through challenging situations. Remind yourself that struggles are a normal part of being human.
- Acknowledge what you've done well ... every day! Celebrate successes.
- Validate your feelings and be patient with yourself.
- Give yourself a gentle 'kick along' sometimes.
- Focus on your strengths and build on these. Don't expect yourself to be great at everything. We are all different.
- Be fair with your expectations of self. Learn from your mistakes. Don't waste time in self punishment – focus on how you wish to improve.
- Be prepared to take a risk.
- Reward yourself for trying.
- Be curious.
- Be spontaneous.
- Have fun – be playful – laugh a lot.
- Treat yourself regularly – you deserve it.
- Have dreams.
- Enjoy simple pleasures.

For all the Henries at child care: giving a secure base – using attachment thinking to support children's daily transitions

Robyn Dolby



Dr Robyn Dolby is a psychologist who has worked in the field of Infant Mental Health for thirty years. Her special interests are attachment; emotional development; assessment and intervention using an attachment framework. Between 2000-2011 she co-ordinated an attachment-based intervention in a preschool, *Attachment Matters Project – from relationships to learning*, and has written the booklets *The Circle of Security: Roadmap to Building Supportive Relationships* and *About bullying and Promoting Positive Behaviour* published by Early Childhood Australia.

Every day when Henry arrives at child care his educator reports that 'Henry tips over chairs for no reason at all'. In the middle of a busy morning, it is easy to react to what Henry does and focus on managing his behaviour. But 'What is Henry trying to tell us?'

Children will often repeat their actions until we can make sense of them.

It's as if they are compelled to do so; like a line from a country and western song, 'If it ain't fixed, keep breaking it'.

Persistent misbehaviour is not children's first choice. Their first choice is behaviour that allows them to feel our support and connection (Circle of Security Parenting, Cos-P, 2009 p. 81).

Perhaps, indirectly, Henry is giving a very respectful message to his mother and educator 'Please take charge, I know you can do it. I believe that you can take charge and make the transition to child care feel safe for me and that's why I keep tipping the chairs for you to see.'

Attachment thinking helps us to shift gears and focus on Henry's relationship needs, not only his behaviour. If Henry is new to child care and just settling in, he'll be trying to figure out whether this is a safe place or not. 'Do the big people here have a plan to comfort me when I'm upset and make me feel safe to play?' John Bowlby

(1988), the father of attachment theory, says that what makes children (and all of us) feel safe is a **relational anchor**. Children use their attachment figure as 'secure-base from which to explore' and as a 'safe haven to return to' (Ainsworth et al, 1978). This attachment-exploration cycle has great educational relevance, because the safer and more comfortable children feel to come in to their educators, the more effective learners they will be when they go out to explore. The feeling that the educator is gladly 'being there', to come back to, is what makes it possible for children to go out and learn.

The Circle of Security authors (Cooper et al, 2005) have drawn a map of this attachment-exploration cycle in the shape of a circle and make the children's relationship needs explicit. Their needs around exploration are 'watch me, help me, enjoy with me, delight in me'; for attachment they are 'protect me, comfort me, delight in me and organize my feelings'. To travel smoothly around the Circle of Security – from exploration to attachment needs and back again – children require the support of an emotionally available adult:

Always: be bigger, stronger, wiser and kind. Whenever possible: follow the child's need. Whenever necessary: take charge.

In a busy group environment how can you put this map into place so that children feel 'Here,

in this place, my teachers value being a secure base and safe haven for me? Playspaces®¹ (Dolby, 2011; Dolby, 2007) give a structure for making this happen; when children arrive at the start of the day Playspaces give each child a predictable reunion with their educator. Using the Playspace structure, you see multiple secure bases in operation.

The Playspace® structure when children and parents arrive

When creating play spaces, staff get ready before the children arrive. They sit down at the children's level, always in the same place so the children can easily find them and parents don't arrive into an empty space. Each staff member sets up an activity they can share with the children. Then they wait for the children to come, observing how each child approaches and trying to make their welcome 'just right' for that child. This means being still on the outside (not moving around and setting up equipment) and still on the inside (getting to a calm place inside yourself so you have the room or mental space to be welcoming. It involves you acknowledging the children's feelings and guessing their relationship needs) (Dolby, 2007, p7).

On the way to preschool, parents talk with their children about which staff member they would like to see when they arrive. Parents bring their child to the educator who is ready at the child's level and greets them by saying something to the child that includes the parent. 'Hello Henry you've come with your daddy'. The educator looks from child to parent as he/she refers to the parent, so the parent feels included, 'It's about both of us (not only my child)'. (This idea for bridging is from Maria Aarts, Marte Meo, 2008). The educator's genuine greeting of the parent also goes a long way towards reassuring the child. When it's time to say goodbye the parents and educator together make the hand-over explicit to reassure the child. The dialogue may go something like this.

Dad to Henry: Henry I'm leaving now. Judy is here to look after you and keep you safe for me.

Dad to Judy: Judy, will you look after Henry today?

Judy to Dad and Henry: Yes Henry, I'm pleased I get to keep you safe and play with you till Daddy comes back. I'm always here when you need me.

Saying you'll keep a child safe may seem strange to the adult and abstract to the child, but in our experience children seem to respond to it in a way that shows they understand the meaning. What is important is how you convey the message, 'we can keep you safe', rather than the words you use. Saying this out loud creates very clear expectations, and tells Henry that he is in the minds of two big people who care for him.

The Playspace® structure after parents leave

When Henry comes to a children's centre he has a new social experience, being in the prolonged presence of a peer group. His sense of belonging will depend on feeling that he has a secure position in his group of peers. When he tips the chairs at the start of the day, he may be communicating to his teacher his frustration at not being able to manage this play on his own: 'I am young and I am still learning how to play with friends, and I need your help.' (Aarts, 2008). 'Disconnection wakes up aggression' (Aarts, 2008). If this guess is correct, Henry will feel safe when he experiences a very responsive social world where he feels seen and valued by his educators, where he can practice presenting himself to them, and where they in turn can assist him to link with his peers. Playspaces® give a structure for this to happen.

The first hour of the day is dedicated to emotional exchange with the staff watching and enjoying what the children can do, rather than directing and teaching them.

¹The structure of Playspaces has been developed and evaluated over a ten-year period at KU James Cahill Preschool as part of the Attachment Matters Project, a joint collaboration between the Benevolent Society and KU Children's Services.

When the educators are in their Playspaces they have many opportunities to confirm what they see the children do and feel. Confirming refers to all the ways of expressing, 'I see you, I enjoy you, I respect you'. When they are in their Playspaces they also have the chance to name what one child is doing and highlight this to another. This is how they build connections between the children (Dolby, 2011, p. 13)

This is called linking (Aarts, Marte Meo, 2008).

For example, Henry is sitting with Judy in her Playspace. She has brought craft materials and Henry and two others are at her table making hats. When Henry says, 'I'm sticking feathers' (on his hat), Judy confirms him. She repeats, 'You're sticking feathers on.' Now Henry says again, what he is doing. 'Yes, I'm sticking on feathers.' His tone is bright and confident and he looks up at Judy to share his feelings. Judy then lifts up his communication to the other two children by saying, 'Look what he's sticking on his hat.' Serena looks over to Henry and relates her play to his. 'I haven't stuck on any feathers yet.' What Judy is doing is so important because, when she links the children up, it makes it easier for the children to come into each other's play and create togetherness feelings.

