



# ***Educating Young Children***

Learning and teaching in the  
early childhood years

Volume 19

Number 3,  
2013

Journal of the Early Childhood Teachers' Association Inc.

## **PUBLISHED BY**

Early Childhood Teachers'  
Association (ECTA Inc.)  
20 Hilton Road,  
Gympie, Qld. 4570

Copyright © 2013  
ECTA Inc.  
ISSN: 1323:823x

## **EDITORIAL PANEL**

Lynne Moore (Editor)  
Angela Drysdale  
Archana Sinh  
Sue Webster  
Mathilda Element  
Nebula Wild

## **PROOFREADING**

Angela Le Mare

## **ECTA JOURNAL LIAISON**

Lynne Moore  
e. [journal@ecta.org.au](mailto:journal@ecta.org.au)

## **DESIGN**

Graphic Skills Pty Ltd

## **PRINTING**

Cornerstone Press

The ECTA Coordinating Committee and the EYC Journal Editorial Panel wish to acknowledge the contributions of the children for the illustrations used for the journal cover and other ECTA printed material.

## **Address all correspondence and advertising enquiries to**

Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA Inc.)  
20 Hilton Road, Gympie Qld 4570  
Ph: 0418 157 280 Fax: 07 5481 1148  
e. [info@ecta.org.au](mailto:info@ecta.org.au) w. [www.ecta.org.au](http://www.ecta.org.au)

## **Journal contributions**

Articles and ideas for possible inclusion in the journal, following review by the editorial panel, are welcomed. See inside back cover for submission guidelines.

## **Advertising rates (GST inclusive)**

	1 Issue	2 Issues	3 Issues
Full Page	\$451.00	\$407.00 per issue	\$363.00 per issue
Half Page	\$269.00	\$242.00 per issue	\$214.50 per issue
Quarter Page	\$181.50	\$148.50 per issue	\$121.00 per issue
Eighth Page	\$121.00	\$88.00 per issue	\$71.50 per issue

## **Inserts**

\$200 for an insert to be included. Written notification of intent is required, as there is a limit on the number of inserts per issue.

## **Dates for contributions**

No 1	Last week in January
No 2	Last week in May
No 3	Last week in September

## **Advertising policy**

ECTA Inc. reserves the right to determine the suitability and quality of any camera-ready artwork supplied by advertisers. Advertisements in *Educating Young Children* (EYC) are the responsibility of the advertiser. While EYC makes reasonable efforts to ensure that no misleading claims are made by advertisers, responsibility is not accepted by EYC or ECTA Inc. for statements made or the failure of any product or service to give satisfaction. Inclusion of a product or service should not be construed as an endorsement or recommendation by ECTA Inc. Advertisers should comply with the Trade Practices Act 1974.

## **Copyright ©**

No part of this journal may be copied or reproduced in any form without written permission. To the best of the editors' knowledge all details were correct at the time of printing.

## **EYC subscriptions**

Subscriptions to the journal are included in your ECTA membership. Single back copy issues can be purchased for \$15 plus postage (GST inclusive).

## **EYC disclaimer**

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

## **Editorial policy**

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

## **Registered Teachers - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements**

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

## **Online access to journal**

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

## **Photographs**

All photographs are attributed to the author unless otherwise noted.

# Contents

## Editorial

From the President .....	Kim Walters	2
From the Editorial Panel .....	Lynne Moore	4

## Stories

Family-centred practice and Kindy: Thinking outside the box .....	Laura Ballantyne	5
Environments for teaching mathematics: – supporting students with special needs .....	Heidi Clausen	7

## Conversations

Play: what do parents think? .....	Marilyn Casley	10
Katherine Miles .....		10
Hayley Matthew .....		11
Claire Going .....		12
Abbie Morrissey .....		13

## Environments

Outdoor environments – Dry Creek Bed on a Budget .....	Laura Ballantyne	14
Making the most of space .....	Leanne Hunter	17

## Partnerships

Literacy in kindergarten .....	Robyn Whiting and Karen Dooley	19
Monitoring literacy and numeracy progress through <i>Early Start</i> .....		21

## Feature Articles

Calming our students' lives .....	Maggie Dent	23
A practical explanation of how students learn .....	Iain Hodge	26
Going online: young children and teachers accessing knowledge through web interactions .....	Susan Danby	30
Making class movies – using technology with little people .....	Jeff Licence	33
C.A.L.M: Strategies to manage sensory processing disorder and children's behaviour .....	Joe Larcom and Robyn Sims	35
The role of percussion in early childhood education .....	Brendan Gilmour	37
Artful Building: integrating art appreciation and block play .....	Rebecca M. Giles and Paige Vitulli	40

## Media Reviews

Introduction .....	Mathilda Element	43
Are Trees Alive? .....	Christine Nolan	43
Gracie and Josh .....	Allison Borland	44
The Coat .....	Melindi Robertson	45
All Monkeys Love Bananas .....	Sue Webster	46
Never Lie on a Lion .....	Kim Mostyn	47
Who Lives Here? .....	Tanya Dawson	48



## *From the President*

*Kim Walters*

*This year ECTA celebrates 40 years of dedication to the support of early childhood professionals across Queensland.*

ECTA began in 1973 when the initial meeting at Bardon State Preschool, Brisbane was organised by Gail Halliwell and Jeanette O'Shea. Twenty-one teachers, employed in the first State Preschool Centres to open in Queensland, formed the State Preschool Teachers' Association. These teachers, scattered throughout Queensland, knew their major professional need was to share their experiences to improve their ability to manage troubling events and incidents.

In 1976, the name was changed to the Early Childhood Teachers' Association, reflecting membership recognition that an Association was needed that would serve the professional needs of teachers working in educational programs for children from birth to eight years of age. ECTA continues to provide professional support for thousands of teachers and professionals working across all sectors of early childhood education and care.

Many ECTA members who began their involvement in the 1970s and 1980s have made huge contributions over long periods. Their contributions have been honoured by the awarding of life membership. In 1998, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Association, the first life memberships were awarded. The awards are made 'as an appreciation of contributions and dedication to the field'.

Sadly several life members of ECTA have passed away. These include Gerald Ashby (1998), Lil Gwyther (2001) and Von Davis (2002). Current

ECTA life members are Gail Halliwell (1998), Jeanette O'Shea (1998), Carole Wilde (1999), Debbie Gahan (2000), Cathy Holyoak (2003), Noeleen Christensen (2004), Pam Fulmer (2006), Mark Cooper (2007), Toni Michael (2009), and Robbie Leikvold (2013).

ECTA membership during 2013 reached 760 members. Having a large membership base provides ECTA with funds to support our regional groups who in turn support our regional members. Our membership base also provides a powerful voice to advocate for early childhood pedagogy at a state and federal level.

ECTA strives to provide networking opportunities and high quality professional development for our members and early childhood colleagues. This is achieved through our Annual Conference, *Educating Young Children* journal, eNEWS, website, Facebook page and regional groups. Whilst many associations outsource the management of these events and publications all ECTA activities continue to be carried out by an amazing team of volunteers.

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

Thank you to the website committee for their support throughout the year. We are currently in the process of upgrading the site to make it more user friendly for administrators and users. A special thank you goes to Roslyn Heywood who continuously updates the website professional development calendar with PD opportunities. A thank you also to Bron MacGregor who coordinates the ECTA eNEWS



which, on a monthly basis, keep members up to date with issues and information. This year our Members Centre resources have been made more easily accessible with direct links from the homepage to the Journal, Videolink and (conference) Handouts sections.

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

Also, thank you to Allison Borland and Bec Trimble-Roles, for their support in establishing the ECTA Facebook page. If you have a Facebook account, and if you haven't already done so, please LIKE us at [www.facebook.com/ectaqlld](http://www.facebook.com/ectaqlld).

ECTA believes networking between colleagues from all sectors of early childhood education and care is a key component to successful professional development. To this end ECTA supports the establishment and facilitation of ECTA Groups that promote networking at a local level. Some of these Groups have existed since the beginning of the Association in the 1970s.

During the year ECTA Groups Coordinator, Libby Gaedtker continued her work supporting regional groups across the state. Libby's role is to inform the groups of professional development opportunities, pass on information from the committee and maintain a webpage for each of the regional groups. Libby attends regional professional events to help facilitate the event and to promote ECTA membership.

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

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

Thank you to the dedicated conference committee who once again did an outstanding job with new life member Robbie Leikvold

co-coordinating the event alongside life member Toni Michael. Life member Pam Fulmer once again took on the demanding role of presenter coordinator and provided beautiful floral arrangements for the conference. Pam joined fellow life member Noleen Christensen to man the Conference administration stand. It is amazing to see our life members still actively involved in supporting ECTA.

Organisation for next year's conference to be held at Sheldon Event Centre on 28th June 2014 is well under way with the confirmation of Marc Armitage as our keynote speaker. If you would like to help out please contact Toni at [conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au](mailto:conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au). Please enjoy the enclosed DVD of master classes by Iain Hodge and Steven Francis recorded at the 38th Annual Conference this year.

Thanks also to Lynne Moore for her continued coordination of the journal committee. Lynne has worked with her committee to create a professional well respected journal that is current, practical and relevant. The submission of articles from colleagues in the early childhood field is a vital component to the journal's success. The committee are always looking for helpers to source articles. Contact Lynne at [journal@ecta.org.au](mailto:journal@ecta.org.au) for information on joining the committee. If you would like to submit an article the website has style guides and further information.

***Nearly 95% of our committee and subcommittee members renominate each year for their positions. I believe this is a clear sign of their enjoyment in the role and their passion for early childhood and in particular their commitment to ECTA.***

I would like to thank our active life members and members of our state coordinating, journal, web and conference and regional group committees for their time and dedication to ECTA during 2013. Without their support ECTA would not be the strong professional organisation that it is. I wish you all well for the 2014 year. Please contact me at [president@ecta.org.au](mailto:president@ecta.org.au) anytime if you wish to discuss ECTA or your involvement in one of the committees.

Kim



### *From the editorial panel*

*Lynne Moore*

Families are a child's first educator. Indeed, they are fundamental to delivering a holistic and successful early learning program. In this issue of *Educating Young Children* (EYC), our authors highlight the importance of working in partnership with families.

Thinking outside of the box, Laura Ballantyne reflects on her own parents experiences of kindergarten to discover that the individual needs of families can extend beyond educational and program involvement.

Marilyn Casley asks, *Play - what do parents think?*, and ponders whether from time-to-time, as early childhood educators, we get caught in 'taken-for-granted' practices. When was the last time you stopped to ask parents what they think? In *Conversations* parents Katherine, Hayley, Claire and Abbie share their beliefs about play and its value.

In *Environments* EYC member Sue Webster discovers two outdoor environments offering opportunities for parents, children and staff to connect and collaboratively undertake projects that enhance gardens, play spaces and sustainable practices.

All parents want the best for their children – we want them to grow up healthy, happy and to live a meaningful life as adults, writes Maggie Dent, in the first of our feature articles. One of the best ways to do this, she says, is by calming our children's lives.

Jo Larcom and Robyn Sims agree. Communication between parents, teachers and other care givers, they say, is essential to ensure everyone has the same understanding of the child's needs as well as strategies which can help the child to settle and focus for optimal learning and socialisation.

In what ways do use technology to support relationships with families? Susan Danby reminds us that technologies are very often introduced to children through the contexts of the home and community. Using technologies, Susan suggests, can support engagement in the cultural and everyday experiences of home, an early learning program, school and community.

The first sound we hear and feel, is the rhythm of our mother's heartbeat in the womb. What better place to start, says Brendan Gilmour, *to inspire and empower the next generation to become lifelong learners ... and lovers ... of music!*

Finally, find out Mathilda's favourite picture books as you delve into another great selection of media reviews including the 2013 Picture Book of the Year *The Coat*.

Please enjoy our selections.

With best wishes from the team

Lynne, Angela, Sue, Mathilda, Archana and Neb

**COULD YOUR EMPLOYEES LIVE WITH HALF?**



YourSuperFuture is a **FREE** online advice tool to help your employees look at their super, and start the process of securing their financial future.



**1300 360 507**      **qiec.com.au**

\*According to Rabodirect, Eureka Report published 25 July 2012. This information is of a general nature and does not take account of your individual financial situation, objectives or needs. Before acting on this advice, you should consider the appropriateness of the advice, having regard to your objectives, financial situation and needs. You should obtain a Product Disclosure Statement (PDS) and consider the PDS before making any decision. If you require specific advice, you should contact a licensed financial adviser. QIEC Super Pty Ltd ABN 81 010 887 480, the Trustee of QIEC Super ABN 15 549 636 673, is Corporate Authorised Representative No. 268804 under Australian Financial Services Licence No. 238507 and is authorised to provide general financial product advice in relation to superannuation. This limited personal advice is provided by IFAA Pty Ltd ABN 28 081 966 243 under AFSL No. 238507.

# ***Family-centred practice and Kindy: Thinking outside the box***

***Laura Ballantyne***



Laura Ballantyne is a Kindergarten Teacher at C&K QUT Kelvin Grove Community Childcare Centre.

For early years educators, the involvement of families is a fundamental aspect to delivering a holistic and successful program (Porter, 2003). Family is a child's initial source of contact with a culture and learning environment, often instilling socially acceptable norms and values, as well as socially regulating patterns of behaviour including actions, language, non-verbal language, concepts of space, values of learning and education, and the role, rights and responsibilities of the child (Cartledge & Feng, 1996; Porter, 2003).

Family and community involvement is also a priority within all levels of legislation and curriculum, from ACECQA'S National Quality Standards, to the *Early Years Learning Framework*, the *Queensland Kindergarten Learning Guideline* and C&K's curriculum *Building Waterfalls*. Quality Area 6 and sections 6.1 and 6.2 of the National Quality Standard, identify the importance of developing collaborative partnerships with families and communities by creating and maintaining respectful and supportive relationships that promote the beliefs, views and values of individual families (ACECQA, 2012). In addition to this, *Building Waterfalls* strongly advocates the involvement of families and community throughout its shared understandings based on connectedness to oneself, the community and the environment; enlargement and promotion of personal and social dignities and rights; listening and being open to new possibilities, perspectives, cultures, values and learning environments; and through

exploring one's ideas, experiences, learning and representation of knowledge and understanding (C&K, 2011).

