



Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the
early childhood years

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EYC disclaimer

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

Editorial policy

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

Registered Teachers - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements

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

Online access to journal

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

Photographs

All photographs are attributed to the author unless otherwise noted.

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From the President

Kim Walters

As the first term of 2016 draws to a close I would like to thank everyone for their support and contribution to the work of the Early Childhood Teachers' Association. Our members and committees continue to focus on supporting best practice in early childhood settings across the state.

We have had an increase in organisational membership over the past several years which is due, I believe, to benefits including reduced conference registration for staff (two staff receive the full discount and all others a partial discount), access to our online member centre, priority registration to videolinqs and no-cost registration to our new webinar series. Staff are also able to receive large discounts at regional group events. If you haven't already done so, please speak to your administration about your organisation joining ECTA.

ECTA's latest recording is the webinar *Focus on Australian Curriculum: Core* with members and colleagues providing the Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority with important and insightful feedback. Those attending identified core content which should be included in the curriculum in the early years and gave reflections on the amount of assessment currently required and its effect on teaching and learning. View the recording of the session via the link in the online members centre.

ECTA has responded to members concerns about the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the announcement by the Education Department that current Early Childhood Development Programs (ECDP) will be closed as they roll into the new NDIS services. Whilst we have been assured by the Department that no centre will close until all children attending are receiving

support from the NDIS our members remain concerned about the nature of that support. Particularly the education focus of the ECDPs which prepares children for school transitions. Members of our Townsville Regional Group met with a representative from the Department to discuss issues of concern. Townsville is one of the initial locations for the roll-out of NDIS which across the state will take up to three years. ECTA will continue to advocate for services with an educational focus to be offered alongside those with a therapeutic focus as both are required if we are to prepare and support children with special needs to transition into school settings.

Leonie Mitchell and Anne Pearson represented and promoted ECTA at the Nature Play conference in Brisbane held on Friday 18 March. ECTA is proud to partner with Nature Play www.natureplay.org.au to support their mission for:

unstructured outdoor play to become a normal part of every child's life, so that they can develop into resilient, healthy and creative members of the community.



Leonie Mitchell and Anne Pearson at the Nature Play conference in Brisbane.

In this journal we share recordings of the Louise Dorrat Masterclasses presented at the 2016 ECTA Annual Conference. Please enjoy *Building children's resilience in this risk-adverse world* and *Music and storytelling in an inclusive environment*.

ECTA funded Louise to present both sessions last year and early this year at events coordinated by our ECTA Regional Groups. Feedback from the sessions was very positive and appreciative of ECTA's support in bringing high quality professional development to regional areas.

Our 41st ECTA Annual Conference is now open for registrations via our website. With forty workshops to choose from there is something available to suit your professional development requirements. We have chosen presentations that are cross-sectoral and age group relevant and others that cater specifically for a particular age group e.g. babies and toddlers, kindy, Prep and lower primary. Held on the first Saturday of the June/July state school holidays I know you will find the conference engaging, stimulating and inspiring. Discounts are available for ECTA members and those wishing to join ECTA. This year membership at all levels can be paid for and entered during the conference registration process.

I hope to see you all at the conference.

Kim

Webinars and videolinqs for viewing on the ECTA website include:

- From craft to creativity
- Protecting children from abuse and neglect
- Dealing with childhood anxiety
- Embedding Indigenous perspectives
- Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guidelines
- Linking schools and early years services
- Building collaborative partnerships that foster quality outcomes for children
- Technology and multi-literacies to engage and support young learners
- A practical explanation of how children learn
- Self-regulation: strategies in action
- Transition from kindergarten to school
- Sensory savvy Classrooms
- Why transition to school matters.

For these and more, visit the member centre. You will need your username and password to access.



Louise Dorrat engaging the audience at the ECTA Capricorn Coast Regional Group session.



From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

A new year and a new editorial panel. Sarah-Jane takes time out from her busy role as Policy Officer with The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to introduce the team to you. I'm sure you will agree that together they bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the task of creating this journal. Please join me in welcoming our 2016 members.

Archana investigates the meaning of 'play and intentionality' in this issue's conversation. Be inspired as five educators ponder their position in children's play and their approach to

intentionality. How do you position yourself in children's play? If you would like to contribute your thoughts to an EYC conversation email the team at journal@ecta.org.au.

Neb continues the theme of play and intentionality with some awe inspiring environments to capture your imagination.

I love the thought of an intentionally empty space for children to fill with richness and learning. Do you?

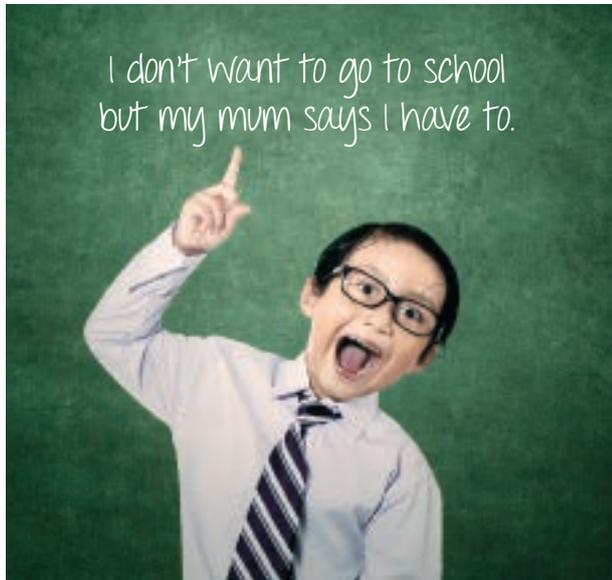
In partnerships, Imogene from Nature Play explains why nature is vital to a healthy childhood and Louise Dorrat shares the benefits of music, dance and storytelling in early childhood.

Once again we bring you specialist advice in our featured articles. Adele Amorsen and Deborah Wilson return with practical tips on the role of the teacher in promoting oral language. Desley Jones reinforces the links between relationships, wellbeing and mental health and Evelyn Terry asks 'Are your Prep students ready to learn to read and write?'

The team from Mater Mothers' Hospital bring us up to date with changes in the care of babies and mothers while Mark Griffiths espouses the value of the human voice and body in musical expression. Mark Melrose challenges our thinking about children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Sally Foley-Lewis brings practical advice to the role of educational leader.

Finally, Sue Webster has collated five media reviews for your enjoyment. So sit back now and enjoy a good read.

Lynne



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Editorial Panel

Our Editorial Panel has a diverse range of experience and backgrounds. Here we share how our passion for educating young children brought us to the early childhood education and care sector.



Angela Drysdale

Head of Primary, St Margaret's Anglican Grammar School

I joined the EYC committee in 1995 making me the longest serving member. I have

held two leadership positions but believe my leadership journey started in the classroom, over 30 years ago, where I demonstrated leadership in collaborative planning, being a member of various committees and presenting to the wider educational community at conferences and seminars. I was appointed as Head of Infants School at John Paul College in 1994 and remained in that position until appointed Head of Primary at St Margaret's AGS in 2003. I remain in this position today. I am in the final stage of completing my Masters by Research. I am passionate about the education of children with a deep interest in early childhood education because it lays the foundation for future learning. In my leadership position I understand the importance of establishing a safe and caring community where all members feel valued.



Sue Webster

Literacy and Numeracy Support Teacher, Wellers Hill State School

I joined the EYC committee in 1997. I have worked for

30 years in early childhood settings within Education Queensland. I started work in Brisbane South and was Teacher in Charge of a unit in my second year of teaching. I then transferred with my husband to the bush and spent some years in rural Queensland state schools in the mid-west and far north. I then had a couple of years off and had two beautiful children. We moved back to Brisbane and I continued my early childhood work.

I have done short acting stints in administration and curriculum roles as the school required. I was also heavily involved in Brisbane South Region training for Prep and the local roll-out and have spent much time providing professional development to teacher aides.

I am currently working as a Support Teacher: Literacy and Numeracy and love working with children and teachers. I also enjoy my role as a Beginning Mentor Teacher in my school. I have loved every one of my jobs but working with young children wins hands down every time.



Lynne Moore

Manager, Department of Education and Training, Queensland

I joined the EYC committee in 2002, taking on the role of editor in 2005. I am a Manager in Indigenous Priorities, Early Childhood and Community Engagement, Department of Education and Training, Queensland, leading the delivery of the Remote Indigenous Professional Development project for the Early Years Learning Framework across Queensland, the Northern Territory and South Australia. I began my career as an early childhood educator in kindergartens and child care centres. More recently I have specialised in the development of curriculum for the early years. I am privileged to work with amazing Aboriginal and Torres Strait early childhood educators who each day teach me to see early childhood through different eyes.



Sarah-Jane Johnson

Policy Officer, Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

I have worked in early childhood education for over 13 years, starting as an early childhood assistant whilst studying for my Bachelor's degree. Inspired by my leaders whilst working as a young early childhood teacher, I developed a passion to construct a better identity within the wider community for early childhood educators as the highly skilled, dedicated and passionate professionals that they are. Since then I have committed to being an advocate for the early childhood profession. While still working as an early childhood teacher, I completed a law

degree and then worked as a lawyer for a few years before moving overseas to work in an international school. I bring this practical expertise in implementing the National Quality Framework at home and abroad to my current role as a policy officer at ACECQA in Sydney, where I continue to advocate for the early childhood profession at every opportunity.



Jeanie Watt

Early Childhood Teacher,
Molly's House

I came from a family of teachers. My grandmother and mother were teachers.

My mother had a kindergarten in our backyard, so I was immersed in an early childhood environment. I always said that I would never walk in her footsteps, but once I had children of my own I discovered that it felt like the right thing to do. I started studying at Brisbane College of Advanced Education (BCAE) as a mature age student, and have been teaching now for 25 years. Although there have been many changes in the overriding systems over the years, children remain a constant. I continue to be inspired by their quest for knowledge, creative thinking and boundless enthusiasm.



Marion Mori

Early Childhood Teacher,
Kurilpa Community Childcare
Centre

I am an accidental early childhood professional who

fell in love with this work very quickly. Big personal changes a few years ago meant moving from South East Asia back to New Zealand, where there were few opportunities to continue working in publishing. A friend asked me to help out in an early learning centre near my house and ... I was converted! I qualified with a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (ECE) a year later and haven't stopped learning since. I have had lots of support from many amazing colleagues over the years and aim to give as much of that back to the sector as I can. I have trained and volunteered as a mentor, and worked with centres struggling with the assessment and rating process. I am currently working as an ECT in a community run service and hope to keep

sharing new challenges and opportunities for as long as they'll let me!



Kerrin Thomas

General Manager, Habitat
Early Learning

I started my career in early childhood in the early nineties when I began studying for my

Bachelor of Education in NSW. I worked as an early childhood teacher for many years before undertaking a research degree and moving into educational leadership. My research interest is social justice and gender issues. In 2012 I completed my Master of Educational Leadership. As a passionate advocate for women's issues, my current area of interest is exploring professional identity and the enactment of leadership within early education and care.



Nebula Wild

Director, C&K QUT Kelvin
Grove

I have been working in early childhood education for over ten years in a variety

of roles. I currently work in inner city Brisbane in a long day care service as a director with C&K. I enjoy diversity and being challenged in my role, and have appreciated and grown from the professional opportunities given to me. I have sought opportunities to extend my understanding of the diversity of early childhood care and education and have been fortunate to be able to work in FNQ in Weipa. I also worked in Shanghai, China, as an international kindergarten teacher. I enjoy learning about the similarities and differences in care and education practices throughout the world. In my current role, I am fortunate to be able to engage with and learn from my international colleagues, families and children. I have been involved with ECTA for a number of years, first joining because I wanted to be amongst others who felt as passionate about early childhood education and educators as I do. Originally involved in the ECTA state coordinating committee and ECTA conference committee, I reduced my commitments to the ECTA journal committee after the birth of my son. I enjoy being surrounded by professionally like-minded people and hopefully will continue to grow and learn through my professional opportunities.



Sharon McKinlay

Early Learning Consultant,
Goodstart Early Learning

I am an early childhood teacher who has worked across a range of early

childhood education and care (ECEC) settings over the last 15 years, as a teacher, leader and mentor. The majority of my teaching has been in rural and regional communities in Queensland. My current role as an Early Learning Consultant with Goodstart Early Learning enables me to work with a team of professionals committed to strengthening quality in ECEC. My Master of Education (Research) study: *Building a sustainable workforce in early childhood education and care: What keeps Australian early childhood teachers working in long day care?* aims to strengthen the understanding of the factors impacting the retention of early childhood teachers in long day care, drawing on the perspective of early childhood teachers who are currently choosing to work in long day care. I have been awarded a QUT post-graduate scholarship to work on the Australian Research Council Linkage Project *Identifying effective strategies to grow and sustain a professional early years workforce study* led by Professor Karen Thorpe.



Kate Shapcott

Kindergarten Teacher,
Springfield Child Care and
Early Education Centre

I am currently the Kindergarten teacher at

a family owned centre in Springfield. As a mother, I worked as a volunteer breastfeeding counsellor for the Australian Breastfeeding Association where I came to appreciate the pivotal importance of skilled and loving mothering, and the first years of a child's life. I then started working as an Assistant Coordinator in a rural OSHC program whilst studying a Graduate Diploma in Education (Child Care) from USQ. With that qualification I was able to work in a wide variety of positions and centres within the rural area where I then lived. I continued to study and completed a Graduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning (Primary) online from USQ.

