



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

ECTA membership during 2014 reached 769 members. This was comprised of ten life members, 496 individual members, 177 organisational members, eleven student EYC members, twelve graduate members, twelve concessional members, forty-eight student members and three overseas organisational members.

Sector breakdown of our current membership shows 198 state school, sixty-eight non-state school, 132 childcare, 304 kindergarten approved programs, twenty-two tertiary educator, forty-seven as other – administration

or retired. Members identified themselves as working with the following age ranges - ninety-six lower primary, 140 prep, 348 kindy, 114 childcare, thirty-one tertiary and thirteen other.

Organisational members identified themselves as working in the following sectors thirty-nine childcare, fifty-three kindergarten, fifty-eight primary school, seven high school, four university and three TAFE. We welcome membership from the Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) Mackay and Rockhampton ECEC, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority (QCAA) and Education Queensland Curriculum Division along with C&K, The Gowrie (Qld), Early Childhood Australia (ECA Qld), Catholic Education Office, Wesley Mission Brisbane and Queensland Lutheran Early Childhood Services.

ECTA strives to provide networking opportunities and high quality professional development for our members and early childhood colleagues. This is achieved through our Annual Conference, *Educating Young Children* journal, eNEWS, website, Facebook page and regional groups, all of which are facilitated by dedicated volunteers.

At our recent bi-annual committee planning day the process of updating the ECTA philosophy commenced. This will include the establishment of a mission statement, goals and priorities along with a Reconciliation Statement.

Members input will be sought in the development of each via a survey early next year. I encourage everyone to provide feedback so that these important statements and documents reflect the thoughts of our membership base.



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This year we welcomed the establishment of the ECTA Toowoomba Regional Group. ECTA provides professional, legal and financial support to regional groups who facilitate meetings, workshops and other forms of networking among regional group members.

ECTA currently has regional groups in Cairns, Mackay, Townsville, Fitzroy (Yeppoon), Gladstone, Biloela, Hervey Bay, Cooloola (Gympie), Logan, Brisbane North and Toowoomba. You can contact your local group via email at groupnamerg@ecta.org.au e.g. herveybayrg@ecta.org.au

During 2014 all regional groups sought ECTA funding to facilitate a Maggie Dent professional development event in their area.

The Maggie Dent tour was a huge success with over 1200 educators and parents attending events throughout the state. This had a direct flow on to over 20,000 children.

Maggie is passionate about children's right to a childhood and maintaining play in the early years. Her message very much aligns with the shared philosophy of our members. State coordinating committee members attend to help facilitate the event and to promote ECTA membership.

All but one of our regional groups sought funding for office bearers to attend the conference and post-conference regional networking breakfast meeting.

Contact Libby at ectagroups@ecta.org.au if you are interested in having a regional group established in your area. Each year groups may apply for up to \$1500 funding along with support to attend the Annual Conference.

Regional groups also came together for Videolinq presentations. Members who were unable to access Videolinqs took advantage of the video streaming option to watch the recording of the presentation. ECTA provides the public with a direct link to the recording of all Videolinqs for one month after the event. We then move the link to the recording into the

Members Centre. I would like to thank Central Queensland University and TAFE Videolinq for their support of our Videolinq program.

By the time you read this our AGM will have been held via Videolinq with nearly all of our committee and subcommittee members renominating for their positions. I believe this is a clear sign of their enjoyment in the role and their passion for early childhood and in particular their commitment to ECTA. I would like to thank all ECTA members who volunteer on our state coordinating, journal, web and conference and regional group committees, for their time and dedication to ECTA during 2014. Without their support ECTA would not be the strong professional organisation that it is.

ECTA welcomes graduates into the profession each year through Grad Packs which are distributed through participating universities and TAFE institutions to all graduating early childhood students throughout Queensland. I would like to thank Noeleen Christensen who once again volunteered her time to compile and distribute the ECTA Grad Packs this year. Noeleen also posts journals and DVDs to members who join after the bulk mail out.

I would like to thank Roslyn Heywood who continuously updates the website professional development calendar with PD opportunities. A thank you also to the website committee for their support in maintaining the website.

If you haven't visited the Members Centre of the website I recommend it to all. To enter you will need your username and password which is always included in your eNEWS. If you would like to join the web weaver team contact website@ecta.org.au. If you can't locate your username and password email ECTA.

A special thank you to Allison Borland for assisting me in maintaining the ECTA Facebook page which now has over 1000 LIKES. If you have a Facebook account and haven't already done so please LIKE us at www.facebook.com/ectaqld.

This year we have made past copies of our *Educating Young Children* journal available to the public. Members are able to download a printable version of past and current journals from the Members Centre.

Thank you to Lynne Moore for her continued dedication to, and coordination of the journal committee. Lynne and the editorial committee produce a professional, current, practical and relevant journal which is well respected by early childhood professionals.

Contact Lynne at journal@ecta.org.au for more information on joining the journal committee. The submission of articles from colleagues in the early childhood field is a vital component to the journal's success. If you would like to submit an article the website has style guides and further information.

Thank you to ECTA Annual Conference co-convenors Toni Michael, Robbie Leikvold and their conference committee who once again provided members with a high quality conference. This year life member Pam Fulmer, who has been an integral part of the committee for many, many, years, announced her retirement. Pam's dedication and professionalism to the role of presenter coordinator along with the beautiful floral arrangements she creates have been very much appreciated. She will be sorely missed.

This year five remote and regional support grants were awarded to individual members to attend the ECTA Annual Conference. ECTA was pleased to support Melissa Gillard (Urraween), Virginia Ward (Tenterfield), Joanne Young (Frenchville), Paul Brazier (Gulliver) and Rhonda Campbell (Cordalba) with conference registration and up to \$500 for travel and accommodation costs. I encourage all members living more than 300 km from the conference venue to apply for funding next year.



Thirteen Committee members from State Coordinating Committee, Conference committee and Journal committee attended the bi-annual ECTA planning day. Collectively there was 365 years of Early Childhood experience in the room!

Organisation for next year's conference, to be held at Sheldon Event Centre on Saturday 27 June 2015, is well under way with the confirmation of Paul McGhee as keynote speaker and masterclasses provided by Paul McGhee, Louise Doratt and Journey into Play's Justine Walsh and Nicole Bourke. For up-to-date information on confirmed speakers go to the ECTA website via www.ecta.org.au.

ECTA values members sharing their knowledge and experience with colleagues. Please consider submitting to the call for conference workshop presentation outlines which is now open online via www.ecta.org.au. If you would like to join the conference committee to support the facilitation of next year's conference please contact Toni at conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au.

Please enjoy the enclosed DVD which has recordings of two masterclasses by Karen Stagnitti - *Pretend play and children with autism* and *Pretend play and literacy* recorded at the 39th Annual Conference this year.

Conference profits and membership fees are the major source of income for ECTA. Next year membership fees will raise slightly to \$95 for an individual and \$210 for an organisation. Concessional and student EYC and graduate memberships will remain the same at \$20, \$60 and \$60 respectively. This increase, the first since 2008, is necessary due to the rising costs of Videolinq presentations, journal production and general running costs.

2015 membership invoices have been emailed to all ECTA members in November. Fees are due by the end of December. Those re-joining before the end of February will be able to register for the

Annual Conference three weeks before the public via a personalised email invitation sent in March. ECTA membership runs from 1 January to 31 December each year.

Please contact me at president@ecta.org.au anytime if you wish to discuss ECTA or your involvement in one of the committees.

Kim



From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

Journeys and the act of travelling from one place to another would seem a nice way to capture the spirit of this issue of *Educating Young Children*. What better place to start than 'following the sunshine' on tour with Maggie Dent.

From Cairns to Toowoomba, hundreds of early childhood educators have listened to Maggie espouse the benefits of a play-based childhood. In this refreshing account Maggie has plenty to inspire in creating 'moments of unbridled joy and freedom' for children.

When did you last tell a story? Storytelling can envelop children and transport them to other times and places, says Jenny Christensen.

Anyone can tell a story and Jenny's tips remind us of the power of stories to create a sense of mystery and wonder.

The transition to school is one of life's great journeys. In *Conversations*, we visit four 'ready' schools to learn about the ways children and families are supported as they embark on this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Schools too, take journeys as John Webster from Wellers Hill reflects. As the only state primary school in Queensland operating a bilingual program, John invites more schools to consider joining Wellers Hill in the bilingual journey.

The journey to sustainable leadership is the topic in *Partnerships*. Gemma Wharten and Nebula Wild share their experience as mentor and mentoree in this innovative program from Workforce Council.

Our features offer a wealth of practical advice to support your professional learning journey. Sally Foley-Lewis outlines three big skills in reaching self-awareness and becoming a great teacher. Kathleen Reilly unpacks the creative journey in creating an artwork with children, one step at a time.

Sue Southey and Iain Hodge return with good advice to support each child's learning journey. Sylvia Bowles considers the challenge of successful communication while Victoria Kerlin explores using feedback to improve learning.

Kath Lloyd reminds readers that, when it comes to connecting with children all you need is your voice. Finally, Danielle Bull reflects on the complex task of handwriting for young children.

In beginning with one journey we end with another. In this issue, we farewell Mathilda Element our much loved co-ordinator of media reviews. Mathilda leaves EYC to embark on new journeys and possibilities. We thank her for the significant contribution to ECTA and to early childhood education. I am sure you will join me in wishing her every success.

... and so we come to the end of the EYC journey for 2014. See you in 2015, with more stimulating reading and thought-provoking ideas from our colleagues in early childhood.

Happy holidays

Lynne and the team

Following the Sunshine ECTA Queensland Tour August 2014

Maggie Dent



Maggie Dent is a parenting author and educator with special interest in the early years and adolescence. She is the author of seven books, including her latest *9 Things: A back-to-basics guide to calm, common-sense, connected parenting Birth-8*. <http://www.maggiedent.com>

When I was invited to run professional development seminars in Queensland this winter I was pretty chuffed. I am a passionate advocate for children having a play-based childhood for as long as possible and I know that the people at the Early Childhood Teachers Association (ECTA) are equally as passionate.

We agree, based on experience and evidence-based research, that giving our precious children a positive voice, as well as a respectful sense of autonomy, is essential to lifelong wellbeing. In today's chaotic world the pressure to 'hurry up' early childhood development is not only concerning, it is not supported by research. This 'push down' of formalised

learning is causing enormous unnecessary stress for young children, as well as for many parents and definitely for many experienced early childhood educators (ECEs).

ECTA and I share a deep commitment to reversing this 'push down' while supporting parents and early childhood educators to make informed choices that enhance early childhood growth and development.

The building of caring relationships with children and healthy partnerships with families is still the first priority of early childhood education.



Kim Walters (ECTA President), Maggie Dent, Deb Hancock, Liz Fallon and Kate McCaffety (Gladstone Office Bearers)

Every child matters

To ensure every child has the best possible start in life, ECEs need to be exceptional rather than average or good enough, because we have so many more challenges and toxic influences that can inhibit healthy development in the early years. Some of these concerns include the tsunami of technology that is sweeping homes,

schools and child care services; passivity; lack of spoken interaction within families and lack of play outside; too much stress on children; and the hidden pressures of our consumer-driven world.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children suffering from anxiety and stress-related illnesses and hyper-sensitive behaviours. The modern world has created environments that have helped overload children's stress-regulating systems — and being mindful and aware of how to reduce some of the stressful events in children's lives is important for ECEs.

The legacy of a teacher lasts a lifetime.

Unfortunately, this well-known adage works both ways and the legacy of a toxic or incompetent teacher lasts just as long as that of an exceptional teacher. Creating calm, safe environments for young children is now more important than ever, and the need to help parents build resilience in children is yet another challenge in this modern world.

Exceptional early childhood educators realise that every child matters, no matter what.

Fortunately, the National Quality Framework through the *Early Years Learning Framework* values all children and this holistic framework has a clear goal of ensuring every child has the best possible start in life. Helping young children to build resilience was a key theme to



Kate McCaffety and Deb Hancock (Gladstone Office Bearers) joining in the fun. (Maggie shared an easy way to remember the EYLF outcomes with actions for each.)

the Queensland tour. Thankfully, it is one of my favourite seminars, based on my book *Real Kids in an Unreal World*.

Research shows there is declining health and wellbeing in our young people — increasing numbers of whom are succumbing to depression, emotional instability, mental illnesses, obesity, and low educational and social competence. Today's children are struggling.

The resilient child

Resilience refers to one's ability to successfully manage life and to successfully adapt to change and stressful events in healthy and constructive ways. In simple terms, it is our survivability and 'bounce-back-ability' from life experiences and that means both the really advantageous ones as well as the challenging, traumatic ones.

Everyone needs to develop effective coping skills. However, the modern world makes it challenging.

Ten resilience building blocks for children birth to twelve years

Maggie's resilience model outlines ten key building blocks for children birth to twelve years that build healthy self-esteem, and strengthen children's ability to be resilient and bounce back from life's challenges.

