



Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the
early childhood years

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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.

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

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From the President

Kim Walters

Welcome, everyone, to the first edition of *Educating Young Children* for 2013. I would like to thank the Editorial team for once again producing an excellent high quality journal. The articles sourced from ECTA members, conference presenters and leaders in the early childhood field will provide our members with current information to enrich their professional development.

This journal will be stored as a PDF in the Members Centre of our website. The new look Members Centre provides direct links to resources available only to members who log into the site using their username and password. The site houses links to PDF copies of past *Educating Young Children* journals, Videolinq-streamed recordings and conference presenter notes, handouts and PowerPoint presentations. We expect the information in the Members Centre will be especially valuable for educators in rural and remote areas who struggle to find opportunities to engage with issues of particular concern to early childhood professionals.

The State Coordinating Committee continues to prioritise support for regional and remote members and ECTA Groups in 2013. We are keen to know how we can best support existing groups and how we can help establish groups in your area. This year will see a North Lakes group join Logan and Bayside groups in supporting Brisbane metropolitan members. Last year the ECTA Mackay Regional Group

Interested in finding out about establishing an ECTA group or connecting with an established group?

Contact Libby Gaedtke, ECTA Groups Coordinator, at ectagroups@ecta.org.au

joined established groups in Townsville, Gympie, Yeppoon, Hervey Bay, Cairns and Gladstone to support members in regional areas.

ECTA is also investigating the use of web tools to increase membership, disseminate information to the wider community and facilitate discussion. We will upgrade our website in 2013 and launch an ECTA Facebook page. All members will receive information about this via our monthly eNEWS. As email is our main form of communication it is vital that you notify ECTA if your details change.

The ECTA State Coordinating Committee has funded lectures by Robin Grille, last year's keynote presenter, in regional areas. Several ECTA Groups are in the process of facilitating a low cost ECTA-funded PD event with Robin Grille in their area. A DVD recording of Robin's master class at the 2012 ECTA Annual Conference is included with this journal.

The recording of our March Videolinq, *Supporting young children and educators in early childhood settings following natural disaster events*, by Professor Susan Danby and Doctor Anne Petriwskyj (QUT) is available now in the Members Centre. This PD event discussed ways that early childhood teachers can work with children and families following natural disaster events. It gave an overview of the related research and key factors relevant to supporting young children in times of natural disaster; outlined children's responses to natural disasters

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Contact the ECTA contact person for your organisation as they should be forwarding eNEWS on to all early childhood staff.

and how they deal with these through play and other ways and gave practical, evidence-based strategies for early childhood educators to support young children and parents following natural disasters.

Our next videolinq event, *FIFO – a New Age phenomenon or an age-old dilemma?*, presented by Marilyn James, will be held on 22 May. Fly-in Fly-Out (FIFO) or Drive-In Drive-Out (DIDO) - are societal trends that look set to continue! Increasingly, early childhood educators and family service providers are working with families living the FIFO / DIDO lifestyle. Many more families are moving from parenting together to parenting apart. This videolinq aims to provide an overview to build awareness and some understanding of the impact that this phenomenon may have on family dynamics; the effect it may have on young children's emotional states and therefore their readiness for learning in our early childhood settings; and practical strategies which may assist to support children and adults to manage the constant transitions of the home and away cycle. Registration forms are emailed to all members and are available three weeks before the event on the ECTA Website.

ECTA Groups or ECTA Organisational Members may choose to use the Videolinq recordings to facilitate a PD event in their area. ECTA Groups and Organisations should issue their own certificates of participation to be used for CPD records of delegates. I recommend previewing the recording so that questions and discussions

Missed an ECTA videolinq?

Go to the videolinq page within the Member Centre at www.ecta.org.au.

Did you know that members who view a videolinq recording from home can enter their time into their record of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in a similar fashion to professional reading?

Please note that recordings of Videolinqs will no longer be sent as a DVD to members.

from the group can be incorporated into your PD event. ECTA Regional Groups are given priority when selecting sites for the Videolinqs using local TAFE facilities at Alexandra Hills (ECTA Bayside Group), Cairns, Gladstone, Gympie, Hervey Bay, Loganlea, Mackay, Townsville and Yeppoon. Where possible, we also stream to Ashmore, Bracken Ridge, Bundaberg, Kingaroy, Ithaca (Red Hill) and Toowoomba sites.

On the 13 March, all ECTA financial members were emailed an invitation to register for our ECTA Annual Conference. This year, due to the fall of the Easter holidays, members have an extended time to register before non-member registrations open online on 15 April. This is a major advantage of your ECTA membership as many workshops book out before the site opens for non-member bookings. This year's conference to be held on 22 June at Sheldon Event Centre, in the grounds of Sheldon College, is shaping up to be another high quality event with six master classes and 30 workshops to choose from on the day. All information about the conference can be found on the ECTA website. www.ecta.org.au.

ECTA is currently participating in the Early Start Implementation Consultation Group. Early start resources are being developed by ACER for use in EQ schools. The On-Entry Prep resources are currently on trial in over 100 EQ Prep classrooms. In the resource, students are asked questions by their teacher, based on materials developed from the English and Maths Australian curriculum. Once fully completed, it is to be a suite of optional literacy and numeracy materials for EQ schools and teachers to use to generate data about literacy and numeracy achievement, track progress and measure learning over four stages - on entry to Prep (most likely in the first term of Prep), end of Prep, Year 1 and Year 2. More information is available on the ECTA website under Advocacy/State. EQ hopes that Early Start will provide an efficient option for schools to replace existing multiples of literacy and numeracy materials currently used to monitor student progress across Prep-2. If you are a trial school for this resource, please send feedback to president@ecta.org.au.

Good luck for the coming year.

Kim



From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

Welcome to *Educating Young Children* in 2013 – it seems fitting that this issue, with its focus on literacy, numeracy and technology, corresponds with the birthday of the Unit Block. Designed in 1913 by Caroline Pratt, this simple hands-on innovation has supported the development of powerful literacy and numeracy concepts and ideas in children for 100 years.

Like the Unit Block, digital technologies have the potential to broaden children's perception of the world, expand their thinking and allow them to represent and express their ideas in new ways. In *Conversations* we are pleased to share with you the views of educators as they reflect on this potential. For added inspiration, Sue Webster takes time out from her Prep class to capture a range of digital technologies currently in use in early childhood *Environments*.

While active involvement in the learning process has the potential to change what children know and can do, the strategies educator's employ will have a significant effect on children's engagement and success in learning. The

first of our *Feature Articles* explores the ways children acquire number concepts. In this article, Bronwyn McGregor provides a wealth of everyday hands-on experiences to support children's numeracy development.

Shannon Wandschneider and Sharon Crosbie follow with insights into the ways children learn words and the support educators can provide through inspiring curiosity towards words and their meanings, incidental word learning and intentional teaching.

Desley Jones unpacks the process of listening to guide our work with young children in this crucial aspect of communication; and Erin Kelly summarises the skills required for handwriting and the strategies that can be implemented to support writing-readiness.

We welcome back Lisa Hingst and Gwen Rayner with more ideas from the Butterfly Wings team; and Karena Menzie reminds us that with the simple book at our fingertips, the world is quite literally at an educator's fingertips.

In *International Perspectives*, Minyi Li, Jillian Fox and Julie Davis reflect on active involvement in the learning process as a powerful means for early childhood educators to build teaching expertise.

Finally Mathilda and our team of media reviewers have sourced some great new resources for your enjoyment. In our increasingly technological world, I am left wondering what early childhood educators will be celebrating in 2113!

See you at the conference in June.

Reference

Community Playthings, 2013, Unit Blocks Turn 100! <http://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/blog/2013/january/unit-blockturns-100> Retrieved 27 March 2013

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Meet the 2013 ECTA co-ordinating committee

Lisa Cooper



Lisa Cooper has been an early years educator since 1990. She is currently working as an Advisory Visiting Teacher – Early Years, in the Student Management Support Team in the North Coast Region.

She finds this role professionally rewarding, advocating and sharing her passion for teaching and learning in the early years. Lisa's association with ECTA started during her first years of teaching. She is involved in her local Hervey Bay ECTA Group as treasurer and also holds the ECTA State Treasurer position. Lisa is a member of the Web Weavers team and a member of the State Co-ordinating Committee. In 2012 Lisa received a NEiTA 'Inspirational Teaching State and Territory' Award and was a finalist in the Queensland College of Teachers 'Excellence in Teaching Awards'. Lisa is inspired by the 'love for learning' children have in the early years.

Rebecca Trimble-Roles

Rebecca Trimble-Roles, Prep Teacher at Genesis Christian College, North Brisbane, is passionate about the use of ICT in her classroom. She integrates the use of iPads and Interactive Whiteboards



across all curriculum areas. Rebecca is currently Secretary of ECTA and first class honours graduate of QUT in the Bachelor of Education Pre-Service (Early Childhood). Rebecca has been involved with the ECTA conference committee since 2008 as catering liaison. Rebecca is also the President of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association Brisbane Local Council MEANJIN. Rebecca is the recipient of the 2012 Australian Literacy Educator's Association University Award.

Kim Walters



Kim Walters is an early childhood educator with over 30 years teaching experience. Her involvement with ECTA began as an individual member participating in ECTA conferences. In 2002 Kim

volunteered to take on the vacated role of State Regional Groups Coordinator and in 2005 became Vice-President followed by President in 2007. As President, Kim strives to support regional and remote members. She continues to coordinate the ECTA Cooloola Regional Group and is actively involved in attending state and national forums giving early childhood a national voice. Kim continues to run a private consultancy publishing business. One of Kim's early childhood career highlights was in 2006 when she participated in a Reggio Emilia educational tour with a USA and Canadian group of early childhood professionals. Kim strongly believes that children need to be co-constructors of their own educational programs. Contributing and being respected leads to high engagement and maximum learning.

Magnificent mathematics

Katrina Teske



For ten years Katrina worked in pre-school age classrooms within long day care centres. She has been a teacher with Education Queensland for nearly nine years, spending most of that time in the P-3 classrooms. For the last two years Katrina has supported teachers at schools in the Murrumba area as a Numeracy Coach modelling everyday mathematics through hands-on, real life experiences that help children make connections between mathematics and the real world. More recently, Katrina has returned to the classroom at Mango Hill State School which opened in 2012. Katrina is very passionate about education and about giving children the tools

they need to become active members of our communities.

Oh well, she's just like me. I was never good at maths either.

My mathematics journey is a similar story to the above comment. I sometimes marvel at where I am today and the roles that I have undertaken.

If you had asked me five years ago if I would be someone who people would go to for advice on how to help students move forward in mathematics, I would have laughed at you and thought you were talking about someone else.

To my amazement (and that of many of those who grew up with me), that is now the role I play. I was not a confident student of maths at school. I struggled to understand many of the basic concepts that were being taught, and over time I slowly became disengaged and unable. It never really made sense to me. I now realise that my teachers, as dedicated and lovely as they were, never made a true connection in my head. I was not a student who learnt by being told what to do. If I could not touch it, smell it, feel it, live it or breathe it, it did not linger in my memory. As an adult, mathematics only started to make sense once I saw the real life context for it. Once I was able to understand that mathematics was about life skills, that we breathed it in every day in millions of ways, and that it was a part of what I was already doing, I was finally able to feel successful.

So now I sit here reflecting and realise that these difficult days of feeling like I would never amount to much mathematically, have helped make me the teacher that I am today. I understand the frustration students feel when it just doesn't connect. I understand that even though they may have sat in a classroom and heard how to do something 15 times, that they may need another 15 times to grasp a concept. I understand that to make maths come alive in a child's mind, I need to make sure that they see the everyday use for it, and I also need to make it FUN!