As a kindergarten teacher I feel as though I have found my niche. I love my work and am constantly stretched to learn more and think more deeply about my work. My particular passion is early childhood literature and I am committed to promoting the importance of reading for pleasure.



Archana Sinh

Kindergarten Teacher, Taigum
Child Care Centre

Prior to visiting my child's day care as a volunteer parent, I was terrified at the thought of

working with children under the age of six. I had some primary teaching experience from overseas, and a degree and experience teaching political science to bachelor students. That was close to 20 years ago. I enjoyed my first experience so much that it started to emerge as a career choice. Since then I have completed my teaching qualifications and a Master in Education (Early Childhood). I have worked as a Kindergarten teacher, casual teacher in schools (Primary), training officer for Diploma and Cert III (Sydney and Brisbane), tutor at Griffith University (Logan) for bachelor students and as a lecturer in early childhood education at TAFE Brisbane (Alexandra Hills). I believe in advocacy for the early childhood profession and am keenly interested in exploring and interpreting policy that guides it.



Kate Constantinou

Prep Teacher, Springfield
Lakes State School

I have been fortunate in my ten years with Education Queensland to work with

passionate and dedicated teachers. After finishing my Bachelor of Education I started work as a music teacher, where I taught all years from Prep to Year 7. I quickly found my niche in the early years and worked with an inspiring Prep teacher. I decided that I would return to study my Masters degree and major in early childhood. I have worked for the last six years with Year One and Prep. I advocate strongly for developmentally appropriate practices in our school environment while meeting the increasing standards that are being set.

Play – what does it mean?

Conversations around play and intentionality are a way to reflect on our understanding of learning in early childhood. The questions in this conversation draw out rich diversity as well as commonality in the interpretation of play and intentional teaching in the early years. The question is not whether learning happens through play, but rather to understand that play and learning can have different interpretations for different educators. The purpose of exploring intentionality is to understand where educators position themselves in this understanding. As educators, I believe we have intent and as we position ourselves we carry our intent with us as we adapt, modify and change our own learning.

Archana Sinh

Anthony Parry



My name is Anthony Parry. I'm a Diploma qualified Group Leader working in an inner city community run kindergarten.

I position myself in children's play ... as a respectful observer open to the cues from children

that they need something else from me. I wait for these before I step into their play. I also set up and modify learning environments to make sure that the children are able to make the most of their interests and follow learning opportunities on their own.

My choices about children's play are informed by ... reflection, through the conversations I have with co-workers and with the children themselves. Children are powerful people. When they are in a provocative environment they are more than capable of making good learning choices for themselves. You become a witness as they build on their knowledge, working behind the scenes so they have the resources they need to explore what they want to.

I weave intentional teaching throughout children's play ...

in conversation, especially by asking careful questions that get children to think about where they are now, where they want to be and how to get there. I'm really interested in doing art with the children, especially group projects. Those questions are about how to get our ideas on a canvas – what materials and techniques we need to use. Children are great at this and we see what they learn in doing this recreated in their individual artwork.

Jenny Hill



Jenny Hill is a Teacher at Kedron Heights Community Kindergarten. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching, Early Childhood and has been in this current position for three years.

I position myself in children's play ... in any number of

ways depending on the situation. There are times when I will observe and listen (I love listening to children as they play). Sometimes,

I will support and scaffold their learning or facilitate others (usually other children) to do this through acknowledging their ideas and contribution. Sometimes I will position myself in the play if I am invited or I may gently insert myself to support and extend an idea. At times I may be a redirector of play into a more positive way and support children with resources, ideas and materials to foster these ideas. The role of relationships around children's play is also vital to the richness of their experience.

My choices about children's play are informed by ... my passion in knowing that play is the most natural way for children to learn and expand their knowledge about the world around them. This knowledge has developed and been shaped over time by many theorists, lots of reading and working every day with many children over a long period of time. At the time of my study in early childhood my own sister had two children 18 months apart. I got to put the theories into practice and test ideas and explore concepts as I studied. This is something I value for the hands on learning I was able to link with theory. My own passion for learning continues. I still embark on much more professional development than I need to. I want to keep learning about how children learn in the context of play. I also want to continue to consider other knowledge and theory that influences children's learning and development.

I weave intentional teaching throughout children's play ... both intentionally and incidentally. I believe intentional teaching is important to scaffold children's development of learning to higher levels. The amount of scaffolding will differ for individual children. I love the intentional teaching aspect of our role in early childhood as we will often see the wonder in children's being as they move to a new understanding. I may have helped them reach this new understanding or as very often occurs, another person in the room will add something. This will help them connect with their existing knowledge and move them into a new state of knowing and being.

Denise Cedric



Denise Cedric is a pedagogical leader for the Remote Indigenous Professional Development project. My role is to support Indigenous early childhood educators to implement the Early Years Learning Framework through

Indigenous perspectives. I also support and mentor Indigenous early childhood educators to grow personally and professionally as educational leaders.

I position myself in children's play ... to observe and listen to their conversations. Educator interactions facilitate children's individual developmental needs and interests through Aboriginal eight ways of knowing, doing and understanding. For example, using cultural or natural environmental resources; connecting learning through sharing personal stories of significant community places and events; allowing time and space for imagining, exploring, using language and modelling how to create and use photographs or picture books to support and extend learning.

My choices about children's play are informed ... by understanding Indigenous child-rearing practices and cultural knowledge about children. The Aboriginal eight ways is used for example, to support children's first language/s and Standard Australian English development. Other examples include manipulative play (non-verbal); puzzles (deconstruct/reconstruct); roleplay community role models (community links); investigating and exploring natural environments or resources (land links/story sharing), and playdough and creative expression (symbols and images/non-linear/learning maps/story sharing).

I weave intentional teaching throughout children's play ... where learning environments are set up purposefully with children's input including creating props to extend their play and family input from their

Indigenous cultural perspectives. Educator interactions are skillfully interwoven throughout the play so you become the 'facilitator' of learning who scaffolds and extends children's learning while listening, observing, questioning, guiding their thought processes and continually reflecting with the children, colleagues and their families as an ongoing cycle.

Kate Shapcott



Kate Shapcott is Kindergarten Teacher at Springfield Child Care and Early Education Centre (ESKAY Kids).

I position myself in children's play

... Observations are the most important thing. I watch, listen closely and position

myself accordingly. If all is going well and children are safely absorbed in their own world then my role is to stand back, let that play develop. Some children may need to help protect that play if others struggle to respect it. Other times I may feel the need to guide the interaction a little or a lot. Maybe close proximity on my part, deep involvement in the play or something in between. Sometimes I can seize a 'teachable moment' and offer a strategy, prop, resource or playmate who takes the learning to a more challenging or interesting level.

My choices about children's play are informed by

... An early influence was the textbook *Play at the center of the curriculum* by Van Hoorn et al. This approach is based on Developmentally Appropriate Practice with an Emergent Curriculum. I have also been influenced by Maria Montessori especially in her approach to the provision of materials for play and learning and how she incorporated life skills into her daily routine. The Reggio Emilia approach reminds me of the importance of documentation, of creating environments that foster learning and of the Arts. *Caring spaces, learning places*

by Greenman continues to remind me of the importance of environment. Recently *Pedagogy and space* by Linda Zane has informed my thinking. At the moment the Nature Play philosophy excites me. I am also inspired by my Director Kristy Hudspith who has a great understanding of the power of environment on every level.

I weave intentional teaching throughout children's play

... My belief is that the play belongs to the children and the purpose of the Centre/Kindergarten is to support and develop this play. My job is to facilitate, extend and encourage. So my intentional teaching may be to provide books on a topic of interest and just point those out to the children at an appropriate time. It may be to engage parents in contributions to the program, it may be to organise a structured activity, excursion or a game or provide a resource such as a photo or easel and paint to extend learning. It may be a conversation with an individual or a whole group time experience. We use the *Talking and thinking books* inspired by Claire Warden. I find them a great way to tap into children's interests and to document their learning and reflections on learning. Inevitably they direct the intentional teaching approach I take.

Maree Frederiksen



Maree Frederiksen is currently on secondment as a Principal Program Officer in the age-appropriate pedagogies project with Early Learning Pathways, in the Division of Early Childhood and Community

Engagement, Department of Education and Training.

I position myself in children's play

... seeing my role in scaffolding children's learning through play as critical. My position in children's play has always changed in response

to the play itself, or the specific curriculum content being addressed. I may have:

- co-constructed the play environment with the children
- adopted a role to support children's socio-dramatic play
- added literacy or numeracy resources to a play space
- acted as discreet observer, anecdotally recording the play
- used pre and post play discussions to make the learning within the play explicit
- modelled relevant language and introduced new vocabulary
- assisted the children to document, annotate and share their play experiences.

Staying 'curriculum-informed' was always crucial in allowing me to respond to spontaneous, planned, child initiated or teacher initiated play opportunities, without

relinquishing a curriculum focus in my classroom.

My choices about children's play are informed by ... the interests and capabilities of my children, my own philosophy and capabilities, my particular context at any given time, and the need for clear alignment between pedagogies, the Australian Curriculum and assessment practices.

I weave intentional teaching throughout children's play ... believing that intentional teaching should always be playful, and that play should always be intentional. Play-based learning provides opportunities for Prep children to actively and imaginatively engage with people, objects and their environment. When playing, as well as interacting, investigating and exploring, children's physical, social, emotional, creative and cognitive development is promoted. I value play-based learning as one of the range of approaches that I can employ in enacting age-appropriate pedagogies in my classroom.



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Intentional environments

Nebula Wild

A definition of intentional teaching includes being purposeful, thoughtful and deliberate (DEEWR, 2009). We can apply the same definition to our learning environments. These are environments that have been designed by teachers to support play and learning, with intent.

What each environment will look like will be different in each education and care space, because the teacher is different, the children engaging in the environment are different, the interests are unique and the landscape itself will allow for, or guide, specific play.

Consideration of a number of key factors is important; but put simply, it is intent or purpose that is paramount. As an educator what is your intention for the play? Are you providing a space for creative play with open ended resources or are you creating a space to learn about rockets. Both are equally valuable, however both will look very different.

Each space may be considered in terms of the following:

- What resources are needed and are they open ended, closed or multi-purpose?
- Is the space for individual or collaborative play or both?
- Are there opportunities for safe risk taking or open boundaries?
- Is the space inviting?
- Is the space usable (can the children access the cupboards, is there enough space)?
- Can the space be revisited and extended the following day?
- Have natural materials or human made materials been used?

Finally, spaces can be intentionally empty. Consider making an interesting space with an ambiguous use ... allow the child to discover their own purpose. This 'lack' needs to be a deliberate act and not just because today you couldn't think of what to put out. You choose to leave a space, a silence for a child to fill.

When a teacher is intentional a richness and depth of the learning and play will be present.

Consider creating a scene for a child to enter into – a home perhaps, maybe a kitchen. You may be expecting a certain type of play to occur in this space; however, the children could use the same resources to create something quite unique. Could this be a kitchen? A house? A restaurant? A doctor's surgery?

Intentional play also includes creating a landscape. Sometimes the environment itself is rich with possibility and opportunity. Consideration can be given when planning play spaces to allow for intentional play.





A dry creek bed at **C&K QUT Kelvin Grove** has been a spaceship, a river, a pond for fishing, a jungle, a house, a place where the fairies are hiding and more.



This is Dinosaur Pirate Island made by the kindergarten children at **Kurilpa Community Child Care West End** and modified often to explore all kinds of stories in many different ways. In this version the dinosaurs have been killed by an exploding volcano, but the sea around the island is still full of sharks. Except the water keeps disappearing ...
Photos and words courtesy Marion Mori



C&K QUT Kelvin Grove - sometimes the space being set up and inviting is enough – it calls to a child 'how will you use this space?' A table and two chairs invites a small number of children to gather.



