Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the early childhood years

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.

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EYC disclaimer

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

Editorial policy

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

Registered Teachers - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements

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

Online access to journal

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

Photographs

All photographs are attributed to the author unless otherwise noted.

Contents

From the President
Kim Walters

As we celebrate twenty years of *Educating Young Children*, I would like to pay tribute to current and past editors and editorial teams. Prior to the publication of *Educating Young Children*, ECTA produced a newsletter six times per year that served members well from 1973-1994. The newsletter reported on regional professional development events and feedback and included lots of practical ideas and teaching strategies for early childhood teachers. As the number of preschools expanded across the state, these were exciting and challenging times for early childhood educators. The newsletter kept educators informed and disseminated quality pedagogical ideas and practice - something we continue to strive for in our current journals. In 1995, with Casandra Weddell and Belinda Macartney alternating as editors, the *Educating Young Children* journal replaced the newsletter. Casandra was editor until 2002, after which time an editorial panel continued to facilitate the journal. Lynne Moore, our current editor, was a member of the editorial panel from 2003 and took over as editor in 2006. Under Lynne's guidance, the journal has flourished as a high quality professional journal which is informative and provides practical strategies for early childhood professionals. In 2011, the journal was published in full colour, which I am sure you agree looks great.

Whilst looking back at several of my own *Educating Young Children* journals, I began reading the President's letter. Of particular interest was Toni Michael's report in the 1999 EYC (Vol 5 No 1), which reported on the ECTA strategic plan. Toni, in reflecting on the plan as part of her 1998 AGM presidential report, mentioned changes to the constitution, expansion of the use of Videolinqs and the establishment of an ECTA website.

Toni noted, 'we hope that the changes that have been proposed by the Constitution Committee will lead to more early childhood professionals becoming associate members'. Today we have many who enjoy the benefits of ECTA membership. At our 2013 AGM, members voted to make several changes to the Constitution Toni referred to in her report. The constitution now officially notes the addition of Life Membership and Concessional Membership. An additional section was also added to the requirement for membership to the State Coordinating Committee:

> Section 11.2 - All Members elected to the Management Committee, are required to have held ECTA membership for at least three years. It is at the discretion of the Management Committee to accept a member with less than three years ECTA membership onto the Management Committee.

This ensures State Coordinating Committee members know the philosophy behind ECTA and have an understanding of who we are and what we do.

Interestingly, Toni reports that in 1998, ECTA had twenty regional groups across the state. In a 1977 newsletter, it was reported that half of the membership fee of $4 was given to regional groups to support local professional development events. Currently our regional groups, which were in decline for many years, are expanding. The decline was following the introduction of the GST and other reporting requirements which made the facilitation of the group time consuming for

office bearers. ECTA has worked successfully to streamline these procedures and lessen administrative requirements for groups. Sunshine Coast has recently sent in registration forms and their approval will take the total to twelve registered regional groups across the state. We know that many professionals meet informally for networking and support, and I would encourage all to register as a regional group. To this end regional groups are supported financially via yearly grants of up to $1500 and funding for office bearers to attend the ECTA Annual Conference.

The 1998 AGM report also noted, 'we are well underway in the establishment of our web site'. The original website, still standing today, was created with funding from the Joint Council of Queensland Teachers' Association (JCQTA) as part of a Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs Education Network (DEETYA EdNA) project. The website has served ECTA well since its establishment in 1999. While the website under the leadership of Gail Halliwell has undergone many improvements, it is time for a new look and one that is easier for web weavers to administer. This requires a substantial investment, with the availability of the required funds testimony to the hard work of previous committees.

In Toni's AGM report she also mentions 'We intend to use the Videolinq technology to a greater extent in the regional areas'. As ECTA membership across the state increased and more regional groups were established, travel costs for professional development events grew. To cut costs and to reach more members the ECTA committee began to facilitate organised teleconferences. In 1998, ECTA began using Videolinq to provide professional development across the state. This has been a huge success, reaching members who cannot attend the ECTA Annual Conference. Videolinqs allow presenters to be seen and to interact directly in real time with participants. This is a far cry from the teleconferences which had materials posted to delegates before events, with only audio being heard by delegates. Our Videolinq network continues to expand, with 15 sites across the state logging in to our last presentation. Videolinqs are now held four times per year across the state, and reach hundreds of early childhood professionals each year. A wide selection of topics is provided, with an emphasis on practical strategies to use in our work with young children. Presenters can present from any of the sites. Our next Videolinq on 7 May, will see three presenters from three different sites.

The ECTA Annual Conference is now web based for registrations and information and provides credit card facilities to pay for conference registration.

It was with pride that I look back to where ECTA has come from, and it is with excitement I look to the future. We are embracing new web based tools to support our regional groups and members across the state. Currently over 300 fans follow us on Facebook, GotoMeeting is used for monthly on-line State Coordinating Committee meetings and we are investigating the use of technology to facilitate regional group office bearer discussions and professional development. The Conference Committee uses Skype to connect with committee members outside of Brisbane. We also use Dropbox for documents, and photo sharing between committee members.

We have much to celebrate over twenty years of EYC journals, and acknowledge all those who have contributed over this time. Thanks for strengthening ECTA as a professional association.

I am looking forward to meeting all regional group office bearers and delegates at the ECTA Annual Conference to be held on 28th June 2014 at Sheldon Event Centre, in the grounds of Sheldon College, Taylor Road Sheldon. The conference will once again see over 500 delegates inspired by more than 30 practical workshops promoting current best practise. Marc Armitage is presenting the keynote entitled, *'We all want 'more play' in our setting - so what's putting us off?'* In the current climate of push-down formal pedagogy into the early years, this is a topic that will resonate with all ECTA members. We all want 'more play' in our settings - so what's putting us off?

Yours in early childhood

Kim

From the editorial panel

Angela Drysdale

This year we celebrate the 20th year of *Educating Young Children*. As the longest serving current member of the editorial committee, the honour of this editorial falls upon me. I joined the committee in 1998, which was the year ECTA celebrated its 25th birthday.

When thinking about what to write, the journal of that year was my first point of reference. Toni Michael, the then President stated in her article, 'at the end of 1993 it was decided that ECTA should produce a journal in conjunction with QUT. A journal of this quality is a remarkable achievement for an organisation of our size'.

It certainly was remarkable, with each year the journal going from strength to strength. In 1998, Cassandra Weddell as editor led the editorial committee of Mark Cooper, Susan Danby, Lyn Hunt, Robbie Leikvold and me. Over the years the editorial committee has changed with many talented and dedicated teachers joining, contributing and leaving the committee. To name just a few, Diane Nailon from QUT, Megan Gibson who started as the Director of Campus Kindy and is now a QUT staff member and Cathy Holyoak. In 2000, Sue Webster, joined the committee and remains today. In 2002, Noelene Brown joined the committee as ECTA administration officer. Suddenly the committee could focus on the journal with Noelene taking care of the administration. Her efforts were acknowledged when she received an Honorary Associate Life Membership.

In 2002, Lynne Moore joined the committee and her reflective, thoughtful approach and leadership led her to the helm of the current committee. Sadly we had to say good bye to Cassandra Weddell who tragically passed away in 2003. Cassandra was a remarkable person and passionate advocate for children. Her spirit and legacy will always remain in this journal.

The partnership with QUT, gave the journal a significant presence in the early childhood field. Staff members from the early childhood faculty worked as editors and deputy editors and QUT provided the printing and design of the journal. The end of this relationship was the catalyst for a new direction for the journal.