At a personal pedagogical level, I strongly believe in the involvement of parents and the wider community within my kindergarten program. Underpinning my socio-cultural pedagogy is Vygotsky's belief that learning is socially, culturally and environmentally defined and that, through children's interactions within these discourses, the foundations for current and future learning and societal involvement are established (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

Despite multiple ongoing initiatives, that utilised a variety of multi-modal mediums, to involve parents, families and caregivers in our community of learners, many were not engaging with the kindergarten program. I found myself taking on a new role in trying to organise and plan play-dates between families who had never met, often hearing myself identifying children to their friend's parents in the playground and saying 'I can't give you their parent's number, but would you like me to give them yours'. Through our discussions, it became apparent that many parents were feeling socially disconnected from friendship groups as a result of busy lifestyles, work commitments and changing family dynamics. They were also missing out on forming friendships with other families at Kindy, due to the varying times that parents were dropping off and picking up their children, and the rushed need in the morning to get to work, or in the afternoon, to start the night time routine. This also meant that families did

not necessarily have the time to look through our daily journal, wall displays or their child's portfolio.

*Upon reflection, I realised that my own parents still have close friends today that they met during my siblings' and my Kindy years and that whilst I was trying to foster involvement between the families and our kindergarten program, I was not fostering or scaffolding the evolvement of a Kindergarten community.*

I started to think outside the box as to what I could do to promote a sense of community and, in collaboration with many parents, we arranged a Kindy play-date. The play-date was simple, it was held in the park behind Kindy on Saturday morning and everybody brought food to share. All family members and caregivers were invited. I also displayed our learning journal, some examples of the children's portfolios and NQF information, as well as providing the opportunity for parents to contribute to our centre's Quality Improvement Plan. The play-date was a big success! The children were so excited to play with their friends outside of Kindy and many of the parents met new families. The play-date also enabled families to discuss our Kindy curriculum and program as well as transitioning to Prep with me.

I have found that more parents now read our daily journal and look at our wall displays and portfolios. Parents are also staying longer in the morning and afternoon to talk to other parents, are involved and interested in our Kindy program and curriculum, and are more interested in volunteering for excursions and other centre



involvements such as our Parent Advisory Group. There are also significantly more play-dates between families outside of Kindy and whole group birthday party invitations as opposed to only inviting a select few. Another play-date is scheduled due to the positive comments and feedback from all families who attended.

*As an educator, I have reflected on my practice and have identified that, in order to establish a community of learners, I also needed to cater for the individual needs of my parents beyond educational and program involvement.*

My parents next year may have completely different needs but this journey has enabled me to become aware of the important role we have in all of our families' lives and how having a truly holistic approach to early years education and by thinking outside of the box can have such a positive impact on the daily implementation and involvement in an early years setting.

## Bibliography

ACECQA. 2012. *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. Accessed 20th September, 2013, from, [files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF03-Guide-to-NQS-130902.pdf](http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/NQF03-Guide-to-NQS-130902.pdf).

Bodrova, E. & Leong, D.J. 1996. *Tools of the mind: The Vygotskian approach to early childhood education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cartledge, G & Feng, H. 1996. The relationship of culture and social behaviour. In G Cartledge (Ed.), *Cultural diversity and social skills instruction*. Champaign, IL: Research Press, pp. 13-43.

Creche and Kindergarten Association. 2011. *Building waterfalls: A guideline for children's learning and for teaching in kindergarten*. Brisbane, QLD: C&K Limited.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). 2009. *The early years learning framework for Australia: Belonging, being and becoming*. Accessed 20th September, 2013, from [http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy\\_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf).

Porter, L. 2003. *Young children's behaviour*. London, UK: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). (2006). *Early years curriculum guidelines*. Brisbane, QLD: QSA.



# ***Environments for teaching mathematics: supporting students with special needs***

***Heidi Clauscen***



Heidi is the support teacher for Literacy and Numeracy at Strathpine State School in the Brisbane Region. She embraces a multisensory approach to learning when working with students with learning difficulties. Heidi supports teachers, parents and auxiliary staff to adjust their planning and modify their teaching strategies to suit the children's preferred learning styles and academic abilities.

The mathematics focus in our Early Years classes at Strathpine State School has been to develop and support inclusivity for all children by providing quality learning opportunities that make connections and are relevant to their everyday life experiences. One action to enhance foundational learning in mathematics for all students was to create a mathematics trolley stocked with interesting, real world objects such as buttons, bottle tops, decks of cards, paddle pop sticks of all sizes and colours, matchsticks, shells, paper streamers, ribbons/wool, elastic, straws, plastic toy animals, plastic money, play-dough and calculators as well as abstract mathematic materials such as number lines, hundreds boards, wooden solid shapes, counters, unifix cubes, 100-string beads, five and ten frames etc. In this story Lynden Mackay and Helene Myers, Prep teachers at Strathpine State School, discuss how they use the mathematics trolley to support students with special needs in collaboration with the *Early Years Learning Framework* for Australia.

### **Belonging to a mathematical culture**

Mathematics is immersed in our students' everyday lives. Time concepts order their personal activities and incorporate routine patterns. Environmental number symbols surround them and data is constantly being collected and reflected upon. When we first presented the trolley to the students they were very enthusiastic to use materials with which they were familiar. Watching how the

students chose to manipulate these materials was interesting and presented opportunities for formative assessment. For example: free play with the materials lends itself to observations of sorting and related language. Incorporating the mathematics trolley into our class mathematics routine has definitely enhanced our mathematics culture by providing opportunities to pose questions that highlight each individual's level of understanding.

### **Being mathematicians**

Encouraging all children to be mathematicians, means providing activities that are important to the children at that moment in time. For example: using themes and interests that the students present. Using the real world materials on the trolley, assisted the children in making



*Lynden Mackay and Helene Myers, Prep teachers at Strathpine State School*

mathematical links to curriculum topics. Our beach trip presented many mathematical opportunities. For example: using shells to represent quantity and measurement unit count. The students loved using the plastic bugs from the trolley to classify and count when we were studying meal worms from *The Living Things Unit* in Science. Observing the students being mathematicians at outdoor play has highlighted the effectiveness of incorporating real world materials. The students naturally measure and make patterns in the sand with equipment, count fence panels when calculating the length of a race, and explore capacity when filling buckets and containers with water.

## Becoming mathematicians

Kindergarten/Day Care to Prep is seen as a developmental 'milestone' by expanding experiences and knowledge. When the students saw the dominoes on the trolley they wanted to use them the way they had the previous year as a knock-over stack or as construction pieces. Currently they are starting to identify numbers and use subitising to count on as beginning addition. The students then applied their number knowledge to follow the procedures of the domino game. Play-dough is still great for pretend cooking but has evolved into a material for exploring number symbol construction, quantity, shape and fractions. For example: one student can make a play-dough shape and the partner can cut the shape in half.

*It is vital that all the children participate in mathematical learning experiences that are challenging (with assisted scaffolding for their needs) so that they can reflect on their growth of understanding and skill, thus becoming positive and successful mathematicians.*

One student highlighted this perfectly when identifying the quantity of dots on a card. 'I didn't have to count that 'cause I know that many now!' While observing another student using playing cards, counters, and cubes

to match the number symbol and quantity, mathematical progression was noted as the student realised she didn't have enough and was able to get more. ('I need another one') whereas previously one-to-one correspondence was not evident.

## Supporting students with special needs

After observing the trolley resources in action, interacting with the children and discussing learning experiences with the teachers several suggestions can be made to support mathematics for students with special needs.

*The major focus is utilising each student's strength in ways of learning by incorporating appropriate modifications.*

Overall, allow each student to self-select resources or state their interests when planning directed learning experiences. Below are some general mathematical-related strategies for supporting students with identified learning needs.

### Strategies for students with ASD:

- break tasks into small steps and provide prompts to help the student move through the steps
- prompt for social actions needed. For example: look at the person you are talking to or we will wait while Sam has his turn
- repeat activities in a variety of settings to support generalizing the learning to new situations.

A learning experience: Word cards with inside/outside are selected and students place an animal in a paddock according to positional language. Next step, a dice is tossed to determine the number of animals inside or outside. Repeat in various settings (e.g. inside/outside sand play box, doll house, pockets, lunch box, toy box, classroom ...).

## Strategies for students with intellectual impairment:

- repeat activities to consolidate learning and allow mastery
- make clear links for student with what has been learnt previously and link with everyday life
- allow for a variety of ways of responding to information (auditory/visual/kinaesthetic)
- allow for thought processing difficulties (speed and organisation of thought processes, logically sequencing ideas, interpreting and synthesising information).

A learning experience: Present a repeating pattern with materials. Read the pattern together – ‘bear, block, bear, block.’ The student copies the pattern by placing bears and blocks in their own constructed pattern. Next step, the student selects different materials to make a repeating pattern at their own pace and then reads that pattern.

## Strategies for students with speech-language impairment:

- scaffold language structure with specific language modelled by teacher. For example: six add three is nine. Ask student to repeat specific language modelled
- simplify teacher talk by using shorter sentences which are clear and direct, use concrete vocabulary, emphasize key points and repeat information
- explicitly link new information/ concepts to student’s prior knowledge
- in all teacher talk situations use visual cues. For example: pictures, drawings, photos and demonstrations.

A learning experience: Students work with a partner and use craft sticks as an informal unit to measure the length of an arm. Teacher reviews the importance of end-to-end placement. Then says, ‘Find how many craft sticks match your partner’s arm length.’ Each student states the number of the unit count. Next step, the students decide to measure the fence and discover that the craft stick is not a good unit to measure the fence. Students look for a longer stick and find a metre stick in the block area. A small group of students discuss what they will do to measure the fence and apply their ideas.

These suggested learning experiences are only a small sample of modifications for students with special needs.

*Valuing students’ unique abilities supports a positive sense of mathematics in their lives. Every child, every day, should succeed at something.*



### *Play: what do parents think?*

*Marilyn Casley*



Marilyn is a consultant and Associate Lecturer in the School of Human Services and Social Work in the Bachelor of Child and Family Studies at Griffith University. Marilyn has over 30 years experience in children's and community services. Marilyn's research interests focus around using conversational processes to develop resilience and leadership skills in young children and the development of pedagogical leadership and integrated practice in children's and human services.

*Parents and other primary carers have the most direct responsibility and influence on young children's wellbeing. Early childhood educators support this role by providing settings for young children that meet their individual needs for emotional security, physical health, socialisation, cultural identity and stimulating play-based experiences (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009b).*

In order to provide an environment that supports each child it is important that early childhood educators understand the experiences of play children have at home. The types of play children experience at home give insight into each parent's beliefs about play, and the value they attach to it. These play experiences can also be an indication of how parents understand the relationship between play and a child's emotional security, physical health, socialisation and cultural identity.

#### **Katherine Miles**



Katherine is the mother of three beautiful children, two little girls aged six and five and one little boy aged one. The girls go to Prep and Kindy respectively. Katherine has a very full-time job managing the children and their home.

**When children play I see ...** them doing what comes naturally, learning, experimenting, growing, building memories, testing, discovering, problem solving, self-expression, enjoyment, love of life, creativity, abstract thinking, social cognition, release of energy!

**I think of play as a way of learning ...** is a child's 'job' and is essential in the areas of problem solving, language acquisition, literacy, numeracy and social, physical, and emotional skills. I also believe that play is essential for their cognitive, emotional and social development and in building physical skills, self-esteem and confidence. I love watching them act out different 'real-life' situations and scenarios and coming up with different responses and solutions.

**To make my child's play experiences the best they can be I ...** provide them with different and age appropriate 'tools' and then sit back and watch! I will ask questions to help guide the direction of their play but I do not dominate it. We have both indoor and outdoor play areas and, within reason, I give them the freedom to explore and experiment as they like.



## Hayley Matthew



Hayley is a Project Officer for the Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee Secretariat, Queensland

Department of Education, Training and Employment. This is a photo of playtime at the Matthew household! Kesarnee (left) and Zakius (right) both enjoy playing with each other every day.

**When children play I see ...** laughter, freedom, happiness, joy and kids just being kids. It brings a smile to my face to see children interacting with kids their age and being able to create stories, be adventurous and use their imagination. You can see a lot of emotion when kids play because they want to be this character or this idol because in their eye that's who they look up to.

### **I think of play as a way of learning**

... understanding, communicating and interacting. Children learn so much from play. It teaches them social skills such as sharing, taking turns, self-discipline and tolerance of others. It's also what children want to do and what they choose to do when given the freedom, independence, time and space to determine their own behaviour. Play is very important in any child's life!

### **To make my child's play experiences the best they can be I ...**

try to be creative in any way possible, shape or form but at the same time make the play experience educational for my children. I also let my kids play indoors and outdoors. It's important for my kids to understand that playing outdoors is ok but whilst doing this I teach them the safety, boundaries and keep them active to ensure that at the same time they are also exercising.

As early childhood educators, we wonder whether we are caught in 'taken-for-granted' practices that value a 'play-based' program with particular types of adult-child interactions. In order to 'think otherwise' about play and what children learn from play, it is important to have open dialogue with significant others in the lives of children. Inviting parents into the dialogue, gives early childhood educators differing perspectives on the importance of play in a child's development. This allows us to reflect on the environment and interactions we provide and ask ourselves if these are relevant for all children.

Having conversations with parents, provides the opportunity for dialogue about the value of play and what they believe their children will learn through play. The following questions can help educators to begin the dialogue with parents:

What do you think your child learns through play?

What stands out for you when you see children playing?

What do you think about play as a way of learning?

Some parents place little value on play and others see it as very important. How parents understand play, influences the types of experiences they provide for their children. This can reflect their experiences of play as children. Learning about the play experiences of parents when they were children enables educators to lead into talking about play as a basis for learning and development. Together the parent and the educator can decide the kinds of experiences that are important for the development of the child. Talking with parents about their play experiences when they were children, provides an opportunity to discuss the importance of play. It also is an opportunity to find out more about how parents know what to do to help their child learn and develop.

Educators could start a conversation with the following questions:

Please share your own experiences of play as a child.

What has helped you to know what to do for your child's learning and development?

What was good about your early play experiences?

What do you think is different for children now?

What would you want to stay the same? Is there anything you would like to change?

What could you and I do to make your child's play experiences the best they could be?

Having these conversations are very helpful in getting to know what parents think about play and how their own experiences have influenced what they want and do for their child. These conversations strengthen the partnership between parents and early childhood educators as they work together to provide play experiences in the early childhood program that fit with the goals and aspirations parents have for their child.

*Children want to feel a sense of belonging within early childhood programs. Recognising the significance that a child's family and community play in a child's life is important in giving a child the best start in life.*

Educators need to know about each child and the context from which they come. How a child is included in play will have an affect on how the child learns, develops and understands the world. Beliefs, child rearing practices, children's abilities and the views parents hold about their child, sometimes differ among parents and between early childhood educators. The conversations educators have with parents will better equip them to give children an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging, engage in building healthy relationships and enjoy the time they spend in the early childhood setting.

## Claire Going



Claire is a Communications Officer for the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment. She and her husband Dean are parents to Fraser, 13 months.