The carpentry table is always busy at **Kurilpa Community Child Care West End**. Adding the loose parts trolley has created a satisfying new element for children who like to dismantle as well as assemble. This is an environment in which our three-year-olds can really surprise us.
Photo and words courtesy Marion Mori





In **Pre Prep at St Margaret's** the 'Mud Bakery' developed after a small group of children regularly engaged in mixing dirt with water to make mud. They accessed a small range of tools provided by educators to encourage experimentation. The children used wooden and metal tools to mix, combine, pat, scoop and pour mud from one container to another. After many days experimenting one child remarked that she was '... making a chocolate cake for Mummy's birthday!' This expression of intent encouraged other children to join in the 'cooking' experience to make cookies, choc-chip muffins and pies. During the group's 'Planning for Play' meeting the following day, the group cooperatively decided to set up a bakery. Educators scaffolded play by supporting children to make and write signs for the bakery, research about bakeries and the products they sell as well as providing resources and equipment including outdoor furniture, cake tins, muffin trays and cooking implements. Photos and words courtesy Jacqui Smith



At **Springfield Lakes State School Prep** has a variety of environments that encourage play. Teachers set up hands on activities based on stories being read and they develop play activities that are centered on the children's interests. Photos and words courtesy Kate Constantinou



The 'Rabbit Restaurant' is a child-initiated play space in the **Year 1 classroom at St Margaret's** that has resulted from the children's experiences in the school holidays. Through teacher scaffolding and peer collaboration the space has evolved over the course of several weeks. The space provides opportunity for investigation while supporting social development and promoting language, literacy and numeracy skills. Photo and words courtesy Tamara Garvey



At **Molly's House in Kedron** a number of children have been actively interested in role playing 'mums and dads'. One child loves to carry around her baby for long periods of time. She loves to talk to her baby, reads the baby stories, cuddles it, and strokes its head. This environment was set up to allow for extension of that play, while also being flexible enough to accommodate many other role play situations – sleepovers, bedtime routines, and is also good for encouraging 'tidying up'.
Photo and words courtesy Jeanie Watt

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Nature play in early years education

Imogene Whittle, Nature Play QLD



Imogene has extensive experience in marketing, managing and directing organisations, programs, projects and large events. Prior to Nature Play QLD, Imogene worked for over five years in the youth arts sector, in industry peak body organisations that provided member support and industry advocacy. Imogene was Creative Director of Youth Arts Queensland from late 2012, prior to which she was Manager of Young People and the Arts Australia. Imogene is passionate about work that will make a positive contribution to the world. While she relishes working with children and young people, it's her recent role of mother which she notes as most rewarding.

Nature play is nurturing

Nature play, that is unstructured play outdoors, is vital to a healthy childhood.

For children, play is learning. There is no better space for kids to learn than the outdoors, and there is no better play resource than nature.

One of the best lessons children can be taught in their early years is to play outdoors. Children innately reap great benefits as they grow connections with, and appreciation of, the natural environment. In the structured, busy and technologically-advanced world we live in, the role of outdoor play that we experienced as children is being forgotten.

Nature play is any activity that gets children active, or thinking actively, outdoors, with the end goal of building the skills and ability to play without the need for parental or adult control. It supports children being left to their own devices, while caregivers supervise from a distance. Adults can also actively participate in nature play, however, through child-led play activities.

Nature play significantly improves all aspects of child development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional.



Nature play is any activity that gets kids active

Playing outdoors grows resilience, increases self-confidence, and promotes creativity. It encourages the joy of movement, nurtures wild imaginations, encourages friendships and establishes social connections.

Nature play has academic benefits

A report from the National Wildlife Federation, *Back to school: back outside* (Coyle 2010), showed such benefits include:

- Improved classroom behaviour
- Increased student motivation and enthusiasm to learn

- Reduced Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and
- Helping under-resourced, low-income students to perform measurably better in school.

Nature deficit disorder

Conversely, children who are not supported, encouraged, inspired or provided the opportunity to develop an intrinsic love of outdoor play are increasingly becoming disconnected from nature, to their detriment.

Children who don't regularly participate in outdoor play and lead sedentary lifestyles are at risk. Richard Louv, American social commentator who wrote *Last child in the woods*, coined the term 'nature deficit disorder' to describe children disconnected from nature, as an illness. Symptoms of nature deficit disorder include depression, hyperactivity, boredom and loneliness (Louv 2005). It may also manifest in reduced motor development and diminished mental and psychological health, including lack of attention, learning ability and creativity.

According to *Beyond blue to green*, a 2010 Australian report on the benefits of contact with nature for mental health and wellbeing, if we don't take drastic changes to curb current sedentary indoor lifestyle trends, it is foreseeable that obesity, depression, stress, anxiety and mental health issues – which are all closely linked – will also continue to rapidly increase (Townsend & Weerasuriya 2010).

Balance screen time with green time

The increase in sedentary recreational behaviour is growing, in almost epidemic proportions. This generation of children, the digital generation, has never known life without a computer or the internet. Research from the Einstein Medical Centre Philadelphia reported that even by age one, 14% of children are already using electronic devices for an hour a day; this goes up to 26% by the age of two, to 38% by age four, and usage continues to increase with age (NY Daily News 2015).

The more high-tech our lives become, the more nature we need.

Louv (2005) says when children become more engrossed in – and even addicted to – their



Everyday nature play

technology, they become less connected to their natural environment. Addictions to technology also lead to children becoming disconnected from each other and to society around them. While we need to support the importance of technology as part of modern day life and education, it is vital to encourage mindful and purposeful use of that technology, balanced with nature play every day.

It is vital that we all take action to curb the rise of sedentary behaviour of children in our communities.

Nature play – every day

As educators, catering for choice and providing space for self-led outdoor play will increase the potential that children will value, and develop a love for, outdoor play. They will see it as meaningful and fun. We can teach children to increase their health and wellbeing and build identity and connection by simply encouraging play and learning outside their classroom or at their front door.

Everyday nature play should become a normal part of every child's life in Queensland, so that they can develop into resilient, healthy and creative members of the community.

Tips to incorporate nature play into your educational setting

- Discuss in the classroom why it is important for our minds and bodies to play outdoors. Promotes children's confidence in their outdoor play competencies.



Encourage play and learning outside the classroom

- Create a 'Why I love playing outdoors' display board. This could incorporate a week of discussing the topic with the children and include their favourite activities, why they are their favourites and who they love to play with.
- Bring natural materials indoors for indoor play or craft.
- Explore the natural areas of your school grounds with your students. Go outside and make maps of the school grounds, including all the natural areas.
- Take your class outdoors for 'daily grounding'. Ask them to remove their shoes and spend ten minutes walking or standing on the grass.
- Provide loose parts for children to play with in the playground (branches, sticks, rope, crates, wood, etc.) and allow them to create whatever they can dream up.

Nature Play QLD and how we can help

Nature Play QLD inspires outdoor play, learning and kids' love of nature. We provide free resources, information, activities and ideas for adults to support their child's outdoor play. We encourage the community to value nature play, and we support educators and families to prioritise it in children's lives.

For example, our flagship program, the *Passport to an amazing childhood* resource was

developed to inspire children to reconnect with unstructured play in nature. Using a Nature Play passport, which you can order for free, hundreds of nature play missions can be undertaken, and the passports are used to record the child's nature play adventures.

More info: www.natureplayqld.org.au

Contact: info@natureplayqld.org.au or 07 3367 1989

Nature Play QLD is an initiative of the Queensland Government Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, administered by QORF (the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation).

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Music, storytelling and dance in early childhood

Louise Dorrat



Louise Dorrat previously taught music in the Bachelor of Education at Swinburne TAFE, Victoria University and Deakin University. She worked professionally in children's theatre for many years and currently conducts professional development nationally. Louise's energetic workshops have taken her around Australia. Her presentations are at once engaging, entertaining and educative. ECTA is proud to have sponsored Louise to present workshops throughout 2015 in Hervey Bay, the Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Yeppoon, Toowoomba, Brisbane North, Sunshine Coast, Logan and Biloela.

The dramatic arts are a fundamental part of life and have the capacity to transport children to different places to become someone or something else. Humans are innately musical and children's pleasure in music is evident from birth (Ilari 2011). When children are active participants they make discoveries about how their body moves, how their voice works and the connections they have to the world around them.

What are the benefits of introducing babies and young children to music, dance and storytelling?

The most critical time for the development of the brain is the first five years of life (Shonkoff 2000). From birth children can feel the beat, hear melody and words and are able to freely move, vocalise and express themselves. Experiencing beats and rhythm wires the brain and repeating this strengthens the wiring (Schiller 2006).

Children learn best when they are enjoying themselves. The dramatic arts are hands on which fosters an immediate sense of fun that engages and encourages children to let go and explore their inner musician and storyteller. When educators encourage children to be part of a call and response experience, they become



Engage children to be participants



Experiencing beat and rhythm



Put on some gloves

active participants which builds confidence and self-esteem. Music and storytelling can be used to create an environment or mood to support young children to relax in the hurried world around them. Songs and chants can provide a predictable structure for routines and transitions making the day flow smoothly.

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (2009) highlights the importance of music and stories:

- Shared singing supports the development of secure and trusting relationships.
- Children's communication skills are enhanced when they listen and respond to sounds and patterns in stories and rhymes.
- Families' cultures, traditions and beliefs can be incorporated through stories and songs to promote in children a strong sense of who they are.
- Children responding through movement to traditional and contemporary music shape their learning and development.

Music and storytelling strengthens language, listening and concentration skills and are excellent socialising tools. These experiences encourage children to use their imagination, build coordination skills and assist with the concepts of rhythm, rhyme, repetition, beat, tempo and pitch.

I feel uncomfortable singing and dancing in front of children

There is a Zimbabwe proverb that says, 'If you can walk you can dance and if you can talk you can sing'. This could be taken a step further to say, 'If you can breathe you can dance and if you can make a sound you can sing.' There is no right or wrong in the dramatic arts, as long as you are enjoying yourself, the children will usually follow.

What are some ideas for educators?

The use of a variety of musical experiences, such as lullabies, songs, percussive instruments, ditties, singing games, rhymes and raps provide both structured and unstructured experiences using a range of simple and culturally diverse props.

Here are a couple of ideas:

- Always have available a class set of egg maracas and clapping sticks. These can be used for all ages to shake or beat along with the music or the rhyme.
- Put on some gloves
I have ten little fingers and they all belong to me
I can make them do things, would you like to see?
I can shut them up tight
I can open them up wide
I can clap them together
I can make them hide
I can make them jump high
I can make them jump low
I can fold them quietly
And fold them so
- Moving to music
Use a tambour or clapping sticks and encourage the children to move to the beat and freeze when you stop. Then repeat with music. Find a variety of music



Oral story telling

that you love; classical, contemporary, jazz and world music. Cut holes in pieces of large fabric so children can put over their heads or use as a scarf and move to the music. Ensure that there is a variety of fast, slow, rap, rock etc.

Attach ribbons or bells to elastic for babies' hands.

Give each child a small paint brush and provide three bowls with pretend paint in them. Encourage children to paint the walls and chairs to the music. Alternatively, paint outside with water to the music.

- For transitions

To the tune farmer in the dell

If you're wearing stripes (blue/a zip)

If you're wearing stripes

You can go and wash your hands

If you're wearing stripes

- Stories in boxes

Choose your favourite story and memorise it. Then find simple props to represent the characters and place them in a box. i.e.

- *Dear zoo*
- *Green sheep*
- *Billy goats gruff*
- *Peace at last*
- *Who sank the boat*
- *Big hungry bear*
- *Brown bear brown bear*

Oral storytelling

Oral storytelling is one of the most ancient art forms and has always played an integral role in Indigenous communities. Dreaming stories have been passed down from one generation to another for 40,000 years embedding the history of the land, the seasons, people, animals and culture. Non Indigenous Australians can learn from the First Nations Peoples about the significance and the art of storytelling.

The beauty of oral storytelling is that you can do it anywhere; outside under a tree or inside, sitting in a circle watching the flame of a candle. You can tell a story to one child on your knee or a group of children lying down.

How do you tell a story?

Draw the children to you by using your eyes and varying your voice, tone, pitch and volume. Be authentic and avoid being cutesy and patronising. Stand up, move around or sit in a circle. Starting in a circle for older children is beneficial in a number of ways including; the absence of hierarchy and clear sight of all participants, including the teacher.

Encourage children to choose any position where they are comfortable. Never force them to sit with their legs crossed and up straight as if they were in the army. I do not like sitting like that when I am singing or listening to a story so I imagine it is more difficult for children.

The use of props and puppets can strengthen participation by creating a visual aid which assists in children's engagement.



Possibilities exist everywhere



Spontaneous opportunities throughout the day

When and where do you provide a dramatic arts session?

Music and storytelling does not just occur at 'group time' or 'music time'. Children benefit from a variety of methods structured and unstructured throughout the day. Possibilities exist anywhere and everywhere. An authentic and responsive music program is one that recognises and promotes naturally occurring and spontaneous opportunities throughout the day. These may be inside, outside, with individuals, small groups and larger groups of children.

How do you respond to children who do not wish to be involved?

Many years ago, I facilitated a series of ten weekly music and movement sessions, one child appeared not to be participating. She did not look up, open her mouth or look at all interested. When the parent enrolled her for the following term, I discussed my concern with her. She told me that at home after each session, her daughter placed her teddies in a circle singing the songs that she had learnt that day to the teddies. This was a clear message to me to never force a child to participate as each child responds to participation differently.

Children participate in singing sessions when they are developmentally ready and feel

comfortable. As with any learning experience, never put pressure on a child to participate (DET 2010). Children should be free to come and go. However if it is interesting enough, they usually stay. Our role is not to teach the arts but to encourage children to experience the arts in a positive and non threatening way.

Conclusion

The dramatic arts through voice, poetry, stories, rhymes, chants, puppets, music and dance should be embedded in the curriculum every day. Engage children to be participants rather than an audience and if you are passionate about the experience, the children will usually be transported with you.

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Resources

A variety of music that you love. The World section in the music shop or iTunes is great for fabulous diverse music.