The evolution of the journal is reflected in the journal cover and layout. The colours have remained the same, albeit different shades of yellow and blue. In 2011 the cover as we know it today came to fruition. The greatest change however was when we printed in colour. Suddenly the photos came to life!

The editorial committee always met regularly and continues to do so today. Over the years the meeting place changed, from a meeting room at QUT to the dining table (with dinner) at Cassandra's home, around the fire at Diane's home, and to the Australian Dental Association when Lyn Hunt was editor. Today the committee meets at St Margaret's; Sue Webster, Mathilda Element, Archana Sinh, Nebula Wild, Sarah-Jane Johnson and Lynne Moore and me. This committee follows in the footsteps of all those editorial committee members who laid the foundation for the journal as we know it today.

When I reflect on **Educating Young Children,** *the analogy of a jigsaw comes to mind. The pieces are the committee, the journal, the readers, the stories. As each journal is put together the pieces are added, removed and changed until they fit perfectly to create a powerful presentation of early childhood education.*

Angela Drysdale

Twenty years revisited

Mathilda Element

Educating Young Children is turning twenty! That's right, twenty years of EYC journals coming straight to your door, jam-packed with news, views and strategies to support professional early childhood educators in their daily work (and sometimes personal) lives.

Over two decades this journal's readership has grown, the journal has physically changed (including shifting to full colour) and the journal committee has changed (although there are some fabulously dedicated volunteers who have been with us for all or most of those two decades). Yet many things remain the same: this journal embodies passionate commitment to play and learning, respect for including children's voices and a desire to advocate for best quality practice in the early childhood field.

In later editions this year there will be many exciting '20th birthday' celebrations and as a part of this we would love to invite you all (our wonderful readers and teachers who already value professional development in their field enough to join ECTA) to take a moment to 'look back' on your own EYC journals. If you are like me, these are all kept on a shelf but rarely revisited. I urge you to do so – take the time to brush off those cobwebs, make a cup of tea (or an EYC birthday cake) and delve back into the wisdoms and insights of past editions. Delight once again in skimming for ideas, photos or stories that you might have forgotten.

And then, dear readers, don't forget to share that journey with us! Send us your 'rediscoveries' and we will aim to present them in a 'twenty years revisited' conversation.

In twenty words or less (not including the name of the article/conversation/edition details) describe what you found that you liked … and if you are really up for a challenge, do it in twenty minutes or less! All submissions due 20 June 2014, or any questions, can be sent to mathilda@ecta.org.au

Happy re-discovering!

Mathilda Element
Educating Young Children Journal Committee since 2007, ECTA member since 2005

As an example, here are three of my 'rediscoveries'…

Article/Segment Title: Environments from a child's eye view – Sharon McKinlay, EYC 2009, vol. 15 no. 3, p. 17-19.

What I liked: The combination of photos with children's thoughts – made me want to go out walking with a camera and kids immediately!

Article/Segment Title: Conversation – Reflections on Robin Grille's keynote presentation 'Love, Fear and Shame in Education', EYC 2012, vol.18 no. 2, p. 13-15.

What I liked: I missed this fabulous keynote, but reading others' perspectives on it made me feel like I was really there!

Article/Segment Title: Reggiosophia: When philosophy and Reggio-inspired practice dance together, Narelle Arcidiacono and Chris Ling, EYC 2011, vol. 17 no. 3, p. 41-43

What I liked: Hearing children's voices on the powerful curriculum activities achieved by integrating philosophical inquiry with Reggio inspired practices.

Maths – the 'new' curriculum and assessment

Ellen Bowen

I am a passionate early years educator who strives to implement best practice early years pedagogy and philosophy. I am currently involved in the Curriculum to Classroom (C2C) project in mathematics as a senior writer. I commenced teaching in a 500+ semi-rural school in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland and later completed country service on the edge of the Simpson Desert in a two teacher school. When not working on the C2C project I am based at a digitally-rich suburban school on Brisbane's North side. My biggest personal challenge has been to achieve balance between practice and curriculum intent in a way that satisfies both 'the paper' and my philosophy. The understanding that the C2C project has given me, makes me confident about successfully implementing the Australian Curriculum intent – not at the expense of early years pedagogy and a rich curriculum.

Mathematics has evolved across cultures over thousands of years. In fact, it continues to evolve today. The newest version of the Australian Curriculum is just the latest in the evolution of current theory and practice in Mathematics. It doesn't aim to 'wipe out' the past but builds on it. As a passionate early years educator, I believe in play-based learning and hands-on experiences that build on children's ideas and relate to their real life experience. It is my job to ensure my early years philosophy is embedded throughout my planning, the learning experiences I offer and the assessments I make.

Where's the test?

I have found that email discussion lists in Queensland are often full of questions and responses about 'maths tests'. These questions, and the often inaccurate answers about mathematic content, are alarming. Nowhere in the curriculum does it state there has to be a paper-based 'summative' test that covers all concepts taught in the semester. Not for report cards. Not even to generate 'data'.

So what then?

The things we have always done in early childhood count toward assessment. Portfolios, anecdotes, observations, interviews, digital recordings and student work samples offer a continuous and meaningful stream of true data. In the latest version of the Queensland

curriculum there is a 'monitoring ideas' section for each lesson. Short observations, anecdotes and hands-on learning experiences will provide multiple formative assessment opportunities across units to determine the final grade of a student. This holistic approach across the term provides real data. A one-dimensional – often too large, too long and too complex – test approach is setting students up to fail.

But what about the data?

Using the mathematic judgement guides provided in the curriculum assessment, along with the daily lesson plan areas of 'evidence of learning' and 'monitoring opportunities', will provide rich, meaningful data. This rich data can be used to inform planning and the 'where to next' journey for each student. A paper-based test score alone does not give a whole picture of the student, their strengths, areas of need and where to next.

So should I follow this 'new' curriculum and nothing else?

Of course not! Follow your early childhood philosophy, add, adapt, change and reshape the documents to suit your context, your students and your teaching style. Look at the maths lessons, see the rich mathematical intent of each lesson and build from there depending on student capabilities and areas of need.

Be flexible in your interpretation of the documents and approach. Use the 'support'

'extension' and 'be aware' concepts in each maths lesson. Building from these for your own students is essential to best practice early childhood pedagogy in the classroom context and in learning experiences.

Isn't that more work?

Yes. To gain a true assessment of student progression – what they know, what they need to work on and where they are going next isn't contained in any one program or document. Use your early childhood pedagogy and philosophy to support each student in their mathematic learning journey. Work smarter not harder – be organised, know the focus of the lesson and complete the monitoring tasks daily.

So more than one assessment type?

Yes. How you assess is up to you as an educator. I implore you to continue to use your 'early childhood hat' when planning assessment. Quality assessment should be multimodal. Students should know what is expected and how they will be assessed. The content should be covered in previous lessons and the assessment itself can be and should be an informal process. Putting a maths 'test' in front of children in the early years seems to me a very strange concept indeed.

So why I am asking you to hold onto your early childhood philosophy in the 'new' curriculum?

Because I am a passionate early years educator who has been lucky enough to have worked on 'both sides' – in the classroom as a P-3 teacher and as a member of the C2C writing team. The maths curriculum is a flexible, working document. It is to be adapted to suit you, your students and context. It is multimodal and if you read through the lessons you can 'see' the opportunities to embed your early years philosophy and pedagogy throughout, not only in each lesson, but in the assessment 'tasks' as well. Keep your sleeves rolled up, the play dough out and the hands-on experiences in. Early childhood philosophy should be embedded in your daily pedagogy.