Every student is a mathematician, from kicking a ball at lunchtime to licking an ice-cream, mathematics plays a part in everything that we do.

Children who sit there and make the statements about 'feeling stupid' and 'being dumb', just need that special someone who can light a fire within their hearts and their heads, and be the catalyst that they need to finally be empowered.

My philosophy and belief in mathematics has been refined by the opportunities that have come my way in the last five years. Being an Early Years Teacher, gave me the permission to be able to use materials, role-play and fun in my everyday classroom experiences. My students did well mathematically due to my

childhood stumbles and I soon found myself attending various professional development opportunities. One of the most important workshops I attended was *First Steps in Number*. This wonderful professional opportunity has given me the knowledge about how to make professional judgements about what my students know, and what to do if they don't. As a facilitator of First Steps and using the skills I gained as a Numeracy Coach, I continue to share my passion with colleagues and help provide them with the confidence they need to teach mathematics.

Another opportunity was to be part of the YuMi Deadly Maths Team at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). YuMi (a research based project for Indigenous students) has given me the framework in which to organise real life mathematics experiences that make lifelong connections in students' minds. It was great to know that the way I taught, the way I truly believe students should learn, is being passionately and zealously shared throughout Queensland. It has started a momentum within teachers and schools and is making a real and true difference.

I have been blessed to have been mentored by some of the most passionate mathematical minds in the district. I selfishly take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge the wonderful people who have changed my life. Peter Carmichael, Paul Walker, Alan Brummel, Rob Proffit-White, just to name a few; I will be forever grateful for your support and friendship.

So now my journey as a professional is to share the knowledge and experiences that I have been so fortunate to have gained.

As a teacher, the workshops I have benefitted from the most have been those where I was able to be an active participant, and where I was able to play and learn at the same time. That is my aim also.

I look forward to meeting some new faces and sharing my love, enthusiasm and joy of all things mathematics.

May the maths be with you!

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Embedding Indigenous perspectives in science

Christine Pigott



Christine Pigott has been teaching in the P-3 area for 14 years, eleven of which have been spent in the Inala area. She is both Crossing Cultures and Yumi Deadly trained. Christine has been implementing Primary Connections in her classroom for five years and last year was a teacher panel representative on the C2C science units. Her school was a trial school for implementing C2C last year.

INCORPORATING THE FIVE E's

ENGAGE

My focus for the unit was for students to describe different objects and materials in terms of properties and purpose. To engage the children's interest I collected a variety of items, both everyday and cultural, (e.g. carvings, pottery, weaving and artwork) to stimulate their curiosity. This was very valuable as many of the children could describe the objects on their appearance but found it very challenging describing the properties of the objects. With 80% of children having an ESL background it

was important to incorporate ESL strategies. We spent a lot of time sorting, labelling and drawing items. It is important to support students' confidence with repetition. The class took digital photos and constructed word walls to support and explain the questions they raised for inquiry, e.g. How is pottery made? Why is some wool thick and some wool thin? How do Torres Strait Islander people weave things?

EXPLORE

As a class we collected items we thought we could re-use or recycle. The children would be asked later in the unit to choose a material to construct an item they could use every day. I gave the children ropes, card and markers to assist in sorting their items. One student finds literacy and numeracy very challenging and is reluctant to engage in activities without support. When given this task, he came to the egg carton and decided that we could recycle and re-use it. His team members explained to him that there were only two ropes to sort with. Using his wonderful problem-solving skills and thinking, he pulled the ropes over each other and put the egg carton in the middle. He had created a Venn diagram through exploration and questioning. This



Sorting items to re-use or recycle.



Creating a Venn diagram.

was one of those moments that is momentous for a student and a teacher. Classmates now go to him for help and his academic results are showing constant improvement. Better still, he is becoming confident in his own achievements. It reinforced in me the belief that teachable moments happen in an instant and that science offers an excellent opportunity for all students to excel. Given the time, modelling and clear expectations, children can reflect, create and represent developing and conceptual understanding shared in a variety of ways.

EXPLAIN

The children investigated and explored combinations of different materials, analysing their properties and uses. I posed questions about some objects for investigation, e.g. Why are some objects made to be waterproof? Why are some objects woven? We focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carving and weaving. Resources were borrowed from



Exploring woven objects.

our local Indigenous Library. The Indigenous children in my class also bought items from home to share with classmates. Through hands-on experiences, the children explored ideas, collected evidence and discussed observations. The class constructed posters of items explored and collected pictures and photos of like items they used at school, at home and within the community e.g. woven hats from the Torres Strait compared to our school hats.

ELABORATE

Students were asked to modify an object that has a purpose in daily life. I observed cultural protocols by inviting community members into the classroom to explain and model carvings and weaving. We had a Torres Strait Island community member come and teach us weaving. This was a wonderful opportunity and the children and I enjoyed learning together.



Learning to weave.

EVALUATE

We decided as a class to make placemats as our modified object. Some children chose to weave paper or material. I also had some children make coasters by coiling rope. With the experiences offered to the class, the children were able to explain clearly how they had constructed their placemats, their properties and how they were modified. They evaluated their own and each other's creations at a class picnic with our community helpers.

This unit of work was very successful because I was able to establish and nurture links with local Indigenous community members and service providers to access relevant perspectives.

Technology in early childhood

As early childhood educators, we see the inclusion of technology as an important component of the learning process. In particular, technology is a powerful teaching tool with the capacity to motivate and challenge young children, expand their perception of the world and enhance their language and thinking.

Young children use technologies instinctively and proficiently. In early childhood environments educators have the capacity to harness the potential of technology to provide learning, practice and reinforcement of experiences at the developmental level of the 21st century learner.

In this issue of *Educating Young Children*, we share the views and thoughts of educators as they reflect on the use of technology in early childhood.



Jonathan Nalder

Jonathan Nalder is Principal Project Officer, Mobile and Digital Learning, Department of Education, Training and Employment and co-founder Slide2learn.net.

In an environment that values digital technologies you would see ... a lack of fear. Success with digital technologies often means being willing to play, and to learn from mistakes.

I am challenged by ... just how amazing today's classroom teachers are. The workload both assessment-wise and through role-modelling is increasingly demanding, and yet every day teachers and aides are changing lives.

And the opportunities are ... that we can indeed work better and faster, but also that students can take hold of the tools to become their own teachers.

I would like to see ... staff and teacher training that is at least equivalent to the amount that is spent on any technology hardware itself. Research shows time and again that this is the biggest factor in the success or failure of technology projects, and yet it's often an afterthought.

An experience or moment I remember

... is when I realised that bringing digital technologies into my classroom was exciting the students, not because it was new or flashy or just because it was technology, but because this was their familiar world which they normally don't encounter in schools.



Rebecca Trimble-Roles

Rebecca Trimble-Roles is Prep Teacher at Genesis Christian College in North Brisbane. She is passionate about the use of ICT in her classroom and integrates the use of iPads,

iPod touch and Interactive Whiteboards across all areas of the curriculum.

In an environment that values digital technologies you would see ... children as competent and capable individuals who bring their own knowledge and understandings of the digital world. An environment where a multi-modal approach to digital technologies embraces and acknowledges this understanding to build on their knowledge and move their understanding and knowledge forward.

I am challenged by ... the ability of teachers/educators to stay current with change and

to facilitate and activate additional skills and processes in children through the use of digital technologies.

In some cases the children know more about digital technologies than the teacher or educator.

And the opportunities are ... that children and teachers/educators can be co-teachers and co-learners as they journey to embrace digital technologies together. The children also have the opportunity to become owners of their own teaching and learning as they embark on their journey as lifelong learners. This is evident in ensuring that children become the facilitators and activators of their abilities, skills and processes.

I would like to see ... all children having access to digital technology, no matter what their background. Children have the right to learn and we should have the ability to give them access to technology in early childhood. This would go a long way to aid the new learning processes, as the jobs of tomorrow, for the children of today, have yet to be discovered.

An experience or moment ... I hold deep is when I was in school, and only the 'good children' were allowed on the computer when they had finished all of their work! Hence, I have a passion that all children should have access to digital technologies so they can show that we are learners that come with many lenses, and technology becomes more than just a reward for good behaviour.



Greer Casey

Greer Casey is a teacher at Wagner Road C&K Kindergarten in Clayfield, Assistant Director of Wagner Road Childcare and Chair of BINEY (Brisbane Inner North Early Years) group.

In an environment that values digital technologies you would see ... a variety of different equipment for children and teachers to use to further enhance the learning taking place. I have a wide variety of technology in my room from iPods to iPads, computers, Apple TV and an interactive screen on the large computer. As well, I have recently chosen to record information for parents through a kindy portal which has proved invaluable as a way for me to send information via emails to parents and also to record for portfolios. I am hoping that this will lead to greater information-sharing between myself and the parents. Other teachers in our centre are also finding that making use of iPads to record what is happening during the day is a much more convenient way for them to record children's learning.

I am challenged by ... the right way to make use of this technology. I do have a concern about children isolating themselves with games on the iPads as I wish for them to learn social skills in the kindergarten year. I have to work out how to make the best use of all of the technology in my room. Currently, it is an invaluable research tool which we can all participate in together. Also I have been writing books, based on the children's ideas, interests and words, on the iPads. I have also been challenged by how to use all of this new technology. I have completed courses over the holidays and during work time. However, at present, I sometimes feel it is quite a challenge.

And the opportunities are ... there to increase both my knowledge, the children's knowledge and also the parent's knowledge of how to integrate technology into our life at kindy. We have been having a lot of fun trying to work out how to relay videos of the children through the Apple TV to the interactive whiteboard. So far two parents have offered their help, however we are still struggling with this. If anyone can help we would be most interested!

I would like to see ... the children making full use of technology to create stories, take pictures and create videos of their learning in both the indoor and outdoor environments.

An experience or moment I remember ... is when my own children were at preschool (a long time ago!) and I questioned the teacher on when the children were going to use the computers in her room. As a parent, I felt this was more important than anything else. Having since completed an early childhood qualification, I realised that helping children to become confident in themselves, as well as happy and interested learners is of more importance. At our parent information evening, open day and in newsletters, I make sure that I explain to my current parents how I am integrating technology into our room as part of the children's everyday experiences and how it enhances learning in a number of exciting ways, yet does not isolate them on games for letters and numbers.



Robyn Mercer

Robyn Mercer is a C&K Early Childhood Advisor for Brisbane and south west Queensland. In 2012, Robyn was part of a research team to investigate the use of new technologies

with kindergarten-aged children. This research is being used to inform the development of a professional development program to support educators wanting to implement technology into their early childhood learning environments.

In an environment that values digital technologies you would see ... children engaging and exploring technology alongside educators who provide support, scaffolding and encouragement through suitable software that provides open-ended learning opportunities. Children would demonstrate choice and control over their own investigations and co-construct learning with their peers and educators. Children would develop the skills

and dispositions to connect and communicate with and through technology.

I am challenged by ... ensuring children's safety in an online environment. Educators and parents share the responsibility to ensure children develop cyber-safe behaviours that protect them now and into the future. Without informed and considered decisions and an understanding of children's appropriate use of technology, children may inadvertently be exposed to a world they are not yet skilled to navigate. C&K are working towards providing policies and procedures to guide educators in their implementation of technology in early childhood environments.

And the opportunities are ... exciting and endless for children and educators. The outside world can come into the early childhood learning environment and provide for immediate investigation and expansion of thinking and ideas. Children can revisit and focus on their thinking and develop ideas without some of the higher order cognitive demands required from memory and processing. Our research project demonstrated how children's thinking could be made visible and shared with their families.