What you see is how much the children use their educators as a secure base from which to explore.

Over and over again, children practise getting together with their educators first, before going on their own strength to engage with their peers. They are wise enough to practise with someone who is very responsive.

Even then the most recent research shows us that getting 'in synch' with each other isn't a smooth social dance. Instead

Our (social) dancing is hardly perfect; there are missteps, apologies, tries, retries, match ups, and missteps again. In systems terminology, the typical interaction is messy (Tronick and Beeghly, 2011, p.112).

When the educator can be with the children in their social world, know the dance steps well and can tolerate the mistakes and messiness, particularly around negative emotions, then step-by-step the children develop their competence and become more nuanced in how they invite and join in with others.

Later, when Henry and Serena run off to play together, Judy becomes a secure base to return to. It is easy for them to come back if they need help because Judy will be in the same place and glad to see them. After a year of experiencing Playspaces, Henry arrives in the morning and greets Judy joyfully.

Henry: Judy, I'm here.

Judy: I've been waiting for you to come.

Henry: What is so good, I always know where to find you.

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Ten top tips for communicating with parents



Judy Gregory

Judy is a communication specialist with more than 20 years' experience in the government, community, and university sectors. She specialises in translating complex concepts into plain language – through writing and editing, facilitated meetings, training, and research.

Here's a fairly typical story about communication:

It's Book Week. You've asked your class to dress up on Wednesday as their favourite book characters and bring along copies of the books that their characters are from.

For the past two weeks, you've been building excitement amongst the students by talking about their favourite books and asking how they might create their costumes. You've communicated carefully with parents: there was a section on Book Week in the beginning-of-term newsletter, a special note home a week before the big day, an email to parents on the Friday before, and reminder notes on the class noticeboard on Monday and Tuesday. You're confident that everyone knows about Book Week and the dress-up day.

Wednesday arrives and two children in your class arrive in their normal clothes – no dress-ups and no books in sight. There are tears and minor tantrums when they see the wonderful costumes of their friends. Both parents say: 'But no one told me this was on today.' You bite your tongue and resist the urge to tell them about the many ways you tried to communicate.

Is there any way to stop this from happening?

The short answer is no. There will always be people who don't hear or don't remember your messages. But there are some things that you can do to help ensure your messages reach parents, are noticed by them, and are acted upon. Here are my top ten tips.

1. Write what readers want to know, not what you want to say

Think about your message from the perspective of your readers. What's in it for them? Why should they care? Why do they need to know this? What do you want them to do? As you

draft and check your writing, make a conscious decision to stop and ask: Is this what my readers need/want to know?

2. Put the most important information first

Find the most important part of your message, and put that first. Imagine that you've got 60 seconds to get your message across (the time it takes to travel a few floors in a lift): What would you say? That's your 'elevator message': Put it first.

Another way to find the most important message is to ask the six journalists' questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how. The answers to these questions will usually help you to figure out what's most important. Remember that you're interested in what's most important for your readers, not what's most important for you.

3. Keep it short and simple

It's best to write in simple, conversational, plain language. Use the words that people use every day, and write as though you're having a conversation with parents (OK, a conversation that's been tidied up and corrected). As much as possible, use short sentences and short paragraphs (while including a bit of variety to make the reading interesting). Keep each story and each document as short as possible. As a general guideline, try to cut your first draft in half before you consider it finished.

4. Help busy readers

Most people are busy, and busy readers skip and skim over information. Help your busy readers to find the important information with the strategies mentioned above. In addition, make good use of headings and bullet points so that readers can quickly find what interests them.

5. Communicate in multiple ways

You will increase the chances that people notice your message if you provide the same message

in different ways. So include a different version of the same message in your newsletter, on the noticeboard, in notes home with children, in emails, in text messages, and on your website. Obviously, use this bit of advice with caution: there's a fine line between clear communication and pestering people with clutter.

6. Include things that interest your readers

Whenever possible, grab your readers' attention with things that interest them. Photographs of their children work well here! Messages created by their children might be even better.

7. Use 'intermediaries' to pass your messages along

Don't always rely on straightforward communication between you and parents. Whenever possible, enlist your 'intermediaries' to pass your messages along. This means creating enthusiasm in your class and asking children to talk about things with their parents. Parents are much more likely to listen to their children than to read a note that you send home.

8. Check your work carefully

Readers notice silly mistakes like spelling and grammatical errors, and they damage your

credibility. They also notice when your different messages seem to contradict each other. Take the time to check your work carefully. Your final product might not be perfect (it rarely is), but it should be close.

9. Don't get carried away with a clever design

It's better to spend time crafting the words than worrying about how to make the message look beautiful. Be particularly careful about creating a design that makes your message difficult to read. Avoid the 'theme park' look with multiple colours, lots of different fonts, multiple boxes, and lots of distractions. In most cases, people are happy to receive simple, clear information with no fancy design.

10. Ask parents how they'd like you to communicate with them

If communication is an ongoing problem, ask parents about how they'd like to receive messages from you. This is best done through informal conversations rather than through a survey (which most people won't bother to complete).

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Developing friendship skills in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Anna Tullemans



Anna works with teachers, parents and professionals to support children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She helps to implement many practical programmes for students in mainstream Kindergarten, Prep, Primary and Secondary schools. Anna is inspired by the passion she encounters in parents, teachers, aides and students, and is constantly energised by the successful outcomes that are being achieved. Anna is also the mother of an adult son with Asperger Syndrome who has successfully attended University and is now in gainful employment.

To acquire friendship skills one requires an understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication skills. It also needs the ability for sharing, reciprocity and cooperation. When we look at the nature of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) it gives us an insight into the reasons why making friends can be a difficult and sometimes elusive step for many children with ASD.

The nature of ASD is such that there is a lack of:

- communication skills with a literal interpretation of words
- empathy for others and of emotional control
- understanding of nonverbal cues
- understanding of facial expressions and body language.

Also, children tend to have self-centred personalities.

We need to address these issues for a successful outcome in developing friendship skills in children with ASD.

For typical children, working out what friendship is, is a 'live and learn' or 'trial and error' practice, whereby they learn from experiences whether they enjoy playing with, or sharing an interest with a particular child. Children with ASD find it difficult to learn through these experiences.

Why is there such an emphasis placed on making friends when in reality most people have only two or three really good friends?

Friendship experiences help us work out which of the people we meet will be the two or three who are going to become our *good* friends.

Early friendships teach us values such as conflict resolution, seeing alternative perspectives and alternative solutions, and teamwork skills.

They also provide us with ideas on socially acceptable behaviour, and how to develop our self-image and self-confidence. Most importantly though, is that friendship forms the basis of all adult relationships. However, to learn all these we must also know how to be a friend to others and to recognise friendship when it is offered in return.

As early learning teachers, we can show the way through modelling, role play and through creating opportunities for friendships to ensure that lessons learned become more innate. Through this, resilience skills are also reinforced in children.

Other reasons why children with ASD find friendship skills difficult include: not understanding the concept of small talk, or misinterpreting friendship overtures from other children as they become absorbed in their favourite activity. Sometimes, children 'unintentionally disinvite' others from playing with them. This is sometimes an 'I'm not coping with what's happening around me' mechanism.