Doing this will give true data through meaningful mathematic, multimodal learning experiences and assessments.

Play, science and assessment — the winning combination

Narindra Sandry

I have been an early years ambassador for 30 years, teaching in a variety of contexts including state preschools, C&K centres, Prep and primary settings and University. In recent years I have been an early years writer on the C2C Science team — an Education Queensland project developing support materials for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. My passions are teaching exciting and accurate science; and designing and developing high quality curriculum materials. I believe exciting science teaching using inquiry-based learning is commensurate with excellent early years pedagogy. In stark contrast, I also believe that teaching and assessing young learners in terms of the Australian Curriculum poses significant challenges for early years teachers.

The greatest challenges, I have found, as an early years teacher in a primary school setting are two-fold. First is holding on to the principles and practices that I know to be appropriate for young children. Second is finding methods to make the range and depth of a young child's learning visible. Once capturing this evidence of learning, I can carefully plan my next teaching strategy in alignment with the curriculum I must implement. Easier said than done. These challenges represent two opposing forces — the character and complexity of early learning and the top-down pressures for point-in-time data.

One of the areas I feel I have most success in meeting these challenges is in the teaching of science. Inquiry-based (not literacy-based) science provides wonderful opportunities for adhering to the fundamental principles of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in a prep or primary classroom and teaching the Australian Curriculum too. Science can legitimise play for those who are feeling pressured to limit play in their class programs. It can also provide wonderful opportunities for teachers to observe and assess students in ways that Froebel, Piaget, Vygotsky and Issacs have taught us are appropriate for young learners. An inquiry-based, hands-on science unit can include opportunities for children to:

- use play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas;

- follow and extend their own interests with enthusiasm, energy and concentration;

- initiate and contribute to play experiences emerging from their own ideas; and

- participate in a variety of rich and meaningful inquiry-based experiences.

These statements are from the EYLF and directly mirror statements in the Australian Curriculum including:

Students can experience the joy of scientific discovery and nurture their natural curiosity about the world around them. In doing this, they develop critical and creative thinking skills and challenge themselves to identify questions and draw evidence-based conclusions using scientific methods.

http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Science/Rationale (accessed May 12, 2013)

Accepting that science provides the means to employ time-honoured early childhood learning

and development principles, we then need to meet our second challenge — how do we make the learning visible and organise it into a record for reporting which accurately reflects the emerging young learner. This is where a science journal and a well-written guide to making judgments can be invaluable.

Keeping a science journal

In keeping a science journal, young students need to be taught to see this as not just another scrap book for pasting sheets into and then forgotten about. They need to be told that this is a thinking tool and scientists always look back at the notes they have written in the past. This should also be modelled using the class science journal. First and foremost, the entries are always date-stamped by the students, if even somewhat exuberantly in the beginning. Of course, there will likely be some sheets to glue in but even young students can be encouraged to make other types of entries too. For example, drawing things they observe or describing their observations to an adult who scribes their ideas are both important types of journal entries. Early picture graphs and graphic organisers like story boards are also important ways for organizing their observations and explaining change. Photos taken and printed out, or screen shots/ print-outs of computer activities which are then annotated, can be other sources.

The most significant factor in the success of using science journals is that teachers then need to make time to have conversations with students about what they have drawn, what they have learnt and if they have unanswered questions.

We know that what a young person can draw or write is rarely a true indicator of the depth of their knowledge.

Science journal entry

Conversations and observations of students engaged in hands-on activities are of course a major source of information when teaching young children. However, capturing the enormous number of significant observation moments that occur in any one day is a huge challenge. A really valuable technique is to record observations with a digital recording device, as writing these down can be difficult during an activity. Also, taking photos can capture an important moment and trigger the recall of an important observation. It is important to explain to a class what you are doing when you are speaking into a small device and why you are taking photos of them. Young children can even be taught how to talk into a recording device themselves – for example, to describe something they have made from different materials and why. Sometimes, without a teacher's questions to direct the conversation, it can give new insights into a young learner's thinking.

When discussing, scribing and interviewing about a task which you have deemed significant for monitoring and assessment, it is highly valuable to have a marking guide on hand. It is again important to briefly explain to students why you are recording on this document – for example, to write about what they know and can do. A well-written marking provides excellent structure to the questions you ask and the information you look for. Guides are very effective when written in a continua style rather than a rubric. When reading and using the guide, start from the
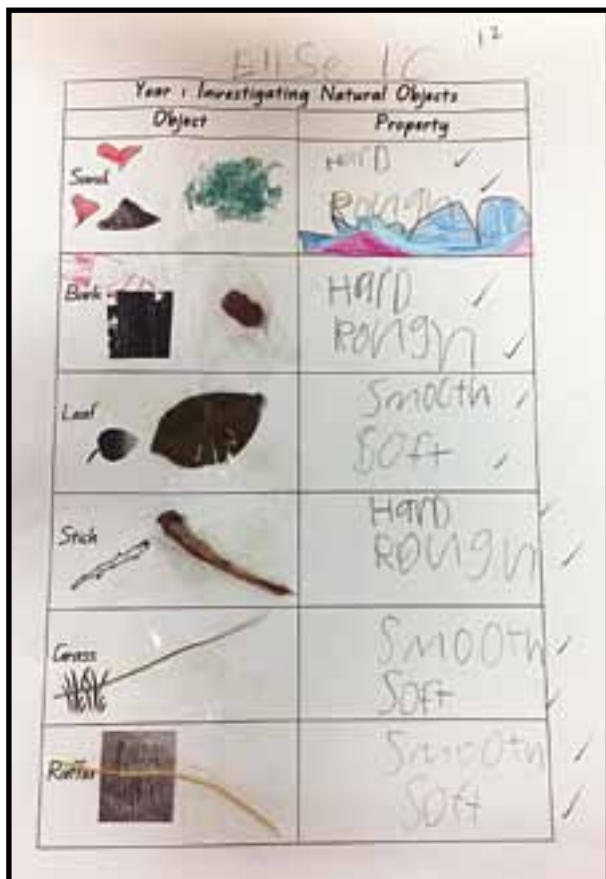
Making hands-on learning visible

and increased sociological diversity all result in time constraints and top down pressures which make it difficult to include play-based, child-directed learning in our classrooms. If you have not been taught how to foster and map these in the first place through completing a specific early childhood qualification, it can be especially difficult. Inquiry-based science, science journals and well-written marking guides can be a big part of the solution.

Swaffield, S.,2011 Getting to the heart of authentic Assessment for Learning, Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 18:4, 433-449 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2011.582838

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, The Australian Curriculum, http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Science/Rationale (accessed May 12, 2013)

bottom and read upwards so that you are identifying what the child can do. Placing a mark, brief comment and/or activity name and the date will then give you a starting point for the next time you use the guide with a child and, over time, will build up a picture of not only where they are at but where they have come from. The dates on the guide can then be matched to an anecdotal record, recorded observation, or science journal entry as evidence of the mark. Guides using language stating a frequency of performance such as 'sometimes, often, always' should be avoided as this is far too subjective. When you are teaching at least 25 students, trying to document how often someone does something is near impossible and it may not, in fact, indicate actual understanding.

In modern primary school settings, many traditional early years practices are threatened, largely because of the accountability measures that engulf us. Achievement in literacy and numeracy, a mandated National Curriculum

ECTA's submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning

Last year, the Australian Government requested the Productivity Commission to commence an inquiry into child care and early childhood learning. The Inquiry is focused on developing 'a system that supports workforce participation and addresses children's learning and development needs'.