1. Positive, healthy pregnancy
2. Good nutrition
3. Safe, nurturing care within the circle of family
4. Plenty of play
5. Build life skills
6. Meaningful involvement with positive adults
7. Clear boundaries
8. Absence of stress
9. Self-mastery
10. Strengthen the spirit

Maggie Dent 2006 ©

Today's world has a tendency to practise intensive parenting — whether you call it helicopter, bubble wrap or over-mothering — and sadly this has seen many children coming to kindergarten and preschool with less capacity to cope. The need to improve everyone's understanding of resilience is essential for parents and carers of children because it will offer insights into how to protect our children from the damaging effects of the pressures of our increasingly chaotic and uncertain world.

Resilience should be understood as a vital ingredient in the early development of all children. It is not only the child's physical and intellectual development that is developing rapidly in the first years of life. It is also the emotional and social aspects. Most of the important developments are invisible and difficult to measure. Often the little things are the big things.

Children still need the basics — plenty of loving interaction with significant people who care for them, enormous amounts of play and opportunities to make mistakes and learn from them.

Supporting families

You don't need a lot of money to raise children well — that is a myth. ECEs play a huge role in supporting parents in building resilience.

Children need to experience disappointment, challenge, failure and boundaries to fully develop the interpersonal and personal skills that allow people to live in society. They also need to have a voice, and age-appropriate moments of autonomy where they get to have a sense of control over their life. However, too much autonomy can lead to over-indulgent, permissive and unpleasantly challenging behaviour that can lead to conflict and distress.

Young children need help to manage strong negative feelings and learn how to communicate their needs to

significant adults. Unmet needs are the main driver for inappropriate behaviour in children — and helping them to understand what need is unmet is unbelievably important for later life. This is where children learn the difference between assertiveness, passivity and aggression.

Everyone has a toolkit of life skills that they have accumulated throughout their life. Children have an imaginary toolkit hanging off their shoulder and the more tools in their toolkit, the more resilient they will be. It is parents' primary responsibility to fill that toolkit. Teachers and child care workers merely add to the basic tools that should already be present.

From Cairns all the way to Toowoomba, I met ECTA members, ECEs and parents who embrace childhood that nurtures the whole child. I found it heartening and was especially delighted with the direction Queensland is taking to stop the 'schoolification' of the early years. Play-based learning has been reclaimed and is returning to where it belongs.

I hope ECTA and I can continue to be powerful, positive voices for giving young children highly engaging play-based education with innovative, inclusive and culturally respectful pedagogy in centres that encourage children to experience autonomy and moments of unbridled joy and freedom. A sincere thank-you to everyone who took part in my tour — and a special thank-you to the ECTA leadership team for the fabulous opportunity to spread this important message.



190 educators from as far as Rockhampton attended the ECTA Fitzroy Regional Group Maggie Dent event held in Yeppoon

The power of storytelling

Jenny Christensen



Based in Mackay, North Queensland, Jenny Christensen has been teaching Pre-prep children for ten years, in both kindergarten and day care settings, with six of these years spent in a Steiner-based Kindergarten. She has recently begun to make presentations to other educators focussing on play, storytelling and nature-based education. Prior to her recent re-location to Kingaroy, Jenny has been an active member of ECTA Mackay, serving as Secretary of her regional group.

When I first accepted a position teaching in a Steiner-based Kindergarten, I knew that daily oral storytelling was part of the deal. I thought it a little old-fashioned, but quaint, and could not see the harm, so, with no real forethought or training, I dived right in. I loved it from the start; lighting the candle, sitting in a circle on the floor and entrancing the children with my tales. This provided a refreshing highlight to each day. However, as days turned to weeks, weeks into terms, and terms into years, I became more and more convinced that this process was more important than merely entertaining the children. It became a profoundly influential part of my practice, something that I have carried with me into new settings and have come to champion to anyone who will listen!

Throughout the span of history, across the divides of culture and environments, the telling of stories has been a defining characteristic of humanity. Traditionally, stories have been used to pass down wisdom from one generation to the next, to explain important events and to bind listeners together by sharing common heritage and beliefs. Today, most stories come to us through the brightly-coloured, whizz-bang digital technology that we carry in our pockets or on the screens that are part of our everyday lives. These stories are instant,

re-playable and effortless, so why should an overworked teacher bother telling a story when, with a fingertip on a screen, someone else can do it for us?

The answer lies in the response of the children. Bright and shining sets of eyes watch every move, mouths repeat familiar refrains, hands join in gestures, faces frown, smile and giggle and bodies are transformed from wriggling fidgets to entranced listeners.

The power of storytelling envelops children, transporting them to other times and places. Stories create a sense of mystery and wonder.

They subtly build understanding and respect for other cultures and emphasise commonalities of feelings and experience.

Regularly gathering together to share a story forms bonds, connects the participants to one another and enhances the feeling of belonging. Of course, there are 'teaching' benefits as well: children learn to attend and focus; foundations of grammar and story structure are laid; vocabulary is extended; understandings of positional and directional

language are underpinned; and complex moral and ethical dilemmas are examined. My, oh my, the list boxes being ticked on any curriculum framework you might be using is long!

Anyone can tell a story, but here are my tips for successful storytelling to young children:

1. Commit to storytelling – make it part of your routine and plan around it. Every day is probably the most effective, particularly for the younger age groups, but once a week can work as well.
2. Make it a ritual – a specific time, a defined sequence, a unique transition, a dedicated space. Props such as a lit candle or storytelling cape, blanket or chair all work to signal to children that something special is about to take place.
3. Set ground rules – some simple guidelines help children to understand when it is appropriate to ask questions, why it helps the storyteller if they remain seated etc.
4. Select from a range of story sources – Classic Fairy Tales (*The Three Billy Goats Gruff*), Dreaming Stories (*Tiddalick*), Folk Tales (*Anansi, the Spider*), Poetry (*The Man From Snowy River*) or even adaptations of modern story books (*Wombat Stew* or *The Gruffalo*) can all become the basis for enjoyable storytelling.
5. Introduce props – simple items such as a wolf mask, a pirate puppet, a model shark or a princess tiara are all that is needed. The power of the story is in the words. Showing any props you choose to use before the story begins, helps to avoid interruption.
6. Bookend phrases – ‘Once upon a time’, ‘Long ago in the Dreaming’, ‘In a faraway place, in a faraway time’, ‘And they all lived happily ever after’, ‘And so it was, for ever and ever’ all serve as signals to listeners as to where they are in the story.
7. Know the story – it is not necessary to have it memorized, word for word (in fact, this can be detrimental to the tale), but you should have a clear sequence of events in your mind.
8. Minimize interruption – you will be less likely to lose the story line, or the attention of the children if you keep the story going. Don’t feel that you have to stop to explain abstract concepts or unfamiliar words to the children. They will learn more effectively if you allow them to be swept along in the story and to work it out for themselves.
9. Use repetition – stories that have sections that are repeated several times (for example ‘I’ll huff and I’ll puff, and I’ll blow your house down’) really appeal to children, who quickly learn the words and love to join in.
10. Use dramatic licence - adopt voices, body positions and gestures and make eye contact with children to enhance their listening experience.
11. Utilize linguistic devices – rhyme, alliteration and metaphor can all be included in your tale telling, fostering your audience’s intrinsic understanding and appreciation of language.
12. Repeat tellings – tell the same story over successive days, as it allows the children to become really familiar with the tale, enhancing their enjoyment and perception of the story considerably. In my experience, five to seven tellings of the same tale is about right for kindergarten-age children.
13. Vary your words – once children know the story, you can expand their vocabulary knowledge by substituting simple words with more complex ones that have the same meaning (for example ‘enormous’ or ‘massive’ or ‘huge’ for ‘big’).
14. Be confident – remember, your audience are children who want to like the story, not critics there to judge you.
15. Enjoy the experience – children have a way of knowing that you are having fun, and it sharpens their own enjoyment.
16. And, if all else fails, include the words ‘underpants’ ‘snot’ or ‘superhero’ and you will have them in the palm of your hand!

Transition to school – are our schools ready?

Beginning school is a time of great excitement and expectation for children and their families. Both need to feel confident that school will be a welcoming place for them, where they will feel secure, respected and supported. A successful transition will occur over time and extend to when the child feels a sense of belonging in the school. In this issue of *Educating Young Children* we explore the ways schools create a sense of belonging by asking the question 'are schools ready?'

Susie Randel Kneipp



Susie is Deputy Principal at Eagle Junction State School.

You would know our school is ready for children by ... the excitement and enthusiasm as we begin to welcome our

2015 Preps and their families into the Eagle Junction State School community. This is a highly valued process that ensures each family an opportunity to personally meet with me and share their child's learning journey to date and also what they are most looking forward to in the next stage of schooling. This time also connects our youngest students to the school and ensures a familiar face as they begin their school transition. We also conduct parent information evenings and most importantly school orientation sessions where our newest students can spend time in the Prep Precinct and start to establish relationships with their peers and teachers.

Our school builds on the experiences children bring when ... we value the learning of the pre-Prep environments by ensuring our students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do in a supportive environment as their relationship with their Prep teacher and class mates grow. Eagle Junction State School also prioritises the connection to our fellow early years educators

through an established network (Brisbane Inner North Early Years Network). This allows curriculum and learning experiences in both settings to be shared to build continuity and ensure prior learning is recognised and celebrated.

The transition to school for children and their families is positive when ... both children and their parents feel welcomed and supported as they enter the next exciting stage of education. Positive experiences are fostered through quality communication and school/parent partnerships. Both children and their families benefit from transitions from pre Prep to Prep that focus on shared understandings and child centred practices. Understanding individual children and their pre-Prep experiences assists in seamless transitions.

A child and their family would know they belong to our school when ... Becoming part of the EJ family begins long before the first day of school. Eagle Junction State School acknowledges that a sense of community and belonging are essential factors in learning and development. Prior to starting Prep, our new students have already begun to develop relationships and a familiarity with their new school context.

In our school what works well is ... At Eagle Junction State School our vision – *For every child, every opportunity for every success*, clearly articulates the commitment to ensuring each child's learning is prioritised. The wealth of experience we have in our early years teaching team enables us to quickly get to know who students are, what they already know and how best to lead their learning into the future.

Ensuring that children have early learning success at their individual level helps to develop a love of learning that hopefully will carry them through school and beyond.

I would like to see ... the strong professional relationship we have with our local early years educators continue to grow as we share curriculum, teaching and learning expectations from pre-Prep into the early years of primary school. Ensuring strong communication between these professional agencies not only supports the clarity of educational expectations from kindergarten to primary school but also alleviates anxiety in families about school readiness and the next stage of schooling. The Prep year supports strong literacy and numeracy instruction through developmentally appropriate programs that allow children to learn in engaging and stimulating environments. Recognition of prior and individual learning is an important part of educating young children. The ability for all educators to articulate this with confidence ensures the optimism that we want all children and families to possess as they embark on the next stage of the learning journey.

Bradley Clark



Principal,
Samford State
School in
conversation
with Archana
Sinh.

You would know our school is ready for children by ... the enthusiasm we share with the

families and children in starting the learning journey in our school, long before they begin Prep at Samford State School. We support families by providing opportunities to know the school well before the children start in

2015 and share their journey about their child with us. This reduces anxiety and worry that families and children might feel. Our induction for Prep commences at the end of Term 3. During this process families and children get to know us and we get to know them. By facilitating these strong relationships through open days, visits to the local pre-Preps by our teachers and play-dates in our local parks, we encourage families to get to know other families, teachers to understand the practices of the learning environment where the children are coming from and families to become familiar with the environment where the children are going to go. This process minimizes anxiety for the families and the children by creating a physical connection from abstract to tangible where children learn the language of school such as 'I saw the tuckshop today'. This helps children settle in and our staff to understand the needs of children.

Our school builds on the experiences children bring when ... we have built strong relationships with the local pre-Prep Centres in this area. Our teachers visit the pre-Prep Centres from where our children come, and we learn how children interact in their prior to school environment. For example, one of our teachers was visiting a pre-Prep Centre and thought of sharing a story with the group while she was there. However, the teacher of the pre-Prep said that the children never sat as a whole group at any given time and would find the idea challenging. This made our teacher and the school reflect on how they would support the children from pre-Prep in settling down. So they made some changes to their routines for when the children would start the Prep.

We meet every family and during these meetings families share their children's interests and general learning needs. They are also encouraged to share the Transition Statements from the pre-Prep.

The transition to school for children and their families is positive when ... families and children do not experience anxiety or fear and worry about their new environment and what it involves. Families also feel supported

when they realise that we as a school support the learning styles that children are bringing from the pre-Prep environment. We work with the understanding of what a learning physiology of four- and five-year-olds would be like. They learn through experience, structured play and intentional teaching as some of the strategies.

A child and their family would know they belong to our school when ... they walk on their first day in the school with a smile and say 'Bye' without anxiety and worry. To make this happen, we start building partnerships from very early on, as mentioned, from the end of Term 3. We provide many opportunities for the families and the children to visit the school; to meet outside the school with other families; and by building connections with the local pre-Prep Centres.