**When children play I see ...** learning, communicating, interacting and developing. Children are also masters of imitation, I've noticed, even from a very young age! My son Fraser recently turned one, and his latest obsession is ball-play. One afternoon, he watched his Nan and I throwing and catching his ball and it didn't take him long to grasp the concept of releasing it from his hands and pushing it towards us. He can now achieve quite a decent throw. It's amazing to see him building on his skills each day.

**I think of play as a way of learning ...** as it gives children the opportunity to discover their world through all of their senses. Touch is a particularly important sense at Fraser's age as he enjoys exploring various textures and shapes. Having a wide range of experiences and lots of stimulation is helping his brain to develop. I have particularly enjoyed watching Fraser learning to communicate through play. He is developing his own little sense of humour and has quickly learnt how to initiate interactive games like 'chasey'.

**To make my child's play experiences the best they can be I ...** ensure he has plenty of opportunity to interact with others. I returned to work part-time when Fraser was nine months old and he is currently attending a wonderful day care centre three days per week. I believe that day care has helped him to develop early social skills; he has some great little buddies to play and learn with there. On his days at home with me and on weekends, we get out and about as much as we can so Fraser can meet and play with various friends and relatives.

## Abbie Morrissey



I am the parent of a nine-year-old and a five-year-old. Before I was

a parent, I was a special education teacher and since becoming a parent have become a much better teacher because I now see each child as a loved son or daughter. If I had spare time I would be a better drummer, but the audience in my mind thinks I'm awesome.

**When children play I see ...** kids at work. Work that can be hard, work that can be delightful, work that can be challenging but rewarding. We often see children enjoying their work but, just as for adults, there are times when work isn't fun. There are times when playing is a steep learning curve. At these times, parents often step in to moderate and I am certainly guilty of that. As parents we feel social pressure to have children with well-regulated emotions and the manners of a duchess but the truth is that, if you plonked me into the middle of a play park with a bunch of adults I didn't know, I would probably go and sit under a tree and read a book. However, we expect our kids to go and interact with other children with social finesse. I have spent considerable time schooling myself to stand back and wait to see how my children

can navigate their own social minefields during play, to experience the prickliness of negotiating and releasing control. It doesn't always work out and then I step in and offer some observations and ideas when necessary.

### **I think of play as a way of learning ...**

Actually I see play as the only way of learning. Apart from the obvious social and emotional lessons that play gives us (which to me is the important stuff), play ticks the boxes of all the curriculum areas. Jumping puddles ticks off physical education, falling over covers physics, grazing your knee covers biology, holding your breath and counting to ten so you don't cry covers numeracy, putting on the band aid covers health and hygiene, asking your brother not to push you again covers language and literacy!

### **To make my child's play experiences the best they can be ...**

I play too! Even though I am itching to sit on the bench and thumb through my newest magazine, I take my shoes off, climb up the rope web and pretend I'm Spiderman's sidekick. I try to put the noise of my day-to-day worries to the back of my mind and make playing spies my main mission. If I immerse myself into their world, I can sometimes feel the joy of a successful mission or the thrill of the perfectly created pony world but most times I have to work hard at keeping up with story shifts and rule changes just like anyone else at play and I have to remember to model successful negotiation and interaction. It's exhausting and all I did was play!

## References

Commonwealth of Australia. 2009a. *Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments.

Commonwealth of Australia. 2009b. Investing in the early years: A national early childhood development strategy. Canberra, ACT.

Casley, M. & Cartmel, J. 2010. Dialogue of discovery. Brisbane: Early Childhood Australia, Queensland Branch Inc.

Oates, J. (Ed.) 2010. *Supporting parenting*. Milton Keynes, UK: The Open University.

Stanfield, B. (Ed.) 2000. *The art of focused conversation: 100 ways to access group wisdom in the workplace*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers and The Canadian Institute for Cultural Affairs.

## Further Resources

*Play: What do parents think?* This DVD and workshop booklet investigates a series of topics in a variety of early education and care settings where parents and guardians of young children talk about play and what it means for them and their children. It is available from [ecaqlid@earlychildhood.org.au](mailto:ecaqlid@earlychildhood.org.au)

### *Outdoor environments*

In this Issue of *Educating Young Children*, two unique and completely different outdoor environments are featured - one from **C&K QUT Kelvin Grove Community Childcare Centre**, the other from **Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre**. Both capture the imagination and have been made by children for children and with minimum budgets.

In a time when so many children seem to spend hours in front of the television, computers or hand-held devices it is delightful to see centres encouraging outdoor learning. It is well known but often forgotten at home and in our overcrowded curriculum, that a child's physical and mental wellbeing greatly contributes to their overall development.

Good overall development can be achieved with well-planned outdoor areas that make the most of children's active play experiences and are conducive to spontaneous play. Well-planned areas will encourage children to explore, investigate, engage and be involved in rich learning experiences, care for the environment and to interact socially with peers, educators and families as well as building on language and maths concepts in a natural environment.

These spaces contribute positively to children's learning and provide opportunities for collaborative, independent and autonomous learning. Well done, C&K QUT Kelvin Grove and Mitchelton.

---

#### *C&K QUT Kelvin Grove Community Childcare Centre*

### *Dry Creek Bed on a Budget*

*Laura Ballantyne*

Our backyard is in desperate need of a renovation. At C&K QUT Kelvin Grove CCC, we have all been trying to think of ways to add new life to our play spaces on a budget. Kindy children especially, have a love of nature and the majority of our program is run outside.

Kindy children love planting and caring for plants as well as using natural features such as rocks, leaves, trees and sticks for their play. We had a discussion during group time about what could be done outside. All of the children decided that they wanted a new play space.

We researched some different types of play spaces on the internet and the Kindy group loved the dry creek beds that they saw.

The intention of the project was to involve the whole centre in order to scaffold ownership of the dry creek bed and its care for all children. Firstly, Junior Kindy, Pre-Kindy and Kindy held a group meeting to discuss the location of our dry creek bed and what we needed to do. We all decided that a sandy kidney shaped area between Kindy and Pre-Kindy would be a good spot!







Some of the Kindy children said we first needed to clean up the area. Kindy set up witches hats and construction signs around the area to let everybody know it was a work site. Everyone got involved in moving the rocks and clearing the area. There were so many rocks and pot plants to clear out, it was great team work! After we cleared the rocks and pot plants, we raked the soil to make it flat. We have used many of the rocks again.

On the weekend, Jessika our Toddler Group Leader, Laura our Kindergarten Teacher and Kane from Gardenlife Landscapes came and started off our dry creek bed. They removed the old sand, replaced it with new soil, laid the big rocks and Kane suggested where our native grasses and plants could go. Thank you so much Kane and the team at Gardenlife Landscapes for your kind donation of materials and your help!



Many of us were involved in planting our dry creek bed plants. In our dry creek bed, we have used lomandra and native indigo tubestock. Tubestock helped to keep costs down and the native plants complement our already established lilypilly tree. We all had a great time getting dirty and playing in the soil and we found some worms - telling us that our soil is healthy! We used diluted worm juice and compost from our own sustainable worm farm and compost to initially feed the plants.



The next step was to lay our creek pebbles and mulch our plants. We had the pebbles donated and the natural pine bark mulch was on sale.



The bush turkeys took some of our mulch for their nests. Kindy came up with the idea of making two big scarecrows and some mini scarecrows to keep the turkeys away. It was very successful. We



also laid some chicken wire below our mulch to discourage the turkeys from digging up our plants.

Everyday, children from Junior Kindy, Pre-Kindy and Kindy take care of our plants in our dry creek bed by watering them. Many of us also watch the plants to see how they are growing.



Our dry creek bed took three weeks to create. Being garden fairies, jumping from rock to rock and going on bear hunts have been popular games in our dry creek bed. It has also been used as a place for some quiet and relaxing time within a very busy playground. The project enabled all children to explore, investigate, problem-solve and plan for what we were going to do, from its implementation to the care of plants and the final outcome. We have had many discussions surrounding care for plants and the environment as well as sustainability. We also utilised our listening skills to value and incorporate many opinions into the establishing of the dry creek bed as well as applying and adapting our previous knowledge and experiences to benefit this project. Through our dry creek bed project, the children have discovered and connected with our natural environment, utilising the natural materials around them to develop our creek bed. They are taking more responsibility in caring for our entire backyard as well as the dry creek bed and our vocabulary surrounding plants and gardening has increased across all age groups. The creek bed has also encouraged the different age groups to play and interact together. Overall, the centre spent \$130.00 on setting up the creek bed, as well as the donations from a local landscaping company. All of the children at the centre are really proud of their efforts and take great pride in their creation. In afternoon group time, it is often mentioned when talking about the games that have been played or the care and maintenance of the creek bed itself, being a favourite part of the day.

### References

Creche and Kindergarten Association. 2011. *Building waterfalls: A guideline for children's learning and for teaching in kindergarten*. Brisbane, QLD: C&K Limited.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. 2009. *The early years learning framework for Australia: Belonging, being and becoming*. Accessed 20 September, 2013, from [http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy\\_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf).



*Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre*

## ***Making the most of space***

*Leanne Hunter*

At Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre (MPC) we provide and continue to develop rich inviting learning environments which foster children's engagement, interactions, exploration and wonder. We make use of every small space in our beautifully treed playgrounds and we are endeavouring to reduce the artificial grass with natural elements.

Developing children's understandings about the natural environment and sustainability are core tenets of MPC. Parents, children and staff have collaboratively undertaken, and will continue to undertake, projects to enhance gardens, play spaces and sustainable practices. As a not-for-profit centre, most of our projects are funded through various grants. However plants for the 'pick me' garden near the front gate have been generated by the industrious production and sale of worm wee.



*Under the tree-house ... Look what can happen in a small space with some collaborative thinking, planning, problem-solving and action by children, parents and teachers.*



*Investigations are underway ...what's digging up our plants?*

*Scat samples were collected and sent to the museum. It was a bandicoot! Now the garden is shared.*







*The digging patch: a great place for one or many!*



*Dam building – cooperation, investigation, theory testing and discovery occur easily in nature contexts*



*Building camp fires and cooking – sourcing materials from the natural environment, and playing out real life experiences*



*Gardening project – team work in action*



*The Fairy Garden*



### *Literacy in kindergarten*

*Robyn Whiting and Karen Dooley*



Karen Dooley is Associate Professor in the School of Curriculum, Queensland University of Technology (QUT). She began her teaching career as a preschool teacher 30 years ago, and has also taught in primary schools and as an English teacher in Shanghai. Karen currently works in English education, and is especially interested in literacy education for learners of English as an additional language.

Robyn is Manager, K-10 Resources, at the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA). She leads the development of resources and professional development programs to support Queensland teachers to implement curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 10. Prior to joining the QSA, Robyn taught from Kindergarten to Year 12 across a range of learning areas, in Queensland, interstate and overseas.



Children bring diverse literacy knowledge and skills to kindergarten. For some children, kindergarten activities are familiar; for others, they involve new ways of being literate and new language, including use of Standard Australian English (SAE).

To support teachers in linguistically diverse settings, the QSA has collaborated with Karen Dooley from QUT to develop a suite of resources. These resources are directly aligned to the *Queensland kindergarten learning guideline (QKLG)*, and include examples from kindergartens.

These resources suggest ways to develop literacy-learning partnerships with children, families and the wider community, provide intentional teaching strategies and set out examples of observable behaviours in literacy development. The three resources specifically focus on children who speak English as an additional language (EAL).

#### **Building literacy-learning partnerships**

This resource presents a range of strategies for building partnerships with children, parents/carers and community. Two-way communication between kindergarten and the home is especially important in diverse settings (Kenner, 2000). This enables families to

learn about kindergarten literacy activities and teachers to learn about home and community literacy experiences that children bring with them to kindergarten.

For teachers, the challenge is to understand families' literacy practices and how children gain literacy skills in their home environment. Talking with and observing children with their parents/carers in the rich linguistic environment of the kindergarten is one way to do this.

#### **Intentional teaching strategies**

This resource provides ideas for supporting emergent literacy in EAL. It suggests strategies for developing children's comprehension of English texts, teaching the sounds of English, and fostering knowledge of the alphabet (sounds



and letters) and beginning writing. The strategies acknowledge children's developing capacity to participate in literacy-learning activities one-on-one and in small and large group contexts.

## Developing comprehension

Oral comprehension skills are a foundation for reading comprehension. Initially, language learners understand more than they can say in talk around books. During this 'silent period' children can display comprehension physically through actions or by matching and sequencing pictures. As children's use of SAE grows, predictable language such as 'What's going to happen next?' or 'I think ...' enables children to participate in discussions about books. With careful teaching of vocabulary, children are supported as they expand their comprehension of more complex ideas in English.



## Playing with sounds

Children in kindergarten delight in the strongly patterned language of nursery rhymes, riddles, jingles, chants, songs, poems and rhyming stories. While having fun and playing with language, children build foundations of reading: they come to feel the beat of syllables and to recognise and create rhymes and alliteration. Learners develop this awareness of sound as they hear their own voices chant, recite, sing and play with both their first language and SAE.

## Developing literacy

Some literacy knowledge and skills are the same in any language. For example, the idea that speech can be written down and that print carries a stable message. Adding multilingual stories to book corner or e-readers/tablets may enhance this learning. Junk mail, calendars, food packets and other environmental print materials in English and home languages promote literate play. They are also springboards for



discussions about the features of print, such as 'What direction does the print go?' or 'How are the English letters different from the Chinese characters?' These conversations can deepen all children's knowledge of written language.

## Examples of observable behaviours

The *Continua of learning and development* is a companion document to the *Queensland kindergarten learning guideline*. It assists teachers as they assess and reflect on evidence to inform their ongoing decisions about children's literacy learning.

*English as an additional language: Examples of observable behaviours* is used in conjunction with the *Continua of learning and development* to provide specific examples for teachers to monitor and make consistent judgments about the literacy learning of children who are learning English as an additional language.

## Where to find these resources

These resources are available on the QSA website at the following link <http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/12974.html> under the headings Professional topics > Inclusion and diversity > Cultural and linguistic diversity.

## References

Kenner, C., 2000. *Home pages: Literacy links for bilingual children*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.



# Monitoring literacy and numeracy progress through Early Start

*Early Start* is an optional suite of materials being developed by Education Queensland to promote a culture of ongoing and consistent school-based monitoring of literacy and numeracy progress in schools. *Early Start* captures specific student literacy and numeracy data at four points in time (On-entry to Prep, End of Prep, Year 1 and Year 2), enabling schools to map progress and compare achievements and growth of students and groups of students over time (see Figure 1). These materials provide valuable evidence to inform next steps in teaching and learning.