In response, ECTA made a submission to the Commission in February. It acknowledged the importance of kindergarten participation and supported the current staff qualifications and ratios under the National Quality Framework (NQF). It also suggested streamlining current regulatory requirements under the NQF and the processes involved in providing appropriate support for children with additional needs.

You can read ECTA's submission in full at: http://pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/133624/sub192-childcare.pdf

Cultural competence

This conversation, specific to cultural competence as it applies to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is a call to action. Please honour the voices of your colleagues by committing to developing your own cultural competence. Ask yourself - how do I demonstrate respect for multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living? How do I show that I have an ability to understand and honour differences in a two way process with families and communities? How do I ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, Australia's First Peoples, are valued in my service?

Denise Cedric

I am a Pre-Prep Teacher and Pedagogical Leader with the Remote Indigenous Professional Development Program for the Early Years Learning Framework. I am currently based at Yarrabah State School Pre-Prep Centre.

In an early childhood environment that values Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures you would see ... happy children with a strong sense of identity and pride in knowing 'who they are and where they're from'. The environment reflects the diverse knowledge, cultures and languages that children and their families bring and has culturally safe play spaces where children and families can freely exchange cultural education. Educators are responsive in supporting positive outcomes for children and their families by providing varieties of cultural resources that are accessible by children.

I am challenged by ... seeking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of learning and understanding that connect with 'mainstream' styles of education that stimulate, challenge and engage children's interests and abilities to ensure children are competent and 'ready' to enter formal school settings with the skills necessary to continue learning.

I would like to see ... early childhood educators engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in discussion with a willingness to learn new ways of learning and teaching that highlight the value of maintaining culture, language and family connections to land and sea. Early childhood education should have relevance to children's everyday life. High expectations that all children can learn in the different ways that reflect their cultural identity, is the key to quality educational outcomes.

Danielle Cassidy

I am the Principal Project Developer for the Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood (EATSIPEC) initiative. I am passionate about working in Indigenous Education, and understand the importance of working with Elders and community, and the role of parents as the first teachers of their children.

In an early childhood environment that values Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures you would see ... firstly, the service would be very welcoming and have a clear acknowledgement of Aboriginal culture and Torres Strait Islander culture. This could be flying the flags, utilising cultural resources and showing clear collaborations and partnerships with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and services. This would ultimately create a 'wrap around' model that can support the families and children, as well as the centre.

I am challenged by ... the lack of education regarding Australia's past in regard to the treatment of Aboriginal people and Torres

Strait Islander people. I feel that having an understanding of past government policies and Acts that have shaped Australia's history, truly helps an educator understand the importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Becoming aware of this, enables educators to understand why it is so important to reflect and incorporate this knowledge, so to lead them to understanding how to embed these perspectives.

I would like to see ... more children's services that are flexible in their program delivery to ensure that local Elders, community and families have clear input on the curriculum and service delivery. Where the kindy or child care centre has many community partners to support all children attending, as well as their families, they can ensure their program is holistic. Having continual and reciprocal connections to key community stakeholders, can really support a family's sense of trust, thus supporting their sense of belonging.

Ursula Barber

I am a mentor to up and coming early childhood educators in my community and a Pedagogical Leader with the Remote Indigenous Professional Development Program for the Early Years Learning Framework (DETE). I am based in my community which is Woorabinda in Central Queensland.

In an early childhood environment that values Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures you would see ... children who know where they come from, have that strong connection to their community and who build that respectfulness to their families and Elders in the community by learning both ways. You would see children able to express themselves through their culture, family beliefs and education and who are able to continue that throughout their learning

journey from early childhood education and care into formal schooling.

I am challenged by ... understanding the huge diversity of language groups in my community and being able to include that into appropriate early childhood learning experiences whilst being respectful to all fifty-seven family clans.

I would like to see ... all early childhood services embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and implementing culturally appropriate learning experiences into their everyday practices. For early childhood educators to value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and access the resources that we have in our Elders and natural environment to provide rich learning experiences for all children.

Marie Page

I work as an EATSIPEC officer assisting mainstream services make holistic changes that are culturally inclusive.

In an early childhood environment that values Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures you would see ... a centre that provides a culturally safe and welcoming environment. The service would be known by the community and, embedded within the service, would be regular visits from an Elder or community visitors.

I am challenged by ... services that don't make holistic changes; they only have flags on display with no further involvement with community. These services just want a quick fix – for example, inviting someone to provide a workshop without any commitment to follow up or other engagement.

I would like to see ... more focus on how to truly embed cultural practices. To do this, services need to create sustainable partnerships with the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to gain an insight into our culture. If we open our doors to allow community involvement we are opening our minds to culture at a holistic level. If we can do this we will be building a bridge to reconciliation by creating footsteps in children's acceptance of First Nations Peoples.

Sarah Callinan

Sarah is the Manager of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs at C&K where she oversees the Indigenous Support Unit, Dhagun Gur Indigenous Resource Library, Indigenous Parenting Services and Children and Family Centres.

**In an early childhood environment that values Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures you would see
...** both indoor and outdoor environments that allow children to establish deeper cultural understandings. When walking through the gate, there would be traces of culture embedded all through the outdoor learning environment in a respectful and meaningful manner. There could be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, yarning circles, native plants and artefacts like coolamons with which the children could engage. Children would be connecting with the world around them, making observations about nature and taking photographs to document what sets of things are happening at one time, and what things are changing from one season to the next. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have taken care of, and lived off, the land for thousands of years in this way.

Indoors, you would see photographic displays of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaging in everyday activities as well as traditional culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander story books would be accessible in amongst a range of books. There could be musical instruments like kulaps and also traditional or contemporary music by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being played in the background. Words in the local traditional language could be displayed and incorporated into daily routines such as at morning group time. By including these perspectives, children can then make choices to engage, make plans and ask questions. They can begin to look at things through a different lens and appreciate other ways of being in the world.

I am challenged by ... the uncertainty many educators feel about how to approach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. I understand people are at different stages of the learning journey to embrace and value culture. While the National Quality Framework (NQF) has elevated awareness, there remains a challenge that lies in fearing mandates which can both be paralysing or lead to tokenism. There is enormous value in the rich culture and knowledge of our First Peoples, for all children and educators regardless of background. Another challenge is when people don't realise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is important that environments reflect this diversity and that educators are also grounded in local culture. At times educators find it difficult to connect with their local Indigenous community. They may not know who to contact or more importantly how to make contact. Sending an email or leaving a voice message may not get a response because building a relationship takes time and lots of cups of tea!

I would like to see ... early childhood environments that reflect a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and honour traditional ways as well as our shared history. Most especially I would like to see early childhood educators building genuine and reciprocal relationships with local Indigenous people. An important first step is to ask how the early childhood service can participate in the local community before requesting something in return. I would like to see not only traces of culture in the environment but also local Indigenous Elders and families welcomed and actively involved in the education of children. Children's interests often build from what they know. So we need to be intentional about what choices children have to engage in by noticing what perspectives are visible and invisible in the environment.

39ᵗʰ ECTA Annual Early Childhood Conference
Saturday 28th June 2014

ECTA

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

MTA

Keynote Address: We all want 'more play' in our setting – so what's putting us off?

The Keynote Presentation looks at the most common barriers that settings face when trying to provide 'more playing' as part of their day, and explores a number of possible solutions. Marc will explore what it is our children truly want in a play environment and how we can overcome the barriers we perceive as stopping us from doing just that. He will show participants how to overcome what they believe are the barriers … the things that are currently getting in their way. This is an inspiring presentation which empowers the participants to achieve with confidence what we know is the best environment in which our children can spend their time. It shows them how they can go away following the presentation and begin to achieve such an environment now!