In our school what works well is ... in our school we build on partnerships with families, children and the pre-Prep Centres from before they start the school year. These opportunities help build stronger relations and a better understanding of how we can support the children and their families. We also incorporate the current understandings of how children in this age group learn best.

I would like to see ... the ability to be able to shape the curriculum to meet social, emotional and cognitive understandings in the way children learn best.

Mathilda Element



Mathilda Element is an early childhood educator, currently providing curriculum support for Pine Community School, a small democratic community in Arana Hills, Brisbane that

provides Prep to Year Six education for 75 students.

You would know our school is ready for children by ... We believe that schools need to recognise and respect children's uniqueness – protecting and nurturing their individual strengths and supporting their developing needs. Further, we believe that families are the strongest and most important centre of their children's worlds and, as such, schools should be designed to support families as the first and most important teachers of their children.

In order to make schools ready for children and families, we must take time to understand those dynamics – their needs, their strengths and their diversity. At Pine we do this through a number of ways. One way is through extensive relationship-building with both families and children in the early days (beginning prior to school). We organise school-holiday casual play-dates in the local park for new families, teachers and students to get to know one another; have lengthy new family interviews prior to school which are repeated after the first four weeks (clarifying expectations and needs unique to each child and family). Teachers send introductory letters home addressed to the children. (These are treasured items we are told!) and most of our new families make several visits to the school (both formally organised and casually arranged) prior to the first day of school. Our genuine open-door policy means visiting students and families are always welcomed and included, for any length of time they wish to stay. (Some children find frequent, short visits helpful; others want to join in straight away.) Further, this continues throughout the child's schooling – families are always welcome in the school as a precious part of the community. Their knowledge of their children informs the teachers' practice and we aim to allow children's unique needs to guide our teaching. (E.g. some children 'build up' to full-time Prep as they can be quite exhausted by our busy, play-based, multi-age learning environment; other children are raring to go from Day One.)

In all things, the important value is respect for diverse needs – all young children and families transition at a different time and pace, and we believe our school needs to cater to that, offering lots of different ways to experience the school culture and community as gently or as deeply as is required at the time. This includes

the notion that transition can be a lengthy process and families may need to revisit their needs (e.g. for more information) at any time of the year.

Our school builds on the experiences children bring when ... We gather as much information as possible about their prior-to-school experience and build on where children are genuinely at – what they are interested in, challenged by and ready for. For this information, we rely mainly on families and children – we ask lots of questions, take lots of notes and make lots of time to listen to children as we work on building genuine, deep relationships. We also try and make connections with kindergarten and other prior-to-school teachers where possible but, as our children come from a very diverse range of prior-to-school backgrounds (including many whose home environment has been their primary learning setting before school), parents (and the children themselves) are the main source of information.

The transition to school for children and their families is positive when ... I think there is a lot of pressure in the modern, wider social culture to make children 'ready' for school, particularly in academic ways. This pressure can unduly stress families to provide experiences that their children may not be ready for, or to 'push' children without the pedagogical skills to make it enjoyable for them. This can have a detrimental effect on the child's love of learning in some instances. Conversely, other children seek deeper investigative and cognitive challenges than they are currently offered and are 'hungry' for the experiences that school can provide.

If society as a whole worked towards a deeper respect for children's individual needs, and innate desire to learn and grow in their own way and own time, it would take a lot of stress from parents, who are genuinely trying to equip their children for life, but who are often bombarded with pressure to 'push' earlier and earlier into formal skills. Reducing the anxiety load of modern families would be a very positive step in managing school transitions, and we do attempt this by valuing and respecting these truths:

parenting is complex, rewarding, difficult and empowering.

Families do the best they can and it is the job of schools to respect them, genuinely include them as learning partners and support them in any way possible in their noble task of raising their families.

I personally believe that transitions would be more positive overall if these values were included as routine in all educational settings and experiences.

A child and their family would know they belong to our school when ... As a teacher and a curriculum support worker, I have witnessed the moment when a child decides they 'belong' to Pine many, many times and it is a thing of beauty. For some children, it is the first time they speak up in a democratic meeting and have their voice heard by the wider community. (Our school holds weekly whole-school meetings run by the children, where they decide on issues of relevance to them in the running of the school, as well as lots of class meetings and small group consultations.) For others, it's when they tell their parents they need to 'call a meeting' to discuss a rule or issue of conflict in their family sphere. (Internalising the values of school and applying them to home often bemuses our families and it can be an extremely empowering sign of belonging.) For many, it's just the first time they call themselves a 'Pine kid'. I have asked different children what that means and, for lots of children, it means someone who climbs trees; plays games; hangs out with babies to teenagers; is aware of social justice and conflict resolution; experiences lots of interesting curriculum; is listened to and learns to listen. The children have an innate knowledge of the school culture (as they do in most schools) and it's interesting to hear that culture being verbally and intuitively 'passed down' from our older students to the younger ones (including our many former students, now in high school or university, who visit frequently and use these types of phrases).

'Belonging' is, however, an extremely deep process – it takes time and it also ebbs and flows. Children and families can 'belong' to a school community, but also experience times of discord and these times need to be guided and managed – with information, time for questions, connections and support. Understanding this is important, for everyone within our school community.

In our school what works well is ... as stated previously, lots of time to get to know children and families as individuals, and lots of different opportunities for connections (through interviews, letters home, play-dates and school visits, etc.) help our teachers create real relationships with the children. Helping children feel safe, excited and empowered as school learners is our main goal and we believe that all learning stems from this place of positive feeling. Our school motto *Happy Children Learn* is deeply ingrained in everything we plan, including transitions. Some other practical tools include offering home visits by teachers to families, particularly where a child is struggling with connection. This is not forced, but is offered when parents and teachers think it might be helpful. We find that children are excited to share their space with their teachers and that one-on-one time is extremely valuable in relationship-building.

I would like to see ... Those key words 'connection' and 'relationships' at the heart of everything we do.

This tends to work well for us in providing the kind of education we strive for.

Louise Hart



Louise Hart is Deputy Principal at Wellers Hill State School.

You would know our school is ready for children by ... the buzz circulating around the school. Our

new students will have completed their orientation program and feel excited and comfortable to begin their Prep year. The Parents will have also participated in an orientation program and be well informed about our school, its values and philosophy, and what their child will experience in Prep. The teachers will feel well informed about each child's strengths as they will have gathered information on each of their children from a variety of sources.

Our school builds on the experiences children bring when ... teachers plan to discover what children already know and can do and then explicitly develop learning episodes that connect and build onto their knowledge and experiences.

The transition to school for children and their families is positive when

... we see happy smiling faces everyday as the children come to school, the level of engagement throughout the day is high, and there is positive chatter about the day as the children leave. Parents are engaged in the school community both inside and outside the classroom.

A child and their family would know they belong to our school when ... they walk into the school on their first day and parents, teachers and students take the time to acknowledge and greet them warmly.

In our school what works well is ... Our school community is very supportive of the staff.

Our teachers work very closely with parents placing the children at the forefront of all decisions to ensure each child is moving towards achieving their full potential. We are very proud of our collaborative staff culture, and the introduction of our pedagogical coaching program.

I would like to see ... our connection to the pre-Prep settings in our surrounding area grow and develop into a strong professional network.



40th ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference Saturday 27 June 2015

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Keynote Address: *Lighten Up! Humour is FUNdamental to providing Quality Education & Care to Young Children*

This keynote is always entertaining and fun, but substantive, as well. It focuses on how keeping your sense of humour helps early childhood educators and child care providers provide quality education and care day after day—even on the tough days. Part of this program emphasizes the notion that a good sense of humour is an essential survival skill for teachers and care providers. A sense of humour is shown to provide the resilience needed to cope with the challenges that young children sometimes offer.

Presenter: Paul McGhee is currently President of The Laughter Remedy in Wilmington, Delaware, in the USA. His scientific contributions to the field of humour research make him unique among those who currently work as professional speakers discussing the importance of building more humour into your life. He has published 15 books and many scientific articles on humour and is internationally recognized for his contributions in three distinct areas:

- 1) Scientific research on humour and laughter.
- 2) Practical applications of humour in corporate and healthcare settings—including the only research-supported program for improving humour skills.
- 3) Substantive, but entertaining, keynotes and workshops on humour.

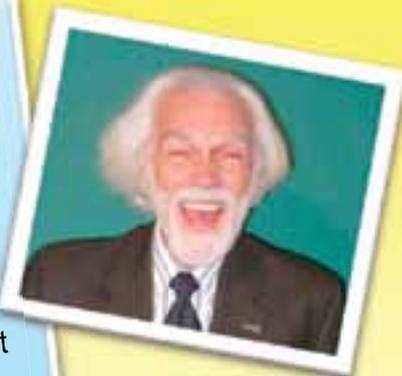
Paul was a recipient of The Odyssey Award in 2009 from his undergraduate *alma mater*, Oakland University. This prestigious award was given in honour of Paul's contribution to knowledge in the field of humour research and for exemplifying the university's motto of seeking virtue and knowledge. He is also the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humour.

Confirmed Masterclasses (see page two for presentation outlines)

- Learning to use humour to cope with stress: The 7 Humour Habits Program by Paul McGhee
- The playful brain: development of young children's humour by Paul McGhee
- Tables: do we need them? by Justine Walsh & Nicole Bourke (Journey into Play)
- Outdoor play spaces by Justine Walsh & Nicole Bourke (Journey into Play)
- Music and storytelling in an inclusive environment by Louise Doratt
- Building children's resilience in this risk-averse world by Louise Doratt

PLUS 22 Workshops

Presentations will be relevant for professionals working with children 0-8 years of age.



VENUE: Sheldon Event Centre, Sheldon,
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(Within grounds of Sheldon College)

Bilingualism at Wellers Hill State School

John L. Webster



Bilingual Education became a reality at Wellers Hill State School with the introduction of Japanese for 76 Year One students in 2014. To the casual observer, the programme is revolutionary for a Queensland state school. However, there is significant research to support the teaching of students in a foreign language, commencing at an early age. John is Assistant Regional Director, School Performance, Darling Downs South West Queensland Region.

Two questions are generally asked in relation to the bilingual programme at Wellers Hill (WHSS). The most obvious being, why Japanese? As a school, Wellers Hill has operated a strong Japanese LOTE programme for a number of years. This is linked with an exchange programme where WHSS students visit Japan bi-annually, with our Sister School students visiting on the alternate year. The programme is also highly valued by students, staff and parents; and the move towards using the Japanese language as a basis for the bilingual programme was a natural progression.

The other question that is also frequently asked revolves around the introduction of what could be considered a 'high risk' educational strategy; and has the school considered the implications associated with maintaining the high academic standard achieved by the school?



The children and teacher hard at work.

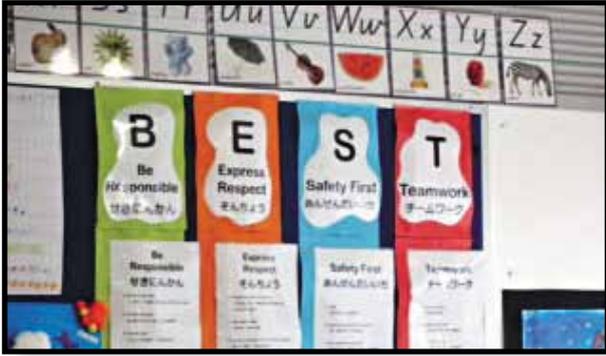
Both questions are reasonable and logical, given that Wellers Hill is the only state primary school in Queensland currently operating a bilingual programme. The following outlines the decision-making processes involved in the introduction of the programme and the outcomes achieved after only three terms.

The research

It is extremely important when introducing initiatives that they are backed by a strong research base. This is the case with bilingual education. The aim of introducing the programme was not to ensure students became conversationally fluent in Japanese by the time they left primary school.

The aim was to improve long-term educational outcomes for students, using Japanese bilingual education as the vehicle for improvement.

There are also long-term educational, social and economic advantages of bilingualism; immersion learners benefit cognitively, exhibiting greater nonverbal problem-solving abilities and more flexible thinking (see reviews in Met, 1998). Research has also shown that the bilingual brain has modified or changed neuroplasticity, resulting in the opening of neural pathways that would not generally open



Much of the curriculum is delivered in English and Japanese.

in the non-bilingual brain. Being bilingual is like constantly working out at the gym for your brain! (Being Bilingual: The Neuroplastic Workout)

Once the research base was verified, the proposal was introduced to the parent population at the school. The key to the successful introduction was communication, and lots of it. The school also shared all of the research with the parents, including research that was not supportive of bilingual education.

Success factors

Parents voted with their feet, choosing to enrol 76 out of a total of 132 Prep students into the programme for 2014. The numbers exceeded school expectations, and the programme was extended to encompass three classes as opposed to the original anticipated two.