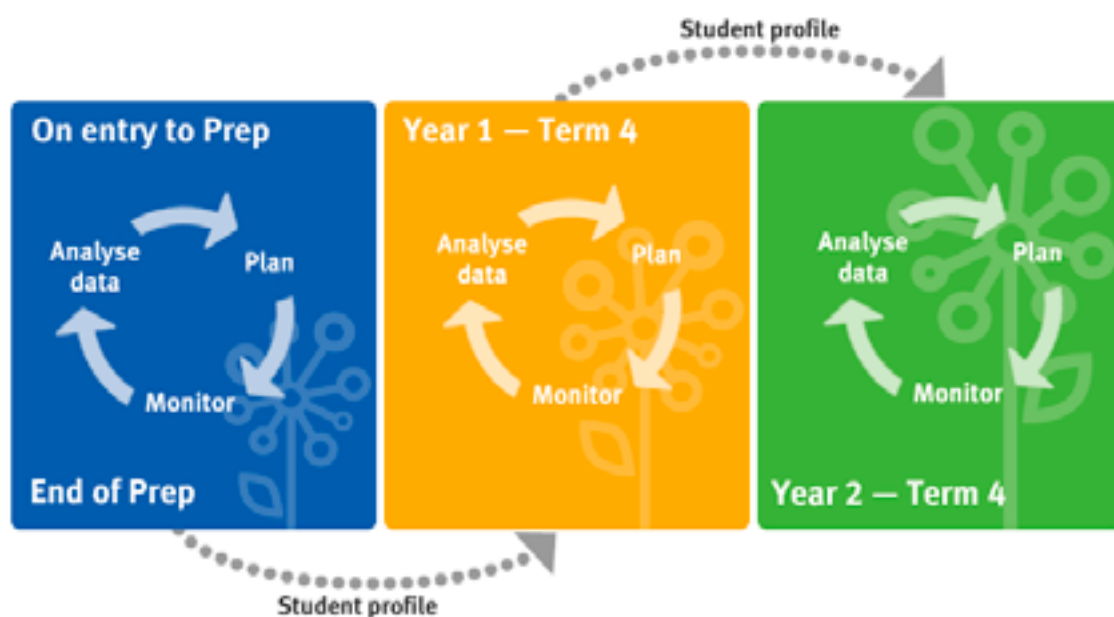


Figure 1 - Schools can use Early Start to map student progress in literacy and numeracy across P–2

From 2014, Queensland primary and special schools can choose to use the free *Early Start* materials with their students. Selected schools are trialling *Early Start* materials in 2013–2014 and all state schools can opt to use the refined Prep materials from Term 1, 2014, and the refined Year 1 and Year 2 materials from 2015. The trial, involving 93 schools and over 4000 students, draws on the Australian Council for Educational Research's rigorous *Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study* to ensure that *Early Start* generates data that is both valid and reliable, and useful in informing school-based decisions at every level and is specifically suited to Queensland schools.

*Early Start* has been written specifically to gather accurate and consistent data about

literacy and numeracy progress in the early years (P–2). For example, *The Wise Frog* (see Figure 2) is a storybook written to support the literacy materials. Teacher feedback and student data from the trial are informing the refinement of *Early Start* materials. Some questions which were initially included were removed after analysis of the trial data. Results showed that these questions were either too difficult for students (i.e. *no-one* got them right) or they were too easy for students (i.e. *everyone* got them right). The resulting product is a high quality, research-based instrument that produces valid and reliable data. In the case of the On-entry to Prep materials, ten questions were removed from each of the literacy and numeracy materials following data analysis and



# The Wise Frog



Figure 2 – *The Wise Frog* was written specifically for *Early Start*

teacher feedback. To learn more about the trial, read teachers' first-hand experiences in the *Early Start* issue of Classroom Connections. <<https://classroomconnections.eq.edu.au/>>.

*Early Start* materials should be implemented by the student's classroom teacher, so they can learn about their students as they document student responses to the materials. Useful qualitative and quantitative data can be gathered from the interviews with students. Therefore, *Early Start* should not be used as a screening tool prior to entry into Prep. Approximately half an hour is needed to complete the literacy and numeracy materials with students. However, teachers can use their professional judgment about the best ways to administer them. For example, teachers could ask a small number of grouped questions, focused on a specific skill, to each student in turn before moving on to the next section.

Teachers in Education Queensland schools will be able to use OneSchool to enter, collate and analyse *Early Start* data from 2014. Using OneSchool allows teachers to analyse

the data as soon as they have administered *Early Start*, using it to support collaborative teaching inquiries and to make evidence-based decisions regarding curriculum planning and resource allocation. While the *Early Start* aligns closely with the Australian Curriculum general capabilities and some Australian Curriculum: English and Mathematics content, it is not designed to reflect specific year level achievement standards. Consequently, it cannot be used for reporting.

Teachers can use *Early Start* with all students as it is inclusive of students with disability, EAL/D students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and students requiring support or extension. If teachers consider using the *Early Start* materials with students beyond the early years, they should first decide whether the texts and resources are age-appropriate.

*Early Start* materials will be sent to all Queensland state schools offering Prep through to Year 2 as they become available. An *Early Start* guide and online professional support modules are available.



# Calming our students' lives

Maggie Dent



Maggie 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, commonsense raising of children in order to strengthen families and communities. She has a broad perspective and range of experience that shapes her work, a slightly irreverent sense of humour and a depth of knowledge based on modern research and ancient wisdom that she shares passionately in a commonsense way.

---

*Happy, calm children learn best. — Daniel Goleman (1995).*

All parents want the best for their children – we want them to grow up healthy, happy and to live a meaningful life as adults. All early years' educators also want the same for the children in their care. We want them to be able to manage living in our chaotic world and avoid becoming overwhelmed by the speediness and busy-ness of modern life. One of the best ways to do this is by calming our children's lives. Stress is a new health and social contributor to challenge children in our modern world. The 'hurried child' and the over-scheduled child are both modern developments. Somewhere over the last ten years parenting has become a type of competition and the hidden stress this places on growing children causes many other issues that delay healthy development and growth on all levels emotionally, socially, mentally and cognitively.

The overarching themes of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and *National Quality Framework* (NQF) are 'belonging, being and becoming'. In order to be able to ensure this acknowledgment of the whole child and their right to have their unique needs met within our services, the adults present need to be mindful and present to the children. Yes, that means 'attachment and attunement' and stressed and hurried staff will struggle to deliver what children need.

*So many grown ups can't manage stress well because no-one helped them enough with stress and distress in childhood, they never set up*

*effective stress regulating systems in their brains — Margot Sunderland, The Science of Parenting (2006).*

We have sped up the pace of life and living. We live in an **instant** world where we expect everything NOW. Communication, food, pain relief, results, well-behaved children — you name it, we expect things instantly. This expectation works silently and unconsciously creating stress when things do not always happen like that. Children take all of childhood to grow — to learn how to think, learn, process information, behave appropriately, manage their lives, dress themselves, find their way home and learn who they are. Adolescents are also experiencing profound biological changes that cause enormous stress in the wired, plugged-in world.

*Homes and education services that consciously create calm and quiet times are building enormous support structures that will help children feel safe, allow them to enjoy their own quiet company and lower the stress levels within their growing bodies.*

The over-exposure to TV and other screens is overstimulating many little minds and bodies.

The state of 'absorbed play' or 'natural transcendence' is a profound moment of oneness that children enjoy. All time disappears and they become delightfully at peace. Today's children are having less time for them to experience this magical moment. There are

some who worry that without this experience in childhood we will only seek instant gratification as adults.

Professor Susan Greenfield has written in her book, *ID – The Quest for Meaning in the 21st Century* (2008), that she is concerned that this 'instant world' is changing how we form our sense of identity. So much of the modern world is about the 'instant' and is 'fun' focused and there is little savouring of the meaning of things. Our sense of identity is formed by some of our deeper thinking – our 'aha' moments. This is what occurs in 'absorbed play'.

*... some cerebral light flashes on as you start to see one thing in terms of something else and place an event or behaviour in a new, wider context ...*  
— Susan Greenfield (2008).

'Children have a strong sense of identity' is the first of the five Outcomes in the EYLF and, without these quiet moments of reflection from time to time, maybe our children will form a sense of self that is quite simply less than it could be.

Canadian child development specialist Professor Stuart Shanker has been researching children's self-regulation and arousal states to further support the need for calmness and the reduction in stressors in children's lives. Young children need the help of grown-ups to manage their arousal states and opportunities to discharge excess energy and find energy when they are weary.

One of the main inhibitors for children's and adolescents' learning is prolonged chronic stress. Eric Jensen (*Enriching The Brain*, 2006) believes that there is up to a 50% reduction in neuron development within a week of a major stressor event. He also believes that the existing neurons wither with continued chronic stress. This has enormous implications for children and their learning in both our homes and our schools.

Many small stressors can have the same impact as one large one such as a death of a loved one, divorce or social dislocation like moving school, town or country. The brain will concentrate on

survival and upper cognitive functioning will be impaired for up to 12-18 months.

*The best way to help children feel safe, secure and calm is to have staff who are aware of the need to avoid triggering stress for children, especially our sensitive children.*

Also, the knowledge that we can build calm coping patterns in children who don't have them is really important and can be a part of our early years learning curriculum and pedagogy.

*The idea that the brain can change its own structure and function through thought and activity is the most important alteration in our view of the brain since we first sketched out its basic anatomy and the working of its basic component, the neuron. (Norman Doidge, 2007)*

Some of the ways to build happy, calm children include:

- ✓ Calm educators
- ✓ Routines and habits
- ✓ Calming music
- ✓ Silent sound signals
- ✓ Movement & relaxation
- ✓ Time in nature
- ✓ Regular quiet times
- ✓ Mindfulness
- ✓ Low vocal tones
- ✓ Thinking time
- ✓ Having a quiet corner
- ✓ Creative visualisation
- ✓ Laughter and lightness

*The magic of silence and stillness is something that helps shape students in a positive way.*

While there are many cognitive (left brain) benefits from teaching the magic of silence, there are even more emotional and social (right brain) benefits. The inner world of children today is in turmoil and the outer turmoil of

the world that we have created probably contributes. I believe that children who can build a doorway to their own sense of value and worth will be better able to manage this chaotic rapidly changing world. This doorway is found on the inside rather than the outside.

Calmness is a skill that can be learned early in life. Please help teach your students to experience the value of calmness, stillness and quiet. As early years educators are aiming to meet the five EYLF outcomes for every child who comes through their door, I am sure that by bringing calmness, stillness and quiet into children's lives all the outcomes will be reached.

After all, as Aline Wolf (2000) asks us:

*Who is to tell children that there is much more to life than accumulating more and more things? Who is to tell them that their real value as human beings lies within themselves rather than in what they possess?*

### References:

Dent, M, 2008, *Real Kids in an Unreal World*, Pennington Publications: Murwillumbah, NSW.

Dent, M, 2009, *Saving our Children from our Chaotic World: Teaching children the magic of silence and stillness*, Rev. edn, Pennington Publications: Murwillumbah, NSW.

Doidge, N, 2007, *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of personal triumph from the frontiers of brain science*, Viking: New York.

Goleman, D 1995 *Emotional intelligence*, Bantam Books: New York.

Greenfield, S, 2008, ID: *The quest for meaning in the 21st century*. Hodder and Stoughton: London.

Jensen, E, 2006, *Enriching the brain: How to maximize every learner's potential*, Jossey-Bass, A John Wiley & Sons Imprint: San Francisco.

Sunderland, M 2006 *Science of parenting: Practical guidance on sleep, crying, play, and building emotional well-being for life*. Dorling Kindersley: New York.

Wolf, A 2000, How to nurture the spirit in non-sectarian environments. *Young Children*, 55 (1) 34–36.



modern teaching aids

## Resources to Support Every Learning Environment

- Outdoor & Nature Play
- Building & Construction
- Pretend & Play
- Science & Inquiry
- Early Literacy & Numeracy
- Art & Craft

P 1800 251 497 F 1800 151 492  
W [teaching.com.au](http://teaching.com.au)



# A practical explanation of how students learn

Iain Hodge



Iain has taught in Queensland for 24 years as a Principal of small schools, Deputy Principal, Educational Advisor (Literacy, Numeracy), behaviour management support teacher and Regional Literacy Manager. Most importantly, between roles he regularly returned to the classroom as a teacher. Iain's interests across his roles have included curriculum development and implementation as well as effective pedagogical practices. For the last 15 years, he and his colleagues have explored the impact of "how we learn" on day-to-day classroom practice. More recently, Iain has been exploring the implications of automaticity and working memory

in numeracy, building upon his understanding of its role in literacy. Iain is currently teaching at Maryborough Central State School.

Since the early 1950s, research into the mechanisms of the brain and how we learn have been the target of much research. In the last decade, significant advancement in our understanding of these complex elements has exploded, primarily due to rapid advancements in medical and neuro-scientific research technologies. What impact has this had on the day-to-day teaching of children? While some might argue that effective teaching practices have been developed because they work and there is not really a need to know why they work, other practitioners feel that a practical understanding of some key elements of how the brain works is useful. Personally, I find my knowledge allows me to filter the many pedagogical options and demands that seem to pile higher upon my desk each day!

I have aimed to pitch this article at the middle ground and fully realise that where generalisations are made, inaccuracies creep in. Think of this as a good solid home-cooked

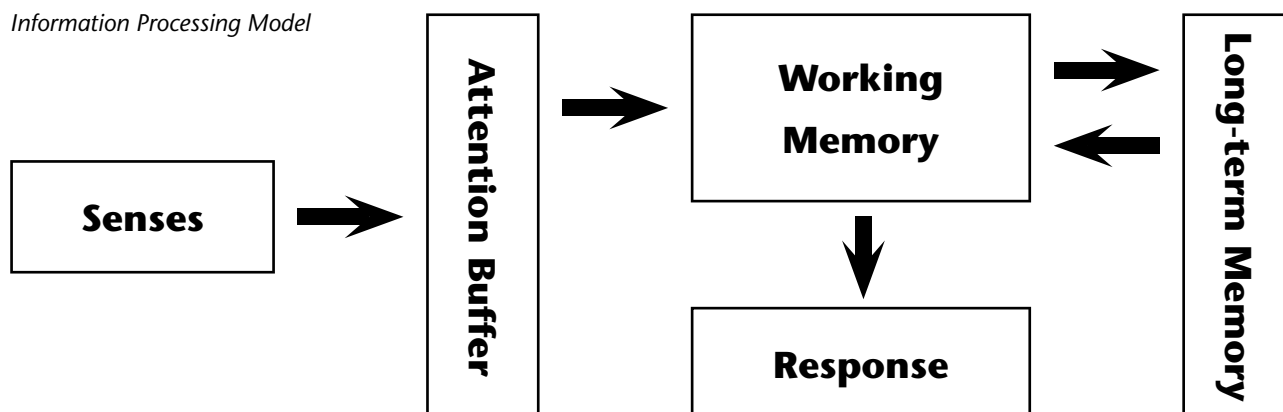
meal, rather than a delicately crafted restaurant meal.