Presenter: Marc Armitage:

Marc Armitage is an independent play consultant specialising in the role of children's play in learning and their social worlds. Marc is currently based in the United Kingdom but regularly travels around the world lecturing, running professional development workshops, researching and consulting on children's play. Marc has been an independent specialist in this field for twenty-four years and altogether has been employed in this type of work for more than thirty years. specialises in exploring what children and young people do when they are not usually in the presence of adults. To understand children's play and how this knowledge can impact on our practice in playwork, early childhood education and schools, we need to know and understand what it is that children 'do' not what we think they do. As adults, we make a lot of assumptions about children – what they can do, what they can't do; where they spend their free time and what they do there. Very often those assumptions are wrong. It is common to hear adults say that children of today simply do not know how to play any more – it isn't true; people say the traditional games that they remember playing as a child just are not around any more – this isn't true; and people say children much prefer screen time to playing out – I'm here to tell you this isn't true either. If we want to understand children and their wider social lives, we need to know and understand what they 'do' – not what we think they do or what we would like them to do but what they actually do in those places and those times in which they have control over their own choices. This can only be done by actively exploring children's lives - especially exploring those times and those places in which there are usually no adults present – the journey to and from school, recess time, the time after school, time at home away from parents, etc. **'The thing that children and young people do more than any other thing when adults are not watching … is play!'**

Masterclass Presentations:

Karen Stagnitti: Pretend play and literacy

Karen Stagnitti: Pretend play and children with autism

Iain Hodge: An introduction to how we learn

Sally Foley-Lewis: The Big 3: The secret trio to management success.

Marc Armitage: The Role of the Adult in Children's Play: The play cycle

Plus choose from over 26 Workshops.

Venue: Sheldon Event Centre
(within the grounds of Sheldon College)

Environments that value Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

Lakeview Community Kindergarten

Tui Benson is a C&K Early Childhood Advisor and former Director of C&K Lakeview Community Kindergarten. Tui has been passionate about embedding cultural perspectives into the Kindergarten environment for almost 20 years. In fact, she believes all areas of the curriculum need to be embedded in the environment.

'I find it very difficult to understand why there are certain areas for art, music, block building and dramatic play,' she says.

'As part of my own professional development, not to mention the requirements of the National Quality Framework (NQF), I decided to take this to another level and involve all of the staff. My early childhood advisor, Carrolyn, invited me to proceed in a more formal way this year with an Action Research project.

'Last year we were very fortunate to gain a grant to use in this area. I managed, through the Sunshine Coast Council, to obtain a lead to Kerry Neil, a Gubbi Gubbi man, from Goombuckar Creations. He is amazing, and held the children's attention for an hour with knowledge, humour and hands-on involvement. He has continued to be an incredible source of information as well as of where to find 'stuff'.

'This is not a journey for a week or a year, it is a lifetime. I have been to a number of workshops over the past three years and my knowledge/skill base is developing. The questions I posed for reflection, from the NQF outcomes, are for everyone, especially staff and families.

'On a personal level, this is about respect, history, heritage, and valuing First Peoples. It is about relationships, and it is about understanding two world views (in fact there are many) and working alongside each other.'

These photos show how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are embedded throughout the indoor environment.

This is a photo of the display cabinet in the kindergarten foyer. The cabinet has Aboriginal art as well as the children's own artwork which they produced while engaging in learning about Aboriginal culture. This is not a token display; the art is embedded amongst other practical items such as the kindy policy book and staff folder.
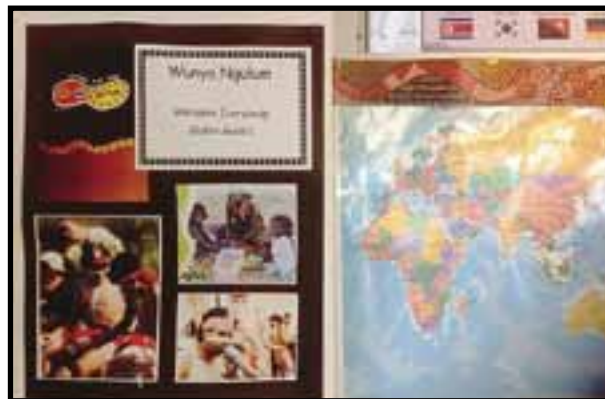
Posters of Aboriginal art, performers and local language words alongside maps and flags of the world, again embedded.
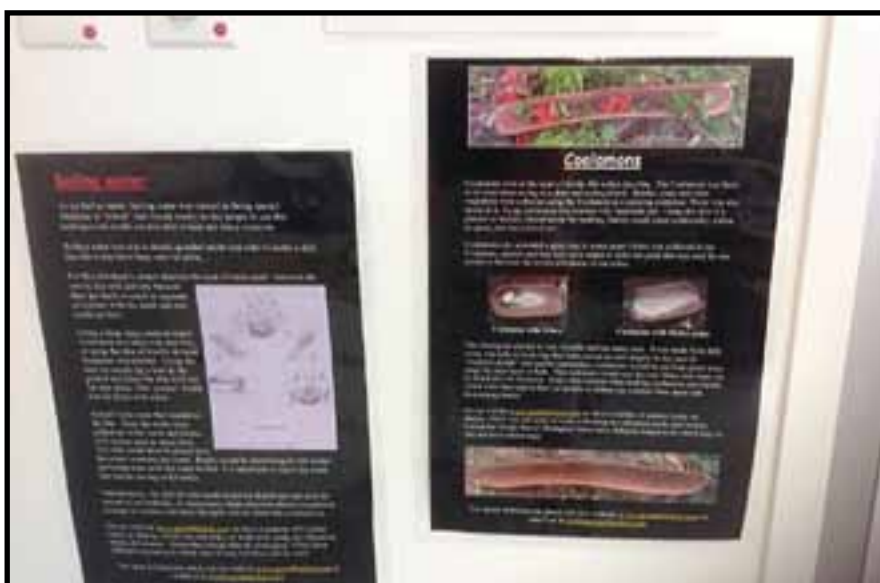

Wall display featuring pictures of local Elders, both in traditional and contemporary dress, there is a definition of what the word Elder means in a traditional and contemporary sense.

Evidence the children had read the story of the Rainbow Snake.

Posters explaining traditional practices, for instance how and why water is boiled and what coolamons are used for.

Environments that value Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

Mourilyan Kindergarten

The Mourilyan Kindergarten has established strong connections with the local Ma:Mu people, who are highly involved in the education of the children at the kindergarten. Elders are comfortable and happy to connect with children as they feel welcome and respected. The children each year go on a Ma:Mu cultural excursion. The kindergarten children have the special honour of being turtle guardians alongside the Ma:Mu people.

Sandra Bulger, Director at Mourilyan Kindergarten, a C&K Affiliate, explains 'The Ma:Mu people are the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Mourilyan kindergarten is built and we are respectful of them as the Elders past, present and future.

'The Ma:Mu people of North Queensland share a special connection to country: the land, rivers and waterways of this region. There are five different tribal clans that form Ma:Mu: Bagirgabarra, Waribarra, Dyiribarra, Mandubarra and Dulgulbarra.'

These photographs show how the environment at Mourilyan embeds local culture achieved through authentic relationships with local Ma:Mu people.

The environment includes art made by local Ma:Mu people.

Educators engage with the children in posing questions and discussing the artwork.

Children create artworks using similar techniques and colours.

There is a focus on connecting with nature, as shown by the photos of insects and seed pods.