To begin to teach friendship skills we teach:

- turn-taking skills (for conversation)
- conversation skills such as opening and closing phrases, and 'I don't feel like playing at the moment' phrases.

Conversation openers make good first impressions and it tells others that I am approachable and ready to reciprocate. A great way to teach this skill is to play games and to use the child's favourite activity or special interest.

Games will help to teach a myriad of skills such as playing fair, being a gracious loser, being a good winner, taking turns, asking for help, and making and correcting mistakes.

A beginning strategy is to teach some of the micro skills in a one-to-one situation. Play games such as 'Trouble' and 'Go Fish', and video the children playing these games. Replay and point out when children are being friendly, comment on good skills that are being used, and also comment on skills that require some work. This same strategy works well for small group work too. Video and replay to show the differences between peers who work well together and those who don't. Pause and point out friendly behaviour and when skills are used appropriately.

Another highlight of friendship is learning about seeing different perspectives. As children with ASD can be quite rigid in the way they play and use objects in play, playing games such as 'What else can this be?' which may be difficult at first, will encourage children to see another side of what is happening. I ask children to invent as many uses as possible for a particular object such as a train track – ladder, a sword, and wings on an aeroplane – to encourage more flexibility in play with other children and to enable them to expand their imaginative play. This pretend play will also teach children that rules can change and that these changes can be just as enjoyable.

An important aspect of this approach is that it must be taught with the peers the child

interacts with in real situations. Their inability to generalise to new situations may mean that you need to teach the skill in a variety of play situations. We must also use 'peer speech' and 'girl' talk with girls and 'boy' talk with boys, otherwise we may find the child may exhibit speech and play patterns that set them apart from their peers. In addition, use popular games of the day as this will encourage other peers to join in with the child with ASD.

Use a variety of social stories to 'set up' the teaching event. The social story will describe the skill the child is about to learn, the need to learn this skill and the concept. Furthermore it will indicate relevant cues to look for and, the perspectives of others who may be playing.

Always include good role models as many children with ASD are visual in their learning. Teach the child to watch the other children and to model what they see. Show them the cues for friendship, explain what the 'cue' is and what it means and then show the child how to respond appropriately to the friendship overture.

During play and throughout the day, give your thoughts out loud on good friends. You can simulate examples of good friendship and unfriendly actions. Help children choose which is the correct response.

It is necessary to create opportunities for friendship along the way. These opportunities can range from having 'boasting books' where children can write down or draw friendly acts (either towards them or initiated by them), to using the child's special or obsessive interest to stimulate interaction with peers. Teach the child how to teach others about a special interest, or show the child how to express interest in other children's activities by giving a script of questions to ask.

Teaching friendship skills to children with ASD is always going to have challenges. However, it is a very worthwhile pursuit especially as you see this child develop friendships and become a real part of the group instead of skirting the edges.

Play with a purpose: deepening young children's engagement with the visual arts in the early childhood environment

Michelle Bugler



Michelle has worked in many school settings over the last 20 years, mostly with young children and the visual arts. Working with young children and art is Michelle's passion, and she is now the Director of Artstar Children's Art Studio, a specialised art school for children from the age of two up to adults. Michelle works extensively with teachers, facilitating workshops aimed at expanding understanding of art curriculum, skills, techniques and children's experiences. Michelle has curated and displayed many children's art exhibitions, the most recent, in 2009, at Brisbane Institute of Art. Michelle is also a practising artist who recently held her fourth solo exhibition at Doggett St Studio in Brisbane.

All early childhood educators are familiar with the standard art experiences that form the staple of play-based choices in the early years learning environment. These are: painting at easels, the clay or playdough table, and the collage area. In a creative, play-based environment, children are encouraged to explore with these materials in their own way and time. This 'natural unfoldment' of children's artistic development forms a philosophy that derives itself from the original theories about children's learning in art that were espoused by theorist Viktor Lowenfeld, and in Australia, Frances Derham (Piscitelli, 1993). Lowenfeld (1947) strongly advocated the 'hands-off' approach, where teachers were discouraged from scaffolding children's art experiences with instruction regarding skill development or technique.

Recent research in the field of early childhood art education (Knight, 2008, Kolbe, 2001; McArdle & Piscitelli, 2002; Wright, 1991) has shown that, whilst children need to freely 'play' and experiment with art media and technique, a balanced approach is necessary, where creative, play-based activities are combined with supported learning episodes which enhance technique, skills and develop artistry.

In the day-to-day running of many early childhood education environments, the art

experiences which encourage deeper learning and engagement in children are often neglected due to teachers' perceived lack of knowledge regarding art skills and ideas. A recent study (Garvis, S; Twigg, D; & Pendergast, D. 2011) found that

... early childhood teachers may feel they have little capability when teaching the arts in their own classroom. In the long term, these experiences may contribute to lower teacher efficacy for the arts, creating a cyclical problem of failure for arts education in early childhood.

To make matters worse, many teachers remember their own art experiences at school, and with this as their point of reference, may still structure art experiences for their classrooms that reflect the 'reproductive' approach, with the aim being to 'reproduce a product pre-determined by the teacher' (Miller, et al. 2008).

Teachers wishing to provide better art experiences in their classrooms are often frustrated by the few choices offered to extend their knowledge. Most understand that it is not enough to provide an array of attractive materials to children: knowledge of the artistic process is important (McArdle, 2005). Unfortunately, professional development for teachers in the area of visual arts that focusses on practical skills, technique

development, artistry and ideas for the classroom is scant.

Workshops to develop teachers' confidence and therefore their willingness to incorporate art into their programme, should provide practical art approaches which aim to extend and deepen teachers' experiences of the activities found in most early years environments. In experiencing the process of art-making, and in working on their own artistry, teachers are then able to apply their understanding to the learning environment, focussing on processes and approaches rather than 'filler activities' which are widely used for special activities such as Easter or Mother's Day.

COLLAGE

Collage in early childhood environments can become a very token activity in that it is often just a 'cut, paste and tape' time-filler. In the art world, collage is a very complex and exciting approach to creative expression. The artist Henri Matisse spent the latter years of his career exploring the possibilities of collage, calling it 'drawing with scissors'. In this project, children were shown Matisse's collages and how he explored shapes using scissors. Teachers can demonstrate the 'drawing with scissors' approach to children by explaining how shapes can be made with straight lines, wiggly lines, skinny lines and fat lines. Children can then explore cutting with coloured card in their own time, keeping the shapes they cut. An important aspect of this task is to get children to think about the *negative space* created when an object is cut. This is the remaining area left that forms the space around the shape.

When each child has collected a selection of cut shapes, the process of screenprinting can be used. This involves having several silkscreens and working in small groups. The process starts with putting the shapes on paper, laying the screen over the shapes and smoothing paint over the surface using a squeegee. The screen and shapes are then pulled off, creating a picture from the negative spaces of the shapes.

PAINTING AND DRAWING

This activity incorporates drawing and painting to deepen children's experiences beyond easel painting.