The information processing model (Christensen, 2001) below provides a useful tool to visually represent a very complex process.

### Senses

Information comes into the brain via our **senses**, sight, sound, taste, smell, touch are the well-known but are accompanied by our sense of where our body is (proprioceptive system) and whether we are about to fall over (vestibular system). These systems are continually sending information of the highest quality to our brain, all day, every day. Our eyes don't know what things in our field of vision are important, so they send every bit of information they can, so too for our ears and even our skin. Each millisecond the temperature, pressure readings and friction status for every square centimetre of our skin is being beamed directly to our brain. Coupled with our other senses our brain is

Information Processing Model





being fed phenomenal amounts of information about our body and its surrounds. Obviously this is too much information to be dealt with consciously so the first element to be discussed is our **attention buffers**.

### Attention buffer

Our **attention buffer** basically allows only a trickle of information into our brain via the **working memory**. This buffer basically filters out the new, relevant and interesting information from the old and boring. Hear an odd sound in amongst the normal white noise around you and your attention is caught. Once a sense is flagged as having new information more of this senses information is allowed through, thus allowing us to consciously react or dismiss it.

*Tip: We all have certain sensory pathways that allow more information through than others. Who can't stand that noisy fan? The flickering light that annoys you? Does sand in your shoes put you on edge? There are children in our class that find simple everyday things highly distracting. Sometimes their frustrations and overload can trigger outbursts. For children prone to these reactions, try to analyse the sensory stimulus that may be contributing. Interestingly some children will self-stimulate by rocking, humming, chewing or fiddling to help block out the overload of information from other senses.*

Our attention buffer will also let through different information depending on our past experiences. For example, a mechanic will hear an odd engine sound before you or I will and we can all hear the shout of a child from our own class on the oval before others. This relates to **perception**.

### Perception

Perception is our ability to learn new things because of what we already know. Perception is an enormously powerful element in the learning process; quite simply what a person already knows will be the pivotal factor of what they are presently able to learn. This has huge implications and is closely linked to the child's language development.

*Tip: Building up a rich base of knowledge and processes is vital in the early years. Early language development is vital if children are to benefit from instruction in the years ahead. Never shy away from sharing anything clever that you know about the world with the children in your class. "Learning is driven by life experiences rather than chronological age." (Geake, 2009 p. 64)*

### Working memory

Now information is stored where the thinking happens. Our **working memory** is where conscious thought occurs and tasks are performed. Information in the working memory lasts for 5-15 seconds, then fades unless something is done with it. We can help stretch this relatively short window of opportunity by putting this information into a **loop**, a replay of it again and again. For example, 'milk, butter, pineapple pieces' said over and over in my head, or a picture of the dishwashing liquid I need to buy, help to keep it in my working memory for more than 15 seconds.

The primary roles of the working memory are to:

- **search**
- **organize**
- **file**

The most important feature of the working memory is that it is a finite resource. Young children are unable to hold three or four elements within their working memory.

*Tip: If we are teaching something new then, everything surrounding this new concept needs to be scaffolded. Think about teaching a new setting-out for an algorithm. If a child's working memory is busy searching for number facts, then there is no working memory left to **organise** the new setting-out of the algorithm. If they do somehow manage to get it right there certainly won't be enough working memory available to **file** it away! In each lesson, think about what you want the working memory to be doing.*

The **search** element is where the working memory matches new information from the

senses with existing memories (perception again) or creates a new memory. This memory retrieval and creation happens in the **long term memory**, something akin to a long term storage facility, like the shelving system in a library.

There are two types of searches:

- **controlled**
- **automated**

A **controlled search** is when we concentrate on remembering something such as a friend's birthdate. This type of search takes effort and time.

*Tip: You can see a child's eyes glaze over as they struggle with each word, painfully sounding out letter by letter, until the working memory is so busy searching for knowledge that it has lost its capacity to organise anything! Let alone learn from the experience. Controlled searches are hard work!*

An **automated search** is done more efficiently (and because of this, much quicker, under a second) For example: the date of our own birthday. A knowledge or skill that is automated does not impact upon the working memory. The aim for teachers is to develop as many literacy and numeracy skills to this level. This allows the working memory more capacity to carry out the higher order function of **organising**.

The **organising** element is where the working memory, combines existing memories with new information and performs tasks. Bloom's taxonomy springs to mind as to the type of organizing the working memory can perform.

The **filing** element is the how the working memory puts away new information into existing long term memories or to reorganise existing long term memories into new files. Put very simply this is when we learn something. The most important detail of this process is that, if working memory capacity is tied up with searching and juggling information, then there is none left to do the filing and nothing will be remembered! This is why basic skills need to be automated.

Another element of our working memory is the **executive function**; this feature allows us to

*Tip: When children are constantly doing controlled searches during decoding it will usually show in poor comprehension. This is not necessarily because their comprehension skills are low, rather they don't have enough working memory left to search and organise those comprehension skills. This is often treated with more instruction in comprehension skills rather than moving those basic decoding skills (especially sight words) to a level where they are accessed with an automated search. Listening to the children read you can quickly determine if the issues lie in the decoding or comprehension area. As a rule of thumb, if a child takes longer than a second to read a word, then a controlled search is being done. The automated recall of fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy is vital to building your students' capacity for higher order thinking and complex reasoning. Rehearsal of these skills without error is a vital element in every teacher's day. It is often not enough that they can remember something but more important how they remember it.*

plan and reason, to make good decisions. This is integral in the working memory's ability to organise information effectively.

In this brief discussion of working memory, it is vital that we as teachers recognise the importance of automated basic knowledge and skills because unnecessary overloading of the working memory inhibits new learning and higher order functioning such as comprehending and composition.

### Long term memory

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

### Implications for teaching

There are a number of pivotal elements for a teacher's consideration. Firstly, if students don't

*Tip: It seems a minor miracle that we actually manage to get information from our heads into the long term memory of our students. There are so many opportunities for the process to get interrupted. To keep information stored accurately, plan to revise and revisit concepts regularly. Try to access these memories while in different contexts. This helps to put a variety of 'cues' on that memory.*

have any existing knowledge of a concept, then instruction is unlikely to get through the sensory buffers and if it does then it will be unlikely to make it into long term memory because there is nothing existing to attach it to. Therefore, what students already know will significantly determine what they can learn next, (**perception**).

Secondly, some memories are so strong and well-used that they don't require the working memory to consciously search for them. This is called **automaticity** and is vital to doing complex tasks. Why is this an important feature? Because working memory is such a **finite resource**. If it is being used to do searches for simple memories (e.g. that t.h.e. is the word 'the') then it has no capacity to do the more complex tasks of putting that word into a clever sentence, paragraph or persuasive letter to the Premier.

The model below shows how an automated search does not tie up working memory, allowing for all the working memory's capacity to be devoted to higher order thinking.

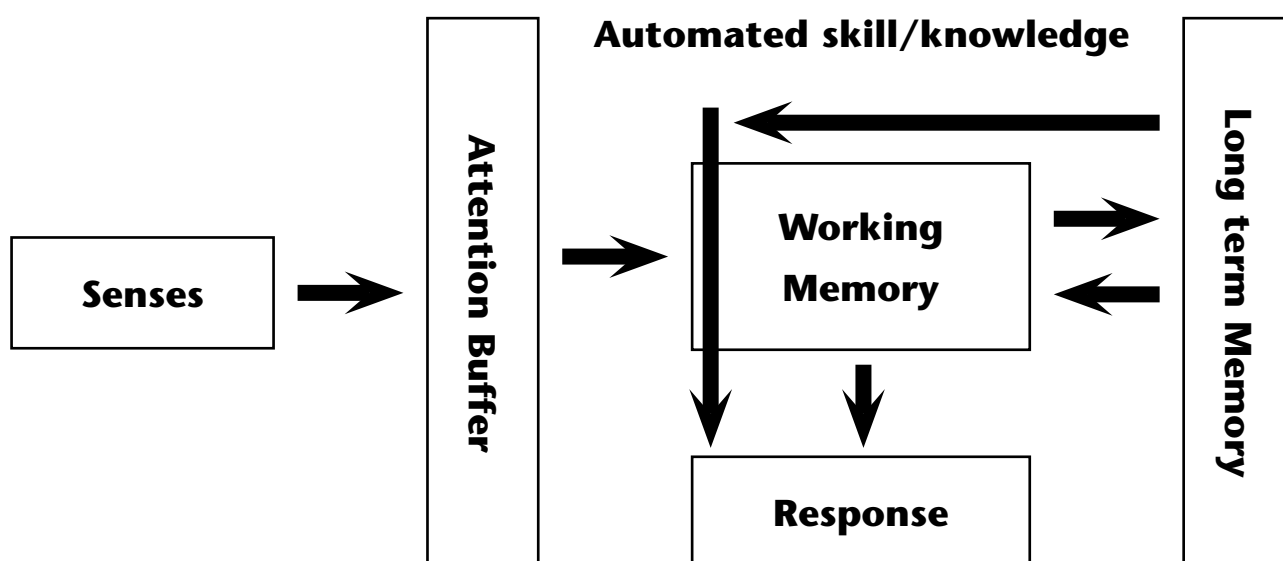
The implications of what memories are to be developed until they reach automaticity is paramount for teachers of literacy and numeracy. A solid foundation of the fundamental skills within these domains is necessary for students to reach **fluency** and to be able to independently perform higher order tasks.

From an educational perspective, it is essential for students to become automated at basic skills such as letter and word decoding, number recognition, and simple procedural skills such as handwriting, addition, multiplication, and spelling. Automaticity makes available limited processing resources that can be used to engage much more complex processing and ultimately allow memories to be formed in the long term memory.

### References:

Christensen, C. A., 2001, *Transforming Classrooms: Educational Psychology for Teaching and Learning*. Flaxton, Qld: Post Pressed.

Geake, J., 2009, *The Brain at School*. Berkshire: Open University Press.





# ***Going online: young children and teachers accessing knowledge through web interactions***

***Susan Danby***



Susan is Professor in Early Childhood Education at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and Program Leader of the *Health, Wellbeing and Happiness* program within the QUT Children and Youth Research Centre. Susan taught for many years in Australian and USA preschool and early years primary settings. Her recent Australian Research Council grant investigates young children's web searching in early years settings of preschool and homes. This article is a collaboration with Sandra Houen, Sandra Grant and Karen Thorpe (School of Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology) and Christina Davidson (Charles Sturt University).

Children accessing and using internet-connected technology is a relatively recent phenomenon, and rapidly having an impact on their experiences and activities in homes and early childhood classrooms. Technology refers to devices such as computers, smart phones and tablets – many capable of being connected to the internet – and the products, such as websites, games, and interactive stories (Plowman & McPake, 2013). These activities can be played, created, watched, listened to and read, and incorporated into traditional everyday activities.

***It is no longer possible to suggest that technologies have no, or peripheral, places in early childhood education.***

Guidelines such as the *Early Years Learning Framework* (2009) promote the educational value of experiences for children involving technology. At the start of their educational trajectory, young children with access to technology may have improved opportunities for play and learning (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2012). Computers and mobile devices such as tablets are becoming essential resources to support young children's everyday classroom experiences. To date, however, there is not a great deal of practical guidance on ways to integrate technology and more traditional activities into early childhood education.

The increasing prevalence of tablets and smart phones suggests more children are accessing smart technologies and the Internet. In 2009, 60% of Australian children aged five to eight years accessed the internet, up from 37.7% in 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009), and no doubt the percentages are higher now. When we hear these statistics, it is easy to suggest young children are naturally 'wired in' to using technology. For example, we've probably seen videos of toddlers swiping iPads (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXV-yaFmQNk>) and children using their parents' phones to play games. What is often not realized is that these children are immersed in environments where the bedtime story is increasingly likely to be delivered using a tablet as a book. At the same time, there are still many children who do not have access to internet technology, and come to school with little or limited access and understanding.

***Educators have the responsibility of building technology experiences into classroom activities in ways that are fun and also have meaning for children's everyday lives.***

Use of technology can support, not hinder, social interaction (Plowman, 2013). Below, there are some suggestions to engage young children in web searching and other internet-

connected technologies, to support web use for socially interactive learning and knowledge building in early years classrooms. While not an exhaustive list, many examples are drawn from real-life practices of educators and children accessing the web in early childhood classrooms in Queensland.

### Strategies

1. *Using technology to support communication and connect globally.* Skype is a free software program for users to contact each other, at a distance, using the Internet. Connections are free from computer to computer, and have the advantage of calls having visual and audio contact. Skype can be used to keep in touch with a classmate on holidays or at home (e.g. with broken leg); with others with specific knowledge, such as scientists and book authors; and with classmates across the country and globe (Morgan, 2013).
2. *Using technology to support engagement in the cultural and everyday experiences of home, school and community.* In one classroom, the teacher mentioned at group time that she was putting together a shopping list to buy classroom materials, and asked for suggestions. A couple of children became involved in drawing what they needed (e.g. basketball), and then worked with the teacher on the online form. Not only was this activity real-life use of technology, it modeled other possible online everyday activities, such as online grocery shopping.
3. *Using technology for information seeking, investigating and problem solving.* In many classrooms, we observed children undertaking online searches using Google or other search engines. For example, one child shared at group time his book on endangered animals from home, which led to discussions of which animals were endangered, and an online search later that day. In that same classroom, others became interested in what animals ate and, with the teacher, undertook a web search to find out what tadpoles ate and, along the way, engaged shared conversation about pets and what they ate. Integrating information

seeking and inquiry-based learning with technology expands the potential of children's knowledge creation.

4. *Using technology to support home and school relationships.* In one classroom, a family brought in a link to a video of their weekend four-wheel driving adventure that they had uploaded onto YouTube. Together, the class and teacher watched the video. This led to discussion about what had happened and the experience was continued in outdoor time when some children built roads for their trucks. In another classroom, one child kept in her pocket a toy dolphin from home, leading to the teacher initiating a web search for videos about Sea World, leading to discussion about holiday trips.
5. *Using technology to move from technology into play-based activities.* In one classroom, two boys engaged with the teacher in a search and discussion of army tanks, prompting a collaborative enterprise building their own tank using cardboard boxes and tubes.