The environment is not confined to being within the kindergarten gates, as the children go out on excursions and explore their natural world, led by the Ma:Mu guides who share their wisdom and explain about their connection to country.

Cultural competence support and guidance program

The *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood* (EATSIPEC) program will be extended throughout 2014, following a successful pilot in 2013.

The program was developed to strengthen engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in kindergarten programs.

Through EATSIPEC, approved kindergarten program providers in targeted locations are supported to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children and deliver inclusive early childhood education programs.

Back left: Marie Page, Aunty Honor Cleary, Margi Malezer, Rowena Cleary, Tom Byrne
Front Left: Sharly Murdoch, Nicole Watego-Gilsenan, Kelea Johnson, Danielle Cassidy

Benefits of participating in the program include:

- support in meeting the requirements of National Quality Standard 6 – collaborative partnerships with families and communities

- receiving cultural competence support and guidance (materials) relevant to your local setting

- access to professional development such as practical teaching and learning strategies and activities using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge frameworks

- access to an implementation officer and ongoing support from cultural mentors

- provision of strategies for working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and other agencies.

EATSIPEC is adapted for the early childhood sector from the successful *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools* (EATSIPS) program and funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

It contributes to the Queensland Government's objective of delivering universal access to kindergarten by supporting an increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participating in kindergarten programs.

For more information on EATSIPEC (including program priority locations) visit the department's website at http://deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/service/indigenous-perspectives.html or contact EATSIPEC project developer Danielle Cassidy by email Danielle.cassidy@dete.qld.gov.au or telephone 0418 710 274.

U3vid website launch and research findings round table

Allison Borland

In August 2013 I had the pleasure of representing ECTA at a round table meeting to support early childhood education and care for Birth to Three Years. The meeting was chaired by Dr Susanne Garvis (Griffith University), Dr Narelle Lemon (RMIT), Dr Bonnie Yim (Deakin University) and Professor Donna Pendergast (Griffith University).

What u3vid is?

U3Vid is a learning resource early childhood educators can use to gain knowledge and experience in the education and care of infants and toddlers. U3vid draws upon the five Learning Outcomes and the five Practices of the *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (DEEWR, 2009) to guide educational expectations for children from birth to three years of age.

The project team, involving the four Institutions outlined above, was awarded an Australian Government Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) seeding grant to explore ways to improve early childhood education. A pilot study videoed and captured specialized footage of short interactions of infants and toddlers from birth to three years of age interacting in their environment with a supervising teacher.

The purpose of these vignettes is to support pre-service teachers' study of an early childhood learning environment. To encourage higher order thinking and reflective practice, a template has been developed based on Bloom's taxonomy. This process consists of six stages. Questions are posed as students view the scenarios to identify the specific developmental learning that is occurring. At this stage there are ten videos available with more under development.

The website platform is an excellent way to view and share the videos and to connect with a forum portal where students and lecturers can share ideas and thoughts.

All resources are located in the secure website and are available for pre-service teachers enrolled in early childhood courses at Griffith University, La Trobe University, RMIT University and Deakin University in Australia.

Round table discussion

Participants, representing their respective organizations, were asked to contribute to the discussion based around the four themes:

- Curriculum for Birth to Three years

- Teacher Education for Birth to Three years

- The National Quality Framework for Birth to Three Years

- Future directions for Birth to Three Years in Australia

Discussions highlighted areas that need consideration in early childhood, including the challenges and issues that the early childhood profession faces on a daily basis. It was an informative session with all stakeholders present working towards better education for young children and improved working conditions for professionals within the early years.

The discussion included advocacy, affordability, parental concerns, supporting families, consistency, attachment, the value of a child and inclusion - all in support of children from Birth to Three years.

The following meeting, in November, focused on developing an Action Research Group, comprising representatives from early childhood bodies, to advocate for children from birth to three years on selected topics. This group, known as 'Knowledge Communities for Early Childhood', is working towards collaboration, connection and change for the future of the industry.

In this meeting the focus was based on the themes:

• Professional identity for working with Birth to Three years

• Teacher education for Birth to Three years

• Respect for children.

Further information

http://u3vid.com.au/

Anyone interested in joining the 'Knowledge Communities for Early Childhood' group or in finding out how to access the online resources available through the secure login access please email Susanne Garvis at s.garvis@griffith.edu.au.

Allison Borland, Bonnie Yim, Susanne Garvis, Narelle Lemon and Eva Nislev

Toilet Tactics Kit take-up reaches 1000 schools

More and more children are acquiring healthier bladder and bowel habits thanks to the 1000th Australian primary school signing up for the Continence Foundation of Australia's Toilet Tactics Kit.

Just as importantly, increasing numbers of teachers and parents are acquiring the knowledge and skills to handle sensitive situations around children's toileting and incontinence issues.

The Toilet Tactics Kit is part of the Continence Foundation's successful *Healthy Bladder and Bowel Habits* in Schools special project, which was launched in 2011 and initiated in response to the high incidence of urinary incontinence by children in primary schools.

A 2001 Australian survey of 2,856 children found that nearly 20 per cent of children had experienced daytime incontinence in the previous six months. Further to this, a 2005 study revealed that constipation (one of the main causes of faecal and urinary incontinence) was found to affect up to 30 per cent of children.

While it is understood there are many causes of incontinence and constipation in children, it is also understood that lifelong behaviours and attitudes begin early, which is why children, their parents and teachers are the target of this project.

The program is most effective when kindergarten teachers can confidently hand over children to school teachers equipped with the skills and knowledge to effectively manage any toileting issues.

One of the most recent schools to register for the Toilet Tactics Kit is Currans Hill Public School in Sydney. Principal Lyn Flegg, who implemented the program at her previous school, Warwick Farm Public School, is such a strong advocate for the program that she is about to introduce it at Currans Hill in 2014.

Mrs Flegg said at her previous school the program was introduced to children from day one, and was firmly embedded into the culture of the school.

'We utilise it regularly, particularly at the start of the school year with the little children from kindergarten. Often they are not fully toilet trained, and it

becomes the responsibility of the school,' Mrs Flegg said.

She said the program's strength was that it set up an attitude of normalcy around toileting.

'Just as we help children with reading or literacy, we help with their bodies, their health and their toileting, so it doesn't become a big deal for children and it's not embarrassing.'

Ms Flegg said the impact on teachers was just as important.

'I noticed an increase in confidence in teachers. The program provided them with the tools to be able to address these sensitive situations, and it definitely gave us strategies to support the increasing needs of parents.'

The Continence Foundation's project officer Samantha Scoble said schools were finding out about the Toilet Tactics Kit through teachers, parents and health professionals who had witnessed the outcomes in other schools.

'We're really pleased with the take-up, and the individual feed-back we've received has been fantastic. Comments from schools highlight the user-friendliness of the kit and the successful outcomes of the Toilet Tactics initiative,' Ms Scoble said.

The Continence Foundation of Australia welcomes enquiries from parents, teachers and health professionals. Phone the free National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 or go to www.continence.org.au

The Continence Foundation of Australia is the peak national organisation working to improve the quality of life of all Australians affected by incontinence. For further information about this initiative contact: Maria Whitmore 03 9347 2522

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Feedback – *the breakfast of champions*

Steve Francis

Steve Francis understands the challenges and demands of being a Principal. He has led a number of Queensland State Schools from a one teacher school through to a large Metropolitan school. After 18 years of successful Principalship, Steve ventured with his family to Hong Kong as the Principal of an international school for four great years. He returned to Queensland to start a new business venture supporting leaders to reach their potential. Steve is passionate about work-life balance and supporting school leaders to reach their potential through a range of professional development programs. www.stevefrancis.net.au

Throughout my childhood I was led to believe that Weet-Bix was the breakfast of Champions. However, it was actually Henry Ford who is attributed with the saying *'Feedback is the breakfast of champions'*.