Drawing with scissors

Stage One

The focus for the task is the figure. Children are asked to lie down on a large sheet of card, and an adult traces around their body shape. Each child has to think creatively about movement and putting his or her body into that shape on



Screenprinting

the cardboard. After the child stands up, they can see their outline on the card. The next stage is to use the paint. A variety of interesting tools can be introduced. Large brushes and sponge rollers, as well as small brushes. The use of each of these can be demonstrated by the teacher. Each child is asked to paint the background only and leave their figure unpainted.

Stage Two

This involves painting the body. Ideally, the background will be dry before this is attempted. The children are then given many different pre-mixed skin tones and asked to colour the skin on their bodies. This time, they can paint the positive space and not get paint on the background!

Stage Three

In the final stage, provide children with chalk pastels and ask them to draw and colour clothing on their figures. Books on ethnic clothing, fashion, pattern and design can be used as reference to enrich children's ideas.



Alice's painting



Alice with her displayed painting

CLAY

Clay, like play-dough, is often a staple in the early childhood classroom. As a modelling compound, it gives physical, three-dimensional form to children's ideas. This activity looks at how clay can be used to explore movement of the human form with children.

Stage One

After exploring the human body, its forms, and capability for movement, children are guided through a process of using clay to

create a body. This body may be dancing, jumping, walking, twisting, etc. The teacher can demonstrate the technique of using the clay tools to create a face and also of rolling "sausages" with the clay to form the body. It is important here to note the role of demonstration. This is simply a walk-through to show the children practical skills and thought processes and certainly not a prescriptive 'show' of what their work should look like. To avoid children thinking their work should be like the teacher's, it is important to take the demonstration 'model' away before the children start working! The sausage-shaped sections of clay are then manipulated to depict a body and movement. Toes, fingers, and clothes can be added as children explore the activity in their own way. The completed, dried figure must be glued to the cardboard sheet using PVA glue.

Stage Two and Three

The children can use paint to colour the negative space around their sculpture. It is important that they try not to paint the figure itself! When the background is dry, children can use small brushes to paint the figure itself.



Ngaire rolls sausage shapes with clay



Helena's moving figure with clay

MIXED MEDIA

Mixed media is a term describing art that is made using a variety of materials. This project explores the sculpting of a head using papier-mache pulp called claycrete. The children construct a head around a pre-made armature



Alice's Portrait sculpture



Helena's portrait sculpture



Ben and Helena enjoy the work on display



Ava with her portrait sculpture

and build the features: eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. They then use a variety of materials: jewellery, clay, wool, match sticks, glue, glitter and any other found objects of interest to explore personal adornment. The details of varying shades of skin tones can also be explored, along with interesting ideas to create hair!

EXHIBITION: SHARING CHILDREN'S CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

Like any artists, children love sharing their creative endeavours with their community. Visual Arts experiences provide teachers with wonderful ways to involve and develop relationships with parents, care givers and the larger community. Displaying children's work in the environment is a vital final step in celebrating the creative endeavours of children. Working with teachers to develop artistry and confidence in their own visual arts practice is the important first step in ensuring our children have positive art experiences in the early childhood learning environment.

All photographs were taken during studio lessons at Artstar Children's Art Studio. Images of the children and their works on display were taken in the Artstar Gallery, an artspace especially for children and families. Our details are www.artstarstudio.com.au

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Integrating drama and arts processes into everyday learning

Paula Camilleri



Paula has worked in a variety of educational settings over the years. Passionate about performing arts, she began her career as a secondary drama teacher but has also worked in Primary schools, Early Years Centres, Long Day Care and Outside School Hours Care. She has also worked in adult education and loves the excitement of teaching. Paula believes that every teacher is part actor and that learning can and should be so much fun. Paula now writes workshops, works as a trainer, and has gained a wealth of knowledge playing 'Mother Duck' to her five little ducklings. She considers herself an Arts Integration Specialist; exploring ways that the Arts can be used as a teaching tool for all areas of education.

Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn. -- Benjamin Franklin

When I ask Early Childhood Educators if they 'do Drama' with children, the replies are varied. Some show me the dress-up rack or the home corner and tell me that the children create their own dramas in those spaces; some tell me that they would like to but don't really know how to begin; and others tell me they don't need to add extra drama as their whole experience with children is 'dramatic' as all play has elements of drama.

There seems to be little doubt in educators' minds that drama has significant benefits to children even though it can be difficult to measure those benefits and even harder to understand the breadth and scope of the significance to children's development. Even when left to their own devices, without props or prompting, children naturally engage in dramatic play. In other words, children are telling us that this is one way that they choose to learn.

Drama is credited with the ability to develop oral literacy, encourage empathy and understanding, allow children to express their emotions (both positive and negative) in appropriate ways, develop social skills and fuel the imagination. The other performing arts have great benefits to children too.

Dance in child care settings often takes the form of actions to songs or free movement

to children's music. Music often involves singing and sometimes incorporates percussion instruments. With both of these art forms, there are many more possibilities that can be explored. Furthermore, there are wonderful opportunities in Early Childhood to fuse drama, dance and music experiences.

Some of the barriers to exploring Arts processes include a lack of knowledge about how to integrate these elements, fear of losing control of the class, lack of adequate free space and perception of inadequate resources. In schools, time constraints on teachers for both planning and implementing drama can also be an issue. This is often the case with dance and music as well; time and space constraints often mean that teachers have to choose only 'one'.

Drama, dance and music are beautiful subjects each in their own right. However, their potential as teaching tools across a variety of subjects, in small and ordinary spaces, without elaborate resources and included in fragments of time across the day, is so rich in value to children's education.

According to Edgar Dale, we tend to remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 50% of what we hear and see, 70% of what we say and write and 90% of what we do.

Drama, dance and music are all tied into this powerful kinaesthetic dimension, this 'learning by doing'.

'Pretending' is a powerful way for children to understand themselves and make sense of their

worlds. We can see pretending in various forms. Early pretending begins in the form of imitation. Children imitate the jobs, roles, sounds and actions of those around them, especially adults. Even small babies imitate facial expressions. In early pretending, children often play themselves within the activity e.g. I am feeding my baby. (I am pretending to be a mother/father.) This then progresses to actual roles 'I am a fire fighter putting out a fire'. More complex pretending involves children being able to take on dual roles. For example, acting out the role of the mother and answering as the child, or, working out group roles e.g. 'I'll be Batman and you can be Robin' or even taking on the role of animals or inanimate objects.

One element of note is that while adults may say, 'Are you pretending to be ...?' usually children leave out the word 'pretend' entirely. That is, when asked, many will say 'I am ...' This is an important distinction as the child is so immersed in the 'being' that to accuse them of 'merely pretending' is almost an insult. I once watched a five-year-old paint a large colourful picture at an Art Gallery workshop. He took his painting up to the facilitator to show her. She looked at the painting and said with enthusiasm, 'Wow! You might be an artist one day' – to which the five-year-old looked at his painting, looked at her confused and replied, 'I am an artist now.' When children 'do', they 'are'.

So how can we begin to incorporate more Arts activities into Early Childhood?

One way to begin is to look at the activities and experiences that are currently occurring and find ways to add the Arts 'choc chips'.