As the children undertook their real-life explorations using web searching, they were introduced to, and engaged with, tools and techniques to develop and practise their skills. The experiences happened in a number of classroom and outdoor spaces:

- using the interactive white board during whole group to find a YouTube video;
- looking at Google Earth to locate their centre on the map, and researching lady beetles, in small groups or in pairs;
- engaging in real life activities such as online shopping;
- creating digital books and digital storytelling with photo and audio files;
- taking the mobile device (the iPad) outdoors to compare the butterfly found in the yard to those illustrated on a web site that named and described butterflies
- extending the experience from the computer screen to include real-life props.

These opportunities extended learning about interests beyond the classroom, where there

were enhanced opportunities for teacher-child and child-child interactions.

While the experiences discussed above are associated with web searching, there are many other ways that technology-related interests can incorporate real and imaginary contexts and props, and become an integral part of classroom life to support children's engagement and learning (Fleer, 2013):

- mobile telephones in dramatic play area for taking photos;
- the GPS (Global Positioning System) navigational tool;
- Apps that measure the distance walked, and route taken;
- the Quick Response (QR code), a bar code that is a previously downloaded app that gives information about the product such as cost.

Here are some final thoughts for educators when considering technology in early childhood classrooms.

1. Children have different preferences for using different forms of technologies (Plowman & McPake, 2013) and interests, just as they do with the traditional experiences of the classroom.
2. Different forms of technologies offer children social interaction and opportunities to think in new ways about their own lives, as well as at neighbourhood, national and global levels.
3. The contexts of the home and community contexts are important early experiences that very often introduce children to technologies, and capitalizing on these experiences is productive for all classroom members.
4. Technological skills are best learned when used in an integrated way. Successful interactions with technology and with others (e.g. parents) focus on what is being discovered (e.g. the results of the search), and the technical skills are developed along the way (Danby et al, 2013; Spink, 2010).

Using technologies in classrooms is much more than games and software programs used for

entertainment. They are important resources for children to communicate with the world, extending beyond the classroom. Finding out new knowledge, exploring and making sense of worlds, along with having fun and developing confidence, are just some advantages of 'going online.'

### Acknowledgements

The study was funded by the Australian Research Council (DP110104227), with ethical approval by Queensland University of Technology's University Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference No.: 1100001480) and Charles Sturt University's Research Ethics Office. We thank the teachers, children and families of the Crèche and Kindergarten Association for their participation in this study.

### References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2009. *Household Use of Information Technology*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations for the Council of Australian Governments. 2009. *Belonging, being and becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*. Barton: ACT: Author.
- Danby, S., Davidson, C., Theobald, M., Scriven, B., Cobb-Moore, C., Houen, S., Grant, S., Given, L., Thorpe, K. 2013, accepted 17 June 2013. Talk in activity during young children's use of digital technologies at home. *Australian Journal of Communication*.
- Fleer, M. 2013. *Play in the early years*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan, H. 2013. Technology in the classroom: Using Skype for exciting projects. *Childhood Education*, 89(3), 197-199.
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). 2012. *NAEYC position statement: Technology and interactive media as tools in early childhood education programs serving children birth through age 8*. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/technology>
- Plowman, L., & McPake, J. 2013. Seven myths about young children and technology. *Childhood Education*, 89(1), 27-33.
- Spink, A., Danby, S., Mallan, K., & Butler, C. 2010. Exploring young children's web searching and technoliteracy. *Journal of Documentation* 66(2), 191-206.



# *Making class movies – using technology with little people*

*Jeff Licence*



Jeff is a media education consultant, trained early childhood educator, writer and filmmaker who specialises in early childhood and primary media education. Jeff has been teaching young children, parents and teachers about digital and traditional storytelling media for over 10 years and has a unique understanding of the needs, opportunities and issues that young people and their families face in their 'plugged in' digital lives. Jeff has presented at many conferences across Australia and provides professional development and media education consultancy for schools, childcare centres, families and curriculum designers. He is also a Media Education Advisor for Common Sense Media (America) and the Commonwealth Bank Start Smart consumer awareness program.

When the young children in our care are more tech savvy than we are, it's time to get acquainted with some basic technology, and more importantly, use it in meaningful ways. Though the kids may be good at clicking on icons and navigating screens, as teachers, we have the storytelling and contextual skills to put their mouse-tastic abilities to work. One way to do this is through photographs and simple filmmaking techniques to create 'class movies'.

Making class movies is all about combining video, photos, sounds, music, dialogue, text and editing to tell stories. Movies and photo collages can be made for the classroom, excursions and visiting shows, class performances, speeches, plays and parade presentations.

They can also be useful as a way to connect home and school. I used to run a school Film Festival where the kids got to share their filmic creations with friends, parents and their community. It was lovely to get comments from parents saying that the films gave them a real insight into what their kids were doing in class.

**But why make class movies?** Children love seeing themselves in action and filming them at work and play offers them feedback and a chance for self reflection. Narratives and children's story ideas can come to life beyond the written page in a relevant and accessible way when new media are employed.

Putting together your photos and video into a movie creates a focal point for the growing stash of photos gathering on your computer and we all love being able to tick the 'Using technology' outcomes in curriculum documents and outcomes reports.

Photos, video and audio recordings can also be used by teachers as primary sources for observations and to add to children's portfolios. Stepping into the Principals', Directors' and Administrators' shoes for a minute, we see that video and photographic creations can also be highly useful tools to introduce and market your school and centre to new parents.

**When to start?** There's no time like the present! It does take time to plan and execute, especially editing, but don't be afraid to jump in and have a go.

### **Some general ideas and tips for technology in the classroom**

- Don't fear the machine. It's hard to break a computer, so feel confident to click on things and see what they do. That's how the kids learn - they have no fear of experimenting and exploring.
- Learn from the kids - they will be happy to show you what they know.
- Use the technology to broaden your children's learning, not just for the sake of using technology.

- Undo is your friend. It takes a computer program back a step and undoes your last action. It's in the top menu bar: Edit - Undo.
- Start by using technology you are comfortable with, e.g cameras. Take photos or get the responsible children to take them. Children should always have the camera strap around their wrist in case they drop it.
- Import the pictures into your computer and make a simple slide show. Most digital cameras also have a video function. Use it to video the children and experiment with some simple editing programs - Windows Movie Maker (P.C) or IMovie (Mac) - adding titles and text in the pictures and transitions.
- Most computers, tablets and smart phones have software (built in or freely downloadable) that allows you to record sound. Record your class singing a group song, make up and record an audio story with the children, adding sound effects and record it, then add more sound effects from the inbuilt sound effects options in the computer.
- Record the children speaking about their ideas, impressions of your latest project or their concerns. This may offer ideas for future

learning and raise issues you can address in your teaching or with families. Children love hearing themselves and the recordings can become springboards to self created books, dramas, puppet shows, illustrations, etc.

- Your sound recordings, songs, audio stories, slide shows and video make a great showpiece for culminating events and parent information nights.
- Online support. Asking Google just about anything about how to use technology will reveal a bunch of forums and information to help you.

Using audiovisual recordings is all about capturing moments from now to experience again later, to learn from and reflect on, to enjoy and to share with others. Though making class movies can be time consuming, what you end up with is a wonderful audiovisual document of your class in action - an excursion, child's speech, quirky visitor, dramatic play or classic moment of childlike wonder.

Feel free to contact me if you need help. Good luck and enjoy!

Email: [jeff@tigermonkeyproductions.com](mailto:jeff@tigermonkeyproductions.com)



the education agency  
TEACHERS / SUPPORT STAFF / EARLY CHILDHOOD

**Your Specialist Education Agency**

**07 3852 6122**

Kindergarten Teachers • Early Childhood Educators  
Childcare Cooks • OSHC • Vacation Care  
School Teachers • Teachers' Aides • Special Education Needs

anzuk\* the standard in educational recruitment

# ***C.A.L.M: Strategies to manage sensory processing disorder and children's behaviour***

***Jo Larcom and Robyn Sims***



Jo Larcom and her sister Robyn Sims bring a unique perspective to the topic of behavioural challenges resulting from sensory processing disorder. Jo and Robyn have collaborated in the creation of their business, Magnetic Moves, which provides visual charts for children to develop independence in routines and transitions. They provide opportunities for parents and teachers to understand sensory processing challenges through regular workshops and online forums.

It's Monday morning and the school crowds are gathering in the undercover area. The environment is busy, noisy and overwhelming for seven-year-old Stewart. He stands with his hands clenched in his pockets to help control the energy which is building inside him while he tries to focus on something to block out all of the noise. The teacher blows a whistle which resonates uncomfortably through his body. Children start jostling to find their place in line and Stewart is squashed between other children, increasing his sense of discomfort. A giggle arises from his throat, exploding out as loud, uncontrolled laughter. At this point his attempts at keeping his hands in his pocket have been forgotten as he joins in finding his place in line by pushing the children closest to him with all his might. While Stewart's behaviour is escalating, the other children are beginning to find their individual space and are becoming calm. This is just the beginning of the day for Stewart in which the information he receives through his senses is not always interpreted accurately and this is reflected in his behaviour. Stewart is a child with sensory processing challenges. There are many children like Stewart in every educational setting.

Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) can exist in isolation, however has a high co-morbidity rate with more frequently recognised diagnoses including Autism and Attention Deficit Disorder. SPD is a neurological condition in which the nervous system does not accurately interpret sensory information. Children may over- or under-react to sensory stimulus and this can

impact upon behaviour, learning and social development.

The question then is: How does a teacher, carer or parent manage, when they are presented with a child whose challenging behaviour is a reflection of ineffective or inaccurate sensory processing?

An easy way to remember strategies to implement at these times is through the acronym C.A.L.M

### **C is for COMMUNICATE**

Communication with the child and significant others in their life is an important first step of C.A.L.M

- Communication between parents, teacher and other care givers is essential to ensure everyone has the same understanding of the child's needs as well as strategies which can help the child to settle and focus for optimal learning and socialisation.
- Communication with the child is important on many levels.
  - ❖ Children with SPD benefit from routines and may need to be supported through transitions. Visual cues and social stories are useful tools.
  - ❖ Children need to be taught ways in which to cope with individual challenges in sensory processing so they can ultimately implement strategies themselves.



*In practice: Stewart's parents have provided him with a visual chart to help with home routines. His teacher and parents communicate regularly via email. His mum lets his teachers know if there have been any challenges before school and what has helped to calm him. Stewart hands a red card to his teacher when he is beginning to feel overwhelmed in the classroom. This means he can use the quiet corner or go for a walk.*

### A is for AVOID OR ALTER

Certain environments or situations can exacerbate challenges presented by SPD. It is important to consider if you can avoid or alter:

1. The physical environment the child is being placed in – is it noisy, congested, underwhelming, smelly, bright?
2. The expectations on the child – do these match their age and capabilities relating to their sensory challenges?

*In practice:*

- Provide a quiet place for children to access during lunchtimes
- Arrange for the child to be dropped off after assembly
- Provide mats to sit on during assembly to avoid contact with the cold cement
- Decline attending a noisy indoor play centre party

### L is for LEARNING THE CHILD'S SENSORY LANGUAGE

All children are unique in every aspect and SPD is no different. Some children may over react to noise and be under responsive to touch while others may crave noise and avoid touch. Their sensory preferences may change depending on any triggers that have been present.

It is important to become aware of what the child is seeking through their actions. This can allow you to choose a more appropriate

avenue to meet their sensory needs. Once you understand their sensory-specific challenges then you can put into place activities which support their particular needs.

*In practice: Stewart seeks input by sucking on his shirt collar so he wears a chewy necklace at school. He sits on an air cushion to decrease his fidgeting and provide feedback to his muscles.*

### M is for MOVE

Movement is a powerful way to help calm, organise and regulate the sensory systems. Different types of movement can help to meet the needs of the child's sensory system. Activities which provide pressure through muscles and joints, such as jumping, pushing and pulling can help to calm and organise a child so they are ready to interact and learn. Actions such as swinging and spinning can calm or alert a child depending on their sensory needs.

There are many actions and activities which can be implemented as part of a daily schedule to help children modulate their behaviours as a response to sensory input. This is known as a sensory diet.

*In Practice: Stewart's Occupational Therapist has helped create a sensory diet for him. Stewart rides to school and now aims to arrive just in time for first class. He helps the teacher to run errands and the whole class participates in yoga breaks or animal walks in between activities. After school Stewart spends time on the trampoline before homework.*

Remembering the steps within the acronym C.A.L.M can assist at times when challenging behaviours or difficulties with learning and socialisation are a result of sensory processing difficulties.

Ultimately, the most important thing a teacher or parent can do for a child with SPD is to remain calm themselves and support the child.

More information about SPD can be found at: [www.spdaustralia.com.au](http://www.spdaustralia.com.au)

# *The role of percussion in early childhood education*

*Brendan Gilmour*



Brendan is the Director and founding member of the innovative children's edutainment group - The Beats Bus ([www.thebeatsbus.com.au](http://www.thebeatsbus.com.au)). In this role, Brendan has written and presented countless interactive music workshops and performances in both the early childhood and primary school environments. An accomplished musician, Brendan has been playing drums and percussion for over 20 years. He is a dedicated advocate of the importance of active participation in music for the developing brain, body and soul and is passionately committed to inspiring and empowering young children to become lifelong learners and lovers of music!

Consider this ... the first sound that we hear and *feel* from conception, is the rhythm of our mother's heartbeat in the womb. Rhythm is truly innate in all of us and this is evidenced in a young child's ability to spontaneously move their body to a beat. Yet, in Australian society, it is not uncommon to hear adults profess that they have no rhythm! This is simply not true; we have all just forgotten a skill that we have intuitively from birth.

*Most of us in Australia love listening to music, but unlike people in so many other cultures and traditional societies around the world, not so many of us take the time to actually create it ourselves.*

Fortunately, it is never too late to 'tap' into our inherent rhythm, take some simple percussion instruments and provide our children with the opportunity to actively participate in music!

### **Why music is so important**

*Educators and philosophers as far back as Plato have been advocates of the importance of music education. Not just for the intrinsic enjoyment, or accomplishment of the skill of playing an instrument itself, but also for the more holistic developmental benefits that active participation in music imparts.*

The advent of brain scanning technologies and a number of recent longitudinal studies around the globe have now scientifically supported what many have observed for so long - that active participation in music has a profound and positive impact on a child's cognitive, physical, emotional, social and spiritual development. These developmental benefits, in turn, enhance all other areas of a child's learning.

So, if these incomparable benefits of music education are no longer in dispute then why has a recent study shown that nationally, 'as few as 2 out of 10 government schools (are) able to offer their students an effective music education'. (Music Council of Australia, 2013).