Feedback helps us improve by focusing our priorities. Through feedback we identify what is working well *(and therefore should be continued) and what isn't working so well (and therefore we should focus on improving)*.

Feedback is seen as a vital aspect of improved performance in educational settings. Feedback to students on how they are doing and what they should focus on and feedback to staff on how they are doing and what they can focus on too. Establishing a feedback culture is essential to optimising the learning environment for children.

95% of people who work in educational settings want to do a good job. They are committed to continuous improvement and want what is best for the children.

However most staff are 'in the dark' and are not aware of what they need to focus on to improve. They operate in isolation. In most instances, the classroom teacher and aide work without feedback.

The *egg crate* analogy is generally alive and well in most early childhood settings. Individual teachers and assistants work away in their classroom with their own students. Day after day they do what they think is right, with the best intentions, within the confines of their own class room. Many teachers and assistants continue to do what they have always done. They try to implement some of the initiatives they have learnt through professional development or through discussions with colleagues.

Giving feedback to children to help them learn is common in early childhood. We are used to praising the behaviour we like to see and highlight areas of need to help children learn.

However, giving colleagues, including teachers, feedback is not part of the culture in most learning environments. Changing that culture will inevitably lead to anxiety, barriers and resistance. The move to *de-privatise* classroom practice will be seen as *threatening* even to our best teachers and *terrifying* to our less confident teachers. Having a fellow professional observe us teach is not part of the culture in the majority of our schools.

Whilst acknowledging that it is a significant change in our culture that will bring with it anxiety and concern, the potential and importance of establishing an effective process that helps early childhood staff be the best that they can be, cannot be overstated.

High quality learning depends on high quality teaching. Aside from what students themselves bring to school, teachers and teaching account for the greatest level of variance of any other factor operating in a school.   Hattie, 2003

The Hattie report continues to receive high acclaim. It confirms what many educators have believed for years. The controllable factor, that has the most impact on the success of student's learning, is the teacher. The quality of the day-to-day delivery of the art of teaching is therefore paramount to student learning.

As educators we espouse the importance of feedback as part of the learning cycle. Learning experiences are carefully planned, the series of experiences are provided to students, we assess their ability to apply the skills or content taught and then provide feedback to the student, with the aim of helping them make progress.

Whilst I believe that the de-privatisation of classrooms will initially be stressful for all concerned, and few would welcome any more stresses in teaching, there are also tremendous potential benefits that will ultimately boost staff morale and teacher satisfaction.

Through implementing an effective process that is intended to support staff to be the best that they can be, we can also provide REAL, relevant and specific praise for the great work that so many of them do.

The challenge is to move the focus from *'catching teachers out'* to *'helping teachers be the best teacher they can be'*. Don't get me wrong – I believe that we need high standards of professionalism. In valuing our students (and the vast number of highly skilled practitioners in our early childhood settings) we need to address the very small number of staff who are not of an acceptable standard.

The Grattan Institute report *What Teachers Want* noted the following alarming statistics:

> *Ninety-one per cent of Australian teachers report that in their school, the most effective teachers do not receive the greatest recognition. Nor does it recognise quality teachers or teaching, with 92% of teachers reporting that if they improved the quality of their teaching they would not receive any recognition in their school… Teachers and school principals report that problems in their schools need to be addressed. However, 63% of teachers report that the evaluation of*

> *their work is largely done simply to fulfil administrative requirements. And 61% of teachers report that the evaluation of teachers' work has little impact on the way they teach in the classroom. (2010, p 4)*

The Grattan Institute report concluded that teacher evaluation is not developing teachers' skills and the teaching that students receive.

I believe that if we can successfully change this culture, we will not only benefit our children but also boost staff morale through providing positive feedback and increasing the satisfaction that comes from teaching.

One of the key aspects of providing feedback to staff is to explicitly state what our expectations are. Whilst many organisations have position descriptions, they are often very 'dry' documents that include generic terms and inclusive statements. They provide very broad guidance about what is expected.

The most powerful step that leaders in early childhood settings can take is to lead the collaborative development of a rubric describing what is expected of each role within their setting.

A rubric for teachers for example, would identify the key areas that teachers should focus on, e.g. learning environment, learning activities, management of student behaviour, and relationships and communication. I like to call these 'the BIG Rocks'.

For each area (e.g. learning environment) descriptors are written into a four-step rubric. For the top level, write a description of what you would see in a fantastic learning environment. At the bottom level of the rubric, write what you would see in a very poor learning environment.

Through working together as a staff to clearly define and agree what quality looks like *(and doesn't look like)*, we can provide clarity on what is expected. Being clear about our expectations or 'where the goal posts are', is the first step in providing helpful feedback. The other rubric boxes are used as a continuum to show

Very poor learning environment			Fantastic learning environment
Disorganised space that is not student-centred or inviting. Not student- focused. Student work not displayed and display opportunities not utilised. Hands-on resources not provided or not relevant. Many students not engaged or not on task. Noise level is disruptive.			Lovely, exciting and inviting learning environment. Student-focused. Colourful and attractive displays of student work. Interesting, enticing and relevant hands-on resources set up. All students actively engaged in learning and on task. Classroom noise reflects a happy and fun learning place.

progression from very poor to fantastic. Rubrics are powerful in that they not only highlight the current level of performance; they also show the next steps for improvement. The rubric is used to facilitate a discussion between the staff member and the person providing the feedback.

A similar rubric can also be developed to provide clear feedback about expectations of teacher aides and other staff.

The rubric is intended to provide REAL feedback to staff about how they are achieving and help them be the best they can be.

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Getting it wRITE! Developing handwriting skills

Amy Oxbrough and Siobhan Gordon

Amy works as an Advanced Practitioner at Mater Children's Hospital and Mater Health and Wellness Clinic, a private allied health clinic, providing early intervention services for children. She has specialist training and experience in sensory processing assessment and treatment for self-regulation, attention and concentration, coordination, anxiety and coping with daily activities and routines.

Siobhan works as an Occupational Therapist at Mater Children's Hospital and Mater Health and Wellness Clinic. She has special interest, experience and training in working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, their families and teachers to support them in their home and school settings. She works with schools and families to collaboratively develop skills and strategies to support children to participate in their daily occupations.

Handwriting is an extremely complex skill that involves multiple processes including attention, cognitive processes, language, auditory processing, visual processing, fine motor control and vestibular, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive development (Levine, 1994). Breakdowns in any of these processes can contribute to difficulties with handwriting.

Poor handwriting skills can lead to a range of difficulties at school including poor academic performance, low self-esteem, slow handwriting, difficulty taking notes in class (and reading them after), difficulty developing other higher order writing processes such as planning and grammar and writing avoidance.

Development of handwriting skills
Handwriting skills develop from an early age, with some children making their first marks as early as ten months of age (Amundson, 2005). These first marks are a child's introduction to handwriting and should be praised and encouraged. The child is learning to communicate via written text.

Development of writing skills generally follows a developmental trajectory that starts with a child making marks on a page through to being able to draw complex shapes and letters (usually around five to six years).

Regardless of when a child reaches a developmental stage, it is considered important that a child moves through each developmental level rather than skipping stages so they can develop the necessary skills to handwrite (Bailer, 2003). For example, if a child picks up a pencil for the first time at age three, we would still expect them to demonstrate some exploratory scribbling initially, rather than expecting them to copy basic lines and shapes.