I would like to see ... technology being used to connect children in far north Queensland with children and communities in coastal and city communities. We now have the technology, increasingly skilled and confident educators, and interested children and communities to be able to 'visit' each other's kindergartens. It is an opportunity for children to begin to deepen their understanding and experience of the diversity and difference of our state and our country.

An experience or moment I remember ... was during a research visit to observe the use of ICT in a kindergarten environment, an educator was standing in the mud patch with an iPad recording the ideas and investigations of four or five children. This showed the portability and the possibility of ICT in being able to support and extend children's learning anywhere and anytime. The educator's flexibility and responsiveness to the children was far removed from the narrower view of a 'drag and drop game' image of ICT.

Technology in early childhood

Sue Webster

Technology in early childhood environments has become the way of the world. Children arrive at an early childhood education and care setting with varying degrees of knowledge that needs to be firstly – acknowledged, and then supported, enhanced and further developed.

Children arrive in prep classrooms (and earlier settings) with real skills – that is - they can turn a device on, navigate the device and use the device for learning and fun. We need to tap into this prior learning and further develop these skills to help children develop to their fullest potential in this fast-moving, twenty-first century world.

With the advances in technology, children can compose and record music on an Interactive White Board (IWB), do hands-on maths problems on an iPad, create beautiful works of art on a computer and have a story read to them that they have dictated into a talking book – just to name a few.

Children can create and investigate in ways that we may not have even dreamed about. Yet teachers can effectively use technology to

enhance their teaching. Many devices allow for wonderful pedagogy as they provide children with high interest and hands-on learning activities. But, as always, when planning a learning experience, teachers must take into account children's prior knowledge, interest and needs before making a choice about which technology to use. Teachers can make sure that the use of technology will benefit children's educational opportunities and experiences in appropriate ways.

It is a challenge for some teachers and everyday life for others but, whichever category you fall into, it is an exciting time to teach!!

I hope you enjoy the following photo collage of a small selection of the technologies currently being used in early childhood environments.



iPad

iPads can be used individually or in small groups. There are many apps. that are available for literacy, numeracy, music and art activities that are free or come at a small cost.

iPad with protective cover

Children can use iPads safely using a foam iPad surround. This allows the children an easy handhold and some protection if dropped. An iPad 'license' is always a good idea for children so they are fully aware of the requirements when using this expensive item.





iPod hand held

iPods can be used individually or in groups. A Belkin Rock Star plus headsets can be attached so a small group can listen to stories instead of using a listening post. E-books can be loaded using iTunes.

iPod in speakers

Gone are the days when only tapes and CDs were available. iPods and iTunes makes life so easy – everything on one small piece of technology.



Flip Video

Flip Video is a fun way for children and adults to video each other to record activities/stories/performances. It is super easy to download and make a quick movie or instruction video.

Interactive Whiteboard

IWB's are so useful in everyday life – children can sign-in, do the weather, look for information, do maths and literacy activities, make books or use purchased programmes such as *Jolly Phonics* and *Easiteach*.



Talking points in use

Talking Points are for teachers or students to record sound/voices and can be used to give directions or instructions or be used to sequence a story etc.



Talking points different types

Talking points come in many shapes, sizes, colours and lengths of recording time.

Computer

Children can use computers to type and then print their own stories or pictures. Many programmes can also be purchased for use in the classroom with one or two children at a computer.



Microphone

Children can record anything with this little microphone device. It is easy to download and the sound can be imported into other programmes.

Talking book

Talking books are great for making class books. Teachers can place the pages of text and drawings into this 30-page book that comes in A4 or A3 and then children or teachers can record the text. The text is read back with the push of a button.



Beebot and mat

Beebots can be used for maths and literacy in so many ways with teacher-made or purchased resources.

Assessment and rating: your questions answered

Office for Early Childhood Education and Care

Early childhood services can have confidence that the assessment and rating process against the National Quality Standard (NQS) accurately measures the quality of education and care they provide and that results are nationally consistent.

An evaluation by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) found the process is valid and reliable, the instrument used to assess services was fit for purpose and a clear majority of services believed their rating and assessment experience was positive.

ACER collected data from 491 services throughout Australia, including 128 from Queensland. Interviews, online surveys and focus groups were held with services and Authorised Officers and a sample of final reports were reviewed.

The full ACER report is anticipated to be released in the first quarter of 2013.

With the evaluation now complete, Queensland services are asking what the next step is in the process.

When will our service be assessed and rated?

Assessment and rating visits are scheduled by the Department of Education, Training and Employment's regional offices. Services will be told of their assessment visit approximately 20 weeks in advance.

Download the assessment and rating process fact sheet from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website at www.acecqa.gov.au for more information.

When will ratings be published?

Ratings will be available on the MyChild and ACECQA websites after relevant sections of the National Law are proclaimed, allowing ratings to be released. This is anticipated to occur in the first half of 2013.

What information will be published?

The rating for each of the seven quality areas and overall rating will be published.

When do services need to display their rating and how should they be displayed?

Services are considered to be *Provisional-Not Yet Assessed Under the National Quality Framework* until they are rated. If a service was accredited by the National Child Care Accreditation Council (NCAC), the approved provider must continue to display that accreditation at the service until a first rating assessment is completed and a rating given.

Assessed services can display their NQS rating now. After the proclamation, this will be mandatory.

What is the process for awarding the highest rating?

Services rated *Exceeding National Quality Standard* overall can apply for the *Excellent* rating after relevant sections of the National Law are proclaimed.

Visit the ACECQA website at www.acecqa.gov.au for a copy of the guidelines and criteria.

How can our service stay up to date?

Subscribe to the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care e-newsletter, A to Z of Early Childhood at www.dete.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood and ACECQA's e-newsletter at www.acecqa.gov.au.

What information is available for families?

Families want the best for their children and as the ratings are published, many families will be eager to learn more about the NQF and what it means for them.

Families can subscribe to ACECQA's Family News e-newsletter for more information and regular updates at www.acecqa.gov.au. Consider providing a copy to parents at your service, or sharing the information on the following page in your service newsletter.

Why the NQF is important

With 90 per cent of a child's brain development occurring in the first eight years, we want to give our children the best start in life.

Quality education and care provides safe and well maintained environments where children are happy, engaged and learning with educators who are dedicated, qualified and caring.

Our service is committed to the NQF which aims to raise quality in early childhood education and care and drive continuous improvement in service provision.

The National Quality Standard

A key component of the NQF is the National Quality Standard (NQS). All services will be assessed and rated against the seven quality areas of the NQS. These are:

| | |
|-----|--|
| QA1 | Educational program and practice |
| QA2 | Children's health and safety |
| QA3 | Physical environment |
| QA4 | Staffing arrangements |
| QA5 | Relationships with children |
| QA6 | Collaborative partnerships with families and communities |
| QA7 | Leadership and service management |

Assessment of services

Services will be given a rating for each of the seven quality areas, and an overall rating. There are five rating levels:

- Excellent
- Exceeding National Quality Standard
- Meeting National Quality Standard
- Working Towards National Quality Standard
- Significant Improvement Required

Ratings will be published on the MyChild website at www.mychild.gov.au and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority website at www.acecqa.gov.au later this year. After this time, ratings will also be displayed at the service following their assessment.

What the ratings mean to families

The new assessment and rating system is designed so parents and educators can understand what quality education and care looks like, to make informed choices for their children.

All services are required to meet a set of robust legal requirements to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children.

Under the NQF, services are asked to not only meet these minimum requirements but

to continually improve towards exemplary quality and the higher standards as set out in the NQS.

While the overall rating provided to a service gives an overall picture of the quality of education and care provided, it is important to look at the rating provided against each Quality Area.

A service that is rated as *Working Towards National Quality Standard*

is providing a safe learning environment for children and has one or more areas identified for improvement.

Parents are encouraged to discuss the ratings across the seven quality areas with their service and the plans in place to improve practice.

Services Meeting National Quality Standard or *Exceeding National Quality Standard* are achieving the higher quality benchmark.

What do we mean by number concept?

Bronwyn McGregor



Bronwyn has been an infant, preschool and primary teacher, a tutor and consultant in early childhood education in NZ, a policy officer with Dept of Families, a trainer and workplace liaison officer with TAFE, a senior project officer with DSQ and worked for Queensland Health to collaboratively develop the Social and Emotional Early Development Strategy (SEEDS) with the Early Childhood Education and Care sector. Most recently, Bronwyn has worked as a Community Development Worker – Early Childhood for Queensland Health's Early Years Initiative based at Browns Plains. This is the second of Bronwyn's articles on numeracy. Part 1

appeared in the last Issue of *Educating Young Children*.

In her article, *The acquisition of numeracy*, Jenny Young-Loveridge (1999) describes early number foundations as children building ...a rich network of ideas about the patterns and relationships among numbers. Central to this network of relationships is the number concept itself. To understand the richness of ideas surrounding number foundation, she developed a numeracy framework.

Young-Loveridge proposed that understanding the number system is the key to teaching and learning mathematics. Using a framework for numeracy shows how children's understanding

about the number system becomes increasingly sophisticated as their thinking develops.

Each stage includes three different components as shown in Figure 1:

- The *Number Concept* itself (e.g. quantity of 5)
- The *Spoken Word*, the oral concept of Number (e.g. 'five')
- The *Written Numeral*, the number concept in written form using symbols (e.g. 5)

In the first part of this article we will explore how children acquire number concepts through written numerals and the spoken word and look at strategies which support this learning. Finally, we look at more aspects of number acquisition – subitising; learning to count; the 1-1 principle; stable order principle; cardinality; and the fact that numbers are infinite and can be counted in any order.

The Spoken Word

- As number concepts develop, so does the language used to communicate understanding of number concepts.
- Children learn the names of the number words in their own culture to talk about and refer to quantities.
- Early connections between number concepts and the spoken number word may be faulty to begin with e.g. hold up three fingers but says four.

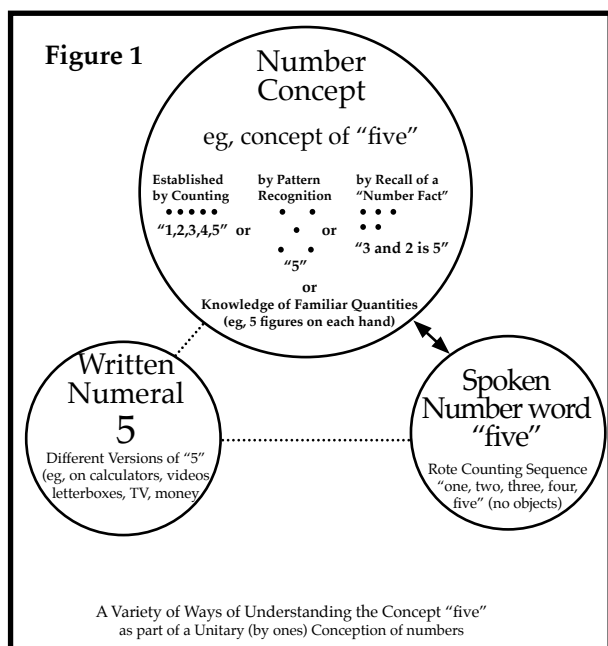


Figure 1. Understanding the number concept 'five'.

Written Numerals

- Written Numerals are the symbols which record number concepts in written form.
- Children initially learn the names of numerals which are familiar to them e.g. TV channels, house number, age.
- Often numerals are used as labels to identify familiar objects rather than to represent quantities e.g. phone numbers, car registration.
- Children's understanding of the connection between a written numeral and the quantity which it represents occurs gradually.