### Barriers to music education

#### 1. Crowded curriculum

*The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), Curriculum Design Paper expresses the intention to avoid overcrowding and to allow the content for any learning area (to) be 'teachable' within the indicative time allocation. However, the indicative time allocation proposed for the Australian Curriculum: The Arts learning area is only 4% of the total teaching time in Prep to Year Two. This equates to 1 hour per week for all five Arts subjects (Drama, Dance, Media Arts, Music, Visual Art) or 20 minutes per subject! Clearly this is completely insufficient for such an important area of learning. Encouragingly though, the latest amendments (February 2013) to the music rationale in the Revised Draft Australian Curriculum: The Arts include far more rigorous and robust language regarding the benefits of music than previous versions of the document. That said, it seems unlikely (at this the eleventh hour before the curriculum is implemented) that there will be any further recognition, at a government level, of the importance of music education. This is particularly so given the competing political interest of producing quantifiable data through national standardised testing of numeracy and literacy. A recent national study by the University of Melbourne into the impact of NAPLAN, concluded that 69 per cent of educators admitted that the focus on literacy and numeracy testing led to a significant reduction in time spent teaching other subject areas (The Age, 2012).*

*The challenge is to find our own creative ways to incorporate musical experiences into the day-to-day routines of the early childhood environment.*

#### 2. Cost of instruments – inadequate school budgets

The high cost of quality instruments is another barrier to providing an effective music program. Fortunately, however, it is one that can be more easily overcome.

*The solution is not found in the cheaper 'toy' instruments that invariably end up broken in a drawer, but by involving the children in making their own instruments from everyday household or classroom items.*

This is where percussion instruments come into their own. A simple bucket turned upside down can become a great sounding drum for a teacher to lead the musical sessions, whilst a recycled plastic bottle filled with a little rice makes a genuine sounding shaker that students can use in an endless host of games and activities.

A great option is to modify traditional childhood games to include an instrument for example; *Simon Says, Musical Statues, Hokey Pokey, Pass the Instrument* and *Fruit Salad* are just some of the endless possibilities.

#### 3. Lack of confidence

Understandably, many teachers feel that there is an unrealistic expectation on them to have the skills and knowledge to be able to teach across all of the learning areas effectively. Even people with specific training in one or more areas of the Arts are unlikely to feel competent in all facets of the five subject areas (Drama, Dance, Media Arts, Music, Visual Art) incorporated into this learning area. Over the past few decades the average mandatory music education



component of undergraduate degrees for classroom primary school teachers has been around 17 hours.

*It's no wonder that so many teachers, who haven't had external experiences with music in their lives, lack the confidence and skills required to implement programs in the classroom.*

The good news, as stated earlier, is that it is truly never too late to 'tap' into the 'rhythmical voice' inside us all. If you can clap your hands then you can keep a simple beat! Now transfer this action to any drum or bucket you can find! Seek out professional development training in music, develop links with community groups and associations, enlist parents or extended family to share their musical expertise and most importantly, practice playing a strong and consistent beat on a drum of your making! This simple, repetitive beat can form the basis of so many active music activities:

- Shake in time to the beat of a song you already sing as a group.
- Children repeat a simple rhythmic pattern that you play on your bucket drum.
- Many counting activities can be more joyously recited in time to a beat.
- Play along to rhymes and poems.

### Conclusion

If we can persist to overcome the many barriers to effective music education then with a few simple percussion instruments - and the confidence to use them – we can incorporate active participation with music into the existing practices and everyday life of the early childhood environment.

*Through this fun and engaging, yet developmentally imperative, act we will all hopefully play a role in inspiring and empowering the next generation to become lifelong learners ... and lovers ... of music!*



### References

- ABC News, 2013, *Teachers Warn Early Music Education Under Threat*, Retrieved from: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-27/teachers-warn-early-music-education-under-threat/4597138>
- Alter F, Hays T & O'Hara R 2009, 'The challenges of implementing primary arts education: What our teachers say'. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*. Vol 34, Issue 4 2009, Australia.
- Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2013, *The Australian Curriculum*, Retrieved from: <http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/curriculum.html>
- Bamford A, 2006, *The WOW factor: Global research compendium on the impact of arts in education*, 1st edn, Waxmann Munster: New York
- Deasy, R. 2002, *Critical links: Learning in the Arts and student academic achievement and social development*. Washington DC: Arts Education Partnerships.
- Ewing R, 2012, *Creative Arts in the Lives of Young Children*, 1st edn, ACER Press: Camberwell VIC
- Gibson R & Anderson M. 2008, 'Touching the void: Arts education research in Australia', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, Vol 28, Issue 1 2008, Australia.
- Music Council of Australia, 2013, *Music: Play for Life*, Retrieved from: <http://www.musicplayforlife.org/index.php/about>
- Sacks O, 2007, *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, 1st edn, Knopf: New York
- The Age, 2012, *Music Education Lack Primacy in Primary Schools*, Retrieved from: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/a-musical-education-lacks-primacy-in-primary-schools-20121203-2ar4x.html>
- Queensland Studies Authority (QSA), 2011, *Time Allocations and entitlement: Implementing the Australian Curriculum F(P)-10*, Retrieved from: [http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p\\_10/ac\\_time\\_alloc\\_entitlement\\_report.pdf](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ac_time_alloc_entitlement_report.pdf)

# ***Artful Building: integrating art appreciation and block play***

***Rebecca M. Giles and Paige Vitulli***  
***University of South Alabama***

Art is a way of expressing ideas, experiences, and emotions. As an alternative means of communication, art should permeate the entire early childhood curriculum and be part of what all children do. This includes art production as well as art appreciation. Placing works of art in the block centre instantly combines art awareness and construction play to significantly increase learning opportunities.

Unit blocks, a set of unadorned wooden blocks with a smooth finish that are proportional in size, have been a popular classroom building material since they were first produced for young children in the early 20th century (Wellhousen & Kieff, 2001). The block centre is a long standing tradition among learning centres, and unit blocks are typically associated with learning basic mathematical skills and concepts, such as quantity, shapes, and sizes. During building, children are also introduced

to crucial concepts needed for success in early literacy, including visual discrimination, use of abstract symbols, and oral language (Wellhousen & Giles, 2005/06). Including stimulating works of art in the block centre provides an excellent opportunity for cultivating children's appreciation for art while establishing a meaningful context for discussing various art forms and the elements of visual art. Each of these situations is described in further detail and supported with photographs of children at play. Additionally, teacher tips are provided for enhancing an existing block centre with art integration.

### **Cultivating Art Appreciation**

Imaginative and creative play is encouraged when teachers properly prepare for children's block play. Large pictures and posters displayed in the block centre can stimulate play ideas and generate meaningful discussion related both to building projects and the pictures themselves. For example, a picture of Winslow Homer's *Shipbuilding at Gloucester* may inspire building related to ships. When displayed alongside *Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare* by Claude Monet, a transportation theme may emerge. Similarly, works such as *City Building* by Thomas Hart Benton and *The Great Constructors* by Fernand Léger might result in the creation of a skyscraper or an entire city scene. Works of art recommended for inclusion in the block center to enthuse building are provided in Figure 1.

*Teacher Tip: An inexpensive resource for famous artwork is wall calendars.*



### Figure 1. Suggested Works of Art to Enthuse Building

*Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare* by Claude Monet

*The Block* by Romare Bearden

*Builders* by Jacob Lawrence

*The Builders* by Fernand Léger

*The Building of Westminster Bridge* by Samuel Scott

*Carpenters* by Jacob Lawrence

*Case with Five Balusters* by Loise Nevelson

*City Building* by Thomas Hart Benton

*The Church at Auvers 1890* by Vincent Van Gogh

*Church Tower at Domburg 1911* by Piet Mondrian

*Global Encoder* by Nam June Paik

*The Great Constructors* by Fernand Léger

*House Behind Trees* by Georges Braque

*The House with the Cracked Walls* by Paul Cézanne

*Lighthouse and Buildings* by Edward Hopper

*Shipbuilding at Gloucester* by Winslow Homer

Teacher interest is one of the best incentives for children's block play while information gained through observation and interaction offers a valuable opportunity to redirect or extend activities. As children are engaged



in play, thoughtful inquiry statements and 'artful' questions about the artworks displayed can motivate higher-level thinking as well as enhance the building process. A list of simple questions to encourage artful thinking and promote motivation for building is provided in Figure 2.

*Teacher Tip: Pair artworks with related accessories. For example, the dynamic energy depicted by Jacob Lawrence in his brightly coloured 'Builders' provides the perfect backdrop for sawing, drilling, and measuring when it is accompanied by a set of toy tools.*

### Figure 2. Artful Questions

What colours do you see?

Describe the lines. Are they thick, thin, or wavy?

Can you name any shapes in this work of art?

Pretend you are in the picture. What would you do? What do you smell? Or hear?

What do you see in this work of art?

What is the picture about?

Do you see textures? How do they feel?

What is the person thinking or saying?

How do you think he/she feels?

What title would you give this work of art?

What questions would you ask the artist?

What happens next?

### Elements of Art

The *elements of art* are the building blocks for creating and analyzing visual works of art. To read text, we must have ready knowledge of the letters of the alphabet. Similarly, artists must have a working knowledge of the elements of art to effectively examine and produce art. In order to facilitate visual literacy and fully integrate the visual arts, we as teachers should also have at least a basic knowledge



of the visual art elements that we can share with our students. Knowledge of the basic art elements enhances background and vocabulary to describe and create art; it increases visual

### Figure 3. The seven basic elements of art and online resources

**Line** is the path of a moving point that can vary in width, direction, and length. Lines such as contour lines define the edges of shapes and forms. In art (not maths) lines can be swirled, curved, zig-zagged and bent.

**Shape** is an area defined by line or colour. It is two-dimensional in art and can be geometric such as those we study in maths or organic as found in nature.

**Form** is a shape having three dimensions. It occupies space or gives the illusion of occupied space.

**Colour** is the hue, value, and intensity; a most expressive element of art and is seen by the way light reflects off a surface. Red, yellow and blue are the primary colours from which other colours are created.

**Value** is the lightness or darkness of a colour or surface. Adding black to a colour creates a shade and adding white creates a tint.

**Texture** is the actual surface feel of an area or the simulated appearance (illusion) of roughness, smoothness or many others.

**Space** is the area between, around, above, below or within; it is the illusion of objects having depth on the two-dimensional surface.

#### Sites for additional information about the elements of art include:

The ABC's of Art  
(<http://www.awesomeartists.com>)

Project ARTiculate  
(<http://www.projectarticulate.org/principles.php>)

The Artist's Toolkit  
(<http://www.artsconnected.org/toolkit/index.html>)

literacy in our learners as they view the world around them with more investigative tools (Santoli & Vitulli, 2013). Attention to elements such as, *line, shape, form, space, texture, colour* and *value* is very useful for facilitating the lifelong skills of seeing visual images more deeply, therefore, interpreting more thoughtfully (Vitulli & Santoli, 2013).

Figure 3 provides a brief description of each element and resources for additional information.

These elements of art are the basic properties of a work of art and the seven terms compose an aspect of the language of visual art. Facilitating young children's basic understanding of these terms provides them with the knowledge and vocabulary needed to evaluate art in a way that goes beyond a discussion of its subject matter. By knowing the elements of art, children can describe what an artist has done and express their feelings about it using a common vocabulary. An effective way to increase comprehension of the elements of visual arts, is to initiate conversations related to them. Opportunities for exploration of the elements through such conversations arise as children observe artwork encountered in their environment. Questions about art related to knowledge of the elements can include prompting students to observe and describe the *lines, shapes, colours* and/or *textures* in a work of art.

*Teacher Tip: Create a visual reference for art elements using architectural examples as a permanent block centre display.*

### References

- Santoli, S. P., & Vitulli, P. 2013. Picture this: The integration of social studies and visual arts. In T. Lintner (Ed.), *Integrative strategies for the k-12 social studies classroom*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Vitulli, P., & Santoli, S. P. 2013. Visual arts and social studies: Powerful partners in promoting critical thinking skills. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 8(1), 18 pages. [www.socstrpr.org](http://www.socstrpr.org)
- Wellhausen, K., & Giles, R. M. 2005-06. Building literacy opportunities into children's block play: What every teacher should know. *Childhood Education*, 82(2), 74-78.
- Wellhausen, K. & Kieff, J. 2000. *A constructivist approach to block play in early childhood*. Albany, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning.



### **Mathilda Element**

In this edition, I am pleased to be able to include a review

of the 2013 Picture Book of the Year, awarded by the Children's Book Council of Australia. For those of us who are addicted to picture books (I am raising a slightly guilty hand here), these awards are always an exciting time, when we can cheer on our favourites and discover potential new 'friends' – stories that we will ponder and take with us throughout our years of teaching and interacting with children. While the Picture Book of the Year is not necessarily for early childhood (and in this case, is a complex book more suited to older readers), it is worth exploration by early childhood educators, to remind ourselves of the depth of layers a good picture book can contain.

I still recall with pleasure the picture books of my early childhood years – thumbing my well-worn copy of *The Lorax* and swinging away with the brown barbaloots in their truffula suits, sailing away on a private boat with Max to *Where the Wild Things Are*, and crying with *The Giving Tree*. These three books helped shape many a young child's sense of imagination, empathy and caring. Now there is a whole new generation of wonderful authors and illustrators to explore. It is a wonderful time to buy picture books.

What are your favourite books? Feel free to send us a review of something you've read and read, something you truly love, or just drop me a line at [mathilda@ecta.org.au](mailto:mathilda@ecta.org.au). New reviewers always welcome!

### **Title: Are Trees Alive?**

**Author: Debbie S Miller**

**Illustrator: Stacey Schuett**

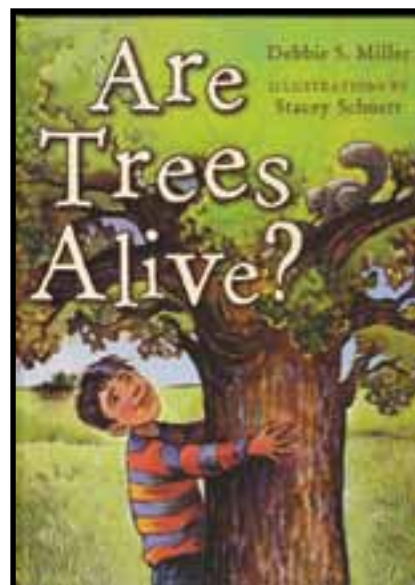
**Published: Bloomsbury**

**ISBN: 978-1-4081-7389-3**

**RRP: \$22.99 ( hardback )**

**Reviewed by: Christine Nolan**

*Are Trees Alive?* was an amazing springboard for discussion on trees and their importance in the environment linked to our focus at the time on Clean up Australia Day. The children loved the way the tree was given human-like qualities and made the connection between themselves and trees as part of the cosmos of life! Our older Buddy class spotted the book on a visit and borrowed the book from us. They had been learning about plants and their growth. They also found the book a delightful experience and it sent them off investigating some of the thoughts presented in the text. While the book has a fiction feel about it; in many ways it is a non-fiction text in disguise. The multicultural presentation intertwined in the variety of trees and their environments also added another dimension to the text. The illustrations were appealing and provided a subtext of their own. The final pages provide a mini glossary of the trees that featured in the text and were a stimulus for us to paint our own gallery of trees. The book was written by the author in response to her four-year-old's question ... Are trees alive? Undoubtedly, this book was well received by both its audiences and as such would be suitable for children aged 4-9 years. It proved a valuable and engaging learning resource for us in multiple learning areas and addressed some aspects of the science and cross curriculum priorities of the national curriculum.