Oxfam shops sell wonderful fair trade boxes

Indigenous resources

<http://www.yarnstrongsista.com/>

<https://aboriginalfabrics.com.au/artists>
(for fair trade fabric)

Let me talk! *The relationship between children's oral language and early literacy skills*

Adele Amorsen and Deborah Wilson



Adele and Deborah work with the Prep Teaching Team at St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly. Adele has made a recent return to the classroom after many years as a Language, Literacies and Communication Lecturer at Queensland University of Technology. Deborah has extensive experience as an early childhood music specialist and classroom teacher. Deborah and Adele have noticed an increase in the number of children arriving at Prep with speech and language difficulties and the impact this is having on their capacity to manage early literacy learning. They have been fortunate to work closely with a Speech Pathologist, Narelle Rieck, who supports their classroom program to ensure all children develop strong communication skills.

Oral language underpins all learning. Children use language to question, seek information and offer ideas, and to negotiate, instruct and explain. Oral language also provides the foundation for learning to read and write. A child with strong communication skills is well placed to cope with the demands of reading and writing, including the ability to hear and articulate a range of sounds within words. Conversely, children with speech and language difficulties may struggle to master the basics of written communication.

In recent years, research indicates an increased number of children presenting in classrooms with communication difficulties. McLeod et. al. (2009) report that language difficulties affect up to 14% of Australian children, with 7% of children having a primary language disorder. According to Dr John Munro, Head of Studies in Exceptional Learning and Gifted Education at the University of Melbourne, more than one in five primary school children arrive at school without the necessary oral language skills for successful learning. Brisbane based Speech Pathologist, Narelle Rieck, supports this notion, highlighting current statistical evidence that 20% of 4-year-olds have difficulty understanding or using language.

The social impact of communication difficulties

Children who experience problems with speech and language often encounter a range of associated complications, including difficult social interactions with peers and adults. These children often struggle to communicate and be clearly understood. For some children, this can impact on confidence for contributing

Matt and Tiffany, parents of 5-year-old Hudson have spent many hours supporting Hudson's speech difficulties with the help of a speech pathologist and his kindergarten teachers. They are acutely aware of a range of issues associated with Hudson's speech difficulties. *'It was critical for us to ensure in Prep that Hudson received the same supportive teachers that understood the dynamics of speech difficulties and how it can affect reading, writing, friendships, and his ability to explain the way he feels. We were nervous about Hudson fitting in and being discouraged. As we learned more about speech issues there were a lot of other issues that could occur such as spelling, reading and writing.'*

to classroom discussions, answering teacher questions and involvement in small group work. These issues can then impact a child's self-esteem and self-perception.

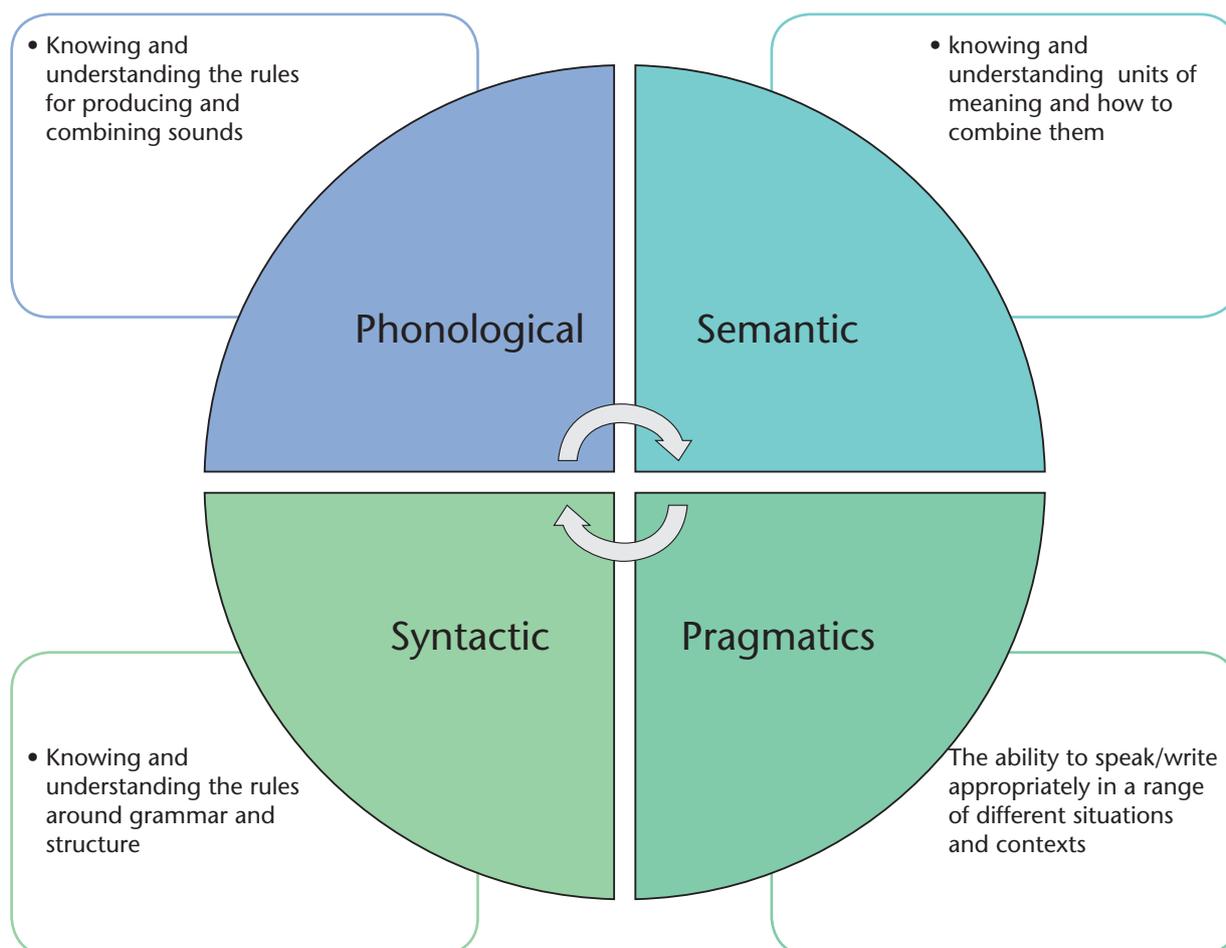
Communication and shared strategies between teachers, families and other specialists provide optimal support for children to settle in and to engage in classroom practices.

Impact on literacy learning

In addition, communication difficulties can impact academic achievement. Speech Pathologist, Narelle Rieck, reports that a child with a language impairment is six times more likely than typically developing peers to experience difficulty with early reading and

writing. In the school environment, speech and language impairment can affect all aspects of learning, with long-term implications including poor academic achievement overall.

The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP), convened in the United States in 2002, conducted a synthesis of scientific research on the development of early literacy skills in children aged birth – 5 years. NELP research indicates that oral language, as well as a set of associated abilities including phonological awareness, provides the basis for later reading success. NELP also found that measures of more complex spoken communication are particularly strong predictors of learning to read. The complex, multidimensional systems of oral language are clearly required to support a range of skills for early reading, including decoding. When decoding texts, children are required to



Components of oral and written language

articulate the sounds made by letters and letter clusters, as part of a system of strategies for learning to read and write.

Further findings of the NELP reveal that other aspects of oral language, such as grammar and vocabulary, are directly related to later reading comprehension skills. Internationally recognised Professor and reading researcher, Dr Timothy Shanahan, supports these findings further with his research around grammar and comprehension.

Studies over the years have shown a clear relationship between syntactic or grammatical sophistication and reading comprehension; that is, as students learn to employ more complex sentences in their oral and written language, their ability to make sense of what they read increases, too. (Shanahan, 2013, p. 1)

Research clearly indicates that it can become very difficult for children to understand the written form of language, without well-established familiarity with oral language structures, grammar and vocabulary.

The role of the teacher

Reading proficiency is built on extensive knowledge, and fluent use of oral language, and teachers from child care to Year 12 can do much to assist students across all content areas.

Early years teachers in particular, are presented with daily opportunities to support students as they grasp the complexities of speech development.

Using these opportunities well can help to minimise the impact of speech difficulties on the procurement of children's reading and writing skills. In the early years, careful adjustments to teachers' programming and planning can have far-reaching results for children's oral language and reading development.

Opportunities for students to talk

Some practicing teachers consider that less free play in the early years has had an impact

on children's language acquisition. Reduced opportunities to freely initiate and engage in conversation and dialogue with peers and adults, means that young children are not given the rehearsal time to develop their oracy skills. Instead, children are spending more time under direct instruction or in teacher-led and directed whole group conversations.

There is a need to create more regular, sustained opportunities for children to share with the class, with each other and in small groups, in directed and non-directed contexts.

The topics can be pre-planned or spontaneous, as each type requires a different type of language interaction.

For teachers, everyday strategies that promote opportunities for children to talk include:

- providing extensive opportunities for children to hear and use new vocabulary; explaining new and interesting words in context and then ensuring children are given ample opportunities to use them on a regular basis (e.g. a spontaneous game about swimming under the ocean could include new words like scuba and oxygen; a science lesson around seeds could include words like germination)
- introducing a weekly routine of 'Word of the Week' from current novels, texts or current events such as the Commonwealth Games



Working in buzz groups for an oral discussion

- keeping a word wall to record new and interesting words and encouraging children to refer to this when writing and playing games; including visuals to enhance memory recall of words and their possible uses
- presenting fiction and non-fiction texts that enhance children's awareness of new language structures and discuss these as you read (e.g. *In the tall, tall grass* by Denise Fleming or *Rain dance* by Cathy Applegate and Dee Huxley)
- creating classroom displays that invite comment and interaction, including displaying photographs and artefacts that children may never have seen before
- labelling learning areas, resources and materials with both words and pictures and encouraging children to use these words as they work and play in the room
- dedicating areas for imaginary and role-play with dress-ups and props, both indoors and outdoors, which can be beneficial for children to instigate natural conversations with peers and adults
- reorganising 'show and tell' into a partner or group of three activity, and teaching children a structure to ensure maximum use of oral language. One child speaks with the support of a visual task card (e.g. who, what, where, when, why), other child/children listen and then ask one question each of the speaker.
- teaching children to play barrier games specifically designed to encourage extended oral language structures and precise language usage.



Engaged in dramatic role play

In the past, generations of children have learnt rhymes and songs at the knee of parents and grandparents. Children now live in a busier, more digital world and some of these childhood traditions have diminished. The valuable interaction between adult and child, through song and rhyme, was and still is, a solid foundation upon which to build early oral language skills. Early childhood teachers can tap into this by:

- singing new and interesting songs that introduce new vocabulary. Explain vocabulary and encourage children to use this in their daily interactions with peers and adults.
- teaching rhymes such as 'Cobbler, cobbler mend my shoe', creating teachable moments as many children today don't know what a 'cobbler' is. Rhymes such as 'See saw' and 'Walk old Joe' allow children to play with words like galloping and trotting. 'Little red wagon' exposes children to lots of new vocabulary. See resource list for access to rhymes such as these.
- singing songs where every child is required to respond individually. Model and encourage facial and vocal expression as they respond. E.g. 'Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar', 'The telephone song', 'Oh! I can play on the big bass drum'. See resource list for access to songs such as these.
- encouraging children to join in greeting songs and/or take on the role of the teacher for particular songs.

Early childhood teachers are well positioned to identify speech and language difficulties and then provide timely support strategies as well as a network of personnel to further assist. Early intervention is essential to ensure that children develop their oral language skills to a level where they can engage successfully in life long literacy learning.

Sources of support for more classroom ideas

Conversation prompts for young children

<http://www.literacysolutions.com.au/blog/2015/03/08/the-daily-chat/>



Working on a box construction together

An excellent site full of articles and resources to support speech and language development

<http://mommyspeechtherapy.com/>

A site to find local speech pathologists

<http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/information-for-the-community/find-a-speech-pathologist>

Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne's Grow and Thrive articles for teachers and parents.

http://www.rch.org.au/ccch/growthrive/language_and_literacy/primary_teachers/

A great teacher blog with links to resources

<http://learningattheprimarypond.com/blog/childrens-oral-language-literacy-development/>

Ideas for barrier games

<http://www.tesaustralia.com/teaching-resource/ideas-for-barrier-games-6039655/>

For songs and rhymes

Musical Beginnings – produced by KMEIA - Kodaly Music Education Institute of Australia www.kodaly.org.au/store.php and First Steps in Music for Preschool and Beyond <https://www.giamusic.com/products/P-5580.cfm>

Pinterest

<http://stayathomeeducator.com/the-big-four-of-preschool-literacy-instruction-oral-language-development/>

Teachers Pay Teachers

Use search bar with Oral language activities

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>

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Relationships, wellbeing and mental health: reinforcing the links

Desley Jones



Desley Jones is Director of Ballymore Kindergarten in Brisbane. Desley has a degree in education and an honours degree in psychology and was a 2011 recipient of a NEiTA ASG Inspirational Teaching Award. She was nominated for the award by kindergarten parents in recognition of her emphasis on children's social and emotional wellbeing in her educational program. Desley's framework for intentional teaching for relationships – *Creating a Caring Community of Learners* – was accepted for presentation at the Infants and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing Conference (IECSEW) held in Canberra in 2013. In addition to teaching full-time, Desley presents workshops and writes articles for educators.

An understanding of mental health difficulties and how early childhood practitioners can support young children and their families, can play a significant role in giving children the best start in life.