After only three terms, the results are outstanding. Each class is taught 50% of the time by a teacher speaking only English and 50% of the time by a teacher speaking only Japanese. After three terms, the students are able to understand and respond to the spoken requests/instructions/directions of the Japanese speaking teacher. While it takes time to develop technical and conversational fluency in a language, the students are developing extremely well and it is anticipated that they will have full conversational fluency by Year Four, and technical proficiency by Year Seven. Internal monitoring and assessment also shows that the students enrolled in the bilingual classes are achieving at a standard equal to non-bilingual Year One classes in the school.

The success of the programme is built on the following foundations:

- Strong support within the school community from parents and staff.
- The programme being built on an existing highly respected LOTE programme.
- A proven research base for success was used to educate and support the introduction.
- The school has strong links with the Japanese Consulate in Brisbane and the Asian Education Foundation (AEF), which has built a relevance for the programme in the broader community.
- Adequate internal funding provided for the introduction of the programme.

There have also been several challenges, with the most significant being the recruitment of teachers who have native speaking Japanese language ability.



Children learn to read and write in both Japanese and English.

Parents, staff and students are extremely proud of the Wellers Hill State School Bilingual Programme. However, the programme must not operate in isolation, and other schools are encouraged to join Wellers Hill in the bilingual journey. The demand on the programme from the Japanese community is extremely high and other schools need to realise that bilingualism, if done properly, is a growing area of specialisation for the Queensland educational scene.

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Developing sustainable leadership in your community to mentor and coach others

Workforce Council has worked alongside the early childhood education and care sector for nearly a decade. During this time the Council has provided many powerful professional development opportunities that acknowledge that directors, coordinators and leaders *'play a central role in establishing a culture of professionalism and ongoing learning in their staff teams'*, (Russel, 2008 p 9). The leadership strategy contributes positively to the perception of change and growth through supporting sustainable, flexible and reflective practices that support leaders to guide services.

This article will focus specifically on the *Developing Sustainable Leadership in your Community to Mentor and Coach Others* program. Funded by the Department of Education, Training and Employment as a research and development project as part of the review of the Workforce Action Plan, and delivered by the Health and Community Services Workforce Council, the *Developing Sustainable Leadership in your Community*

program was developed in response to the sector's identification of the need for greater support in the development of leadership and management skills (Review of the 2011-2014 Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Action Plan, 2014).

Underpinning the model is research conducted by Waniganayake, et al (2008) which demonstrated that when professional development meets the needs of individual

The Mentee

Gemma Wharton



When I heard about the mentor program I knew that it was something that both myself and the educators at my centre could really benefit from. Having that person with knowledge and experience there to help guide me with my practice sounded great. I jumped straight on board with the idea and could not wait to get started. I guess my initial fear was that someone would come into the centre and look at areas I didn't feel strongly about and judge how they might not be right. But I was very wrong about that! On my first meeting with Nebula I could tell that she was not there to judge the work but to help

guide me in a beneficial way, and that is exactly what has happened. From that first meeting I knew that Nebula was someone that I could share thoughts with, and my first thought was the

layout of our curriculum. I had the opportunity to share ideas for change and, from this, our centre has changed the entire layout. It has gone from a very confusing monthly web to a daily write-up that the parents and educators can now understand and complete confidently. We have had such a positive result and feedback from the families about the change that it inspired me to look closer at other aspects of curriculum and documentation. From this, the educators have had

the opportunity to be more hands-on with the decision-making process and they have really taken on the changes that we have made. Each month, we are focusing on one main area that we feel needs improvement and, as a team, we are making changes that overall make for a better centre.



Gemma and her team

practitioners and the centre's overall goals, participants are more likely to develop a sense of ownership as they observe changes in practice and consequently learning communities are established.

Participants in this research highlighted the value of mentoring and coaching as a key model of professional development for new staff to their role, especially when provided by highly qualified mentors.

Leaders involved in the program have the opportunity to be supported and coached to build advanced leadership and mentoring skills through face to face workshops, critical reflection and online learning. The focus of the coaching discussions includes how to grow and sustain the development of a professional learning community that has a commitment to continuous improvement and quality service delivery.

At the beginning of the project, all mentor participants are matched with a mentee and, over a period of six months, mentors participate in three face-to-face workshops and two online sessions and take on responsibility for mentoring another leader. During the program, mentors have the opportunity to gain advanced and specialised skills in leadership, coaching and mentoring; supervision and performance management; and motivating and influencing others. Mentors are supported financially, with funding available to support travel to attend the face-to-face workshops, travel to mentee and backfill to cover time away spent mentoring.

At the end of the program, this model will establish a team of local mentors who are supported with specialised learning activities to:

1. build advanced leadership and mentoring skills
2. provide local leadership to each other, and
3. support entry-level leaders and services 'working towards' national quality standard.

The Mentor

Nebula Wild



I was encouraged to participate in a mentoring program provided by Workforce Council by my employer. I didn't really have much of an understanding of the art of mentoring when I signed

up but was interested in working within a mentoring relationship with another director. My main goals and expectations were that I was hoping both of us would grow and learn professionally and that my experience would be of benefit to the other director.

After meeting Gemma, I realised that what I thought was going to be a journey of professional development was far more than that. As Gemma and I discovered, a key aspect of being an early childhood professional is to step outside your own garden and engage with other professionals. Supporting another professional in the field has made me more aware of the commonalities of issues that we all face in our day-to-day work life. I was also very aware of how alone we can sometimes feel, with the fast pace of the changes our sector has faced and the pressures of working in such an important role. The mentoring program has been so beneficial for me and I have been reminded of how important it is to be involved in a wider community of learners and teachers.

I have also felt very inspired in the way Gemma and her team have embraced the challenge of change, which we all find confronting at times. It has made me more aware of the areas that I could also change and how I could challenge myself and my team.

The final aim of this program is to provide a pool of advanced practitioners to serve as mentors to services and individuals requiring support to meet the National Quality Standard. Services are linked to this support through the Workforce Council's Proactive Support. For more information about this program please call Workforce Council on 1800 112 585 or visit www.workforce.org.au

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Workforce Council commitment to and belief in the importance of professional development for leaders in early childhood education and care is demonstrated through the wide range of opportunities. These opportunities support a strong service culture through delivering programs which result in tangible outcomes for all staff, families, communities and children. In 2014, our leadership programs include:

- Workshops - Coaching and Mentoring in ECEC and School-Aged Care, Leading and Managing Continuous Improvement, Deadly Cards in Action – Building Leaders
- Online modules - Workplace Health and Safety, Risk Management, Financial Management and Approved Provider Guide
- Ongoing learning series – Developing Sustainable Leadership in your Community to Mentor and Coach others
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How important is self-awareness for being a great leader?

Sally Foley-Lewis



Sally Foley-Lewis fast-tracks manager productivity! She empowers managers to be conscious of their thinking and actions: to be strong, authentic and confident in their roles. Sally has worked with managers at all levels, across a range of industries. She brings diverse experiences to her role in training, speaking and coaching. Sally has lived in Germany, Outback Queensland, the United Arab Emirates and is now living in Sydney, Australia.

Self-awareness is having knowledge of your own motives, motivations, feelings and character.

Self-awareness gives you:

- ✓ the power to adapt to various situations
- ✓ the ability to communicate with a range of people
- ✓ an edge when wanting to influence others and
- ✓ helps you build and maintain a team.

In my observation, when self-aware, you demonstrate maturity, integrity and a certain ability to connect with others.

On the other hand, while those who lack self-awareness may be able to 'dazzle' with charisma, this may be short-lived. Rather, when a significant situation occurs, the result can be someone who does not seem to be able to adapt (or even cope).

Major organisational change is one example where a lack of self-awareness could lead to a lack of coping skills and clumsy change processes. What we see might include, as an example:

- Delays in decision-making or rapid fire, radical unrealistic decisions.
- A shift to operational behaviour rather than

remaining in and operating from a strategic vantage point.

- A shift in behaviour from extroverted to introverted, or vice versa.
- Withdrawal from social aspects of the workplace or an increase in social behaviour as avoidance to dealing with contentious issues.

Any or all of these can leave a team in chaos.

The big three

Three big skill areas I often work on with leaders include:

1. Expectations
2. Delegation; and
3. Feedback.

Setting expectations is paramount for staff to have clarity and purpose to their work. So often time, or the lack of, becomes the excuse for not setting clear expectations.

Delegation is a major skill that is often ignored or feared as a valuable tool for leaders. Delegation can be used for task allocation or development; either way, when it's done properly, it can truly enhance the efficacy of the team and give the leader time to focus on more strategic work.

Giving feedback can be a challenge for some and it is often done poorly, impacting far more negatively on the relationship than it could positively impact on the employee's performance. Feedback is about behaviour, not a person, and it is about encouraging change for improvement or value adding.

I spend considerable time training and coaching leaders in developing these skills and just as much time in helping leaders implement the learning. Without helping leaders to implement, what's the point of the insight if there's no change!

Becoming self-aware

One of the biggest challenges to learning from moments of heightened self-awareness (a.k.a. those 'aha', light bulb or insight moments) is the perceived threat to power and rank if a Director is seen to change. When a Director has made a discovery about themselves and sees value in shifting their behaviour, more often than not the next dilemma is: '... but I can't just

go back to work behaving differently. How will the team perceive me?'

Not so!

This counterintuitive thought process really hinders the potential value and benefit of the professional learning.

Conclusion

So often, a leader may fear 'losing face' if they return to work with new behaviours when the reality is, the team will be pleased and probably relieved. When leaders can see the new behaviour holding value for themselves, the team and the organisation (as well as a step in the right direction towards greater respect, power and influence), the results are all positive.

New behaviours take time and effort to become habits and this does need to be taken into account. That said, it's no excuse to not work on your self-awareness.

I'd love to know your thoughts on leaders and self-awareness: send your comments thoughts and ideas to sally@sallyfoleylewis.com



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Art in early childhood: using a project approach

Kathleen Reilly



Kathleen has been making art with children over the past ten years but she has been making art for as long as she can remember. She grew up as one of the youngest in a family of nine children, so it was inevitable that she became creative. She was a visual person who loved to utilise and reinvent things, from 'hand-me-downs' to cardboard boxes. She currently facilitates art projects in numerous kindergartens and primary schools across Brisbane, where she works as a resident artist, as well as holding private classes/workshops.

Creating an artwork is a process. It grows from a simple concept, theme or idea and, with exploration, develops into its finished potential. But, in a world that demands a compulsion for immediacy and replace-ability, how do we encourage children to slow down and take a creative journey when making art? One step at a time ...

When facilitating an art project with children, I work within a given time frame to help the class explore an art theme, allowing them to participate in the process of making art over a period of time. With this in mind, I program the classes accordingly week by week, using a series of processes or steps, to deconstruct the final



product into layers of conversation and artwork.

With every art residency or project, comes a different theme. I suggest a theme be simple, age-appropriate and tangible so that children can relate to it. When planning, use time wisely as it can constrict ideas and create a pressure pot of hurriedness. By setting achievable and realistic aims for each lesson, children can see the art process evolving at a relaxed pace. Avoid hurrying children as it can hinder creativity and confidence. Working in stages teaches children to be patient and discourages the need for immediacy.

Discussion and reflection is an important process in every art project. To evoke creative thinking and problem-solving, use a brainstorming board to record ideas and ask questions such as, 'What if?' thus promoting a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm towards the art project. Discuss the process of creating art in stages, focusing on a new process each class. Begin each class with reflection on the processes and resources used in the prior class, which evokes discussion and refocusing on the next stage. Explain how the class will be working in small groups and taking turns to contribute to the artwork so that no one misses out. This is the slowing down and the boarding ticket for their creative journey.

A positive approach sets the mood for the class and is imperative to allowing children to open



up, ask questions and embrace ideas while making art. Employing a personal approach and being interested in each child's viewpoint can alleviate fear and doubt in children, prompting creative thinking and thus making art appealing not arduous.

With all this in place, you can implement the appropriate art processes and resources to carry out each art project.

Processes

Mixed Media is the process of using more than one art medium in the making of an artwork. When working with children I find using layers of mixed media allows children to slow down, make choices and contribute individually to a collaborative artwork. Children can often grasp the concept of building an image better by breaking it down and reconstructing it layer by layer. This encourages depth of perception which in turn guides the creative process into a slower, step by step approach to making art.

When employing the mixed media approach I help children work up each layer, the first step being the *background*. Selected paints are chosen and applied onto the canvas and blended together across the surface to achieve the required colour/texture as discussed with the class. Using hands and fingers as paintbrushes is a great initiation to an art project as it draws children in to magically reinvent colours and textures while setting the base layer of the image.

For the *mid-ground* layer of the artwork, recycled papers can be torn and shaped to form scenery such as clouds, suns, moons or a mountainous landscape. Shredded paper is a fabulous medium and, when dipped in a PVA glue slurry, can be



used to build up the mid-ground on an image and create texture and depth. This shows children the transforming potential of a recycled material into a new sculptural form. Painting can also be used in this layer to create the landscape or sky. It can be applied using brushes, squirter bottles (to change the paints consistency), water droppers or toothbrushes. As an alternative, recycled papers can be painted with brushes and prepared to draw on.