**Title:** Gracie and Josh  
**Author:** Susanne Gervay and illustrated by Serena Geddes  
**Published by:** Ford Street  
**ISBN:** PB 9781921665851 HC 9781921665-844  
**Publication date:** March 1 2013  
**RRP:** Paperback AUD\$16.95 Hardcover \$26.95  
**Reviewed by:** Allison Borland

'Gracie and Josh' is a brilliant book with lots of positivity when life is not always on your side.

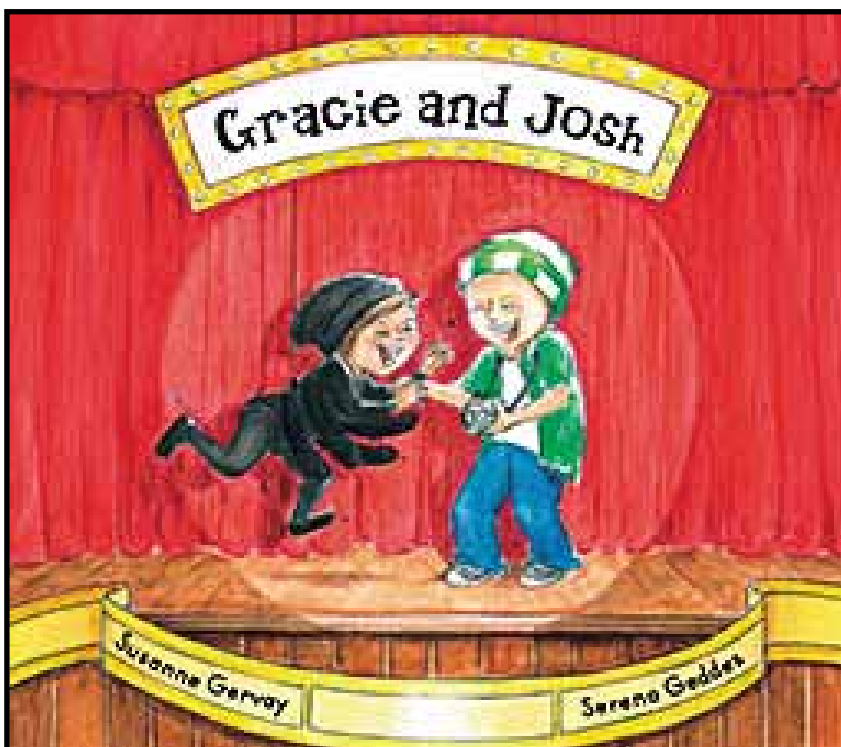
This story is about resilience, love, connection and the power of how children deal with emotions in their own way. It highlights the way children deal with issues in the real world and turn them into a fantasy with a positive spin!

It also shows the strength and character of a child (Josh) who has a terminal illness and, even though he understands this fully, he supports his sister (Gracie) through his journey with his unique character and creativity. Such a special individual.

It is an amazingly crafted book for both children and adults to enjoy, unpacking the rollercoaster of life, bringing in the good and the difficult. The bond that a family has, especially siblings, brings strength and resilience and shows that all things are possible to achieve if you have faith in yourself and others.

Young children, if allowed, can deal with extremely difficult circumstances when supported. Their experiences develop as they tackle the many obstacles of life. It is from these experiences they make connections to deal with life's challenges. This book shows this very well. It brings in a well-known traditional poem-song-story of Incy Wincy Spider or Gracie's words - 'dincy mincy'! A fun action rhyme that is familiar to children and adults across the globe.

The illustrations by Serena Geddes are unique and specifically crafted, making a difficult topic come to life in the most appealing and thoughtful way.



Congratulations to Susanne and Serena for a truly amazing children's book. It is endorsed by Variety, the children's charity helping children live life to the fullest. Susanne Gervay has deservedly won the order of Australia and the Lady Cutler Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature. A heart-warming read.



**Title :**        **The Coat**

**Author:**        **Julie Hunt**

**Illustrator:**    **Ron Brooks**

**ISBN:**         **9781 74114 605 9**

**RRP:**          **\$29.99**

**Reviewed by:**   **Melindi Robertson (CoDirector, Mt Gravatt Kindergarten)**

**Publisher:**     **Allen and Unwin (Teachers' notes available [www.allenandunwin.com](http://www.allenandunwin.com))**

*The Coat* is a mysterious, unique children's picture story book, winning 2013 Picture Book of the Year.

A sullen, frustrated scarecrow's coat entices a despondent passerby to don him and so they begin a magical journey of transformation to create a night of joyful music, allowing the man to realise and celebrate his potential. The large ill-fitting overcoat progressively adapts to fit the man perfectly as he experiences achievement in musical performance. Musical motifs abound in the text and pictures, including a musically themed menu, 'Rare Glissando' and 'Fresh Duet' being two of the dishes.

To create this picture book, Julie Hunt was influenced by her performance experience with the Kazakhstan Kowgirls; a friend's creation of a suit from newspapers and, lastly, the 'exuberant' music from a Polish friend's accordion.

As an illustrator study on Ron Brooks (illustrator) formed part of my post graduate studies, I am fascinated by his evolving style of work; with *Bunyip of Berkleys Creek* (1978), *Old Pig* (1995), *Fox* (2000), and the *Dream of the Thylacine* (2011) being examples of his many works. The artwork in this book was created using reed pen, brush, ink and shellac, on watercolour paper.

Increasing colour shows the rise of success and joy from page to page. The endpapers also use colour or lack of, to reflect the early gloominess to joyful conclusion, while being almost a mirror image of each other in other respects. Pink roses feature throughout, being common motifs in Brook's work. I feel his thoughtful intense illustrations (with some being influenced by work of painter Marc Chagall and the 16th century painter Bruegel) strongly complement this deep storyline.

My kindergarten children seem puzzled by this book, only commenting on the perceived magic nature of the coat, allowing the main character to fly. I feel older primary school aged-children may appreciate the messages contained within, from what may originally be seen as a slightly dark book.



**Title:**           **All Monkeys Love Bananas**

**Author:**       **Sean E Avery**

**Illustrator:**   **Sean E Avery**

**Published By:** **Freemantle Press**

**ISBN:**         **9781921888731**

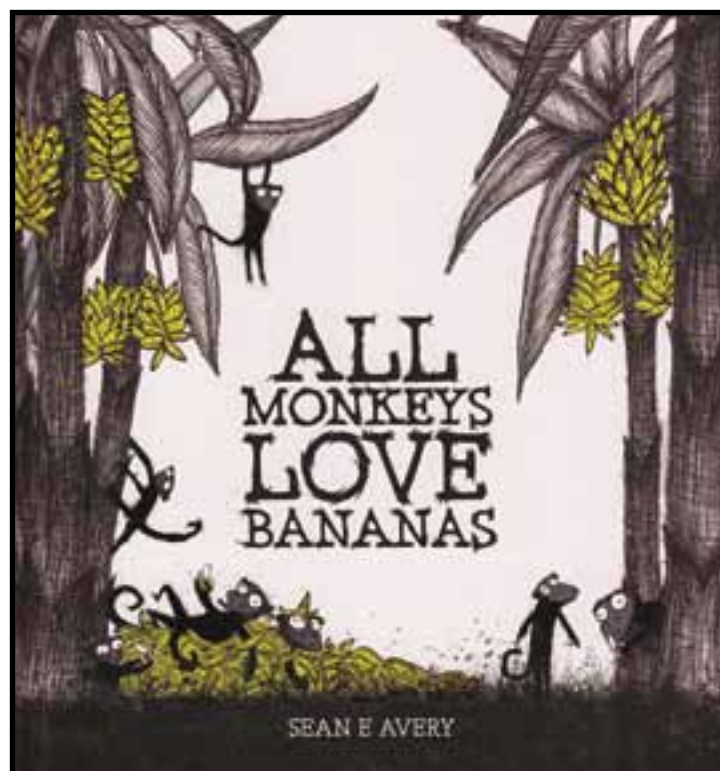
**RRP:**          **\$24.95**

**Reviewed by:** **Sue Webster**

A delightful book from beginning to end. The velvety feel of the monkeys on the cover encourages you to read this rhyming tale of a monkey called Lou and his dislike for bananas at every meal. But Lou has to be careful what he wishes for when Sue the Rabbit offers to trade bananas for carrots!

A fitting end for Sue and Lou ensures as the story ends. The rhyme rolls around your tongue as you read this book aloud to children from 0-8. There are many concepts to cover from rhyme; house numbers in twos; different food for different animals; line drawings (beautifully done with just some touches of colour) with lots of humour and facial expression; different size and shape print; the use of describing words and punctuation. An easy book to read with loads to discuss for any age.

A great first book from Sean E Avery. Learn more about Sean and his work at his website [www.seaneavery.com](http://www.seaneavery.com)

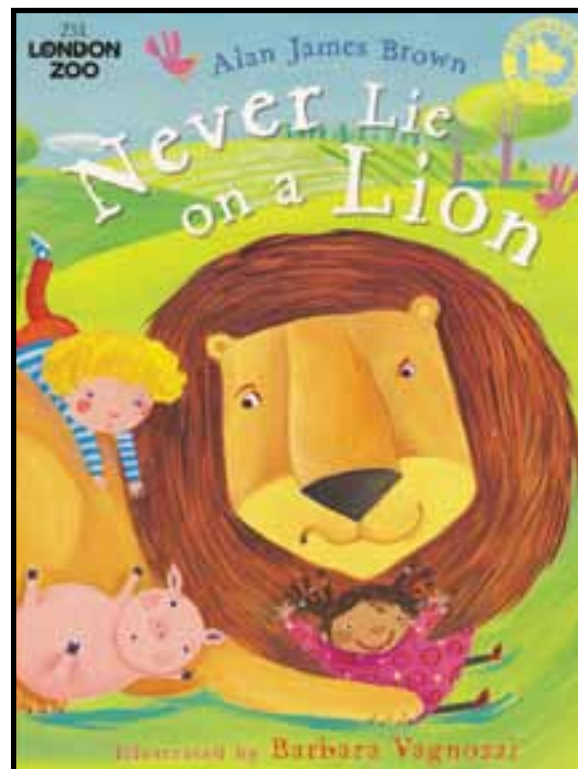


**Title:** Never Lie on a Lion  
**Author:** Alan James Brown  
**Illustrator:** Barbara Vagnozzi  
**Published by:** Bloomsbury Publishing  
**ISBN:** 9781408818442  
**RRP:** \$14.95  
**Reviewed by:** Kim Mostyn – Early Childhood Teacher

*Never Lie on a Lion* is a humorous picture rhyme book, with each page featuring a different animal. Pictures are simple and children are encouraged to draw upon their own knowledge. For example, is it possible to fit a whale into a pail?

The text is predictive with children able to make the accompanying sound for each animal. There are some things we should do and some things we should never do! Children get to work out which things are do-able and which things are not.

This book is designed for young children between the ages of two and four. Children could quickly learn the text and tell the story themselves.





**Title:**               **Who Lives Here?**  
**Author:**           **Michael Terry & London Zoo**  
**Illustrator:**       **Michael Terry**  
**Published by:**   **Bloomsbury Publishers**  
**ISBN:**             **9781408819432**  
**RRP:**              **\$15.99**  
**Reviewed by:**     **Tanya Dawson – Early Childhood Teacher**

*Who Lives Here*, a brightly-coloured lift-the-flap book from bestselling illustrator of *The Selfish Crocodile*, Michael Terry, will keep any young toddler entertained.

This is an interactive story with a simple but catchy story line. Each rhyming sentence introduces a new group of animals and their typical habitat from the jungle and the ocean to the forest and the farm.

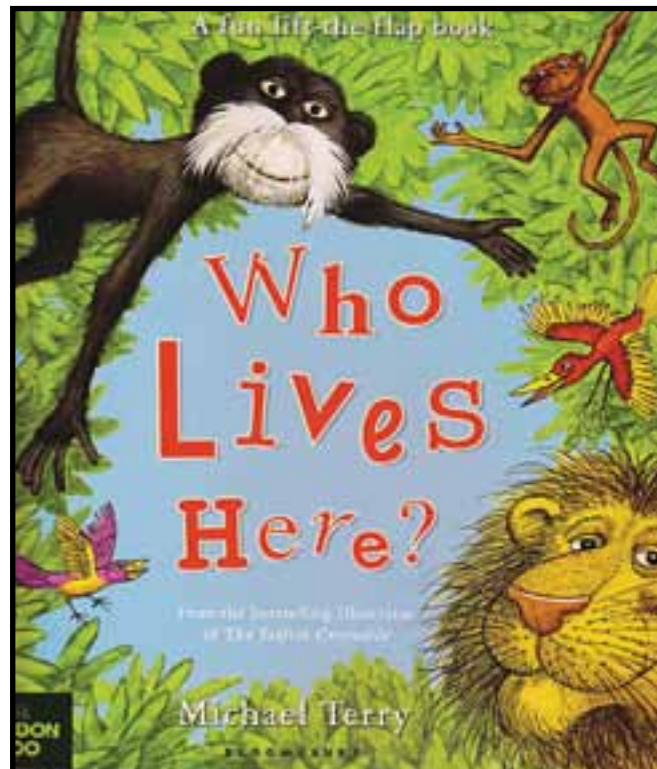
The pictures are beautifully illustrated in typical Michael Terry style and readers are encouraged to look around the page and name the animals they can see. Don't forget to lift the flaps and also find those animals that are hiding! Each animal is labelled to promote learning of animal names and even word recognition for those early readers.

Recommended for infants through to four years of age, *Who Lives Here* will make story time even more enjoyable for all involved.

Go to [www.storiesfromthetoo.com](http://www.storiesfromthetoo.com) for information on the authors and illustrators, more books about animals and the zoo, and 'fun stuff', including downloadable Zoo Activity Packs.

Available from major retail or online bookstores.

[www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com)



## 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* (6<sup>th</sup> 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*, 4<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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.