Early intervention can have a positive impact on the trajectory of common emotional or behavioural problems as well as outcomes for children with serious disorders. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008, p. 1).

Significant mental health problems can, and do, occur in young children. Although the actual expression of the difficulties may differ, children can develop the same mental health difficulties as adults (KidsMatter, 2015). Issues in young children may include:

- Anxiety
- Trauma and stress-related disorders
- Depression
- Neurodevelopmental disorders:
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

- Serious behavioural problems
- Regulatory difficulties

Risk factors

Much impairment in mental health arises as a result of the interaction between a child's genetic predisposition and his or her exposure to significant environmental adversity (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). Children who experience a number of severe or sustained risk factors are at greater risk of developing mental health issues than those with exposure to one or two short-term or intermittent risks.

Risk factors include:

- Individual factors: disability or chronic illness, genetic or biological factors, a difficult temperament, an insecure attachment style.
- Family circumstances: drug or alcohol dependence, mental or physical illness, conflict and violence, separation and divorce, death of a pet, long-term unemployment, homelessness, death in the family.
- Environmental factors: war, poverty, cultural or social discrimination, bullying, neighbourhood violence or crime (Hunter Institute of Mental Health, 2014).

Exposure to risk factors generates stress responses in young children, whereby the brain's stress mechanisms are activated and set off a chemical chain reaction to ensure our survival. (Nagel, 2012, p. 51). Research has identified three tiers of stress: positive stress, tolerable stress and toxic stress.

Positive stress is associated with moderate short lived physiological responses. It includes a variety of early childhood experiences such as meeting new people, dealing with frustration, coping with limit setting, separation, and immunisation. Such stress is an important and necessary aspect of healthy development, assisting the child to develop a sense of mastery and self control. Positive stress occurs in the context of stable, supportive relationships that help to bring levels of stress hormones back to within normal range.

Tolerable stress is associated with physiological responses that could disrupt brain architecture. It is relieved by supportive relationships that facilitate coping. Significant threats include death or illness of a loved one, natural disaster, a frightening injury, or parent divorce. This stress is tolerable when it occurs in a time limited period in which a supportive adult protects the child by reducing the stressful experience, allowing the brain to recover.

At the more extreme end, toxic stress initiates a strong and prolonged activation of the body's stress management systems. Such stress includes extreme poverty, abuse, or exposure to violence. The essential feature is the absence of consistent supportive relationships to help the child cope and bring physiological responses back to baseline. The sustained physiological state disrupts the architecture of the brain and can lead to difficulties in learning, memory and self regulation as well as immune system (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007).

Protective factors

Thankfully, even the effects of numerous risk factors can be reduced or even prevented by the presence of key protective factors. The Hunter Institute of Mental Health (2014, p79) lists protective factors for wellbeing and mental health as:

- a positive or easy going temperament
- thinking positively about yourself or having good self-esteem

- being hopeful about the future
- feeling you have control over what happens in your life
- good communication, problem solving and social skills
- positive, nurturing, affectionate and secure relationships with adults
- being able to identify emotions and manage and express them appropriately
- making friendships that are positive and supportive.

Every child will have some risk factors but hopefully there will be enough protective factors to outweigh the impact of that risk and to give children other, more positive, experiences to draw on as they grow up.

The importance of relationships

Warm, responsive and predictable relationships at home, and in care, are powerfully protective in early childhood and beyond (KidsMatter, 2015).

The quality and stability of a child's human relationships in the early years lay the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes that really matter – self-confidence and sound mental health ... Simply stated, relationships are the 'active ingredient' of the environment's influence on healthy human development.

(Nagel, 2012, p. 162)

Conclusion

Attention to early mental health concerns is essential because such problems have the potential to impact negatively on developing capacities for learning, and for relating to others. In contrast, sound mental health provides a stable foundation that supports all areas of development. The task for early childhood practitioners becomes one of incorporating a strong focus on positive relationships as a core component of their intentional teaching.

Features of positive relationships:

- Reliable support that leads to confidence and trust
- Responsiveness to foster agency and self-efficacy
- Protection from harm and unforeseen threats
- Affection which promotes self-esteem
- Opportunities to experience and resolve conflict cooperatively
- Scaffolding of new skills and capacities
- Reciprocal interaction so that children experience give and take
- Mutual respect.

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Are your Prep students ready to learn to read and write?

Evelyn Terry



Evelyn Terry is a Speech-Language Pathologist with over 25 years of experience in delivering speech therapy within an educational context. Evelyn has presented at state, national and international conferences. She received an outstanding presenter award at the 2014 ACER Excellence in Professional Practice Conference. Currently, as the Director of School Academic Support Services, Evelyn's special interest is in providing workshops for teachers in the areas of early literacy and early language development. Evelyn's practitioner research has focused on the development of appropriate, effective, curriculum-based speech therapy services within education.

Literacy is a core academic skill targeted for development in Prep. On entry to Prep some students can write and read while other students have never held a pencil or a book. As teachers, we need to have a thorough understanding of the core skills required for literacy learning to occur, in order to integrate the development of these skills into our curriculum program. There are two main groups of literacy skills that underpin the development of functional writing and reading:

- Print based literacy ... letter formation, phonological awareness, vocabulary of literacy, sound/letter correspondence ... enable students to spell and read
- Language based literacy ... vocabulary, sentence structure, verb tense, appropriate content, cohesion, word choice ... underpin transition from oral to written language.

The implementation of the National Curriculum with its literacy outcome statements has highlighted the need for a sequential and consolidated development of the print based literacy core skills so that the Foundation Year Achievement Standards can be achieved. Some Prep students do not attain the literacy standards expected at the end of their Prep year because they were not ready to learn to read and write. They had not developed the visual-motor skills



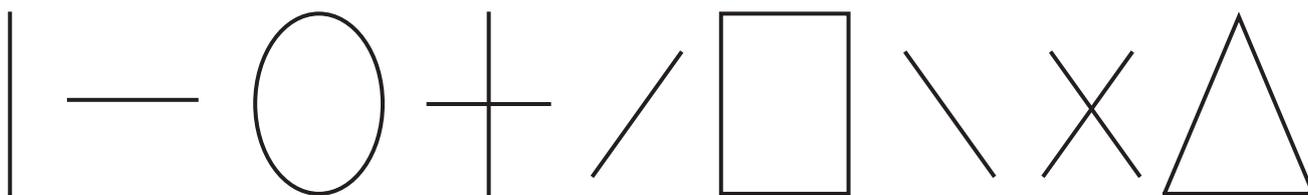
for forming letters or the phonological awareness skills for understanding and manipulating sounds PRIOR to having to learn literacy.

Visual-motor skills development

When planning our literacy program, pre-writing skills need to be developed prior to writing skills. To control a pencil, students need to develop:

- stability of body, shoulder and hand
- coordination of left and right hand
- sensation of where their fingers are, planning of motor movements
- dexterity of fingers through grasp and release, pinch control and wrist movement.

Students also need to develop visual motor integration skills, which are especially important for writing. They allow children to look at, remember and perform the movements to

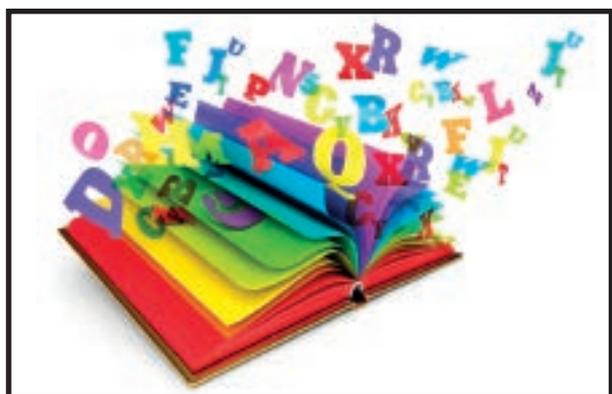


copy shapes and eventually letters. They have been shown to be the strongest predictor of handwriting legibility. Research shows that children need to be able to draw the following shapes independently to have the pencil control required for accurate letter formation.

These skills can be developed while teaching/developing learning behaviours, classroom protocols and routines, listening skills and cooperative play. They can be developed inside, outside and even upside down by starting with matching activities, dots to trace over, bubble shapes, independent copying. Writing requires the student to hold a pencil, crayon, paint brush but the development of these writing skills can be done in goop, finger paint to be engaging and fun!

Phonological awareness skills development

While developing the motor skills, we can also be developing the phonological awareness skills. They are oral skills and are nothing to do with written letters or intellectual ability ... just the development within the child that enables them to identify and manipulate sounds. Research has shown that phonological awareness is a very strong predictor of literacy success however 20% of the general population are at risk and need it explicitly taught.



Your students will be at different levels of their phonological awareness development but learning 'is a journey and as teachers we need to know where every student is along that journey so we can make appropriate decisions regarding teaching and classroom practices'. (Masters 2015). Literacy development activities need to be planned around each student's level of development. The following skills should be consolidated in order prior to the introduction of letters:

1. *Syllable segmentation* ... ability to break words up for spelling. Syllable segmentation can be taught through modelling and discussing long/short words and through activities based on curriculum vocabulary e.g. ko-a-la. Segmentation can be consolidated in everyday classroom practices by putting actions to syllables e.g. claps in music, big stomps during transitions, even in outside play 'run to the ladd / er'.
2. *Rhyme* ... ability to detect patterns in words. This is a precursor for word families in spelling with onset and then rhyme ... b/ear, sh/are
3. *Sound blending* ... ability to join sounds to make words. This skill is needed for reading as you sound out u-p then blend the sounds together to read the word up.

The National Curriculum requires you to teach your students sounds and letters and apply them in the functional literacy tasks of reading and writing. If your students have developed the visual-motor skills and phonological awareness skills discussed so far, they will be ready to start learning formal literacy. The focus should now be on the phonological awareness skill of segmenting sounds and the formal literacy skill of learning sound/letter correspondence and how to write letters.

4. *Segmenting sounds ...* breaking up of words into sounds to then write the letter that represents that sound. The initial sound is easiest to separate off – so that is where we start – then the identification of final sounds and then finally the middle sounds. Segmenting words into sounds needs to be done orally prior to being applied to letters. Segmentation can be taught by using familiar objects. The students can name an item, listen for the initial sound, brainstorm other words that have the sound in the same position, collect and photograph items from around the room and use to make reading books e.g. Sally Snake is on the soap. Sally Snake is on the swing.

Literacy skills development

Learning sound/letter correspondence and how to write letters needs to be developed alongside the segmentation of words into sounds. The order of introduction of letters varies from school to school. From a purely motor planning perspective, letters can be introduced according to ease of production as is detailed in the Foundation Literacy Program (Jones, F & Terry, E 2014).

Teachers have access to a myriad of classroom resources ... puzzles, books, card games, play equipment and craft equipment. With the knowledge of the core skills that students need to develop and the order of development, we can look at these resources and create many different uses for them. The uses will differ according to where the students are in their learning journeys. For example, very early in term 1, we may be developing social skills, turn taking and segmenting words into syllables within the theme of "Us and Our Families". The students could create a floor size dice game by joining dots to create the path for the game, collaging pictures of themselves and gluing them to the board game squares. As your students play the game, they could clap the syllables in each child's name that they land on. Similarly, puzzles could be put out that have multisyllabic pictures on them e.g. families at home washing, eating dinner, and gardening with people in them such as grandmother/nonna. Students can consolidate their ability to break words into syllables while you develop their word knowledge as you talk with them

while they are doing the puzzles. Knowing what to develop and where our students are in their development enables the integration of core skills development into everyday activities.

If a student or group of students is not developing their phonological awareness skills within the whole class context, implementation of targeted teaching activities through small group intervention as part of literacy rotations is an effective evidence based strategy. Specific resources such as *Phonological Awareness Modules* (Terry 2014) can be used or we can choose appropriate activities from phonological awareness activity books such as *A Sound Way* (Love & Reilly 2012)

Conclusion

To effectively teach literacy, we need to know where our students are on their literacy journey. Students need to develop the visual-motor and phonological awareness skills required for literacy learning to occur. Planning for this development and making informed decisions about the selection of teaching and consolidation activities will ensure that our Prep students will be ready to start learning to read and write!

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Care of babies and mothers - what's changed?

Julie Neild, Carmel O'Connell and Katie Woodcock



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Julie is the Team Leader of Occupational Therapy in the Mater Mothers' Hospital where she works with individuals and groups of mums and dads to help them effectively navigate this time of change and to take care of themselves so they can take care of their families.

The reputation of child care centres often stands or falls on the word of mouth of their parents. Staying up to date with the latest trends in baby care, and understanding the priorities and pressures for parents, will help staff to communicate at their best. This article outlines some current parent perceptions and changes to baby care practices and asks the question: How can the child care worker best support new parents in their centre?

Today, hospitals have a family-centred approach to maternity care, recognising the importance of an evolving togetherness between expectant parents. Fathers are encouraged to take a major supportive role in the birth suite, at antenatal classes and in the postnatal wards. Children and extended family are welcome in maternity units as the arrival of a new baby is the creation of a new family.