Small world play

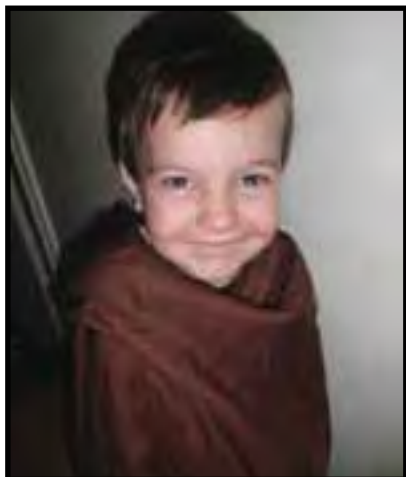
Add extra dramatic elements to songs: For example, the song 'Five fat sausages sizzling in a pan' is often sung with the children using their fingers to count the sausages. After singing it in your usual way, ask the children if they want to be the sausages in your frying pan. They can lie down and tuck in their arms like a sausage while you get to turn up the heat. The teacher can circulate while saying the rhyme and pat each child on the shoulder when they can 'pop' or 'bang'.

Practising drama skills: When reading a story to children, you can look for the emotions of the characters in the pictures and ask children to show you what that looks like. For example, 'Look at Charlie ... He looks so disappointed. Can you all show me what disappointed looks like?' By asking children about the emotions in the stories, we are helping them to understand the characters and emotions and see things from different points of view. Children can also do this activity as a dance activity – moving to slow music showing sadness, moving to faster music showing joy, for example.

Another way to practise drama and movement skills regularly is to ask the children to move like animals. For example, 'We're going to have a quick story now before lunch. Can everybody scurry over to the carpet like quiet, tiny little mice?' Making movement like this part of children's everyday learning, enhances children's vocabulary and makes children familiar with the concept of Arts processes.

Using books: Incorporating some Drama or movement based on a story that the children have just read can be a powerful way of engaging children.

Small world play: Small world play is one of the most basic forms of early drama. When 'worlds' are set up (often in the form of sensory boxes), children are sometimes motivated to begin making up stories and assigning characters to the elements. For example, I once watched a young boy playing by himself with a sensory box filled with water, plastic sharks, fish, crabs, rocks, shells, some twigs and other sea creatures. He was making the shark swim through the water when a friend came and picked up the fish. The friend made the fish say, 'Don't eat me, Mr Shark!' and together they began to create a drama. Educators can



A fat caterpillar waiting in a cocoon ...



unfurls his butterfly wings ...



and flies!

encourage this imaginative drama by playing alongside of children in small world play. This can ignite imagination and lead to questions which enhance learning. Do sharks eat crabs too? What does an octopus eat?

Shared knowledge and understanding: When children engage in drama together, the action can be hindered if the children do not have a shared understanding about the topic. Often, when we watch children role-playing elements of their home life, we get sacred glimpses of how they understand their world. For example, a little girl who is playing 'The Mum' and looking after her baby may not be understood by a fellow classmate who plays 'Mum' beside her and gets her baby ready for child care and herself dressed for work, if this has not been her experience of what mums do. Likewise, different cultural traditions are often more evident when children engage in dramatic play. With questions and conversations, these moments then become wonderful moments of learning about diversity.

Summary

There are so many varied ways to integrate elements of drama and arts processes in everyday teaching that do not require expensive resources or large spaces, only willingness to embrace new approaches and a little imagination. The children will benefit from these experiences and skills now and for years to come.

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Role-playing gives a glimpse into children's worlds.

The significance of music in early childhood education

Considerations for early childhood teachers and music educators

Yue (Grace) Qi, Griffith University, Queensland



Jianda Qi (left in the picture) is a national level musician and music educator and lifetime fellow in the Ministry of Education, China. He graduated from Capital Normal University, majoring in music education. He is a member of the Chinese Musicians Association and Nanjing CPPCC National Committee. With 30 years music teaching experience in the early childhood, primary school and higher education sectors, he is passionate and qualified to provide high quality music education for both children and adults. Currently, he is the principal of Nanjing Arts School (Nanjing Little Red Flower Art Troupe) and an Adjunct Professor at Jiangsu Institute of Education and Nanjing Normal University.

Last year, I went back to my home town in Nanjing, China for my holidays. When I saw my piano in the living room, I was very excited to try it and see whether or not I could play it again. I just tried several single tones on the piano and then automatically played my favourite melody very smoothly. This action surprised me as I have not touched the piano for more than two years! Then, I endeavoured to ask my father, as he is a musician and also an experienced music teacher, why I could still do it. He simply said, 'Because you started when you were five. It is best to learn music at an early stage in my experience.' His answer prompted me to think about music learning and its importance in early childhood. Also, I asked, in regard to the role of teachers in the music education process, how should encouraging students in their lifelong music learning be taken into account. The following interview with my father provides an insight into China's music teaching and considerations for the development of music education nationally and internationally.

Grace: You have been teaching music in China for thirty years. Could you briefly describe music education in China?

Jianda: In China, generally speaking, music lessons in schools have a formal textbook for singing, dancing and simple instrumental learning. This allows children to gain an overview of music history as well as a theoretical understanding of certain musical elements. Twice a week music lessons provide an opportunity for children to touch and think about music, as described in the goals of the curriculum under this education system.

Grace: Why is it valuable for children to learn music in early childhood?

Jianda: According to psychological findings, young children gain advantages when they learn music (Flohr, 2010). Based on these, the optimal period to learn music, particularly musical instrument and singing, is before seven years old. This optimal period refers to a faster and easier development in music learning. In fact,

children have their own natural music, they love to sing, dance and perform freely.

In terms of this, Fox (2000) also points out that

babies have innate musical behaviours and they use music as a meaningful communication in their early years.

Fox's (2000) words can be understood in two ways. Firstly, this innate musical behaviour may be affected by antenatal training, and also this specific natural ability can promote music learning for children.

Technically, children can imitate sounds and movements easily, while adults may find it a little difficult. In contrast, adults have a deeper understanding of music meaning and emotional performance than children.

Therefore, from my point of view, the earlier music learning starts, the better; however, a lifelong span is needed to achieve success as a professional musician.

Grace: Research has proven that music strongly impacts on children's brain development, cognitive development and self-esteem in early childhood. However, I sometimes wonder whether or not they can keep learning music for a lifelong purpose, as many of them easily give it up at certain stage. Also, I wonder how this theoretical evidence influence teachers' teaching in early childhood.

Jianda: In fact, a large amount of research demonstrates that music experiences have an effect on the structure of the brain (Hyde, Lerch, Norton, Forgeard, Winner, Evans & Schlaug, 2009). Physically, neural mechanisms supporting music become engaged throughout the brain in coordinated activities.

Music is an active mediator leading brain activities which assist different parts of the brain to develop at the same time, such as motor and auditory areas.

This kind of activity balances the workings of the left and right brain and approaches a cooperative mode for mental development. When we think about this fascinating experience in the brain, it is easy to link brain development with the cognitive process.

Recent research also shows that music has positive impacts on children's cognitive development and academic achievements (Potowitz, Lichtenstein, Egorova & Brand, 2009). Particularly, music learning has been confirmed as helping children to concentrate for longer times, because it enhances their memories for learning and improves self-expression skills. Learning is a complex process and learning music prompts young children's cognitive understanding and stimulates their creative thinking skills, which builds another relationship with intelligence in early childhood.