Handprints can be made using paint on papers or fabric remnants, then cut out and pasted on to form the base of the *subject matter*, the final layer of the image. The details are added here to define the subjects and articulate the theme. A selection of appropriate collage materials can be selected and adhered to the image.

Drawing

Children like to draw using marker pens or pencils and I encourage them to draw onto recycled papers (they may wish to paint these





first). They can cut out their drawing and lay it out on the art surface. Sometimes children have a 3D idea and don't know where to begin or how to express what they wish to make. By drawing their ideas on paper first, rather than risk forgetting ideas in their infancy, children learn to plan what they envision and can develop their ideas with their drawing *ingredient list*. It's a simple process that promotes breaking art down into steps so the child can watch their idea grow in time from concept to its full potential. This process allows children the conviction to see their plan through. They also have a blueprint to keep and share with others if they are inspired by the child's creation. Drawings can also be done on the painted paper using black marker pen, cut out and pasted onto this final layer. Handprints can be decorated with appropriate details and collage to characterize the subject matter.

A **Reinvention Box** is a wonderful resource tool I use to promote process by triggering creative ideas. A recycled box with a few recycled



goodies such as lids, string, and cardboard inside is like hidden treasure to children and allows them to envision solutions creatively. It builds perseverance and confidence to try new things, so that the treasure is in the discovery enjoyed during the creative process.

Resources

My mother was probably the first to instill the recycling bug in me unknowingly by insisting we didn't throw gift wrapping paper away as it could be used to line our drawers or the pantry shelves. Paper grocery bags, butchers paper and cardboard boxes were a catalyst for craft and role play. As children we had less and we appreciated more, which is why recycling is the perfect resource to promote longevity, persistence and reinvention in art. It encourages children to think twice before throwing something away and ask themselves, 'What can I make with this?' It gives value to everyday materials so children develop creative observation and an awareness of their immediate environment. It takes a little





organizing and space, but it's cost-effective as materials are generally free. As well as all this, it promotes sustainability and environmental consciousness. In an artistic capacity, and above all else, up-cycling makes art accessible to all children.

Various sized and sourced papers stapled or bound together make ideal *visual diaries* for children to pursue their ideas in, inspired by the theme, and share this at discussion times so they feel as though they are contributing to the collaborative process. Be open to children presenting potential ideas and use the recycled *visual diaries* and *the ingredient list* process to help support their vision.

Go to resources when facilitating an art project

- Recycled papers and materials. Newspapers, old phone books, used envelopes, old sheet music, old maps, old stamps, ticket stubs, lolly wrappers, old patterns, old magazines, cut-out words, old books, unused school books, old diaries, old wrapping paper, old drafting plans, old calendars, shredded paper, etc. Cardboard boxes, plastic containers, buttons, paper doilies, egg cartons, tins, cardboard rolls, plastic/tin lids, fabric remnants, paper doilies ... anything that can be salvaged creatively and stored is great.
- Relative books and images to evoke creative thinking in the children and myself.
- Acrylic paints, water colours, glazing medium, powder paints and inks - add squirts of water to change the fluidity of the paint.



- Paint brushes, squirter bottles, water droppers and toothbrushes for various paint applications.
- PVA (watered down) is great for collage.
- Black marker pens, lead pencils, oil pastels, chalk for drawing.
- Clipboards.
- Scissors, hole punch, stanley knife.
- Masking tape for structure and reinforcement in paper sculpture.
- Camera, notepad and pen to document comments/observations made.

By using appropriate processes and resources to facilitate an art project, we allow children the opportunity to open up, ask questions and be aware as they embark on their creative endeavours, step by step. This evokes curiosity, conversation and a sense of wonder and achievement as children open their eyes and reflect, not only on their finished masterpiece, but also on the processes implemented to build their artwork along the way.



Mathematical conversations: teaching maths in kindergarten

Sue Southey



Sue is co-director at Springwood Community Kindergarten. She is a regular presenter at workshops and conferences throughout Queensland and Australia. In 2009 she was a State and Territory recipient of the ASG NEiTA award and in 2013 was awarded an Inspirational Teaching Award from the Down Syndrome Association. During 2013 Sue worked at Queensland Studies Authority in the K-12 Resources Team. Sue is Vice-president of Early Childhood Teachers' Association.

Kindergarten teachers are under increasing pressure to meet community expectations to prepare children for formal schooling by teaching numeracy (Department of Education and Training). The risk inherent in focusing on numeracy skills is that educators revert to 'skill and drill' practices rather than capitalising on play-based pedagogy to teach the language of maths. It is important for us as a community of educators to reflect on both the content and the pedagogy of how maths is taught in early childhood.

Numeracy and mathematical thinking are firmly on the agenda for children before school. However, it is not always clear which skills, knowledge and dispositions are necessary and appropriate for kindergarten children.

When numeracy is framed as competency around 'number', educators may limit the possibilities for children to make meaning about their world in a range of mathematical ways.

To enable us to think about what, why and how maths is taught in kindergarten we need to reflect on the content of the curriculum,

the environments that we operate in and our pedagogies.

Mathematical content

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) provides a very broad and open-ended description of mathematical content based on teaching children to understand how symbols and pattern systems work. The *Queensland kindergarten learning guideline* (QKLG) (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010) provides more guidance to teachers in terms of numeracy, problem-solving and mathematical language. In practice, it may be more helpful to consider mathematical thinking in terms of the skills, knowledge and dispositions around:

- shape and space
- number and set building
- measurement
- probability and data
- mathematical relationships (such as patterning, comparing, seriating, matching).

Pedagogy

The practices that educators use to teach maths may be influenced by the way in which they

think about numeracy and maths. When maths is framed as a discrete set of skills, such as counting, educators are more likely to use rote methods of teaching to ensure children master these skills.

In contrast, when maths is viewed as a language with particular ways of framing the world, educators are more likely to use child-centred practices.

These practices include responding to teachable moments in child-initiated play or providing open-ended play opportunities from which educators scaffold mathematical meanings for the child. In reality, both pedagogies will support children's learning of mathematical content; however, educators need to decide which pedagogy aligns more closely with their philosophy and to practices that align with EYLF.

As Pacey, below, problem-solves how to decorate her monster, she is engaging in problems of shape, size and spatial position. With an adult present to discuss her project she will be encouraged to use this mathematical language and consolidate her understanding of these concepts.



Differences may also occur within play-based pedagogies. Child-centred practices are likely to provide rich play opportunities in which

educators can respond to teachable moments to begin shared mathematical conversations with children. A more group-focused approach might capitalise on games and group experiences in which every child participates. My own view is that both ways of working are necessary. Whilst the shared sustained thinking evolving from play events is likely to produce rich mathematical thinking that is highly relevant to that child, it is difficult to ensure that all children have this experience. A balance of group and individual activities will support all children and ensure that every child in the group receives some mathematical teaching.

A group approach does not require all children to participate in a learning experience at the same time.

Setting up open ended learning experiences with a focus on mathematical thinking allows teachers to engage each child over a period of time, but with the clear intention of involving the child in mathematical conversations. Everyday experiences, such as dough, printing or box collage, allow children to participate in projects that relate to their own ideas and interests but still provide opportunities for educators to engage in mathematical conversations. However, for this to be effective, educators need to be clear about the mathematical content inherent in these



activities and ways in which they can track each child's mathematical learning.

As Nick, on the previous page, engages in this printing activity, there is the potential for him to make discoveries about shape, size and position. With an adult present he may go on to count the 'squares' and 'rectangles', or to talk about the relationship between the three-dimensional printing object and the two-dimensional print shape.

In play-based pedagogy, educators have choices about the learning experiences they capitalise on. Mathematically rich opportunities occur in children's play events but equally valuable learning can occur from group activities such as stories, music or routines.

Open-ended creative activities, in which each child participates over time, also create a setting for mathematical conversations. Whether educators use group or individual play experiences, it is crucial for educators to

be present in those experiences to mediate between mathematical concepts and the child's everyday knowledge (McLachlan, Fleer, & Edwards, 2010). Educators scaffold children's mathematical learning by opening up opportunities for conversations around spatial concepts, number, measurement, probability and mathematical relationships.

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I remember it well

Iain Hodge



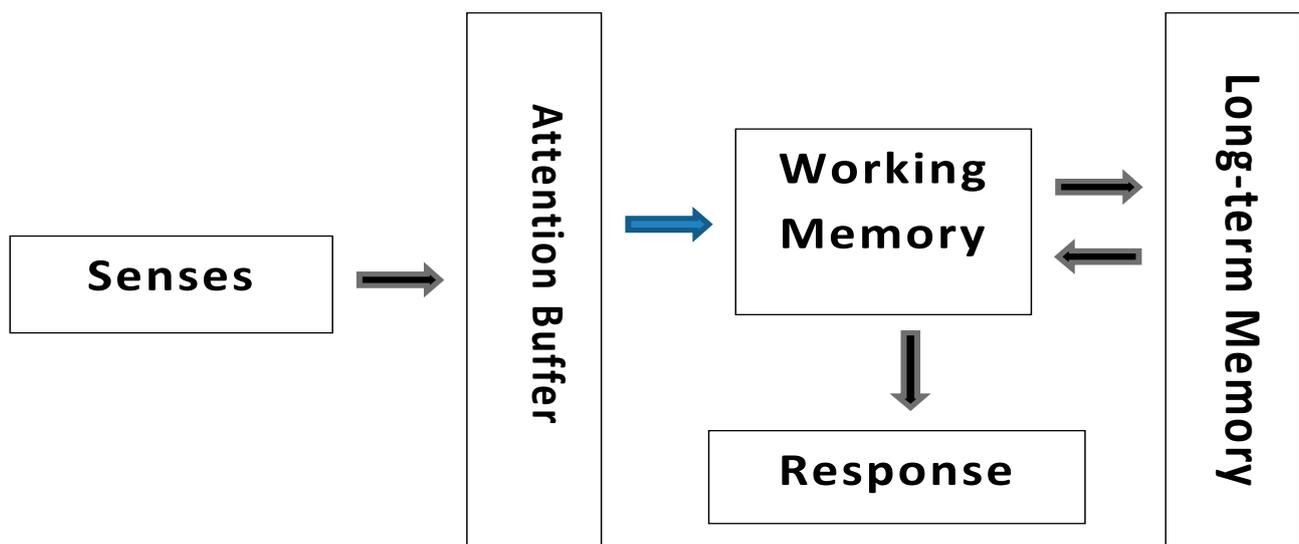
Iain has taught across the early to middle years in Queensland schools for 24 years. He has worked as a Principal of small schools, Deputy Principal, educational advisor in literacy and numeracy, behaviour management support teacher and regional literacy manager. Between roles he regularly returns to the classroom as a teacher. Iain's interests have included curriculum development and implementation as well as effective pedagogical practices. For the last 15 years, he and his colleagues have explored the impact of 'how we learn' on day-to-day classroom practice. More recently, Iain has been exploring the implications of automaticity and working memory in numeracy, building upon his understanding of its role in literacy.

This article builds on *A practical explanation of how students learn* published last year in *Educating Young Children* (Vol 19.3) I begin with an explanation of the learning and remembering process outlined in the diagram below. Then follow this with an exploration of the tricks of the trade that:

1. get information into our long-term memory
2. keep the information there, and
3. get that knowledge back out of our long-term memory.

Our working memory is where conscious thought occurs and tasks are performed. An understanding of it helps educators reflect upon how children think, remember and learn. If we want information and skills to be remembered well, we need to understand how working memory functions. Working memory lies within the information processing model (Christensen, 2001) presented below.

Information enters the brain via our senses – sight, sound, taste, smell and touch – and this is well-known. But these are also accompanied by



The information processing model provides a useful tool to visually represent a very complex process.

our sense of where our body is (proprioceptive system) and our sense of whether we are about to fall over (vestibular system). These systems are continually sending information of the highest quality to our brain, all day, every day.

Our attention buffer allows only a trickle of information into our brain via the working memory. This buffer filters out the new, relevant and interesting information from the old and boring. Hear an odd sound in amongst the normal white noise around you and your attention is caught.

Perception is our ability to learn new things because of what we already know. Our attention is drawn to things we know something about. For example, a mechanic will hear an odd engine sound before you or I will and we can all hear the shout of a child from our own class on the oval before others. This is the power of perception.

Learning is driven by life experiences rather than chronological age (Geake, 2009 p. 64).

The role of the teacher as a source of knowledge has not changed. Share anything you know about everything! Without rich life experiences and language to describe and recall there is limited ability to learn anything new. If children's lives are not rich in experiences, share yours!

The primary role of the working memory is to organise, search and file. Working memory is a finite resource, early years children can juggle three to four tasks at once.

The best known function of working memory is the 'organise' function. This is the concept of 'thinking'. Every time we ponder something our working memory is organising things into new learnings, this process is usually a mixture of new stimulus and existing knowledge (accessed from the long-term memory) all put through the mincer of Bloom's taxonomy.