Skin-to-skin contact: Skin-to-skin contact between mothers and babies immediately after

birth is encouraged. This early contact allows the mother to share her own immunity with her baby. Mothers who have a caesarean birth are also able to have skin-to-skin contact with their baby in the operating theatre; however, fathers are able to do this if the mother is unwell or unable. Other benefits of skin-to-skin contact include facilitation of breastfeeding and stabilisation of the baby's temperature.

Rooming-in: The practice of mother and baby rooming-in 24 hours a day is now common in maternity facilities and night nurseries are a thing of the past. Mothers need to learn to care for, and respond to, their baby's cues. Current research indicates that mothers get more, and better quality, sleep when their baby is close to them. Rooming-in also supports mothers and babies when learning to breastfeed and facilitates bonding.

Soft spots (fontanel): Are no longer an area treated with great care as the area below

this skin is actually quite tough. Parents are encouraged to wash and massage the head firmly with either hand or towel, as this helps to prevent a build-up of oils on the scalp which cause cradle cap.

Sterilising: Current research no longer supports routine sterilising of baby's feeding equipment (especially when breastfeeding or using breast milk). For cleaning and sterilising formula feeding equipment for home use, boiling or using an electric home steam steriliser are the preferred methods, rather than microwaving or chemical sterilising. The current guidelines are as follows:

- Rinse milk from bottles with cold water
- Wash bottles, caps, teats and utensils in hot soapy water
- Rinse thoroughly with cold water to remove any traces of detergent
- Place bottles, caps, teats and utensils in a large saucepan
- Cover the equipment with water and cover with a lid
- Bring the water to the boil and continue to boil for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat. Leave saucepan to cool without removing the saucepan lid.
- Once cool enough to handle, carefully remove the cleaned equipment for use or store in a clean, dry container in the fridge for up to 24 hours. Re sterilising will be required if not used within 24 hours.

These recommendations are for parents to use at home. All centres will have their own specific protocols to follow.

Crying babies: Traditionally, it was believed that babies needed to learn to self-settle as soon as possible or they would become spoilt and difficult. Attachment theories and research into infant brain development encourage demand feeding and responsive care and no longer support the use of controlled crying methods or practices allowing the baby to cry for extended periods of time.

Colic: All babies will cry at some stage, some more than others. Most infants will experience an unsettled period once a day lasting at least one feed period to the next, and perhaps one

day a week, which is normal. Colic is no longer viewed as an illness but rather a label for an extremely unsettled baby. There are a number of causes for this and while most are normal, it is advisable to check with a doctor or child health professional.

Safe sleeping: The safe sleeping guidelines are recommended by SIDS and Kids to reduce the risk of sudden infant death (May 2012). It is essential to be familiar with these guidelines for settling small babies to sleep as these will be the strategies that new mothers are taught.

- Sleep baby on their back from birth, not on tummy or side
- Sleep baby with head and face uncovered
- Keep baby smoke free before birth and after
- Provide a safe sleeping environment
- Sleep baby in their own safe sleeping place in the same room as an adult care-giver for the first six to twelve months
- Breastfeed baby.

A safe sleeping environment includes:

- a cot that meets Australian standards
- a firm, clean well-fitting mattress
- removing all quilts, doonas, pillows, loose bedding, cot bumpers, sheepskins and soft toys.

For additional, comprehensive information about safe sleeping and providing a safe sleeping environment please visit: www.sidsandkids.org

Postnatal depression: This condition has been reported in up to 15% of women and 3–10% of men in the 12 months following the birth of a baby. It can present as changes in mood such as increased anxiety or low mood, irritability, tearfulness or an inability to show emotions, inability to enjoy or see the funny side of things, inability to cope with usual life demands, changes to appetite (increase or decrease), changes to sleep (increase or decrease), decreased self-care, disorganisation and forgetfulness.

All humans have their ups and downs and many of these symptoms can be experienced for short

periods of time following a new baby's arrival, as the lack of sleep and hormonal adjustments come into play.

For some people, however, the symptoms do not lift after a few days and may interfere with the ability to cope and enjoy life. If this is the case it is important to talk to a health professional to clarify the situation and access treatment.

It may be possible for educational staff to be on the lookout for signs of depression, and suggest the following resources. Information might be placed in the foyer. Information sessions could be organised for parents.

Useful sources of help:

1. General practitioners
2. Child health clinics
3. Community services e.g. Possums Clinic (www.possumonline.com) Mater Health & Wellness Clinic (wellness.mater.org.au)

4. Community self-help organisations: Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness (www.peachtree.org.au), Australian Breastfeeding Association (www.breastfeeding.asn.au)
5. Online: BeyondBlue.org.au; Mantherapy.org.au; Panda.org.au; menslineaus.org.au
6. Phone lines: BeyondBlue 24hr/7day helpline:1300224636; PANDA:1300726306; Mensline Aus:1300659467

Hopefully this information, and the resources suggested, will help early child care workers feel more confident in caring for babies and supporting new parents. Maternity hospital websites can also be a great source of up to date educational material for mother and baby care e.g. <http://www.matermothers.org.au/journey/baby-care>

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Building instrumental skills and music literacy in early childhood

Mark Griffiths



Mark Griffiths enjoys a versatile career in teaching, examining, adjudication and research. His professional activities are uniquely informed by comprehensive knowledge, extensive experience and ongoing reflective practice with student cohorts from early childhood to adults of tertiary level. The innovative content of his Early Childhood Music classes at Young Conservatorium Griffith University continue to reflect the current educational trend towards multi-faceted modules where musical exploration meets with sensory integration, literacy, numeracy, bilateral and fine motor coordination, social blending, dramatic play and self-expression.

In many cultures around the world, the human voice and the human body are our first means of musical expression, and both act as our first 'instruments', accessible to most at any given time. Aspects of rhythm, tempo and dynamics are embedded in playful movements and actions such as clapping (Davidson, 2002; Papousek, 1996), and the link between emotion, physical gesture and musical meaning is forged early, with gestural play and quasi-musical vocalisations known as 'motherese' being viewed as ways to communicate basic emotional needs (Davidson, 2002).

It makes sense then that the entry point to building more 'formal' skills in music literacy and playing of instruments lay with the voice and the body.

This idea is not new, and is exposed by the methodology developed by German composer and music educator, Carl Orff, where musical elements are explored within a holistic process that combines language, movement, singing, body percussion and instrumental playing. My approach follows this philosophy, where instrumental skills and music literacy are consequences of an organic process that starts with speech, singing and movement, and are developed in a playful and student-centred environment.

While I don't purport to hold all the answers, I can speak from my own experience that most children love to learn, and enjoy having their intellect challenged in a playful way, where they work through an activity from beginning to end with all senses involved, as one segment of the overall activity leads sequentially to the next. As an example, take a simple speech rhyme that I learnt from Bidy Seymour – 'Mice, Mice, Eating all the Rice'. Below I will outline the sequence of tasks that I lead the children through:

Mice Mice eating all the rice
Pitter Patter Pitter Patter nice white mice.

<i>Ta</i>	<i>Ta</i>	<i>Tik-a-Tik-a</i>	<i>Ta</i>
<i>Tik-a-Tik-a</i>	<i>Tik-a-Tik-a</i>	<i>Ti-Ti</i>	<i>Ta</i>
♪	♪	♪♪	♪
♪♪	♪♪	♪	♪

1. Three mice in a box puppet/mice finger puppets
2. Ask children to copycat rhythm/improvise and dramatise other 'funny' words (with or without puppets), for example:

Rat, Rat, really, really fat

Chook, Chook, reading from a book

Cat, Cat, flying on a mat
Mice, Mice, eating all the cheese
Pitter patter pitter patter cheese
makes you sneeze

3. Whiteboard: magnetic mice beat chart
4. Explore words/rhythm using coloured magnetic buttons: Tik-a-Tik-a – red / Ti-Ti – green / Ta – blue
5. Reward vocalisation of words/colours/ rhythm names and/or body percussion with wooden cheese
6. 'Play' words/rhythm with egg maracas in the palm (eggs containing 'rice')
7. Children fill-in the note heads with coloured stickers, matching those on the whiteboard.

It hardly feels like learning music to the children; they are involved in 'creating' the learning, even though it is highly structured.

Initial interest begets imagination, begets language and vocalisation, begets humour and improvisation, begets music literacy, begets reward and play, begets instrumental playing, begets literacy, numeracy and fine motor coordination – all in the space of five to ten minutes!

I have found that by following this format, a simple rhyme or song transforms into a rich and invigorating learning experience. Start by creating interest with a prop or puppet, introduce the 'notation' of the song on the whiteboard, say or sing the song with body percussion and reward the children with a (returnable) token for their responses, play the song using tuned or non-tuned percussion, and finish with a 'hands on' intellectual or movement activity that relates directly to the theme of the song or reinforces concepts learnt. This could be adding coloured stickers to their song sheet, making magnetic faces at the end of *If you're happy and you know it*, or using the bounce disk at the end of *Bouncing up and down in my little red wagon*.

Many teaching professionals may be worried that they are not 'musical enough'. My advice would be:

1. feel comfortable with speaking while maintaining the beat with hands, feet, etc
2. understand that Ta, Ti-Ti and Tik-a-Tik-a are simple syllabic subdivisions of that beat,

remembering that the words of a song or rhyme IS the rhythm, and vocalising words is *still* 'musical', especially if performed with expressive inflection (i.e. you don't *have* to always sing)

3. adapt the words of traditional rhymes and songs for contemporary culture if they don't seem to 'fit', or if you would like to incorporate something that the children can easily relate to, e.g. *Clap, Clap, Clap Your Hands, clap them both together* could become, *Bat Bat Bat and Ball, play them both together* or *Great Big Din-o-saur, really really scar-y*
4. use the props you have and acquire more as is possible, as I have found that they sustain interest and provide tangible meaning or 'hook' to what is being said, sung or played. Aim keep a list of them and where they are stored for easy access
5. invest in musical instruments over the long term – start with what you have and enjoy collecting!

Here are some of my favourites that I have collected over the years:

Claves, egg maracas, large maracas, tap-a-taps, slap stick, frog guiros, aggy pipe guiros, aggy pipe shaker rings, coloured desk bells, cow bells, melody bells, tulip tone blocks, triangles, tambourines, gathering (therapy) drum, tambours (with various "beaters", including toy hammers, dog bones, fly swats, egg shakers, etc), jingle bells, ankle / wrist bells, attachable bells, rubber chickens, rainbow finger pointers, garbage bins, broomsticks, wooden fruit, river stones, glockenspiels, xylophones, metallophones, boomwhackers, squeaky pigs, lollypop drums, djembes, coconut shells, butterfly castanets, lady bug castanets, woodblocks, two-tone woodblocks, glockenspiels, xylophones, metallophones.

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Working with children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder: teaching them what other children might already know.

Peter Melrose



Peter Melrose is a leading Australian Child and Behaviour Therapist. Peter is a regular speaker at national and international child and family welfare and child protection conferences. He has written a number of journal articles on topics ranging from child and family therapeutic approaches, through to working respectfully with clients and children and young people in care. Peter is currently the Behaviour Expert on Channel Nine's 'Mornings' panel, broadcast nationally.

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex developmental disorder that effects about one in every 120 children in a number of ways. Due to changed diagnostic criteria in the new Diagnostic Statistical Manual V (DSMV), there is an increase in the number of children presenting with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Because of this, it is very important that educators become familiar with the condition, and that we develop ways to assist and educate children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In this article, we will briefly look at Autism Spectrum Disorder, some of the ways it affects a child's behaviour, and what we can do about it. We will also reflect on the need to adopt a new approach toward assisting these children learn to cope in educational environments.

According to the DSMV, there are three levels of Autism Spectrum Disorder: High functioning/low support, moderate functioning/moderate support and low function/high support.

Nevertheless, what is important to remember is that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder need us to have a range of different responses for them because this condition never appears the same in all children. Our goal is to give the child as typical

an educational experience as we can. This means that we should strive to actively include them in all aspects of our educational environments.

Keep in mind that, we may not see any direct results when we work with children with additional needs. However, we are establishing a positive early experience for them of education environments, adult and peers within those environments. This can be very challenging for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

We need to approach children with Autism Spectrum Disorder not as a set of problems to 'deal with', but as unique people who need us to be flexible and adaptable in order to assist them to meet their potential. This is not to suggest that there are not challenges, indeed there are; but what we need, is a planned and purposefully inclusive approach.

Let's consider an overview of the steps needed to create great intervention plans. Before we begin, it is important to remember that children with Autism Spectrum Disorder often think about things differently to other people. They often have quite rigid ways of thinking and this is often referred to as 'black and white thinking' or 'train-track thinking'. In addition, they may

have poor consequential thinking and poor impulse control. These two factors often lead to unpredictable behaviours.

Once we recognise this process of understanding, we can begin to observe the child and their behaviour. We should consider elements such as when is the behaviour occurring, why do you think it is happening. Also, consider when you can predict that the children will escalate. What is going on in the environment for this to occur? Is it noisy; are there too many people for the child to cope? What are the child's strengths? What do I need to change and what can easily wait?

Most importantly, consider what is most likely to be quickly successful for the child. If we start with what will be successful, we are 'leading from the front' in that the child is likely to experience early success in changing behaviour, which reinforces future learning.

Our first step is to come to terms with the idea that some children need different rules and boundaries.