In regard to the early give-up, I would say that it is very common. This is because not everyone has the potential ability to be a professional musician. At the same time, if children do not have enough guidance from teachers, this would be the second reason to reject music learning. Therefore, early childhood teachers need to observe their students carefully and try to identify children's music ability. Then, they should explore differentiated ways to encourage children's long-term music learning. For early childhood teachers and music educators, they must be passionate to deliver quality teaching in class. Children are normally motivated by teachers' personalities and music performances. Thus, whether their skills are professional or general in music; early childhood teachers need a high standard of music performance to attract children's interests.

Grace: Yes, research has suggested that music education in early childhood needs to be 'fun' for children by generating a flexible learning environment in the classroom (Levinowitz, 1999). Do you think this is happening in real classroom settings?

Jianda: I agree with this research. As children have natural musical culture in early childhood, early childhood teachers should provide a free zone in order to encourage them to be creative in the music world. In this way, children can be motivated and may be willing to have a deeper understanding of music in the future.

However, when it becomes a deeper learning stage, this kind of 'fun' environment would not work well in a real classroom. Music at that stage is not filled with the sense of 'play the game', but defined as real knowledge through a professional learning process. Teachers have to change their teaching pedagogy from 'improvisation and encouragement' to 'guidance and imitation'. This is because professional music education is more serious and needs much practice. Understanding different purposes and being able to implement teaching pedagogies in different steps of music education is essential and will depend on children's willingness and potential ability in music. In addition, from a professional music teacher's perspective and personal experience, I would suggest trying to make the 'play' music process shorter. Once children have defined music learning is for 'fun', they would never put themselves into a serious position to explore whether or not they have the potential ability of learning deeply. Therefore, early childhood teachers need to use their pedagogical strategies to tell children that the 'play and fun' domain of music learning is temporary. From a long-term perspective, children need to have technical music training and understanding of theoretical knowledge. I know it would be hard to do, but it is necessary to mention this as early as possible.

Grace: *You mentioned children's natural musical culture. Do you think it is better to use music as background throughout the class (deVries, 2004) rather than a specific subject called 'music'?*

Jianda: Using music as a background to teach is a very significant approach that I would highly recommend for early childhood teachers. I do not mean using background music for every moment, but applying this in class strategically. For instance, early childhood teachers always have story time to read stories to the children. This time would be the best time to utilise background music while talking. As the story progresses, the music can be a kind of drama tool for teachers' to perform realistic-like situations in the story. In addition, teachers can use music as a signal to imply children must react in certain activities. I know some teachers would not agree with this teaching pedagogy as they may think it would interrupt students' learning.

So, it depends on teachers' teaching strategies and skills in choosing the appropriate music. Furthermore, if early childhood teachers do not have enough music knowledge and are afraid to teach music in early childhood settings, a background musical strategy can help them calm down and be confident to deliver music in class.

Grace: *What final advice do you have for teachers of music?*

Jianda: Early childhood teachers and music educators should have a good understanding of children's development and their needs. Young children need to gain a basic knowledge of all types of music and how to appreciate music and arts. Early childhood teachers should be qualified in general music knowledge, music appreciation and music psychology. They need to be all-rounders. In addition, teaching cannot be separated from parenting, particularly in early childhood. The best way I recently found to build a relationship between parents and children was parents engaging in the learning process. That is, teachers and parents need to work collaboratively to achieve sustainable learning because all children deserve to have the opportunity to experience music.

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**Mathilda
Element**

In this edition of our journal, it gives me great pleasure to bring you a selection of titles specifically for our very youngest readers. Babies enjoy books from birth – connecting them to their language, their culture, their family and their traditions. There is a special, magical bond that is formed between caregiver and child when sharing a story, and the rhythm, rhyme and repetition of books aimed at babies and toddlers can become a soothing and familiar refrain that ignites entry into the world of literacy. I have been fortunate enough to see with my own child – as well as many children I have worked with over the years – the way those simple words transcend their pages and invite discovery, excitement and understanding. The following books were all designed to appeal to readers aged from birth to four years, and are expertly reviewed by a team of diverse educators. Yet there are so many, many, MANY wonderful books for babies and toddlers – why not email us at mathilda@ecta.org.au and tell us some of your favourites?

Title: Monkey Red, Monkey Blue

Author: Nicki Greenberg
Illustrator: Nicki Greenberg
Published By: Allen & Unwin 2010
ISBN: 9781742374437
RRP: \$19.99
Reviewed by: Melindi Robertson
(Director, Mt Gravatt Kindergarten)

Monkey Red Monkey Blue is a humorous picture book for children up to three years. Two mischievous monkeys decide to enjoy a disorderly midnight feast, egged on by a chameleon causing even more mayhem.

While this book was more suitable for younger children and best for individuals/small groups, my kindergarten groups both enjoyed repeating and chanting the minimal text upon rereading. The use of alliteration and rhyming, along with invented words *splotter* and *glop* helped, but they concentrated more on the visual detail of the illustrations.

These used layers of different media – a collage of paint, photos, crayon and possibly pen; and ranged from visually busy to chaotic pages, representing the frenzied muddle of the feast's finale.

In creating the three characters, Nicki Greenberg was guided by both her young daughter's preferences and her interest in sequential art narrative (comics). The art gallery on her web site shows similarities among her 'creatures' and our three friends.

The children definitely enjoyed spotting the chameleon camouflaged among the different coloured backgrounds of each page, except on last double-spread page, which they quickly commented on. They also asked why Monkey Blue appears purple on some pages, counted the 13 photographed fruits and realized the endpapers were different colours, linking this to the title. It was also interesting to note who knew what the food packets were on the pancakes page – not all children realize that wheat and an udder represent flour and milk! On the cover, the monkeys' tails cleverly weave around from the front to the back to form part of the text.

Choosing this book would definitely be up to an individual purchaser's preference.