Strategies for supporting children's understanding

So, what does this mean in practice? We need to provide children with experiences with the written numeral as well as the spoken word to represent a quantity or number. Here are some suggestions.

Using Playing Cards, puzzles or games

Children can learn about number and number concept from playing cards. Some simple games you can play with cards include:

- Snap/matching games
- Memory
- Fish

I suggest only using five-card deals so children can handle the cards easily.



Matching games.

Other ways to use cards might be to cut the cards:

- Highest card / Lowest card – to see who goes first at something
- Cut to see how many stories/games to play
- Cut to see how many more minutes until pack away time.

Using small or large dice

- Roll to see how many things to pick up at tidy up time.
- Put a pile of objects in the middle of a circle; each child rolls a dice and collects that number of objects. Continue until all objects are gone. Count to see who has the most.
- Roll to collect items to fill a container. See who fills the container first.
- Roll to collect pegs to peg onto a card, then roll to see who is first to take all pegs off again.
- Roll to thread beads onto a string or to take paces across the playground outside.

Using ice cream lids with numerals, number names or number patterns drawn on them

- Hide the lids and seek them outdoors – collect in order of sequence once all are found.
- Hold up one lid and call out 'groups of' for the children to make themselves into groups of that number.
- Use Lego people (or soft/small toys, natural objects), to play 'groups of' on each lid.
- Put the lids into order using the numbers ... if you put them on the ground they make a number line.
- Use the number line to – count on and count back, count on two and count back two.



Ice cream lids with numerals.

Using stories that contain number words and numerals

The best stories are those that contain:

- **sequence** – number words/numerals in order – counting upwards or backwards e.g. *Ten Apples up on Top*
- **process** – where objects are counted as part of the story e.g. *The Doorbell Rang*
- **cardinality** – where the pictures correspond to number words or numerals in the text e.g. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*
- **numerals** – where written numerals appear as part of the text e.g. *Three Billy Goats Gruff*.

Don't forget to give children opportunities to explore stories in a variety of ways, to revisit and retell in many ways ... and from 'concrete' to more 'abstract' ways.

Intentionally using number for a range of purposes

Educators can support the learning of number concepts by working with number in a range of ways and for a number of different purposes. Young-Loveridge (1999) represents a range of ways of understanding or working with a number concept via Figure 2.

In practice, we can provide experiences to support children's learning of number concepts by:

- modelling counting a variety of objects – moving from real world to abstract
- providing recognition of number represented in a pattern e.g. on dice, on cards, through arrangement
- providing materials in sufficient quantities so that they can be grouped into smaller equal quantities
- promoting early recall of number facts by enabling children to arrange a set number of objects in a range of ways. For example, five dinosaurs can be put into three cups (1, 1, 3) or (1, 2, 2) or into two cups (1, 4) or (2, 3) and so on.

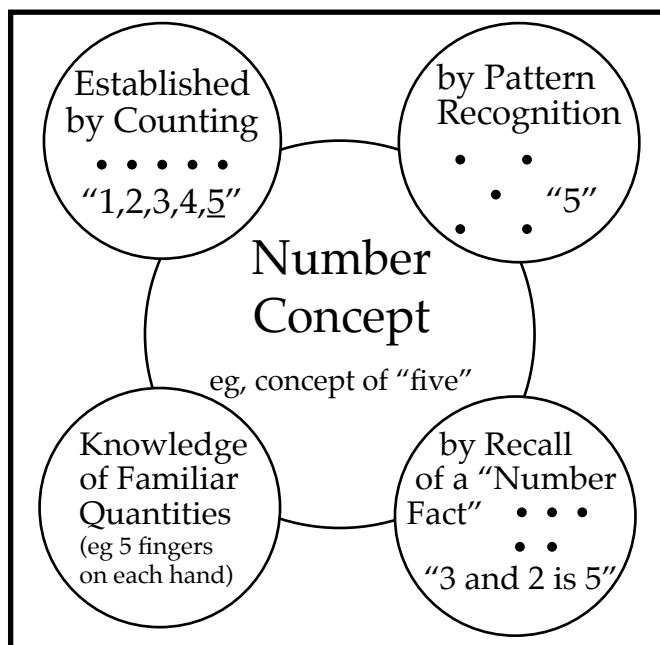


Figure 2. A variety of ways of understanding the number five.

Strategies for helping children use number for a purpose

Peters & Jenks (2000) have outlined a series of ways that children can use number for a purpose. Here are some of their suggestions.

a) Ritualised number use, such as chants (finger plays), songs and rote counting.

(i) Finger plays, songs and props:

- Five little mice went out one day
- Five little ducks
- The bee hive
- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Once I caught a fish alive.

(ii) Rote counting - books containing numbers:

- *Ten Little Mermaids*
- *Five Little Monkeys*
- *One Woolly Wombat*.

(iii) Rote counting - sequencing:

- *The Shopping Basket* – list all the things Stephen had to get
- *Mr Gumpy's Motor Car* – list all the animals that went in the car
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* – list all the things the caterpillar ate

- *The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* – list all the things she swallowed.

b) Status, where numbers were used to establish status. For example, age, higher numbers being better, winners and losers in a game.

Games and Props:

- Cut the cards
- Hands in the cookie jar – pull out handful ... who has the most
- Dinosaur hunt – roll the dice, collect dinosaurs – highest wins
- Memory match and SNAP – most cards wins.

c) Entitlement, establishing rights and fairness, which includes sharing materials, turn taking and rules.

Games and Props:

- Pegs on a container or chairs at a table – to establish how many in a play area
- Musical Chairs – if you don't have a chair, you can't stay in
- Waiting list – put your name down if you want a turn – 5 names on the list
- Deal out cards – take turns in order.

d) Timing, counting sleeps or minutes to an event, counting for an ultimatum and timing an activity or game.

Games and Props:

- Egg timer for length of time until tidy up or for an activity
- Show the hands on the clock when it is time to pack away



Timing.

- **Count up** calendar chart to a special event
- **Count down** to a special event by popping a balloon each day
- **Count Sleeps**
- Count to twenty on the swings.

e) Orderliness, checking things are in order, in the right place, matching, sorting and putting shapes together to form a whole (as in jigsaws).

Games and Props:

- Jigsaws – fish puzzles, sequence puzzles
- Sequence games – the giant turnip
- Stacking boxes
- Number lids – hide, seek and order
- Ice-cream matching.



Orderliness.

f) Labelling, representing numbers with numerals, pictures, number words or dot patterns.

Games and Props:

- Music notes and instruments – 1, 2, 3 beats etc.
- Counting rhymes
- Stepping stones – container lids or foot steps
- Find and sit – container lids.

g) Talking about Number for its own sake.

Questions involving numbers:

- What house/unit number is in your address?
- How many people live in your house?
- How many pets do you have?
- What time did you get up this morning?

h) Exploring quantity to solve a particular problem.

Counting on Frank – Frank has some great ways of calculating things!

- i) **Patterns**, repeating patterns for their own sake in a variety of contexts such as art work and construction.

Games and Props:

- Movement in sequence e.g. three claps, two jumps one turn around
- Music beats cards into patterns
- Exploration with a range of materials.

Other aspects of number acquisition

Subitising - Establishing quantity by recognising a stylised number pattern is important in developing a concept of number. Sometimes called subitising, it involves the almost immediate recognition of a quantity of objects

and does not involve the need for counting. Children gain

experience at subitising

by exploring patterns of objects and through the use of board games, card games, dice and dominoes. Later, children develop the ability to separate quantities into 'parts'. Subitising leads to partitioning.



Subitising

Learning to count

Often there is a tendency to equate the ability to 'rote count' with the understanding of the quantity of number represented. While knowing the correct sequence of number names is an essential component of counting and understanding number concepts, it is only one of many components that make up a child's ability to count. According to Gelman (1978) there are five principles that are involved in counting. With these principles in mind, we can model, and for some children teach, the rules that enable children to think abstractly about collections of objects. Here are some suggestions:

1 – 1 Principle - This involves both keeping track of items (those counted and those not yet counted, called 'partitioning') and producing distinct tags (number words) one at a time. Tagging and partitioning must stay together.



Partitioning

For example, you will have observed children using their finger to touch each item as they say a number name to count each item. You may even note those who have not quite mastered 1-1 (or the 'partitioning' component) touch some items more than once as they count.

Educators can:

- model touching objects 1- 1 as we count them.
- look for opportunities to count 1-1 in everyday routines such as counting out how many shoes on the rack, counting how many children in the group, counting how many cups or water bottles on the tray or counting how many pieces of the puzzle you are working on.
- notice whether children can say the sequence of numbers and also whether they touch each item as they count.

Stable Order Principle - The sequence of number words has to be produced in a stable order. For example, you will have observed children who can count in sequence from 1 – 5 or 1 – 10. Those who are yet to master this principle may mix the number words up as they count or count in random order e.g. 1,2,6,5,3,9,8,

Educators can:

- provide opportunities for children to count in sequence. For example 'I can see some spots on that dog. 1, 2,3,4,5, spots.' 'Let's count how many people we can see in the boat, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.'
- sing songs and rhymes that include number and counting in sequence. For example, *Once I caught a fish alive* or *One Elephant went balancing*.
- read books that include number and counting in sequence.

Cardinality - The last tag represents the whole set. Therefore, if five objects have been counted '1, 2, 3, 4, 5,' the last tag, '5' describes the whole set. For example, if you asked a child who collected the eggs from the hen house, how many they collected, a child who has mastered cardinality will be able to tell you exactly, and correctly, how many eggs were in the basket.

Educators can:

- encourage children to group and count objects by providing containers such as baskets, hoops, cups, jars, boxes, packets, buckets and envelopes for children to collect items in.
- use visual props when singing number rhymes so that children can see items grouped for counting e.g. *Five bees in the bee hive* or *Ten in the bed*.

No Restriction - There is no restriction on the number or type of items that can be counted. For example, children can count on forever, provided there are enough items to count, and they know the number names or words in sequence to count.

Educators can:

- provide a range of materials in large quantities for children to manipulate, explore, arrange, group and count. These can either be natural objects like seed pods, leaves, rocks, stones, gum nuts, flowers, insects and cicada shells or man-made materials like buttons, bottle tops, glass stones, counters, paddle pop sticks, pegs and paper wrappers.
- draw children's attention to things in the environment that occur in large quantities e.g. clouds, leaves, cars parked along a street or people standing in a queue.

Order Irrelevant - The order in which objects are counted is irrelevant. For example, you can sit ten children in row and count them left to right, or right to left, or in random order, but you ten children will remain, provided you count each child only once.

Educators can:

- use lots of opportunities to practice counting with children every day. For example, 'We have three children away today', 'I have two sandwiches for my lunch', 'Can you bring me four wheels for my Lego car?'

Final summary

A wide range of suggestions and strategies have been suggested in this article. These should be useful as you help children to understand number concepts.

References and useful links

Gelman, R. & Gallistel, C.R. 1978, *The Child's Understanding of Number*. Cambridge, M.A: Harvard Press.

Peters & Jenks. 2000, *Young Children's Mathematics: A supporting document for the 'Making Things count' resource*. Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.

Young-Loveridge, J. M. 1999, *Math Maker Handbook*. Department of Education Studies University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Resources/Pages/EarlyChildhoodLearning.aspx>

The materials in this resource will assist educators and parents to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of early literacy and numeracy, both in the home and early childhood settings.

http://www.pbs.org/parents/earlymath/infant_activities.html

This link has useful ideas. It is recommended that you use real items not images on card – real-life to abstract!