It is important to reflect on the idea that not all children can comply with all the rules. Simply expecting a child to follow a rule they do not understand, not only makes no sense, it is also negative for the child and can increase anxiety. This means that some children will have different versions of rules, or may not need to follow a particular rule at all, if they do not have any capacity to do so.

However, there is a big question 'what will we tell the other children?' Children understand and accept diversity much better than we often give them credit for. A good response to children who rightly ask, why does this rule not have to apply to the other child but it does apply to me is, 'I am teaching this child something that you already know how to do. Perhaps we can all help him to learn this thing together'.

Another important factor here is that we are providing all children with a learning environment that can include people with different needs. What children will learn is that people are not all the same, and that we all sometimes need to be flexible and adapt to meet the needs of others, so that we can assist them to cope in spaces they might find challenging. This takes us to a place where all children are

actively engaged in showing each other how to cope. This is residence building at its best.

Our second step is to work out what we need to do for this child and how to do it. This requires observation and planning. You need to have a plan to work toward. This should focus on one behaviour with which to assist the child. We might decide that we are working on, sitting in a group, lining up, or sitting still at rest time. Out of the behaviours you want to work on, decide which one will be most successful.

Once you know what to work on, start planning. Plan small steps that will be successful quickly. Remember, Autism Spectrum Disorder is all about motivation. A great motivator is success and getting the outcome the child wants.

Our third step is to extend planning. You need a quick checklist of what to do. Before you start anything, think about the following:

- What *can* this child do?
- What are their *strengths*?
- How do I *extend* these I to the new behaviour?
- What *rewards* might be needed? How do you begin to '*thin*' the rewards and when?
- Work on *one thing at a time*
- *Plan* what you will do
- *Review* what you have done.

Remember, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder have some different ways of seeing the world. We want to ease them in, not frighten them.

People have often heard me say that *everyone learns when everyone is included*. Children with different needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, are a gift to our environments. This is not just a fluffy comment, it is actually true; these children do not come along very often and they teach us that we need to be flexible, that everyone is not the same, and that we need to be open to change in order to make sure that everyone is included.

Contact Peter Melrose for more information:
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www.thirdcircle.com.au
www.extremebehaviourmechanics.com.au

Making delegation your tool for success

Sally Foley-Lewis



Sally has worked with leaders at all levels, across a range of industries: from health clubs in Germany to shipbuilding yards, from oil and gas companies in the Middle East to community organisations in outback Australia. Sally has also helped managers and leaders in childcare education, aviation, hospitality, professional services and finance. Sally brings diverse program and project management, and leadership experiences to her speaking, training and facilitating. She is a straight-talker, with a wicked sense of humour who inspires people to be where they belong and feel valued.

Most leaders, managers and directors go about delegating in the same way that they were, or weren't, delegated to or at before they became a director. Is this you too? Are your delegation skills a reflection of how you have been delegated to? Was this a positive or productive experience? This may not be a positive or productive experience for your staff now, and may not be so positive or productive for you as a leader or director now. As you go about your day-to-day routine think about whether you are delegating the only way you know from past experiences. Ask yourself if it's working for you, could it be better, or could it be risking quality of service, staff turnover, centre efficiency or the bottom line.

Delegation does not mean giving away your power; it empowers others. It can help you plan for succession, complete projects on time, develop staff, and keep costs to a minimum while still ensuring quality. Delegation is a valuable tool.

Some leaders or directors often feel threatened by the idea of delegating, thinking that if they give away work to others the manager will be seen as having nothing to do. Freeing up your time could result in you being able to complete other work, bigger goals you may have been wanting (wishing) to work on. When you delegate successfully you have more time to ensure your team is engaged, you'll have more time to plan ahead rather than just catch up and to be more productive.

Another common reason for not delegating is that it will result in others surpassing you: *"If I give them tasks and challenging work, then they'll be better than me and get promoted past me."* Well, yes, maybe, but the most likely outcome is that you'll be promoted and the successful employee may step into the leader's role; this is good succession planning in action.

What stops you from delegating?

When you understand why you won't (or feel you cannot) delegate, you are then in a better position to overcome the roadblocks to successful delegation. Delegation roadblocks can impact on productivity, safety and morale. Here is an extensive list of delegation roadblocks, as you read each of them ask yourself if you relate to it. You may even want to give yourself a score for how much you relate; e.g. if you don't relate to a roadblock, score yourself zero, yet if you really find a roadblock resonating with you strongly you might score it a 10:

- I don't know what to delegate
- I don't know how to delegate
- I don't trust my team.
- I believe that if I want something done, I may as well just do it myself
- I believe that I can do the job better
- I'm afraid that someone might be able to do the task better

- I'm afraid I may become redundant if I delegate or teach someone aspects of my job
- I am jealous of others who are capable
- I'm concerned that I'll have nothing to do if I give tasks away
- I'm afraid or unwilling to give away some authority
- I can't see that delegating is a dynamic and cost-effective tool for employee development
- I'm concerned that if I delegate a task and it fails, I'll be blamed
- I'm not sure who gets the praise if the task is done well
- I don't want to give away tasks that I enjoy doing

This list has been devised from years of training leaders and managers, and diving deep into the real reasons why they do not delegate. When you identify your own roadblocks to delegating, it becomes easier to determine strategies and options to for successful delegation. And delegating does become more accessible and easier. Trust me, it does.

When not to delegate

There are times when delegating will not work well for you, let's list these first. Don't delegate when:

- An employee is new, unskilled or still getting a feel for their work and workplace
- An employee is reluctant to participate in planning his or her own work
- An employee is reluctant to take responsibility for their current workload or level of productivity
- An employee is clearly not confident in a particular task.

There are situations where an employee will want to arrive at the centre, do their job and get their pay. As a director, you need to know who is not only **capable** (or potentially capable) but also **willing** to take on extra, delegated, tasks. There's no point pushing if they're not going to be happy, and their otherwise good work will suffer. The lesson is: *sometimes we gotta leave things alone!*

Case Study:

When I first became the CEO of an organisation, I took some time to check in with each staff member. As I sat down to my meeting with Penny, I was confronted with a very direct and to the point, speech from Penny stating that she didn't want to move up any career ladder, she didn't want any extra work, that so long as she was doing her job to the expected standard I should leave her be.

My initial reaction to Penny's speech was, I'll admit, shock, however it may have been the best conversation as it meant all I had to do was lead and manage Penny in her current role and we both had our expectations set. I was not going to delegate to Penny. Some people work to live! Penny included, and that was fine.

An all too common situation is when a director is directing and hovering and dictating but believes they are delegating. It's natural to want your centre to run smoothly without mishaps, issues or conflicts, so, at times, you may hold on to the control too tightly and this can stifle and frustrate your employees. It's important to get some perspective and consider how others may be viewing your management style.

When to delegate

Start with delegating one task, and consider carefully who to delegate that task to. Remember *Rome was not built in a day*. There are some overall factors to consider that may help you determine when it is appropriate, even advantageous, to delegate. Consider delegating when:

Someone has the skills already and can easily do a task

- Your time is short *plus* someone else has the time – you must have both!
- It will provide an opportunity for someone in the team to stand out
- It will provide an obvious training and development opportunity for an employee
- You want to demonstrate your confidence in your team
- You can see it can motivate employees.

So often delegation is a fast and furious dump and run that really only leads to:

- Increased stress for the employee
- Greater risk of failure for both you and your employee
- Decreased willingness of employees to take on tasks in the future
- Your decreased willingness to delegate again.

When it comes to successful delegation, think: slow is fast! This means, slow down and do some planning and preparation, take time to have a thorough delegation conversation, and you will save a lot of time, money, reputation and frustration because there will be a better chance of success.

Five keys to delegating successfully

Key 1: What

What is the task you want to delegate: be able to define the task clearly. Ask yourself, what does successful completion of this task look, feel, sound, maybe even smell, like.

Key 2: Who

Consider employees who are competent and willing, or willing but could benefit from the development opportunity. Match carefully to the task.

You may be lucky to have both types of employees on hand; you could delegate the task to the competent and willing employee as well as encourage them to share the task with other employees as a development opportunity.

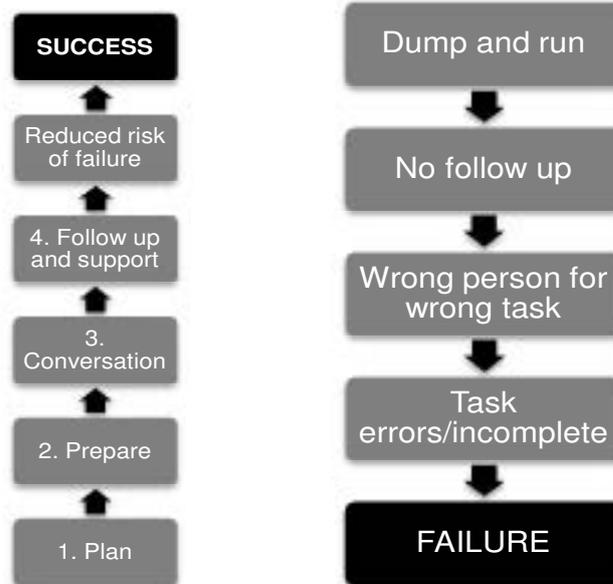
Key 3: Resources and responsibilities

At times it's not clear what resources an employee can access to undertake tasks; don't assume they will know what to use or what they can even ask for. Be explicit. The same applies for the level of decision-making, and responsibility for the task.

It will also be beneficial to let other staff know whom you've delegated the task to so that the progress of task completion isn't delayed because staff come to you rather than to the person with the task responsibility.

Key 4: Milestones and deadlines

Discuss the milestones, timeframe, due dates for task completion. Note that the first word of the last sentence was *discuss*? It's important



for the employee to think through the task and consider realistically how long it will take to complete. You can guide and suggest but you'll have greater buy-in when the employee states when they will deliver the results; and what milestones they will nominate along the way.

If the employee has never done the task before and has no clue on timing, then you could set a conservative timeframe and suggest short periods of time between milestones, at least initially. This will not only ensure the task gets started and there's progress, additionally the employee will be and will feel supported.

Key 5: Gaps and follow ups

Discuss with the employee what information they think may be missing, what questions they have, and how confident they feel about the task and completing it.

Set times and dates for following up and reviewing the success of the completed task. This is just as important as matching the right person to the right task. This shows the employee how you value them and that the task was important.

When having the delegation conversation, remember it is a conversation. The more involvement the employee has in the conversation the greater the chance of the employee taking ownership of the task. You may want to give the last word to the employee.

To discuss delegation and other success skills you can find Sally at www.sallyfoleylewis.com

Title: I grow in Grandma's garden

Author: Moira Andrew

Illustrator: Marc Camelbeke

Published By: Oceanwave Communications

ISBN: 978-0-9805038-3-8

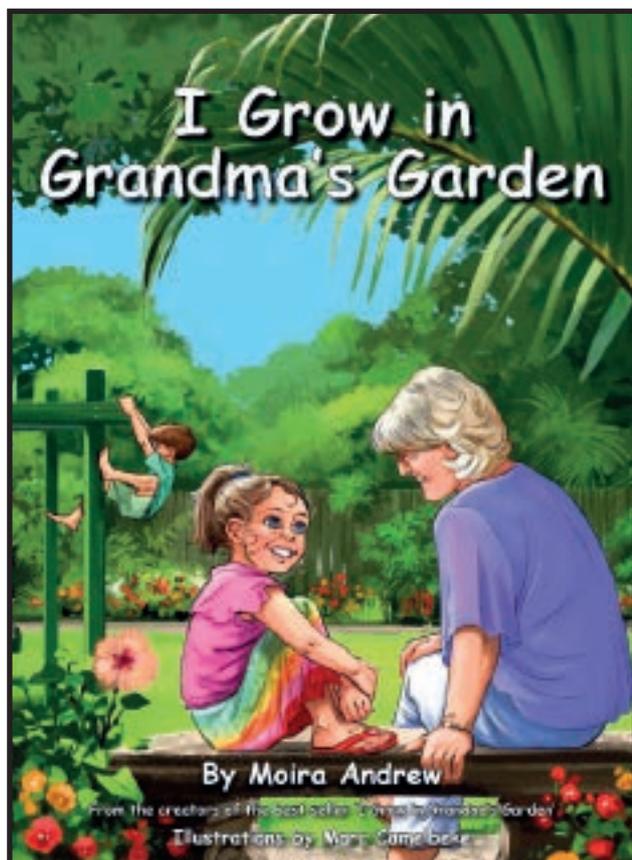
RRP: \$19.95

Reviewed By: Sue Webster

This beautiful picture book written by Moira Andrew builds on her husband (Brian Andrew's) bestselling book *I grow in Grandad's garden*. Brian's book features him showing his granddaughter Ellie around the family garden and visiting the four 'stop spots' which include the 'think and thank seat', the 'let go log', the 'cross over corner' and the 'dream table'.

Moira Andrew wrote *I grow in Grandma's garden* because of repeated requests from followers of *I grow in Grandad's garden* who did not have a grandfather in their children's life for a book with a grandmother focus.

Continuing the theme of developing confident young children, *I grow in Grandma's garden* focuses on the development of a positive attitude and overcoming anxiety as well as how to grow in confidence and discover your dreams from an early age.