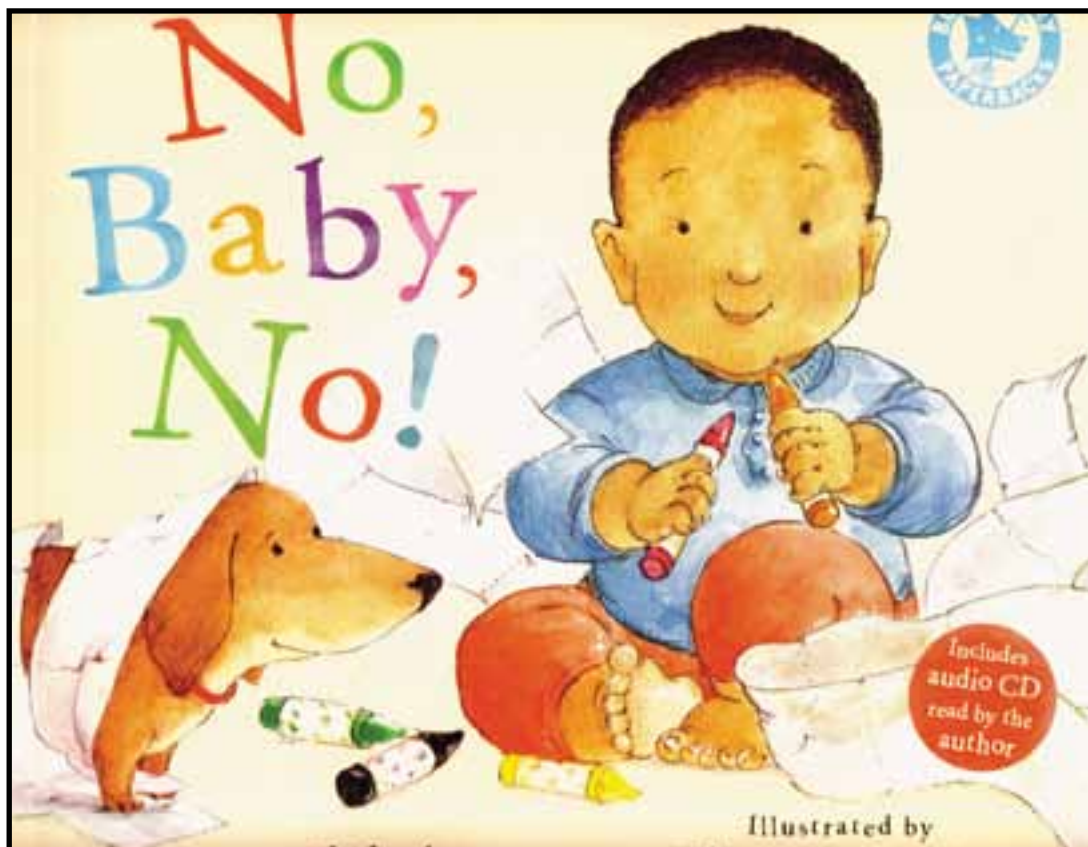


Title: No, Baby, No

Author: Grace Nichols
Illustrator: Eleanor Taylor
Published By: Bloomsbury Publishing
ISBN: 978-1-4088-0299-1
RRP: \$15.99
Reviewed by: Sue Lederhose, Dip teaching, Grad Dip (Early Childhood),
artist, www.lederhoseart.com

I first read *No, Baby, No* to a mixed group of twenty three-to-five-year-olds. By the second page they were 'reading' along with the repeated words. It fully engaged their attention because they could relate to the story, often having younger siblings. It provided a good starting point for a discussion about safety for babies and toddlers. The text also highlights the action verb which begins each sentence. These could be used for discussion by parents or teachers.

The illustrations are large and clear, relating well to the text and filling out the simple story line. The CD provided with the book is a great idea. However, the old foreign voice makes it difficult for Australian children to understand.



Series Title: The Selfish Crocodile Library

Subtitles: Words; Sounds; Animals; Numbers; Colours; Food

Author: Faustin Charles

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/childrens/Faustin-Charles/authors/499>

Illustrator: Michael Terry

<http://www.bloomsbury.com/childrens/Michael-Terry/authors/1982>

Published by: Bloomsbury Publishers

ISBN: 9781408814482

RRP: \$12.99

Reviewed by: Tanya Dawson – Early Childhood Teacher

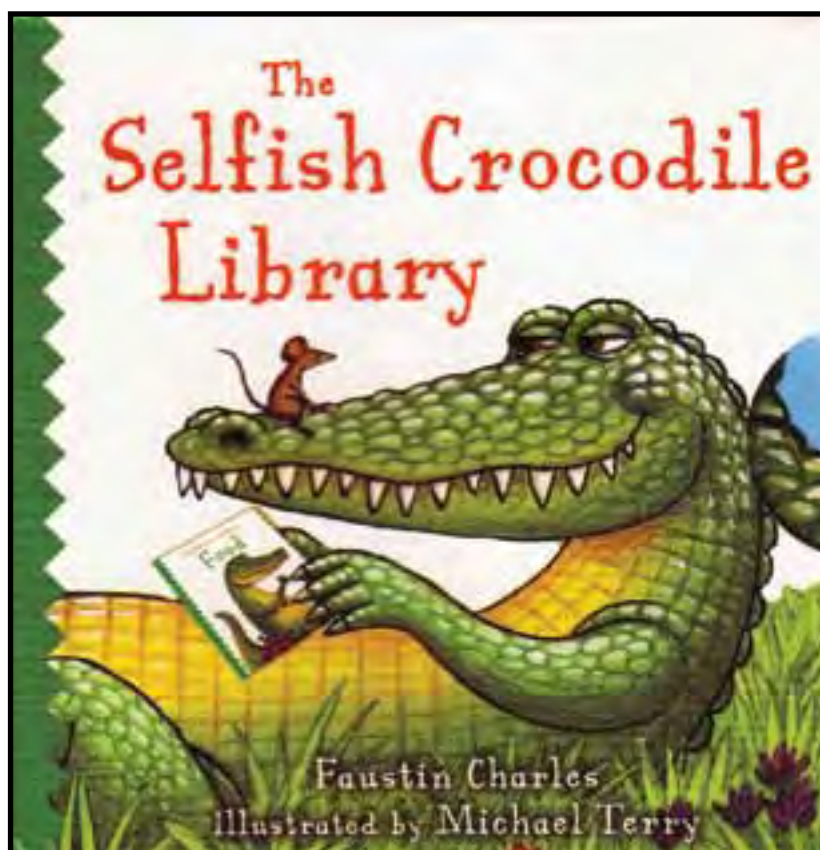
This collection of board books are based on the loveable and familiar characters from Faustin Charles and Michael Terry's picture book, *The Selfish Crocodile*.

Written in simple language, using phrases, single words and numbers, these books are perfect for very young children aged six months to three years. The small sizes of the books are perfect for baby hands to grasp and sturdy enough for toddlers to practise their emerging concepts about reading books.

Even preschool and kindergarten children will enjoy learning to read and recognise their first simple words with these familiar characters.

Sold as a boxed set, these six books fit together like a puzzle to make a picture of *The Selfish Crocodile*.

Available from: www.bloomsbury.com and major retail or online bookstores.



Title: When the World was Waiting for You

Author: Gillian Shields

Illustrator: Anna Currey

Published By: Bloomsbury

ISBN: 9781408806302

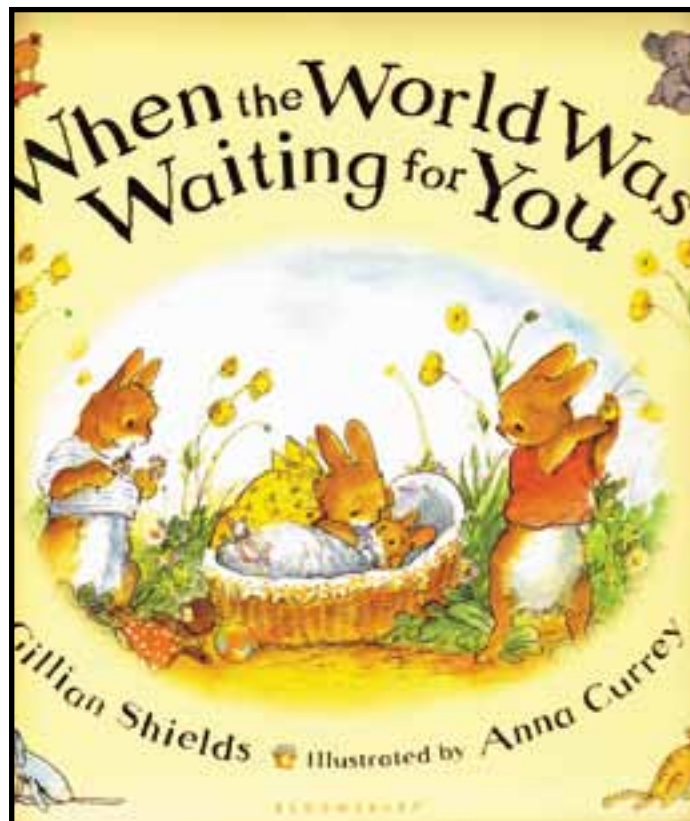
RRP: \$20.95

Reviewed by: Rowan Geppert

*When the world
Was waiting for you,
The air was bright,
The sun seemed new.*

The opening phrase sets the scene for this lovely story about a rabbit family preparing for the arrival of their new baby. From decorating the room, to the array of visitors that come bearing gifts after the birth, it celebrates new life and all the joys a baby brings. The rhyming text is very appealing, especially for young children and those waiting for their own brother or sister to arrive. Anna Currey's illustrations of an English springtime are perfect in complementing this delightful book. I love sharing this book with my young son at bedtime as it gives a clear message of family, love and cherishing those special moments.