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/supporting-infant-toddler-mathematics/>

This is an interesting site as it talks about observing children playing and how it relates to mathematics.

<http://www.babysensory.com/Downloads/MathsEN.pdf>

This is a site for those working with babies and infants.



38th ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference Saturday 22nd June 2013



Keynote Address: "The Importance of Silence, Stillness and Calmness in Children's Lives."



Hurried children are often stressed and modern life is really putting pressure (usually invisible) on our children, especially sensitive children. Children's brains are immature and unable to cope with the stressors of modern adult living and they often misinterpret adult challenges as being about them or their fault. Consistent stress becomes distress and the brain is seriously affected. Irrational behaviour, unstable emotions, sleeplessness and defiance are potential signs that a child is stressed, and struggling. In this Keynote Maggie will discuss the Importance of Calmness, Silence and Stillness in Children's Lives. Today's world is full of the immediacy of a busy life and it is impacting on children. Maggie explores the what, the why and most importantly the how of calming our children. You will learn about self-regulation, how to calm hyperactive children and all about stress in children's lives. You will discover the cognitive, social and emotional benefits of silence and stillness and how it will bring immediate benefits in your classroom and school. Maggie also explores building mindfulness in young children, which will help with their ability to interpret and interact more positively with their world.

Presenter: Maggie Dent

Maggie Dent is an author, educator, and parenting and resilience specialist with a particular interest in the early years and adolescence. Maggie is a passionate advocate for the healthy, common sense raising of children in order to strengthen families and communities.

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Steve Francis: Feedback - Helping Staff Be the Best They Can Be

Dr Brenda Heyworth: A lesson they won't forget-Bad behaviour and the development of self-control

Prof Susan Danby: Young children accessing knowledge through web interactions

Iain Hodge: How do learners learn?

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Play, think, link, learn: Building language skills in the early years of education

Shannon Wandschneider and Sharon Crosbie

Shannon Wandschneider and Sharon Crosbie are both experienced paediatric speech pathologists. They have worked in a range of settings including education, health and research. Sharon has completed her PhD in children with Specific Language Impairment. Shannon and Sharon have a special interest in the speech and language of young children, particularly in developing effective tools to aid language development.

Communication underpins our ability to be competent social beings and active learners. Effective communication skills impact significantly on our ability to form relationships with others and achieve a full range of learning outcomes in early childhood settings. This article will define the various aspects of language, with an emphasis on vocabulary, and suggest strategies to facilitate vocabulary development.

Bloom and Lahey (1978) defined language in terms of three areas - *content, form and use*.

- **Content** refers to the meaning of language. It includes vocabulary, word meanings, how words relate to one another and basic concepts.
- **Form** refers to the surface structure of a language. It includes the sounds of the language and how they can be combined to form words (phonology), rules that govern how words are formed (morphology) and rules that determine how words can be combined to create sentence structures (syntax).
- **Use** includes the various reasons we communicate (e.g. to make a statement, ask a question, seek clarification) as well as the ability to choose the way we communicate that is appropriate to the context.

Another important high level and later developing aspect of language is *metalinguistics*. Metalinguistics is the ability to think about language. For example, we need to be able to reflect on our word knowledge to understand jokes that are based on word play or the structure of words to complete phonological awareness tasks (e.g. do hat and house start with the same sound?).

Vocabulary

An important aspect of language is vocabulary. Vocabulary refers to the words that a child knows. It includes all types of words (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives). A child's receptive vocabulary is the words that a child understands. A child's expressive vocabulary is the words that the child uses when speaking. Typically, a child's receptive vocabulary will be larger than their expressive vocabulary. A diverse vocabulary helps a young child communicate their needs, ideas and opinions with others. General vocabulary knowledge is the single best predictor of reading comprehension (White & Kim, 2009).

How do we learn new words?

New word learning is a complex process that involves two distinct stages, fast mapping and lexical consolidation. The initial fast mapping stage occurs after children have only had a few exposures to a word. Using context, children are able to store partial information about how the word sounds and limited information about the meaning of the new word (Dollaghan, 1987). Words become consolidated when they are stored permanently in the child's store of words (lexicon). Two key components in this consolidation process are multiple exposures and time (Gaskell & Dumay, 2003). Gershkoff-Stowe et al. describe vocabulary development as *a continual process of fine-tuning the lexical system to enable increased accessibility to information* (2007, p 682).

The information that we need to know in order to store a word or to make a lexical representation includes:

- **content:** the key features of the object, the category it belongs to, the words it is associated with, synonyms and antonyms;

- **form:** the sound structure of the word, grammatical class (e.g. noun, verb, adjective), and the legal morphemes associated with a word (e.g. In English, we add 's' to the end of the word if we are talking about more than one cow, but we cannot add 's' to the end of the word when we are talking about more than one sheep);
- **use:** how the target word can be used, and how the word might vary depending on the communicative context.

All of this information needs to be stored accurately, readily available and able to be accessed accurately and quickly.

Supporting vocabulary development in educational settings

When children enter into educational settings they are presented with a rich environment containing new concepts and new vocabulary. Effective vocabulary instruction in the classroom incorporates incidental word learning, intentional teaching and inspires a sense of curiosity towards words and their meanings. Some strategies include:

- **Active construction of the meaning of the new word.** This can be achieved by providing the child with a clear, child-friendly explanation of the word. For example, the word transparent could be introduced whilst using the classroom light box *'Look, this piece of cellophane is transparent. Something that is transparent lets light pass through it. You can see clearly through things that are transparent.'*
- **Strengthening semantic links.** Try to link the new vocabulary with a word the child may already know. This may include highlighting synonyms and/or antonyms or the provision of examples and non-examples of items within a category. Remember to talk about how this new word is different from the word they already know so that you are enriching their vocabulary. Help the child to make connections by talking about what type of word it is, the group it belongs to, what it might be used for or where it might be seen. For example, *'This piece of plastic is see-through. I can hold it up and look through it – and still see you clearly! We can say that the plastic is transparent – what a great word to use to describe the plastic.'*
- **Linking to the child's own knowledge and experiences.** Link the new word to the child's own experiences and pre-existing knowledge. For example, *'Look at the wonderful arrangement that you have made on the light box. Can you see how the light passes through some of the objects you have placed on the light box? We could say that all of those objects are transparent.'*
- **Strengthening the phonological plan for the word.** Talk about the sound structure of the word. For example, *'Transparent starts with the 't' sound. Let's clap the number of syllables in the word transparent.'*
- **Providing multiple exposures across a variety of contexts.** The word transparent could be used whilst playing with see-through coloured blocks and when looking out the classroom windows. The word could be contrasted with the term opaque and opportunities to experiment with a range of objects could be provided.
- **Providing meaningful opportunities to practise new words.**
- **Using multi-sensory learning.** For example, say the name of the action as you are doing it, ensure that you can both see the object that you are talking about, or touch an item as you talk about its texture.

The early years of education with its emphasis on play and exploration provide a wonderful opportunity for vocabulary development.

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Listening – so much more than *hearing*

Desley Jones



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Desley has a Diploma of Teaching in Early Childhood, a Bachelor of Education and has recently completed an Honours Degree in Psychology. In addition to teaching fulltime, Desley has collaborated with a psychologist to write a social skills program for children experiencing difficulties in social interactions, including children with ASD and Asperger's. Desley is a 2011 recipient of a NEiTA ASG Inspirational Teaching State and Territory Award.

The importance of relationships to a child's learning and development are cornerstones of the *Early Years Learning Framework*. When reflecting on children's relationships, with peers or teachers, it is apparent that healthy relationships are based on effective communication; and possibly the most crucial aspect of communication is the ability to listen. Virtually all of our daily interactions in the school, or social milieu, rely on listening and responding to others. Helping children to develop this skill, however, is not simple. Understanding the complexities of what is involved in attending to another person and their message has the potential to change our approach to working with young children in this fundamental area.

More than simply listening

The process of listening involves several areas of development and includes hearing, awareness of others, self-control, processing ability and sustained focus together with confidence and the language ability to respond. We ask a lot of young children when we ask them to *listen*. Helping children to develop this skill requires adults to invest time, patience, support and guidance.

Hearing is essential for *listening*, but it is not the whole story. Also required is the ability to notice that someone is speaking to you, attending to what the speaker is saying, processing what is heard and responding. Talking about the need to *listen* is an important first step. Discussing

why we listen, what would happen if we didn't listen and when we have to listen will help children to understand the reasoning behind the request. Listening needs to take place in group sessions as well as between children, peers and teachers throughout the day. Highlighting the important role of listening in being part of a group will set the scene for a listening environment.

Awareness of others

The awareness that someone is speaking to them takes time for children to develop and is not just reliant on children *hearing* the other person's voice. Young children need help to develop a consciousness of others. Participating in games that focus on interacting with others, having group discussions in a circle so that the *speaker* is visible to all *listeners*, and taking the time to direct children's attention to the person speaking to them are all necessary strategies (e.g. '*Matthew, I can see that Thomas is speaking to you. If you turn and look at him, you can listen really well.*')

It is especially important to help children to develop a habit of responding to their name. Strategies such as saying their name once only, then either acknowledging their response or moving toward them and gaining their attention through touch, and stating, '*I'm glad you turned to look at me when I said your name. I know that will help you to listen to me,*' are more productive than calling their name over and over.



The ability to listen is a crucial aspect of communication.

Self-control

Once children have become aware that they are being spoken to, they require the self-control to stop what they are doing and attend to what the other person is saying. For young children, engrossed in their own thoughts and activity, stopping to listen does not come easily. Teachers have an important role in directing children's attention and in describing what is happening, or what needs to happen and why, and in reinforcing positive behaviour 'Gen, thanks for stopping your painting to look at Debbie. She will know you are really trying to listen to her.'

Self-control is also required by the child to remember the rules of good listening – to keep their body still, to look at the speaker, to be quiet as they speak, to think about what they are saying. Self-control can be enhanced through many activities including music, yoga, breathing and relaxation exercises, or transition games that give specific directions to children to practise listening and responding to another person.

Establishing the idea that self-control, and listening in general, can be practised and improved, sets a positive scene in exercising skills. Talking about practice acknowledges that some things (e.g. looking at the person speaking) can be hard to do. It sends a message that this is something that we can get better at and incorporates an 'I can' attitude. It also provides space for the

celebration of small steps as children work towards achieving improved skills.

Thinking and problem solving

Processing ability is also needed to *think about what the other person is saying*. Rephrasing or reframing questions and comments for children may help them to interpret and process what is being said, and respond more easily. Decoding what another child has said into more manageable chunks may assist some children, as will the use of visual aids that encourage visualisation of what is being said.

Problem-solving activities provide practice in processing information and in communication, as do small group sharing or discussion sessions. During group times and in play, children should experience opportunities to practice basic problem solving strategies:

1. stating the problem
2. brainstorming possible solutions
3. selecting one to try
4. implementing, and
5. evaluating.

This will foster deeper-level thinking skills in young children as well as contributing to listening and communicating.

Reflecting with children (e.g. 'What does it mean when ...', 'I wonder what would happen if ...') as well as opportunities to recall and compare, will promote an environment of consideration, deliberation and pondering and set the scene for increasing awareness.

As in all areas of education, our teaching practice needs to take account of the individual differences within each group. As educators, being conscious of the expectations that we have of children, and adapting our teaching style to support individuals, models a listening approach to children and parents, and supports our acknowledgement of the complexities of relationships.

The fundamentals of handwriting and how to teach them

Erin Kelly



Erin Kelly is an occupational therapist who has worked in the fields of disability and education. She is currently working as a private practitioner at On Call Children's (OCC) Therapy Network in Brisbane.