Grandma and her granddaughter Sian tend the plants as they move around the colourful backyard garden.

The think and thank seat shows Sian the value of good memories and how this helps develop happiness.

The let go log shows the value of pulling out worry weeds and planting flowers in a person's head, which helps develop confidence.

Cross over corner shows Sian the value of encouragement, which helps develop the courage to try new things.

The dream table shows the value of discovering our own special gifts and the good feeling of giving to others.

The colourful and heartwarming illustrations by Belgium born, New Zealand resident Marc Camelbeke, bring the words even more vibrantly to life and much time can be spent exploring the charmingly illustrated garden.

This is a great book for children of any age and particularly those who may worry a little too much.

Title: **The adventures of A B C & D**

Author: **Brain Andrew**

Illustrator: **Marc Camelbeke**

Published By: **Oceanwave Communications**

ISBN: **978-0-9805038-2-1**

RRP: **\$19.95**

Reviewed By: **Sue Webster**

Brian Andrew – best-selling author of *I grow in Granddad's garden* – has again written a book that will pull at your heart strings and bring a smile to your face no matter what your age.

The adventures of A B C & D comprises a selection of stories from some of Brian Andrew's favourite family memories from the 1950s and 1960s. The stories paint a picture of growing up with incredibly supportive parents and three energetic brothers – A (Anthony), C (Christopher) and D (Douglas).

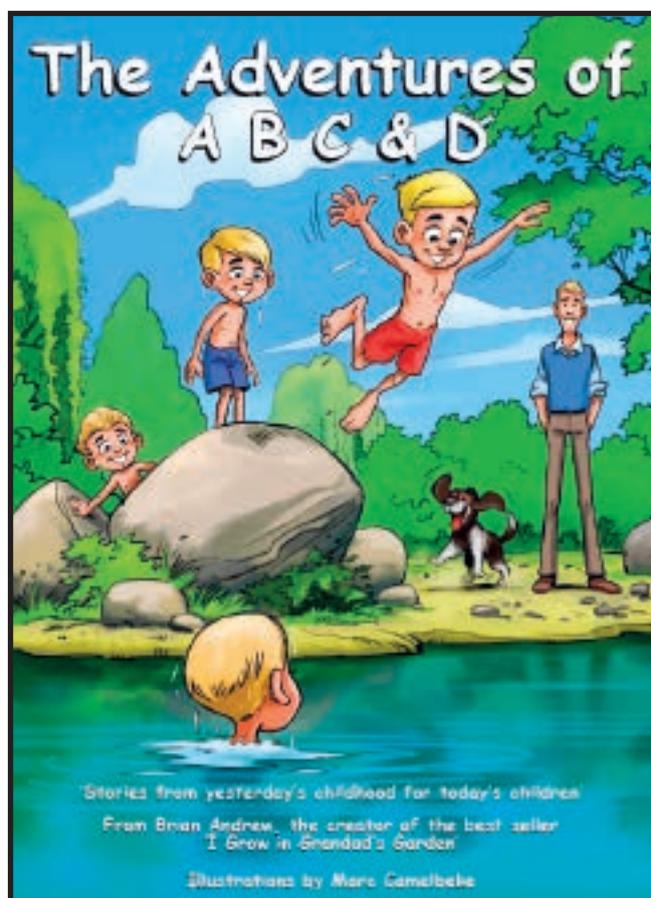
The stories detail growing up in a simpler time when children spent more of their day in the outdoors doing physical activity. A time when parents handed out consequences for actions – with a good dose of wisdom at the same time.

This is a book that begs to be shared between grandparents and grandchildren to inspire the telling of their own family memories and history. A chance for the older generation to tell the tales of their own childhood and explain the times in which they grew up.

Marc Camelbeke helps to bring the stories of the four brothers to life with his colourful, fun and energetic illustrations.

Brian believes that sharing stories of the past with future generations will help children build a strong sense of belonging and a sense of where they fit in the world.

A book of stories to share that will especially help grandparents and grandchildren connect.



Title: Milos's dog says 'Moo!'
Author: Catalina Echeverri
Illustrator: Catalina Echeverri
Published By: Bloomsbury
ISBN: 978-1-4088-3880-8
RRP: \$14.99
Reviewed by: Cassie Mutimer and Friends

A beautifully crafted story by Catalina Echeverri that engages young children from the very first title page. Milo invites everyone to join him on his extra special birthday.

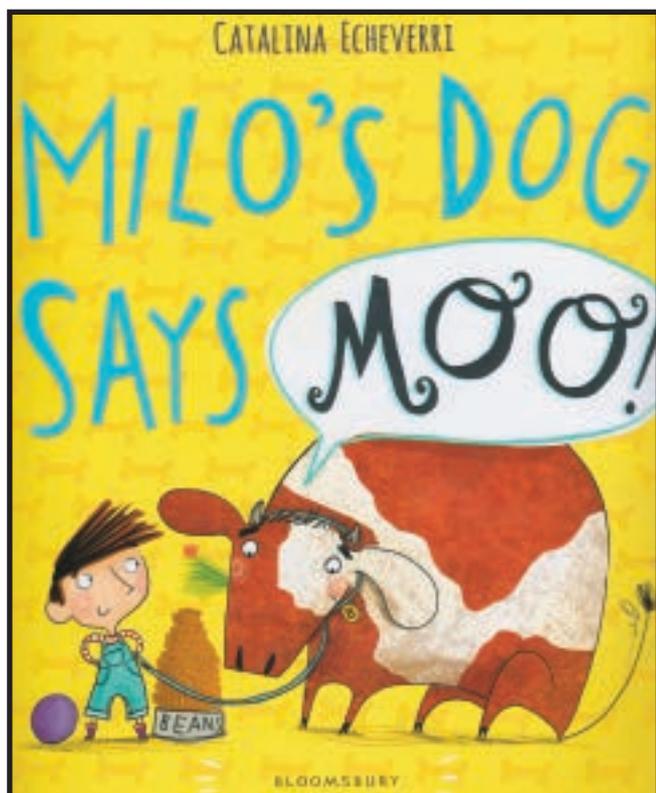
It is extra special because he is getting his own dog and he is allowed to choose it himself.

The colourful illustrations by Catalina herself help draw you further into the story, with Milo – and his family – preparing the house for the arrival of his very first puppy. Everyone seems to have a different idea about what would make the perfect dog.

Milo doesn't choose a puppy with a fancy haircut or one that can give good doggy kisses. Milo carefully chooses Beans, who turns out not to be like any other dog.

Beans is bigger than most dogs and is most definitely unique. He prefers to eat Mum's plants instead of dog food, he doesn't like to play fetch and he is terrible at barking. The only thing Beans is really good at is getting bigger and bigger!

Even when Beans goes missing, nothing stops Milo tracking him down so he can get back to where he belongs – because Milo loves Beans and Beans loves Milo – friends forever.



The students at Wellers Hill Prep loved this story and the thought of choosing a pet that was unusual was intriguing. It led to the creation of our own extraordinary pets with written descriptions of the funny things that they could do.

Some of the children thoughts:

Will: Milo thought the cow was a dog! It was funny.

Finn: It is a funny story. I would like to read it again.

Title: **Dino-daddy**
Author: **Mark Sperring**
Illustrator: **Sam Lloyd**
Published By: **Bloomsbury**
ISBN: **978-1-4088-4970-5**
RRP: **\$14.99**
Reviewed by: **Cassie Mutimer and Friends**

*'The park would never be such fun without him standing by.
No one can spin you faster – weeeeeeee! – or swing you quite so high!
And though he has a list of jobs he has to dino-do,
He always seems to have the time to play a game ... or two!.'*

Dino daddy is a rollicking ride of dino rhyming. It made my class of Prep children think about all the fun things their dads do with them, like building towers, going to the park and playing games.

The language is easy to read and rolls off your tongue as your eyes skim the pages full of a bright and colourfully illustrated dino dad playing with his children. The illustrations and the story had everyone engaged.

The Preppies loved the message that dads were busy but always had time to join in some fun.

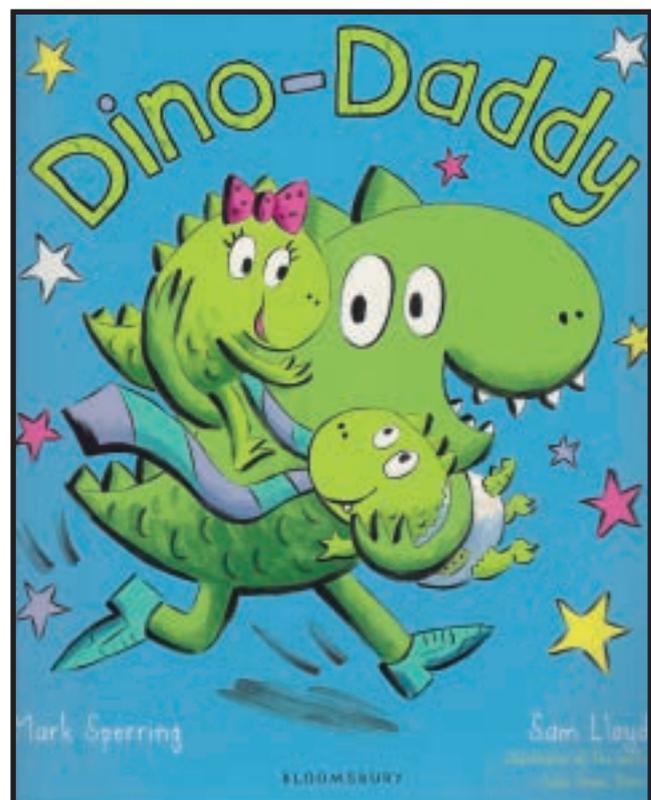
It will be a great story to use around Father's Day as a springboard to talk about our dads and the things we do together.

Some of the children's thoughts:

Raven: I liked the rhyme in the story.

Kristin: I really liked when the kids made dino dad look like a girl when he was sleeping.

Aidan: I liked how they had heaps of fun together and how they loved each other.

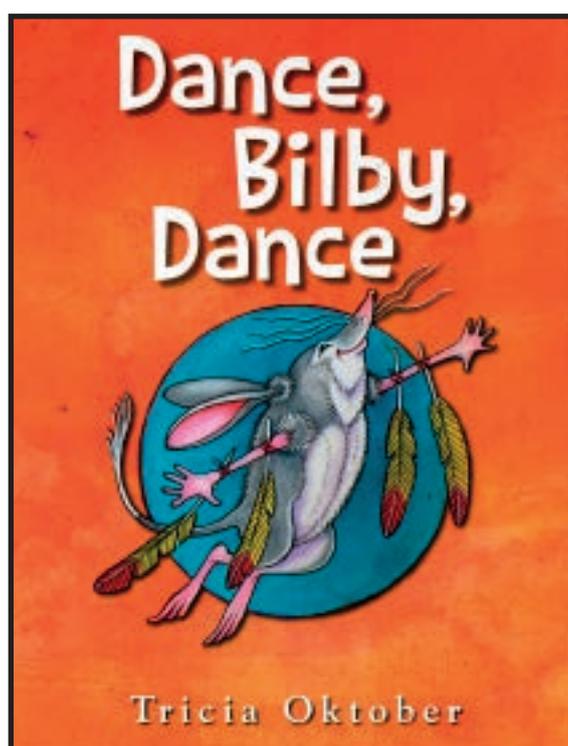


Title: Dance, Bilby, Dance
Author: Tricia Oktober
Illustrator: Tricia Oktober
Published by: Ford St Publishing
ISBN: 9781925272147 PB 9781925272130 HC
RRP: \$14.95 PB or \$22.95 HC
Reviewed by: Julie Jones (Teacher-C&K The Gap Kindergarten)

Dance, Bilby, Dance is a beautifully illustrated book, with a simple and humorous storyline that makes it ideal for kindergarten aged children. Bilbies have been a big part of our kindy for many years. Every year we celebrate 'Go Green for Bilby Day' and have our class bilby puppets who help spread the message that bilbies are an endangered Australian native animal that we don't want to become extinct one day like the dinosaurs! Consequently, the children were very excited when I introduced *Dance, Bilby, Dance* to them.

As well as being a fun book, it generated discussion and questions about shadows, such as why did the size of the shadows change? There were new words to explore such as 'min-min lights' and 'willy-willies'. The children also commented on how Bilby wanted to dance and so he practised until he could. At kindy we talk about giving things a go and practising and this message is in *Dance, Bilby, Dance* in a way easily understandable for young children.

This would be a great book to read before Easter, to help promote the idea of bilbies taking over the delivery of Easter eggs from the rabbits who aren't an Australian native animal and who are threatening the survival of bilbies.



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'.
- Use a single space after full stop.
- Use single quotes.
- Use an en dash between spans of numbers.
- 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, The preferred style for the *ECTA Journal* is the author-date system (pp. 188–208 of the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers, 6th ed.*).

Example of in-text citations: This approach (Smith 1995; Tyler 2002) suggests ...

Example of book referencing: O'Hagan, M 2001, *Early years practitioner*, 4th edn, Harcourt, London.

Example of journal referencing: Bredekamp, S 2006, 'Staying true to our principles', *Educating Young Children*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 21-4.

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.