*Now the world
Still waits for you,
To grow, and bloom,
And be, and do.*



Title: Ribbit Rabbit

Author: Candace Ryan

Illustrator: Mike Lowery

Published By: Bloomsbury

ISBN: 9781208814413

RRP: \$14.99

Reviewed by: Sue Webster

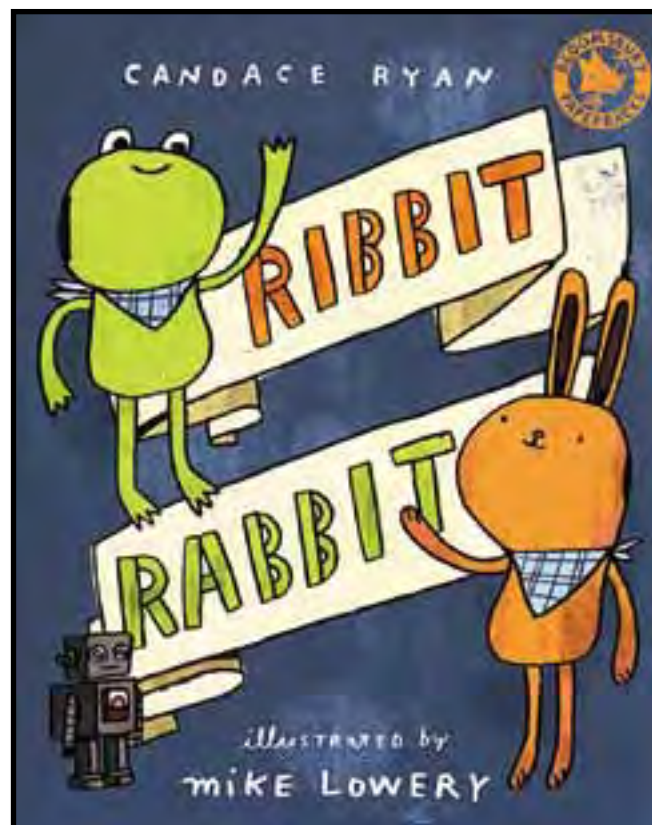
Frog and Bunny are the very best of friends. They do everything together – swim together (DIP IT, DAB IT!), eat peanut butter together (RIBBIT RABBIT, WIBBIT, WABBIT) and fight monsters together (ZIP IT, ZAP IT). Though they sometimes get in a fight (NIP IT, NAB IT), they always make up in the end (RIBBIT RABBIT, RABBIT, RIBBIT).

This is a very cute story about sharing and friendship and how it is much more fun to share and enjoy toys together than fight over toys. It is an important message; one that can be further discussed and expanded on in the home or the classroom.

Ribbit, Rabbit is told in very few words – less than 150 – but with a very precise use of words and rhyme. (The same rhyme is used all the way through.) This story needs to be told out loud as the rhyme makes the reader and listeners want to repeat it and try some of their own.

The illustrations suit the complex and yet simple text with its cartoon-style drawings and its use of full colour pages, flat planes of colours and the predominant use of beige, green, blue, brown and orange. Also, look for the great facial expressions and the subplot about a toy robot.

The text and illustration will appeal to readers around two-four years of age and, in particular, boys because of its use of mechanical toys and robots.



Title: Lulu's Lunch
Author: Camilla Reid
Illustrator: Ailie Busby
Published by: Bloomsbury Publishers
ISBN: 9780747599906
RRP: \$19.95
Reviewed by: Tanya Dawson – Early Childhood Teacher

This *utterly delicious interactive book* is about a little girl with red curly hair called Lulu. The book begins with Lulu deciding it must be lunchtime because she is feeling quite hungry. The story goes through all the types of foods Lulu likes to eat for lunch – from pudding with sticky honey to spaghetti with wriggly noodles.

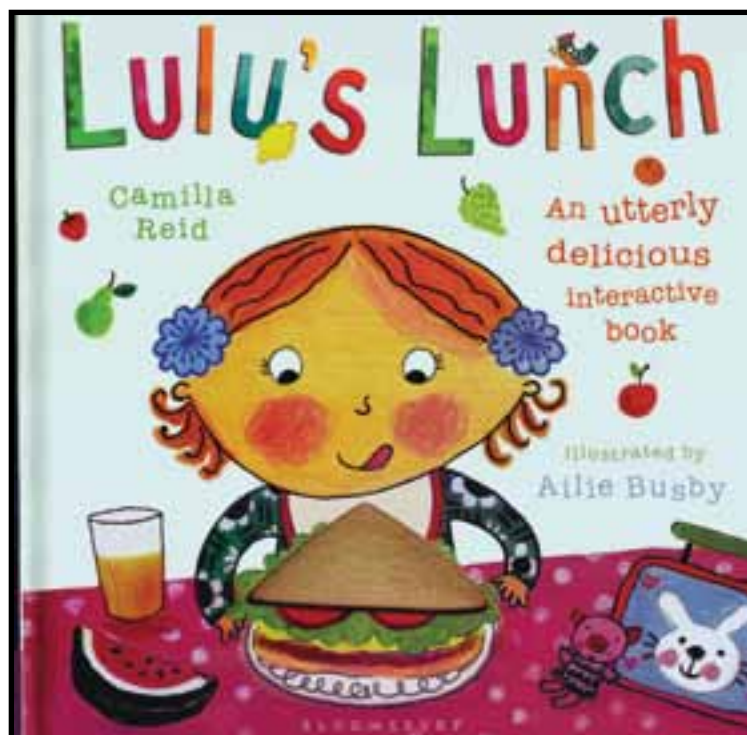
Each page invites children to touch and feel something different, such as, peel a banana, lift the flap on the picnic basket, feel the stickiness of the honey or open and close the velcro tabs on Lulu's bib. This hands-on approach is perfect for promoting an awareness of the senses as well as introducing words to describe them.

Lulu's Lunch may also be an ideal way to initiate dialogue around making healthy food choices during lunch times.

Suitable for children aged six months to three or four years, this book would be best shared with one or two children enabling parents and carers to encourage sensory interaction and discussion.

There are a range of other titles available in the Lulu series, including *Lulu's Shoes*, *Lulu's Clothes* and *Lulu's Loo*.

Available from: www.bloomsburyanz.com and other retail or online bookstores.



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.