There are two types of searches – controlled and automated. A controlled search is when

we concentrate on remembering something, for example, a friend's birth date. This type of search takes effort and time. An automated search is done more efficiently (and because of this much quicker, in under a second). For example, the date of our own birthday.

The filing element is how the working memory puts away new information into existing long-term memories or to reorganise existing long-term memories into new files. Put very simply, this is when we learn something.

If information makes it through the sensory buffers (by being deemed new, relevant or interesting and linking with prior knowledge) then other functions of the working memory may place it into long-term memory. Long-term memories are stored as either short visual or sometimes other sensory memories (episodic memory); or as a memory of how to do something (procedural memory); or as thoughts, usually in the form of words (declarative memories).

Aaaahhhh, I remember it well

For this minor miracle to happen, there are a number of factors that need to be considered. Remembering is the relationship between working memory and long-term memory.

Three points to ponder:

1. If there is not enough working memory free for filing when something is taught, it can't be learned. So don't ask kids complex questions or give complex instructions while they are learning something new. Let their brain 'chew' the new concepts so it can 'swallow'.
2. If there is not enough free working memory to search, a complex memory can't be remembered. Make sure children's heads aren't full of complex instructions or questions before they have a chance to remember (search) the concepts important to the activity.
3. If working memory is tied up searching then it can't organise and do clever things. Search for memories first (as above), then do clever things with them. Try to recover old memories during the activity and the instructions that were in working memory will be gone!

Some simple tips for getting the information into long-term memory

When something is new, take the time to activate any prior knowledge (search). This will ensure that information is more likely to make it through the attention buffers (perception). *Have lots of conversations about topics prior to instruction.*

If a lot of new learning is expected, then it is vital not to overload the working memory with complex tasks (organise). This gives the filing function more of the available working memory to file the new information into long-term memory. *Don't clutter new learning with lots of other directions. For example: cut this out, glue it there, arrange it biggest to smallest and so on.*

Go over it a few times. Not everyone gets everything the first time. Don't always reword things as this can just compound this issue. Choose your words carefully the first time as it is these words only that are connecting with the child's existing memories. *Use accurate terminology. Go over new terms again and again ... and again.*

Some simple tips to keeping it in long-term memory

If it is practiced again and again and again, it can become automatic. This means it will never impact on working memory again. You know this has happened when children can remember it in less than one second. Automaticity is vital for many language, literacy and numeracy skills. *You can tell if something is automatized when it can be remembered in less than a second. This is a vital point to consider as a firm foundation of automatized literacy and numeracy skills is required.*

Turn it into different types of memory; change words into pictures and pictures into words.

Use it regularly; establish a routine around it.

Link it to an emotion; every child remembers when you make it fun and have a laugh.

Make a summary of it. Organise the information. Talk about the main idea, then the big ideas that make up the main idea. Then, talk about the little ideas that go together to make each of the big ideas. Graphic organisers are out there, they are great at doing this.

Some simple tips on getting it out of long-term memory

Be quiet! Stop talking and let children think and get used to 'wait time'. When we talk and prompt, children's working memory is busy organising what we are saying rather than searching.

Clear the deck; don't have their head full of organising tasks as well as trying to remember.

Let them record or represent their complicated memories before you ask them to do complex things with them. This way children don't have to hold them in their working memory while they are expected to organise portions of them. *The use of pictures to organise thoughts before they are turned into words or written is vital to scaffold most early writing experiences.*

Break things into bite-size pieces. Scaffold a really complex task into sections and you will be amazed at how complexly children can think.

The biggest challenge facing educators is time. We all seem to be flat out, all the time. Often, the time-consuming processes that are paramount to memory formation are impacted upon the most by busy schedules and external pressures. Understanding working memory and its relationships with long-term memory may help educators in

identifying those teaching practices that must be prioritised.

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The challenge of successful communication

Sylvia Bowles



Sylvia has worked in the early childhood field for over 30 years. She is currently a Senior Early Learning Consultant with Goodstart Early Learning. During her working career, Sylvia has developed an interest in communication skills that help to avert conflict that arises where people are working and interacting together. She has achieved a Master's Degree in Dispute Resolution and is a certified mediator.

Since the beginning of humanity, verbal interaction has been the most utilised method of communication. For probably just as long, miscommunication has happened. Verbal communication is used to inform, to educate, to build relationships and also at times to intimidate and instil fear.

However well-crafted, all communication carries the capacity for misinterpretation. To develop our skills in verbal communication we need to focus on our ability to articulate precisely what we are trying to convey and also to listen to and hear what others are trying to communicate to us.

Verbal communication is not only about the words we use, but also the tone of voice of the sender and the emotional state of both the sender and receiver. The use of verbal communication and its reception is also augmented by visual cues given by the sender. These could include posture, gestures and facial expressions.

Communication is about a message

The sender wishes to relay information; a question; a command to one or more others. They wish the hearer to act on the message sent and to respond. Successful communication occurs when a balance is achieved between all components; the message intended by the sender has been received, understood and

acted upon appropriately by the recipient.

The ability of both the sender and receiver to communicate effectively can depend on the family background, culture and past experience of both parties.

Effective communication depends on an understanding of the potential barriers presented by cultural differences and their impact on interpretation.

Where we need to interpret a message we rely on past experience to assist in working out how to respond. We are all selective about the information that we take in so we notice some things and ignore others. Most of us, in communication situations, feel we have access to all the relevant information we need. We may also consider that the other person is missing some of the most salient facts of the case. We are influenced by past experiences and we all act and think according to different rules.

Difficult conversations

When we are in difficult conversations we have choice about how we react and respond. Though we may not realise at the time, there is a moment between something that happens and our response to it. This is the moment we have to

make a choice about how we are going to react in any situation. We usually are not aware of the moment of choice; it may be only a split second. The art of not getting hooked into a damaging situation is the essence of managing challenging communication. So how do we do it?

Our job from now on is to recognise that moment and to lengthen it until it is long enough to react in a professional and helpful manner in all situations. We need to pack a 'tool kit' with ideas and strategies to use as we lengthen that moment.

Firstly, we need to approach communication

from a place of knowledge and strength. We need to know what we know so that we can answer questions that arise. We also need to be able to admit what we don't know and work with others to find the answers we need.

Next, we need to understand that we won't be able to please everyone. There is no magic formula for making communication work but most people are reasonable and, given time, are likely to respond in a positive manner.

We also need to be able to demonstrate assertive behaviour that will help communicate clearly and confidently our needs, wants and feelings to other people without abusing in any way their human rights.

Our 'tool kit' will need to contain ways to stay calm in difficult moments; we need to learn to breathe and visualize. We need to learn and adopt techniques for really listening and responding, and to understand the value of a sincere apology.

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How might we make it better: using feedback in the early years to improve student learning

Victoria Kerlin



Victoria's passion is for early years education through child-centred curriculum, developmentally appropriate practice and ICT. She is an early years teacher and an advocate for play-based learning. Victoria has recently become a part of a project called *Design Thinking* (@notosh). *Design Thinking* allows her to successfully work with a play-based pedagogy alongside the Australian Curriculum.

Feedback

Feedback has recently entered the education spotlight through the research of John Hattie. Hattie (2012) identifies feedback among the top ten educational influences as an effective tool to assist teachers and students identify and close the gap between a set success criteria and what is currently being achieved. His research suggests students need to know what it is they are doing (the learning intention) and where they are heading (the success criteria) for learning to be effective.

Effective feedback

For feedback to be effective, it is required to be specific and guide the student to improvement. Such feedback is targeted at a level of process or self-regulation. Traditionally, feedback in classrooms is far from this level of sophistication due to a range of factors including time constraints, habit and familiarity for teachers. No longer is a tick and flick or stamp of achievement approach to feedback regarded to be sufficient in assisting student's learning. Such feedback may offer comfort and support to a student. However, current research suggests this type of feedback may in fact draw students away from task-specific goals and rarely enhances achievement or learning. Feedback from a process or self-regulation level requires feedback to be specific

to the task achievement or to assist with better completion of a task.

To feed back or feed forward

Many people believe there is a fundamental flaw with the term feedback as it may encourage a focus on the past, on what has already occurred and not on the future. *Design Thinking* is an approach that encourages this shift by changing the term feedback to feed forward (Barrett, 2014). Many educational settings are embracing this change and are using feed forward to further enhance feedback in the classroom. There are many resources and strategies available to support teachers with feed forward. Some strategies may be used daily in a classroom to provide support to learners. Others may give instant information to teachers about where children are at with their learning or be used to develop a timeline of achievement and expose gaps over longer periods that may have previously gone unnoticed.

Daily classroom feedback strategies

1. Learning intentions and success criteria
 - <https://thegreatwallofawesome.squarespace.com/resources> fun and child-friendly printable documents for Oli (Our learning intention) and Osc (Our success criteria) characters

- Use of OneNote program to document and print learning intentions
- Use of photo frames for display purposes.

2. Common language

- Be kind, specific and helpful
- Model the language, scaffold the language and encourage it in everyday experiences
- Brainstorm what each word looks like, feels like and sounds like.

3. Whole class sessions

- Use circle time to talk about what students have done well and what they could do to improve
- Peer to peer feedback!

Quick and instant feedback

4. Green and red cards

- Students use cards to quickly identify agreement, acknowledge yes or no, or show confusion with a concept.
- Quick feedback on a large scale.

5. Emotions posters or traffic light poster

- Happy face = I get it!
- Blank face = I can give it a go
- Sad face = I don't understand
- Simple symbols drawn in the corner of work samples.

6. Pitch your idea to an audience

- Gallery Walk
- Tweet images and student work for world-wide audience



Gallery walk

- Vote with one sticker on your favourite piece of work
- Post-it note feedback
- Use Skype to connect with a wider audience.

Extended feedback over a longer period

7. Design station

- Capture feedback with iPad video at a design station
- Use Evernote App to create an online portfolio of work.

8. Dojo App

- Track learning intentions and success criteria objectives for learning
- Automatic feedback on student achievement email to parents weekly
- Add behaviours related to success criteria (use of full stop, attempts sounding out).

9. Jelly bean tree

- Colour in the image that relates to how you are feeling
- Can be done weekly, before you leave class, at the beginning and end of a learning experience or unit of work.

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School pitch

Discover the Music Within – How and Where Do I Begin?

Kath Lloyd



Kath is an early childhood music specialist, with a particular interest in interpersonal development. She has been a registered KMEIA (Kodaly Music Education Institute of Australia) teacher since 2000 and coordinator of the Early Childhood Music program at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. Kath believes that singing is a child's first language, the voice being their first instrument. When nurtured in the early years, music, as an innate form of communication and expression, can help build the whole child in all areas of their development: socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, cognitively as well as musically. It enriches teaching programs and enriches lives, in the classroom and beyond.

When it comes to connecting with children, all you need is inside you - even when making music. There is no need to be reliant upon the accompaniment of recorded music, or feel that the only valid musical experiences are those which include instruments. The voice is our first instrument, one we carry with us at all times.

When we embody a relaxed attitude around our own singing voice we are playfully modeling self-reliance, demonstrating to the children that they too can make music anywhere and at any time.

Singing is not always about putting on a show, but can more often be a fun, creative and expressive extension of our usual means of communication. It can turn a chore into a game, a directive into a shared moment, tears to laughter, pop that bad mood bubble, loosen anxious fingers from parents' got-to-go-to-work necks, or simply make digging in the sand-pit even *more* fun.

Singing can help enormously with the day-to-day management of our classrooms. As a tool we can also use it to:

- redirect focus
- initiate and manage transitions
- connect with individuals and the group as a whole
- cultivate a caring environment — gentle voices and gentle hands
- support other areas of programming — numeracy, literacy, classroom/seasonal themes
- encourage spontaneous opportunities for individual creativity — singing show-and-tell for example
- enrich our programs and the day-to-day experience of the children in our care.

Wherever possible, implement music within and throughout your program, not just at set aside music or mat time. Have an internal tool box of repertoire which you can dip into at any time. Include:

- songs and rhymes

- musical games that incorporate fine motor and gross motor accompanying actions
- dramatic play
- and don't be afraid to improvise! The children will not judge you for it. They will love you for it.

By doing so, you are not just easing yourself and the children through each day. You are also laying the foundations for future musical experiences by naturally creating a music-infused environment that children are not only surrounded by, but a part of.

Music is a language, learnt in the same way we learn any language — immersion, repetition and exchange — until we eventually reach the point of independent expression.

Primed to learn about the symbolic representation of language (notation), we develop the skills of reading and writing. When the language of music is deeply and naturally ingrained within, learning an instrument then becomes yet another seamless extension of the developmental process. Singing whilst washing hands is a far more valuable game, and with further reaching impact than you may have realized.

To help you build your internal repertoire of helpful 'song tools' it is well worth acquiring a resource library of recommended reference books. The titles below are those which have formed the basis of my teaching programs over the years. Each includes songs and rhymes which are predominantly traditional, that is, have stood the test of time, continuing to engage children in relatable themes and activities. These books include lyrics, notation and clear descriptions of accompanying games or actions, and have been compiled or endorsed by experienced music educators and program coordinators.