Handwriting is a complex process that requires well-integrated motor, cognitive and visual skills (Feder & Majenemer, 2007). The introduction of a National Curriculum in Australia has fast-tracked early writing for Queensland students with the expectation that students are able to write a simple sentence by the end of their Prep year. However, in order to achieve this, children must first possess a number of fundamental skills, both physical and cognitive. It is important that children master these skills before being expected to write, so as to avoid frustration at failure and subsequent avoidance of future writing tasks. (Weil & Amundson, 1994). More than ever, early childhood professionals must be focused on facilitating the development of these underlying skills to ensure children are prepared for the demands of Prep. This article summarises the skills needed for handwriting and outlines strategies that early childhood professionals can implement to assist children to achieve writing-readiness.

Physical Foundations

One of the most important physical skills required to handwrite is stability, which develops progressively. (Bruni, 2006). The three main types needed for handwriting are:

1. Body stability – needed to create and maintain an upright posture

2. Shoulder stability – needed for support and to allow the arms to make the requisite movements for writing
3. Hand stability – allows the ulnar side to rest on the desk while supporting the radial side to hold and manipulate the pencil.

After stability has developed, a child must also acquire several aspects of manual dexterity, including reach, grasp, voluntary release, in-hand manipulation and bilateral hand use (Case-Smith, 2005).

These fine motor skills are necessary in order to hold and efficiently manipulate a pencil.

As seen in Fig 1, the most efficient pencil grasp, known as the 'dynamic tripod', requires a child to use a pincer grasp, while maintaining an open web space.

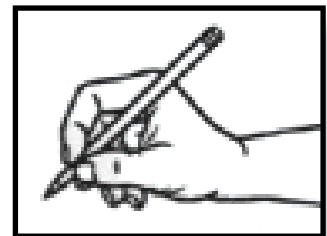


Figure 1.

To facilitate development of these skills, teachers should focus on activities which require 'pinching', finger isolation and separation of the two sides of the hand. Children using less efficient pencil grasps (for example, Fig. 2 & 3) are likely doing so due to underdeveloped fine motor skills.

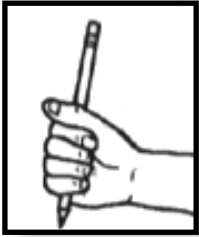


Figure 2.



Figure 3.

To facilitate development of fine motor skills within the context of the curriculum, teachers can create activities known as 'shoebox tasks'



which are effectively single activities with a clearly defined beginning and end. These activities can be adapted to suit varying aspects of the curriculum, whether colour and shape matching, or alphabet and number sequencing. Examples of such activities, from the OCC



Therapy Network, are shown above. These particular activities target skills including eye hand coordination, letter recognition, visual scanning and discrimination, sequencing and bilateral integration.

Pre-writing forms

These are shapes that form part of a developmental sequence and incorporate



Pre-writing forms.

the different pencil strokes required for the creation of letters. Strong evidence supports the theory that children are ready for writing once they have mastered the pre-writing forms up to and including the triangle, which generally occurs in children aged 5 years 6 months. (Beery, 1989; Benbow, Hanft, & Marsh, 1992; Weil & Amundson, 1994) Beery (1989) suggested that children must at least be able to draw an oblique cross before handwriting instruction is commenced. This shape requires mastery of midline crossing and drawing of diagonals.

Cognitive Skills

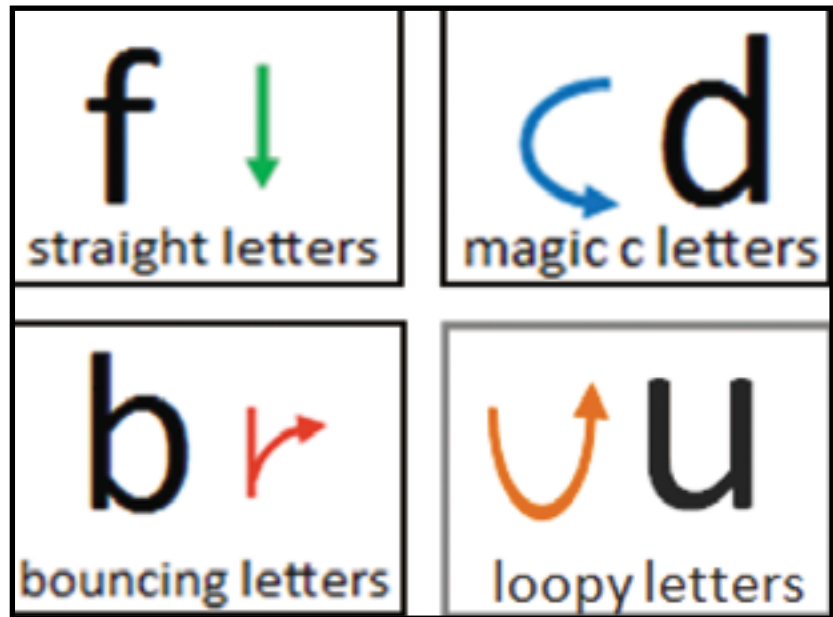
The ability to generate written text requires the execution of a complex array of cognitive and metacognitive skills. (Jones & Christensen, 1999) One of the most important of these, termed 'graphomotor automaticity', involves the ability to write letters automatically, without having to pause to think about what letters look like or how they are formed (Jones & Christensen, 1999). To achieve automaticity, children must:

- thoroughly know the alphabet sequence
- know without hesitation the subsequent letter without needing to sing the song
- know and use the correct formation of letters.

Children are said to have acquired automaticity once they are able to write the correct alphabet sequence in or under 60 seconds (Jones & Christensen, 1999). Mastery of this skill thus enables children to direct their attention towards the higher-level demands of writing, such as spelling and legibility.

To assist children to acquire automaticity, teachers should focus on activities which require sequencing of the alphabet letters. They can also assist children to develop correct letter formation by teaching letters in 'formation groups' of similarly shaped letters. For example:

- Straight letters – start at the top and go down
 - f, i, j, l, t, v, w, x, z
- Magic c letters – start with or include a 'c' shape
 - a, c, d, g, o, q, e, s
- Bouncing letters – start at the top, go down and bounce up to the right
 - b, h, k, m, n, r, p
- Loopy letters – start with a loopy 'u' shape
 - u, w, y



Teaching children *how* letters are formed, and therefore what *type* of letters they are, gives them the ability to self-correct formation errors and discriminate between similar looking letters. For example, knowing that b and d are in different groups helps to eliminate confusion.

The importance of correct letter formation cannot be overstated as bad habits, once formed, are extremely difficult to break.

Children who start to write their names with incorrect formation will often continue to do so, even after being taught the correct way.

Summary

In conclusion, children should not be expected to commence handwriting before they have acquired the requisite physical and cognitive skills. Given that many children are commencing Prep without these skills, and considering the current expectations of the National Curriculum, the onus for developing writing-readiness in children falls heavily onto early childhood professionals and Prep teachers. While it might be tempting to attempt to fast-track the process of handwriting instruction, this will only lead to incorrect letter formation and the

establishment of bad habits. Therefore, teachers and early childhood professionals must be aware of the fundamental skills required and facilitate children to achieve them before addressing handwriting.

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Bringing picture books alive

Lisa Hingst and Gwen Rayner



Gwen and Lisa are experienced early childhood and primary educators, advisers and consultants and together they form *The Butterfly Wings Team*. They have worked in partnerships as facilitators, trainers and researchers since 2004. The team are well known for their fun, interactive workshops full of child-centred activities, songs, rhymes and oral storytelling.



All children and most adults love a great story! Reading books and telling stories is one of the best ways to enhance literacy development and foster imagination in young children. Once you have found a great book with a story rich in language that captures the interest of the children, and makes them ask for it to be read again and again, don't put it back on the shelf for another day. If you find a story that is full of surprises, has characters that children can identify with and has rhyme, rhythm and repetition, then why not 'bring this picture book alive'!

Bringing picture books alive is about sharing quality picture books with children in a fun and interactive way. It is about promoting children's thinking, extending their learning and encouraging their language development. It is essentially a play-based response to literature. Play is the fundamental right of children all around the world. It is a way of building and shaping the architecture of the brain in a very unique way.

Play can be child-guided and adult-guided. Ann S. Epstein (2007), from the High Scope Educational Research Foundation, describes an effective early childhood program as having a combination of both. Adult-guided play could be argued to be intentional teaching. Jenny Connor (2010) explains:

Intentional educators create a learning environment that is rich in open-ended materials and interactions—with opportunities for children to practice choosing, thinking, negotiating, and

taking risks. It is inquiry-based and encourages exploration and problem-solving.

Bringing picture books alive is about guided play and intentional teaching. Take for example Pamela Allen's popular children's book *Who Sank the Boat?* (1982). The characters all live by the sea on Mr Pepper's place. One day the cow, the pig, the sheep, the donkey and the tiny



little mouse decide to go for a row in the bay. The story, rich in rhyme, invites the audience to guess which animal sank the boat. It is a book that children will want to read over and over again. It is also a book that can't just be put back on the shelf. It is perfect for *bringing alive* using guided play and intentional teaching and perfect for an Aussie Story Pouch (Story Sack, Story Box or Story Bag).

Elizabeth Sharp (2005) in her book *Learning through Talk in the Early Years* describes a story pouch as:

... a bag containing a book, plus items associated with the story, which might include characters in the form of soft toys or puppets. There might also be a non-fiction book on a similar theme, which allows children to experience different types of text. These items are used to help bring the story to life. They provide a visual and tactile stimulus that the children can use to take part in the telling or re-telling of the story.

Bringing *Who sank the boat* alive

The *Who Sank the Boat?* (Allen 1982) story pouch below, includes a story map to be used for retelling the story using small farm animals and a makeshift boat. The song *Who was it that Sank the Boat?* (Gwen Rayner, 2009) sung to the tune of *Mary had a Little Lamb* can be introduced after the first retelling of the story.

*Who was it that sank the boat?
Sank the boat? Sank the boat?
Who was it that sank the boat?
Was it the cow?
The cow? Was it the cow?
Noooooooooooooooooooo!*

(Chant this last line using an inquisitive voice)



Story map.

Alternatively, the song can be sung using animal hand puppets and a pretend boat easily created by placing a long skipping rope on the floor in a boat shape. The children could sway to the rocking of the boat and when the mouse attempts to climb into the boat, they could all fall out into the water. Splash!

The story pouch also contains many hands-on science activities helping to bring this picture book alive. These simple experiments give the children the opportunity to practice choosing, thinking, negotiating, and taking risks.

In this open-ended activity, the children are asked to test

a variety of objects for their float or sink qualities. The experiment can be set up daily if the children are interested.



Floating and sinking.

It is open-ended, in that there are endless objects that can be tested for floating or sinking. Fruit and vegetables can also be tested and would generate much discussion and hypothesis.

In this story pouch activity the children use aluminium foil to make a boat. The boats can



Aluminium foil boat.

be tested for buoyancy by placing objects into the boat one at a time until it sinks. Bolts, nuts and little plastic teddy bears can be used for this experiment. Children are usually quick to adjust their models after their first attempt. Again this gives them practice with choosing, thinking, negotiating, and taking risks.



Some wooden blocks can also be added and the children given the challenge to design *Mr Peffer's Farm* using the wooden blocks.

In the above picture, the children created the jetty and the bay.

Another great addition in this story pouch is the instructions and ingredients required to shake a bottle of cream until it turns into butter. This experience *brings alive* the concept 'from farm to table'. The children should notice the cream separating and the curds and whey forming.