An example of a favorite and versatile song which I often use is Green Green, a traditional song of German origin, which can be found in the resource book, *Catch A Song*.

*Green, green, green, green,
Who is wearing green today?
Green, green, green, oh,
Who is wearing green?*

*We're wearing green today,
Look at us and you will say,
Green, green, green,
We're wearing green today.*

Title	Author/ compiled by..	Publisher	ISBN
Catch A Song	Deanna Hoermann Doreen Bridges	A Dominie Publication	0- 86799-360-x
I'm a Little Teapot	Shelagh McGee	Red Fox	0-09-174136-X
Merrily Merrily (book and CD)		Australian Breast feeding Association	0 9597 108 5 X
Music in Preschool	Katalin Forrai	Clayfield School of Music	0 9586297 0 6
The New Useful Book	Henrietta Clark	ABC Books	0 7333 0423 0
This Little Puffin	Elizabeth M. Matterson	Puffin Books	0140340483
Playsongs: Action Songs and Rhymes for Babies and Toddlers (book + CD)	Sheena Roberts	Playsongs Publications	0951711210

Favourite titles

Examples of use:

1. Sing whilst welcoming an arriving child:

- Make a playful connection
- Nurture the child's self-awareness
- Deflect focus from an emotional separation from parent.

2. In the classroom:

- Choose children for transitioning, for example, those wearing the specified colour go to the bathroom
- Make conscious the turn-taking social transaction of question/ answer
- Create opportunities for individuals to sing on their own in front of the group
- The children pat the beat on the part of the body that is wearing the colour
- To select the next colour, use laminated cellophane circles and a torch
- Demonstrate colour mixing by layering pairs of primary colours to create secondary colours. This can then lead on to various art activities.

*Start where you are.
Use what you have.
Do what you can.
Arthur Ashe*

Singing and performing the actions for the song Here's A Box (Playsongs book/CD).

*Here's a box and here's a lid
I wonder whatever inside it is hid ...
Open the lid and see what's inside ...
Out jumps a crocodile!
Snap, snap, snap!
Out jumps a crocodile!
Snap, snap, snap!*



Here's a box and here's a lid

Write ready – supporting children to develop handwriting skills

Danielle Bull



Danielle is an occupational therapist and owner of Paediatric Occupational Therapy Services, with clinics located in Birkdale, Springwood and the Gold Coast. Danielle has a particular interest in early childhood and passionately believes that the early years of schooling are the most important in a child's life. Positive early school experiences can only be achieved through good preparation, smooth transitions to school and supportive learning environments. For more information go to: www.paediatricot.net

Handwriting is a fundamental means of communication for school-aged children. It is used for expressing knowledge, communication and recording ideas, as well as assessing a child's academic performance. Despite the advances in computer technology, a large proportion of a school day is spent completing tasks that require writing.

Handwriting is a complex skill encompassing visual motor, coordination, cognitive and perceptual skills, as well as tactile, proprioceptive and vestibular registration (Maeland 1992).

Proficient handwriting requires maturation and integration of these skills as well as motor planning and control of spatial, temporal and force elements inherent in this task (Cornhill and Case-Smith, 1996).

Children who find handwriting difficult cannot always finish their work on time and may try to write as few words as possible. Some children end up focusing on the mechanical aspects of handwriting and, therefore, cannot attend to the cognitive content. Inadequate handwriting can impair academic performance. (Erhardt and Meade, 2005).

Without understanding and help in dealing with these challenges, the child's skills often reduce

as they avoid all handwriting tasks. When Occupational therapists work with children they analyse all internal and external factors that are necessary for handwriting tasks. Occupational therapists will use a wide variety of techniques to assist children to develop handwriting skills.

Once the challenges a child is experiencing have been identified, it is time to put a handwriting program together.

Handwriting program

When putting a handwriting program together, it is important that it is incorporated into the curriculum on a daily basis.

It is recommended that a handwriting program consists of at least one activity from each of the six sections listed in the table below. The program sections should be completed in this

Sections	Time allowance
Gross Motor	5 minutes
Crossing the midline	5 minutes
Finger Strengthening	5 minutes
Finger Dexterity	5 minutes
Visual Motor Control	5 minutes
Writing	10-15 minutes

order as research suggests that children develop skills in this order.

You can adjust the length of time for each section to suit your school curriculum. It is important to maintain a student's interest and motivation, by choosing a variety of activities from each section. What activity is chosen is not as important as the order in which activities are performed.

Above all have fun with your students.

Possible indicators of handwriting difficulty

Gross motor

- Is there poor body and spatial awareness?
- Does the child demonstrate difficulty with eye-hand coordination?
- Is the child clumsy, with poor balance and poor endurance?
- Are joints in arms, hands and fingers very 'floppy' and flexible?

Sitting Posture

- Is the child fidgeting, squirming, slouched over the desk, supporting head in hand, twisted in their chair?
- Does the child demonstrate adequate postural control and shoulder stability, forearm rotation and wrist extension for writing?
- What is the non-dominant hand doing during writing?
- Are there any tremors or involuntary movements present?
- Are the desk and chair heights, desk surface angle and desk placement adequate?

Crossing the midline and hand dominance

- Does the child have difficulty with bilateral coordination, for example, swapping the role of their hands during fine motor activities?
- Does the child have difficulty drawing shapes and letters with diagonal lines?

Finger dexterity and strength

- Does the child fatigue easily when doing fine motor activities?
- Does the child have difficulty picking up small objects or need assistance with buttons?
- Is the child one of the last to finish fine motor/writing activities or do they avoid activities all together?

References

- Cornhill, H., & Case-Smith, J. 1996. 'Factors that relate to good and poor handwriting' in *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 50, 732-739
- Erhardt, R.P. and Mead, V 2005. *Improving Handwriting without teaching handwriting: The consultative clinical reasoning process.*
- Maeland, A.F. 1992. 'Handwriting and perceptual-motor skills in clumsy dysgraphic, and 'normal' children' in *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 75, 1207-1217.

- Is pencil pressure either heavy or light?
- Does the child shake or tremor when doing precise/controlled movements?
- Is the child easily frustrated or do they give up when performing fine motor tasks or handwriting?

Pencil Grasp

- How closely is the pencil held to the writing tip?
- Are the child's knuckles or fingers white with exertion?
- Does the child stop writing and frequently shake out their hand or hold the pencil awkwardly/immaturely?

Visual Motor Control

- Is writing, drawing, colouring in and tracing immature or messy writing?
- Is the child unable to write their name independently at the beginning of Prep or unable to write most letters of the alphabet by the end of Prep?

Visual Perception

- Is the child able to visually discriminate between shapes and letters?
- Is the child able to track from left to right?
- Are they able to identify the foreground from the background?
- Are there letter or number reversals present after the age of seven years of age?

Handwriting

- Does the child form letters with correct letter formation?
- Is there adequate space between letters and/or words?
- Is the child able to write on lines?



Mathilda Element

In our last edition for the year, it gives me great pleasure to include a review of one of the very first ECTA journals in celebration of *Educating Young Children's* twenty years of publication. Thanks to ECTA treasurer Lisa Cooper for digging through her archives and revisiting these times – it's great to see what issues were current at the time, and what issues continue to be relevant to early childhood teachers.

In this reminiscent spirit, it is timely that I look back over my own journey with the ECTA journal. It was a little over seven years ago that I put my hand up, early in my own teaching career, to volunteer for ECTA. The journal committee needed more members, and I went along willingly, possibly a little naively, not sure what help I could be or what it might entail.

What I found out was that like most volunteer positions, the ECTA journal was driven by passionate hearts willing to roll up their sleeves and do whatever little bit they could to help out, juggling full-time jobs and families and busy, exciting lives as well. It was with the fateful words 'I don't know much about that, but I'm happy to give it a try' that I became media reviews co-ordinator, as well as lots of other little jobs and articles sourced along the way. I have met wonderful people, inspiring educators and made very good friends. I have had funny, endearing conversations via email with teachers in far-flung corners of the state – people I have never met, but feel connected to in the way that early childhood educators often do ... we, the paint-splattered, play-dough-covered, multitudes of multi-taskers, whose lives are enriched daily by the insightful young people who share with us their time, their learning and their love.

I am grateful for my time volunteering for ECTA, for the connections I have made and for the people (very, very busy, WONDERFUL people) who make time in their lives to write reviews, articles or conversations, who read or skim this journal, who join committees and help out in

any little (or big) way they can. So as I write this, I feel a little bit sad that this will be my final journal for ECTA (for a while, anyway), as I take a hiatus from volunteering to concentrate on my family (my impending third baby boy is due early next year) and other opportunities.

I want to say thank you so very much to all my reviewers over the years – including several long-term reviewers who are contributing to this edition – Melindi Robertson, Christine Nolan and Archana Sinh are all featured in the following pages.

I also want to encourage ANYONE who is even MILDLY interested in volunteering for ECTA, and especially for the journal, to please, PLEASE give it a go! You only ever have to do what little bit you can, and there are lots of lovely gains to be had as well. Send an email to our editor lynne@ecta.org.au for more information.

Thanks for reading, and all my love and friendship,
In play-based pedagogy,
Mathilda Element

Title: Creative Arts in the Lives of Young Children

Author: Robyn Ewing (Ed)

Foreword by: Andrew Upton and Cate Blanchett

Published by: ACER Press 2012

ISBN: 978-1-74286-023-7

RRP: 39.95

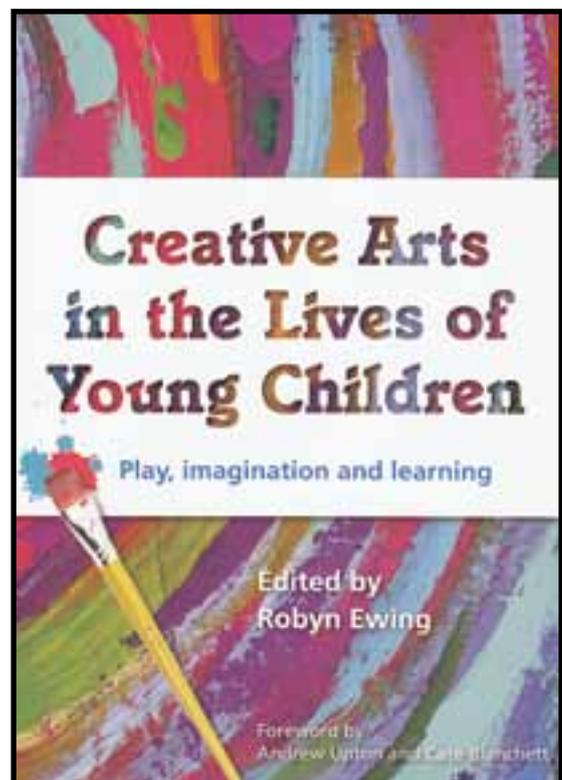
Reviewed by: Christine Nolan

With the recent release of the *Arts in the Australian Curriculum* (awaiting final endorsement) this is a most timely publication. Easy to read and engaging in style, *Creative Arts in the Lives of Young Children* closely aligns with the *Early Years Learning Framework*, and also addresses curriculum requirements for the Arts in the early years of school. It highlights the potential for quality arts experiences to transform educational outcomes. As reiterated in the forward written by Cate Blanchett and husband Andrew Upton 'we must ensure that the Arts are embedded in the early childhood curriculum for all children.'

Creative Arts in the Lives of Young Children draws together essential elements in contemporary education for young children, emphasising the importance that imaginative arts experiences can and should play in high quality care and education in the early years. A number of underlying themes are highlighted throughout the book which are related to the potential that quality arts experiences in the early years can provide for our children. These include: the enhancement and growth of children's creativity and imagination; the development of children's innate problem-solving abilities; the opportunity to experience a diversity with a global view; and the scaffolding of the many positive attributes, both social and emotional, that are needed for growing up in our ever changing world.

The book is reflective of current research and practice that upholds the importance of the arts in young children's lives. It includes a range of practical and engaging creative arts activities and suggested experiences for young children. *Creative Arts in the Lives of Young Children* reinforces partnerships between parents and early childhood practitioners. While its main focus is geared to children birth to age eight, the subject matter and advocated experiences can be adapted to suit wide range of learning contexts and children's diverse needs.

With contributions from academics and teachers, addressing topics from play and storytelling, to drama, puppetry, literature, music, visual media and art appreciation, *Creative Arts in the Lives of Young Children* is essential reading for anyone who understands the importance of the Arts in children's development and is interested in how this can be achieved in both theory and practice in a variety of educational settings. Each chapter can be read alone or in tandem with other chapters from the book. It is certainly one of those books that you can dip into from time to time to look again at the Arts with fresh eyes.



Title : **The Scariest Thing of All**

Author & Illustrator: Debi Gliori

Published by: **Bloomsbury Publishers**

Year of publication: **2011**

ISBN: **978 074599692**

RRP: **\$22.99**

Reviewed by: **Melindi Robertson (Co-Director Mt Gravatt Kindergarten)**

A little rabbit named Pip is scared of everything and has a vivid imagination to make matters worse when it comes to imagining monsters. Eventually, he has to face his fears and ends up scaring his worst imaginary creations.

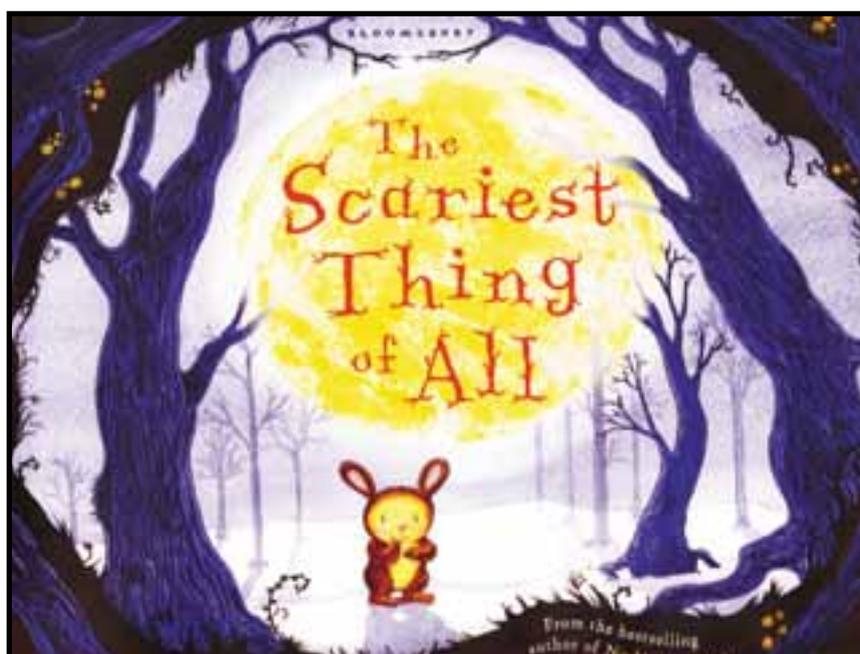
When I read the title of the story to my kindergarten class, one child commented 'I can tell it's scary by the writing' (on the cover) which is an accurate observation of the font used. Another child commented correctly that the roaring must come from the rabbit's tummy immediately he had heard the words 'it was supertime ... and that was when was he heard it'.

In the story Pip makes a long list of all the things he is scared of. Another child taped pieces of paper together that night at home and told me at kindergarten the next day he was going to make a long list too, but it would be about happy things!

The children enjoyed the fantasy creatures in the illustrations such as the vast hisser, a gobbler and a giant wood, but they were also amused at the thought of fluffy pink clouds being considered scary too.

Personally, I'm not a fan of 'cutesie' animal illustrations and found the book had mixed messages. Another kindergarten child said after the reading 'but he wasn't scared of them anymore, but they were really real at the end' which was technically correct. Did they exist or not? Well, apparently they did, but why weren't other rabbit characters rightly fearful of them as well?

Purchasing this book would come down to personal preference.



Title: Progressing Play, Practicalities: Intentions and Possibilities in Emerging Co-constructed Curriculum

Authors: Leanne Hunter and Lisa Sonter

Published by: Consultants at Play

ISBN: 978 0 9750502 1 7

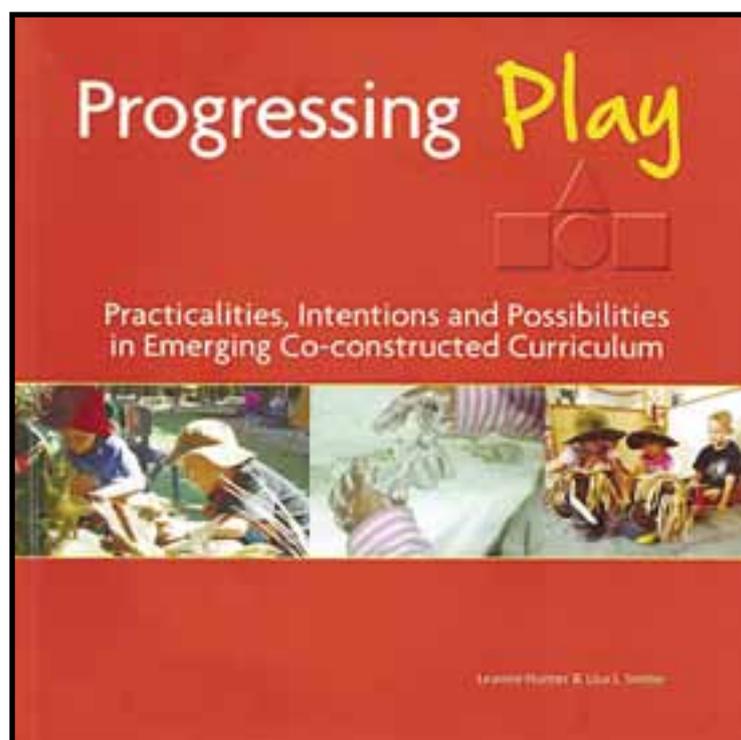
RRP: \$49.50

Reviewed by: Archana Sinh (Sessional Lecturer Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, TAFE Brisbane)

A wonderful source of knowledge based on the practice of two very experienced and reflective professionals of early childhood education. This book offers a range of professional thoughts, stories and ideas around play, curriculum, sustainability, inclusive learning environments and the challenges faced by many educators. For me, the ideas that connected the most included situating the understanding of the child in play while building or co-constructing learning, and the multiple understandings within that learning.

This book is divided into eight chapters, an Introduction and a Conclusion. I particularly liked the colour-coding to differentiate between reflection and narration. Pictures and photographs are used purposefully, adding to the meaning of the text. This book has largely a reflective and narrative style of commentary situating the child within play and curriculum in early childhood. While the authors mention current research and understanding, for more detailed understandings on these, they have provided a list of further reading at end of the book.

There is rich information in detailed discussion and questioning for educators to further explore. I found the section on curriculum of particular interest. The focus on holistic and content-based understanding made sense from the perspective of a kindergarten teacher. In the section on learning environments, I valued the discussion on time though wished for more. I also enjoyed the section dealing with delights and dilemmas, which can be seen to have immense value to early childhood educators.



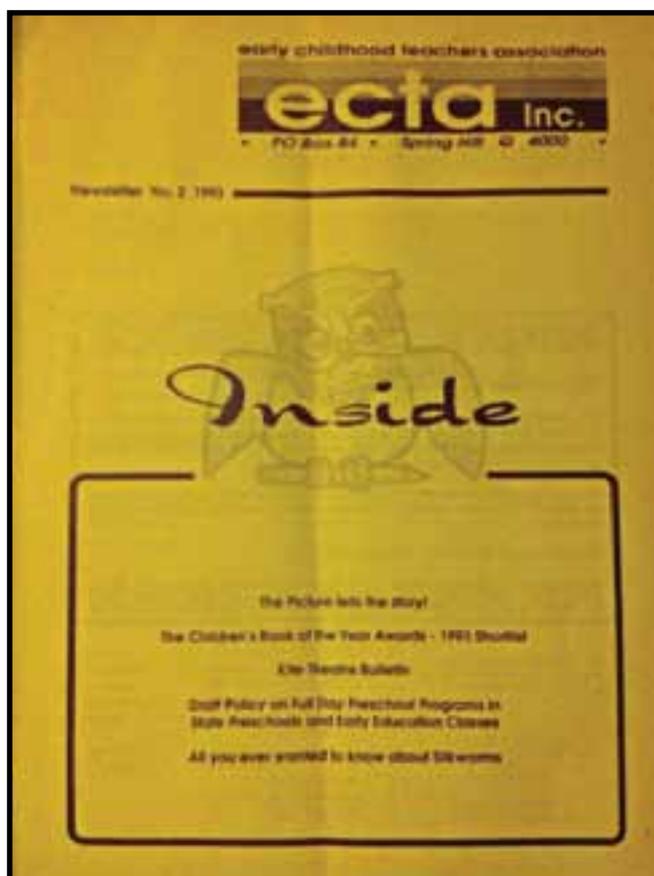
Title: ECTA Newsletter 2
Author & Illustrator: Various ECTA Members
Published by: ECTA
Year of publication: 1993
Reviewed by: Lisa Cooper, Current ECTA Treasurer

The key topics addressed in this 'newsletter' (twelve double-sided photocopied pages, held together by three staples down the side) were Children's Book of the Year, KITE Theatre crisis, draft policy on Full Day Preschool Programs and all you need to know about silkworms.

In the article 'The Picture tells the Story' it talks of children's literature becoming more of a focus in early years classrooms, where picture books tell a story through a combination of text and illustrations. Some of the titles short-listed for the Book of the Year Awards were *Dinosaurs Encore*, *Belinda*, *Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten*, *Where's Mum?* and *Looking for Crabs*.

On Page 9, one takes a moment to reflect on the great performances that KITE did to entertain hundreds of thousands of children across Queensland. The bulletin was seeking letters of support to save KITE. The demise of the KITE Theatre Company saw a loss of a unique contribution to early education in Queensland.

We think back over the preschool years, and the move from half days to full days. In this newsletter the current ECTA President at the time Debbie Gahan received a letter from the Effective Learning and Teaching Unit, Studies Directorate of Queensland Education Department which included the draft policy. The policy provided a response to the community's expressed need for full day programs and addressed its introduction and implementation, including the complex nature of the industrial, staffing and resourcing issues associated with the change. The policy was endorsed as a cost-neutral initiative commencing in 1994.



The final article was *All you ever wanted to know about silkworms*. Silkworms, being easy to keep, viewed as the ideal *resource materials* for introducing children to the fascinating science of biology. The article gave tips on how to keep the eggs, the caterpillars, spinning the silk and the moths. A variety of educational purposes of keeping silkworms are listed. The article concludes with ... *'children only need a little enthusiasm from their teachers to discover that small animals are precious, wonderful and infinitely interesting. If we can show them this, we give a gift to them and perhaps to the world as well.'*

The impact of a teacher never ends.

Title: My First Book of Christmas (hardback)

Author: Charlotte Guillain

Illustrator: Anna Jones

Published By: A&C Black London

ISBN: 97814 08192 894

RRP: \$19:99

Reviewed by: Christine Nolan

Here's a book to put on your Christmas reading list! Its simple and colourful illustrations draw in a young audience and the riddle-style text had my class of six-year-olds jumping out of their skins to answer the questions. We had spent a lot of time looking into the various traditions of Christmas. For us, it was the perfect culminating activity for our learning with almost every child keen to share their knowledge on a wide range of popular Christmas traditions and customs. Christmas truly is an exciting time of year for little ones and this book helps to capture that excitement while explaining some of the traditions and customs behind the festival.

Alternatively it could be a springboard for learning about the tradition or custom and then engaging in a related experience. From making an advent calendar to decorating your tree; from performing a Christmas nativity to writing Christmas cards – this little book has got it between its covers! It's a fun and cultural experience of the whys and wherefores of many Christmas activities we may engage in during this festive season.

A little gem on the topic of celebrating Christmas. It would be well-received by children 3-8 years old, their parents and teachers too. Ask Santa to put it in your Christmas stocking or your shoe if you are from Italy or Spain!



Guidelines for writers

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

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

Style

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

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

Referencing

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

Maybe you need help with referencing. If so, you should find the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers (6th edn)* very helpful. The editor uses this manual and also the *Macquarie Dictionary*. This is the preferred style for the ECTA Journal.

Example of referencing for a book: O'Hagan M 2001, *Early Years Practitioner*, 4th edn, Harcourt: London.

Example of referencing for a journal: Bredekamp S (2006) 'Staying true to our principles', *Educating Young Children*, Vol 12 No. 2, Spring 2006, Australia.

Direct quotations within your article should be in italics and referenced with name of author and the source.

Specific terminology

We are presently compiling a standardised list of frequently used terms. Examples are:

- day care (rather than daycare or day-care)
- child care (rather than childcare or child-care)
- preschool (rather than pre-school)
- the Preparatory Year or Prep (rather than prep)
- Year One, Year Two/Three (words rather than numbers)
- 'the staff members are' (instead of the awkward singular noun 'the staff is ...')
- five-year-olds (i.e. age with hyphens)

The journal committee reserves the right to undertake some minimal editing or rewriting in order to maintain conformity of 'house style'. If an article is provisionally accepted, but fairly major changes are required, we will contact you to discuss this.

Length of contribution

- Article: 1200 words
- Book review: 300 words
- Regular article: 650 words

Form of submission

Your contribution should be submitted via email to info@ecta.org.au Photographs may be submitted digitally – minimum 3 megapixels on the highest resolution. Art works should be scanned. Photographs require a release agreement. A hard copy should also be included.

Author release forms must be signed and a hard copy forwarded to ECTA 20 Hilton Road, Gympie, Qld. 4570. Where original artwork or material has been submitted it will be returned at the contributor's request. All contributors will be sent a copy of the journal.