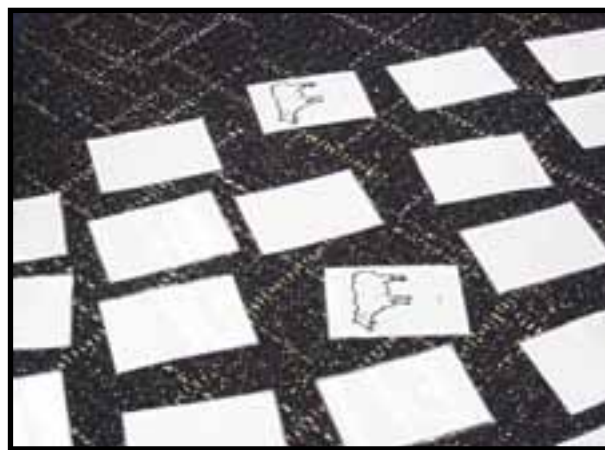
Making butter.

Picture cards featuring the animals from the story are also included in this story pouch. The picture cards are used for sorting and playing Snap, Old Maid, Memory and even a simple question and answer game based on the characteristics of the animals.

All books can be *brought alive* and further enhanced through song, rhyme and story. A

rhyme and song book is always a good addition to any story pouch. This story pouch contains a song and rhyme booklet all about farms, animals and boats. It is very easy to make up your own songs using the tune of a well known nursery rhyme. A good example of this is *Mr Peffer had a Farm* sung to the classic tune of *Old MacDonald had a Farm*.

So why not try to *bring a picture book alive* the next time you read! Use your imagination and a story pouch to bring a whole new experience to literacy in your centre or home. Remember, early literacy skills emerge in the context of imaginative play and loving relationships – those that are formed between carers and the children in their care.



Playing memory.

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<http://www.butterflywings.com.au>

Using picture books to build the foundations of global citizenship

Karena Menzie



Karena Menzie is a lecturer in Social Education in the School of Education at the University of Queensland. She is currently completing a PhD examining students' engagement with active citizenship and its benefits for their wellbeing. Karena is also an Education Consultant with the Global Learning Centre assisting pre-service and in-service teachers to embed global perspectives in their teaching through the Global Education Project.

So many policies – so little time!

With the recent introduction of the National Quality Framework (DWEER, 2011) and the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012), it is little wonder that educators in the early years are feeling overwhelmed as they try to bring these new policy obligations together with their existing work around the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF). In times like these, it is important to step back, take a breath and remind ourselves of the overall intention of education irrespective of whether that education is first words or first steps or coming to grips with year three science. There is a strong relationship between what students experience in school and the kind of human beings they will become. It is here they learn their first and most important lessons about who they are and how they are connected to others (Sapon-Shevin, 2010).

Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child remind us that every child has a right to an education that develops *their personality and talents to the full* (UNICEF, 2006). In the Australian context, this is highlighted through the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the second of which is that *all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens* (MCEETYA, 2008, 8). In particular, the Declaration acknowledges *the need to nurture*

an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship (MCEETYA, 2008, 4). As all early years educators know, the foundations for this begin in the long day care centres and the first years of schooling.

So where do we start?

As with all aspects of quality education, we start with the child. We start with items that are familiar to them and the stories that they love. Children's literature, and pictures books in particular, *captivate young children, and invite them to explore their own and other worlds* (Browett & Ashman, 2011, 18) as well as providing positive and effective ways of exploring controversial issues (Myhill, 2007). By carefully selecting the books that we read and the way that we encourage children to engage with those texts, we can stimulate their critical and creative thinking, promote intercultural understanding and build the foundations for ethical behaviour. Those of you working in schools will have already recognized three of ACARA's General Capabilities while the educators in long day care and Kindergarten settings will see the elements of cultural competence which resonate throughout Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Framework and the EYLF.



Below are just three examples of how to use picture books in this way.

A world of clothes



Mem Fox's *Shoes from Grandpa* and the Global Education Project's resource *Developing Global Citizens* can be used to explore the ways in which clothes are an expression of who we are and where we come from. Questions to explore can include:

- What are your favourite clothes?
- Why do you like these clothes?
- What other clothes do you wear?
- When do you wear these clothes and why?
- What kinds of activities, events or celebrations require special clothing?
- What kind of special clothing?



Developing vocabulary to express feelings and emotions

Renee Fogorty's *Fair skin black fella* can be used to explore the concept of discrimination and how it makes people feel. Read the first few pages then show



an enlarged version of the page where Neli and Lana tell Mary they don't want to play. Talk about how the children would feel if this happened to them. Then finish reading the rest of the story to see how Aboriginal Elder Old Ned resolves the conflict.

Recognising similarities and celebrating differences

Start with *Our Grandparents: A Global Album* by Ajmera, Kinkade and Pon. Explore the pictures and activities described. Then invite children to either bring in photos or draw pictures of themselves with their grandparents (or any

older relation or friend). Create a class collage of the pictures then compare the similarities whilst acknowledging differences, for example in clothing, settings, climate.



As these activities show, a simple book can be the starting point for not only addressing key aspects of the curriculum but also building the foundations for global citizenship. With so many wonderful books available in both hard copy and through sites like <http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>, the world is quite literally at an educator's fingertips.

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Lesson studies in Chinese kindergartens

Minyi Li, Jillian Fox and Julie Davis

Lesson studies are a powerful form of professional development (Doig & Groves, 2011). The processes of creating, enacting, analyzing, and refining lessons to improve teaching practices are key components of lesson studies. Lesson studies have been the primary form of professional development in Japanese classrooms for many years (Lewis, Perry & Hurd, 2009). This model is now used to improve instruction in many South-East Asian countries (White & Lim, 2008), as well as increasingly in North America (Lesson Study Research Group, 2004), and South Africa (Ono & Ferreira, 2010). In China, this form of professional development aimed at improving teaching, has also been adopted, originating from Soviet models of teacher professional development arising from influences post 1949 (China Education Yearbook, 1986). Thus, China too has a long history of improving teaching and learning through this form of school-based professional learning.

Lesson studies occur weekly at the 3rd kindergarten in the Shijingshan District in Beijing, China. This newly established kindergarten services 342 children in eleven classrooms and employs 47 teachers and is recognised as one of the leading kindergartens in the district. In mainland China, kindergartens provide education and care for three- to six-year-old children and are known by the name 'you er yuan'.

Lesson study, as a professional development tool, potentially enhances children's learning and teachers' pedagogical practices.

As noted, it has gained interest from teachers worldwide as it also encourages teachers to create their own communities of inquiry, research and support. Lewis (2002)

describes the *Lesson Study* as having four phases:

1. Development of the Lesson Plan by a teacher
2. Teaching the demonstration lesson (observed by other teachers)
3. Lesson debrief - observers of the lesson provide deep critiques and reflections about how instruction might be modified based on the evidence to improve learning outcomes for children
4. Consolidation of learning.

This process culminates in at least two tangible products: (a) the lesson plan, and (b) an in-depth study of the lesson that investigates teaching and learning interactions. This paper describes phases 2 and 3 of this model.

The context for the lesson ...

The setting for the lesson was the four year old classroom and present in the room were the 29 kindergarten children, the teacher conducting the lesson (district level master teacher), two support teachers, the six teachers observing the lesson. On this occasion, visiting academics from Beijing Normal University and Queensland University of Technology were also observers. All observers remained at the back of the room



The lesson.



Observing the lesson.

with a copy of the lesson plan to review. In the plan, the teacher identified the focuses of the lesson as building empathy for the characters in the story by understanding facial expressions and informal comparison of heights of the characters in the storybook. The children sat on chairs in a horseshoe shape in front of the teacher and Interactive White board (IWB). The lesson centred on a book titled *Little Mouse's Red Vest* by Yoshio Nakae. The story recounted the travels of a mouse and his encounters with various animals who wanted to wear his red vest. The book had been scanned so it could be displayed on the white board, effectively turning it into a big book.

The lesson...

The teacher introduced the book and read it initially from the Interactive White Board. The animals in the story got larger and larger and the vest continued to stretch so that eventually it was too big for the mouse to wear.



Comparing sizes.

The second time the teacher read the story she encouraged the children to predict which story character would appear next on the story and what their facial expression would be.

The teacher then used 3D images of the animals to compare the sizes of the animals and then order from smallest to largest.

The teacher concluded the lesson by reading the story again using the book. The children joined in predicting the story and repeating consistent phrases used in the story. Whilst the teachers and children interacted, the observers watched intently and wrote notes on what they heard and saw. The most enlightening and powerful component of this process was the debrief session that followed the lesson.

The feedback ...

The debrief process was a critical reflection and shared learning event for the purposes of improving teaching and learning.

This part of the lesson study was conducted in the staff room, set up as a conference room. The teacher who had conducted the



The feedback.

demonstration lesson sat in the middle of a line of colleagues. Peer Comments were moderated by another staff member, a 'head' (also the Vice-Director of the kindergarten and city level master teacher) or what we would call a lead teacher/teaching advisor who offered additional comments and reflections on the commentaries. One by one, the teachers offered comments, suggestions and insights into the lesson. For example, one teacher suggested that the mathematical comparisons discussed in the lesson should be expanded. The teacher focused on comparison of height and ordering. Other suggestions included comparisons related to other attributes such as legs of animals and other size attributes. Teachers also provided comments about ways to involve the children more actively, opportunities for enacting an integrated approach to literacy and numeracy, and comments on the use of open and closed questions. The academic visitors were also invited to add suggestions and solutions for improving the lesson.

The teacher, who was the centre of the feedback, welcomed the process and accepted both crucial and positive feedback in apparent good grace.

Three outstanding qualities of the lesson study ...

1. It is very efficient! It is cost and time effective as it happens in-house. This is especially important in a country like China that is seeking to invest heavily in education and educational reform.
2. It improves pedagogical processes by supporting sustained teacher-led improvement of classroom practices and pedagogies. Effective lesson study hinges on skilful observation and subsequent discussion.
3. It affirms and supports teacher professionalism. It provides teachers the opportunities to create professional learning communities, with ownership of professional development, and a sense of responsibility to their colleagues and children. An opportunity for teachers to be researchers and to test their own knowledge and expertise is a positive outcome of the process.

The lesson study is a wonderful example of inside-out reform, led from within the school rather than pushed into the school from outside.

It is a process that can be locally adapted, ownership is within the setting, and outcomes can be used to justify the effectiveness of teaching and learning. This insight from China offers another alternative for Australian early childhood educators to think about approaches to professional development and ways to build expertise and professionalism.

Grounding professional development in classroom practice offers a highly powerful means for early childhood educators to build teaching expertise.

About the authors

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Mathilda Element

Welcome to the first edition of media reviews for 2013. I hope the new school year has everyone itching to discover new resources and share ideas and opinions about how to use them. In the spirit of our earlier conversation in this journal about technology, we have been fortunate to be able to include a few reviews that cover various technological resources. We have a review of a software program (Smilebox), a review of a digital physical product (Bee-bots) and of course, our regular print-based media reviews (including both fiction and non-fiction books for children). I would like to once again invite any of our readers who are interested in becoming reviewers to please email me at Mathilda@ecta.org.au, as it is one of my great joys in life to pass on free resources to early childhood teachers (in exchange for their gorgeous words in the form of reviews, of course!) Happy reading!

Title: ICT - Programmable Floor Robots - Bee-Bots

Creator: Kate Wakefield
Publisher: Kate Wakefield
RRP: \$69.90
Age Appropriate: 4+
Focus: All Curriculum Areas
Reviewed: Rebecca Trimble-Roles

Bee-Bot is a bright and colourful programmable floor robot suitable for students in the Early Years from ages 4 - 8. This resource can be part of an integrated multimodal approach that enables young children to learn through play and hands-on experience. The Bee-Bot floor robots assist children in learning about control and directional language as well as providing an introduction to robotics. They can be purchased from Modern Teaching Aids at the website address www.teaching.com.au. They are available for \$69.90 each. Associated resources such as Mats and Computer CD-ROMs are also available.

When combined with the use of a Bee-Bot Mat, the Bee-Bot provides an avenue for adopting a multimodal approach to learning. It is not essential, however, that a Bee-Bot Mat be purchased commercially as one can be successfully created within the classroom (15cm X 15cm squares of any flat medium). This resource encourages problem solving abilities, both individually and as a group, through the use of directional and lateral thinking strategies. The Bee-Bot also enhances early Mathematical understandings about direction, positional relationships, left to right orientation and spatial awareness. In order to utilize the resource, children are required to process, articulate and comprehend the necessary instructions to operate the Bee-Bot appropriately. In order to articulate their understandings about the concepts explored, children can be given the opportunity to program the floor robot in response to their inquiries. The Bee-Bot programmable floor robots support the implementation of an inquiry-based learning approach. This resource is not just limited to the Mathematics or English curriculums but can also be integrated across into other curriculum areas such as Science and SOSE.



Title: Smilebox - Animation Story Platform

Creator: Andrew Wright

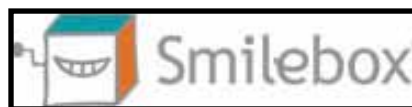
Publisher: Smilebox Inc

RRP:: Free

Age Appropriate: 5+

Focus: All Curriculum Areas

Reviewed:: Rebecca Trimble-Roles



The 'Smilebox Animated Story Platform' is suited for use by children eight years and older and focuses on editing, organizing and sharing photos, music and sending pre-packaged ecards. One can choose from unique multimedia designs and personalize the designs with photos, videos, music and words. These can reflect particular themes or interests. The designs can be uploaded and shared with friends, family or classmates via email, blog or burnt onto DVDs. Smilebox can be downloaded online at www.smilebox.com for free. If one wishes to include pictures and words of their own choice, the individual accessing Smilebox must upload these.

The Smilebox platform provides open-ended opportunities to create digital media presentations. These can then be used as a means for self-expression through editing, formatting, creating and conveying messages and meaning. The Smilebox site provides children with alternative means, as well as writing, to express themselves. Smilebox also encourages children to make real-world connections with their feelings and the audiences with whom they are communicating. The children can design digital creations such as birthday cards or newspaper articles, based on real events, which actually reflect what is going on in their lives in a real-world context. Smilebox is visually attractive to its interactive users as it provides a multitude of design possibilities. All facets of design including animation and music are available. In this way, the children are able to take control and claim ownership of their learning journey.

**Title: Feelings Series: I'm Sad and other tricky feelings
I'm Happy and other fun feelings
I'm Tired and other body feelings
I'm Busy: A story about feelings**

Author: Clare Hibbert
Illustrator: Simona Dimitri
Published By: Evans
ISBN: 9-780327-541996 (I'm Sad and other tricky feelings)
ISBN: 9-780237-541989 (I'm Happy and other fun feelings)
ISBN: 9-780237-542009 (I'm Tired and other body feelings)
ISBN: 9-780237-542016 (I'm Busy: A story about feelings)
RRP: \$18.95 each
Reviewed By: Teenah Schneider Founder/Director Passionate Minds Autism and Aspergers Support Centre

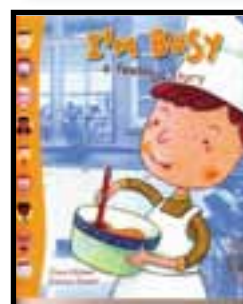
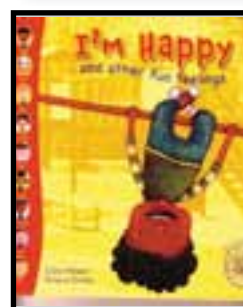
I really enjoy using this fiction picture books series with my clients. I work with children and young people living with Autism Spectrum Conditions, and these books have been a great resource. They deliver the ability to explicitly engage in conversation about feelings; when, where and why you might experience them.

The illustrator uses a mixture of drawings and photos to build colourful child friendly pages. Illustrations express clearly the facial expression for each feeling. Mini faces for each of the feelings in the book are along the base of each page so you can compare each expression. Facial expressions and communication are typically a challenge for children on the Spectrum. Children often need explicit support in this area to develop strategies to effectively and confidently communicate with peers. Each 'feeling' includes an example of UK sign language. The written component uses words and language supportive of early readers.

Notes for adults are included in the back of the book to support and extend interaction with the text.

Children of all ages can have something to gain from reading these books. Each book presents key messages in communication that are often taken for granted.

These hard-covered books are easy to find with an internet search. I strongly recommend this book series to teachers and parents. They are a wonderful resource.



Title : Ten Blue Wrens and what a lot of wattle!
Author & illustrator: Elizabeth Honey
Publisher: Allen & Unwin
ISBN: 978 174237 787 2
RRP: \$24.99
Reviewed by: Melindi Robertson (CoDirector, Mt Gravatt Kindergarten)

While this children's picture book has been described as an "absolutely Australian counting book", it lends itself to so much more – inquiry, questioning, recognising rhyme, discussing and sharing of ideas as well as the numeracy concepts expected in counting books (numeral recognition, 1:1 correspondence).

My pre-Prep kindergarten group greatly enjoyed the sound and 'feel' of the title, repeating this throughout the week and also substituting their own words 'ten blue xxxx' and 'what a lot of wattle' with relish.

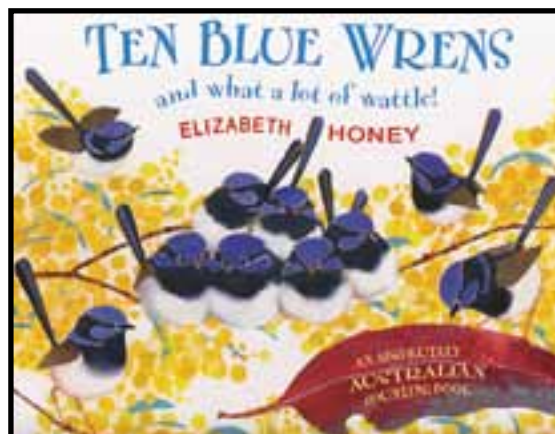
While the audience is early childhood, each age group may respond differently. Younger children will love the sounds of words and the bright illustrations, whereas Prep-age children can appreciate the wide range of visual details, especially with some objects waiting to be counted, but almost hidden.

Elizabeth Honey is an award winning writer and illustrator and her country upbringing and love of nature is apparent in her pictures. In an earlier interview, she explained that, in her books, she tries to convey to children 'This is for you ... This looks like fun', and this playfulness is definitely conveyed in this book. Interspersed among the usual counting sequence are concepts of *big mobs and trillions and billions and thrillions*.

Discussions arose throughout this book – which is the nipper, the little boy or the crab? Scoring goals in various football codes; nocturnal animals versus diurnal; and why are some male birds brightly coloured compared to the females? Why is the kelpie dog on the sheep's backs; and what are *four old ladies dressed in lace*? I also learnt that potoroos like truffles and other fungi and, yes, truffles do grow in Australia too! One page counts the number of dogs' legs, not the dogs, which led to much discussion.

This book was never able to be completely read at one sitting because of the children's involvement, our group kept returning to it or used it themselves to retell to peers on the couch during the session. They also noticed the endpapers were different, but were able to identify those pictures in the body. Elizabeth Honey used stencils with dabs of acrylic paint, and the front endpapers demonstrate this process.

The children and I enjoyed this book. It is available from good bookshops.



Title: Little Nelly's Big Book

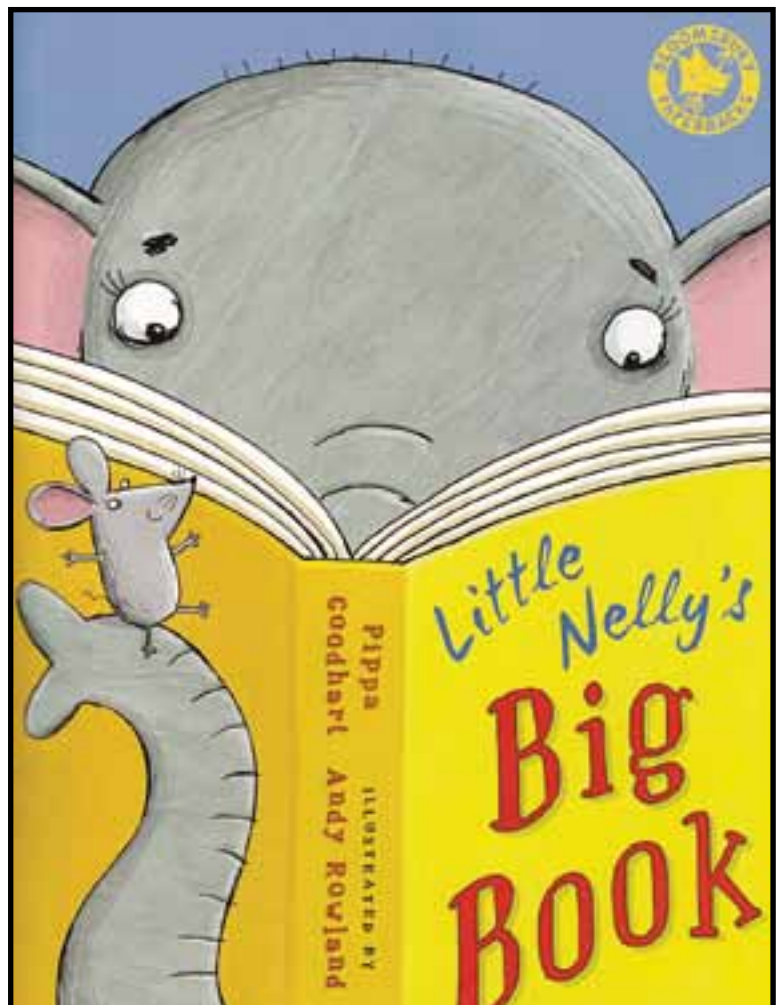
Author: Pippa Goodhart
Illustrator: Andy Rowland
Published By: Bloomsbury
ISBN: 9781 408 818459
RRP: \$14.99
Reviewed by: Christine Nolan

We all enjoyed learning with Little Nelly, an elephant who thought she was a mouse.

Nelly used her big book to discover who she was and all the information seemed to match ... she was a mouse for sure! The children's eyes grew larger and larger. They became incredulous as to how adamant Nelly became that she was definitely a mouse ... all the descriptions matched! We laughed at all her attempts to fit into the mouse household and we thought the mice were so kind to include her in their family. The underlying theme of acceptance struck a chord in many of the children. They loved the play on mixed-up identities and they all agreed on the important role of illustrations. One child summed up her learning when she said, 'This book told me you always have to look more and look closely before you decide!'

The illustrations in this book certainly added to the humour and understanding of its audience. Large, bold and colourful, they invited the reader into the action and were certainly a significant part to the story telling.

We compared this to a story we had read at Easter – *The First Easter Bunny* by Kate Walker – about a rabbit trying to be a chicken and found some similarities in the character trying to discover who it was. While this tale can be enjoyed on many levels, we felt it was most suited for children four to eight years. We rated it five stars!



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.