Handwriting readiness
There is much dispute in the literature about when children are ready to commence writing letters. The age range varies from four to six years (Laszlo & Bairstow, 1984). Anecdotally, many people believe that the time to start teaching a child to write letters is when they start to draw words. For example, they may draw a range of shapes and say it is their name. Lamme (1979) proposed the following six prerequisites for handwriting readiness: small muscle development (e.g. fine motor skills), eye-hand co-ordination, ability to hold writing tools, capacity to form basic strokes smoothly, letter perception and orientation to printed language. Alternatively, Beery (1992) suggested that a child should be able to copy the first nine geometric shapes on the Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual Motor Integration. These shapes include: vertical and horizontal lines, circle, diagonal lines, upright cross, square, diagonal cross and triangle.

Handwriting set-up

Desk set-up can significantly influence the quality of handwriting, especially for children who have difficulty controlling their movements or sitting upright (e.g. low muscle tone). Ensuring that a child is seated in an ergonomically correct posture is vital. This posture involves feet being flat on the floor and a 90 degree angle at the ankle, knee, hips and elbow. This position provides the most stability to the arms, legs and spine. A child's pencil grasp does not need to be a perfect tripod grasp to have functional handwriting. In fact, recent studies have proposed that there are a range of functional grasps (Amundson, 2005). However, an incorrect grasp can be a problem if it is causing pain, fatigue or poor pencil control. If the grasp is not causing any of these issues, there is no need to correct it. Another consideration is the age of a child. Often, by the time a child is in Grade three or four, they already have a strongly established grasp pattern which can be difficult to change. At this age, if the grasp is not functional and is causing pain, it may be more appropriate to consider alternatives to handwriting.

Teaching handwriting

The key to making handwriting automatic is practice, practice, practice. Therefore, it is important to make the process fun. Practice ideas may include writing letters in shaving foam, making letters out of playdoh or making letter collages. In the early teaching stages it is important to be consistent about how letter formation is taught because bad habits can be hard to break.

The order in which we teach letters is another important consideration and can vary depending on the program used. Graham (2011) proposed a teaching order whereby letters are grouped based on the following four criteria:

1. Letters in each group are formed in similar ways (e.g. vertical, clockwise, anticlockwise)

2. Letters that occur more frequently are taught first (e.g. vowels),

3. Letters that are easier to produce are taught first (e.g. straight letters), and

4. Easily confusable or reversible letters are not included in same group.

Alternatives to handwriting

For some children, even after trialing every strategy possible, they still do not manage to master functional handwriting. This is when alternatives need to be considered. There is substantial research to suggest that suitable handwriting alternatives can significantly improve both the quality and quantity of writing. There is a range of acceptable alternatives, both high and low tech. Low tech options may include providing notes already typed, use of fill in the gaps or sentence starters, mind-maps, use of worksheets or use of a scribe. High tech options may include typing, voice-to-text software, or digital (smart) pens.

Summary

The teaching of handwriting skills involves multiple considerations. The information provided in this article has provided an introduction to strategies to support handwriting development. However, some children may need more help to support the development of their handwriting skills. Occupational therapists can provide valuable assessment and advice to identify a child's specific difficulties, provide intervention and develop individual strategies.

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No more 'Ants on the apple' please: Busting the phoneme/alphabet myth

Beryl Exley

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Let's face it, English is a complex language! The difficulty is that the English language uses 26 alphabet letters to make 40+ sounds (phonemes) represented by 120+ different written combinations. These continue to grow as foreign language words are adopted and adapted into the English language.

Yet many early years alphabet charts and phonics programs try to ease young readers and writers (spellers) into a watered down introduction to phoneme/alphabet correspondence. I maintain that this approach is unhelpful at best. The main offenders are alphabet books (or alphabet charts or CD ROMs or Apps) with illustrations or word lists that suggest each alphabet letter has only one sound. For example, an oft-used text (whether in the written, sung or visual form) is 'Ants on the apple'. For those not familiar with this very popular early childhood resource, the 26 letters of the alphabet are introduced in sequence, one at a time, with a little rhyme. The song to be sung for the letter 'a' is "Ants on the apple, a, a, a; ants on the apple, a, a, a; ants on the apple, a, a, a; the letter 'a' says 'a'". This, in my view, is problematic.

Let me demonstrate the problem through a real-life scenario involving my daughter, Alicia. When we were naming Alicia, we didn't realise there were so many ways to spell the same set of sounds: Alicia, Alisha, Alecia, Alesha, Aleesha, Aleasha, Aliesha and the list goes on. We settled on the French spelling (Alicia) but pronounce it the Australian way (A-lee-sha). When Alicia was first introduced to the 'Ants on the apple' song in preschool, the drill was the letter 'a' says 'a' (as in apple). She was given a worksheet with a large apple and the letters 'A' and 'a' to colour and told to practise the song with the coda: the letter 'a' says 'a' (as in apple). She brought the worksheet home and declared, 'in my name the letter 'a' says 'u' (as in up).' She was right. The phoneme/alphabet correspondence reinforced through the 'Ants on the apple' song didn't hold true for her name, or for lots of the sight words that she knew such as 'Kmart', 'Amart Sports', 'McDonalds' and 'Antonella' (her cousin's name).

The second week of preschool focused on the next letter of the alphabet and the song 'Balls are bouncing, b, b, b; balls are bouncing, b, b, b; balls are bouncing, b, b, b; the letter 'b' says 'b''. This phoneme/alphabet correspondence didn't trouble her too much. Little did she know about 'double b' (e.g.

bubble) and the 'b' that doesn't make a sound (e.g. lamb).

Week three proved troublesome. It was the week the children were taught 'Caterpillars are coughing', which was the stimulus for learning that the letter 'c' says 'c' (as in caterpillar). Now she was perplexed. In her name the letter 'c' said 'sh'. Actually, the 'ci' goes together to say 'sh', but she hadn't yet considered the role of the other letters.

An important point must be emphasized: the English language does not have a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and alphabet letters, yet some alphabet resources such as the one reviewed suggest that there is a reliable pattern. There is little merit in teaching young readers and writers this misnomer. I advocate something else.

1. Teachers should emphasise that words are made up of sounds and there are about 42-45 of them. The variance is due to regional accents. It is also quite possible that the list of recognised English sounds will expand as foreign language words continue to be adopted and adapted into English. International phonetics alphabets, such as those listed on http://www.anenglishaccent.com/IPA.html show 45 phonemes, however only a few of these are encountered.

2. 'Sound hunt' activities are a useful way to help young children to understand the extent of phoneme/written representation correspondence. For example, in the children's book *'Giraffes Can't Dance'* (Andreae and Parker-Rees, 2000), the 'i' as in 'lion' phoneme is written in multiple ways depending upon the word. As a case in point, 'y' (as in sky), 'i' (as in rhinos), 'igh' (as in right) and 'i_e' (as in like) showcase the range of written representations that also make the 'i' as in 'lion' phoneme. The sound hunt should also include exploring

the sounds within the children's names, for example 'i' (as in Ivan) and 'ei' (as in Eileen) and other popular words such as 'eye' (as in eye) and 'ie' (as in pie). This list is not exhaustive.

3. As other sounds are explored, children should be supported in recognising that some written combinations make a range of sounds, for example, 'ei' (as in receive and neighbour).

4. When young children are trying to spell and they are at the stage where they know all the sounds in a word but incorrect sound/symbol choices are hindering their attempts, they now have a strategy whereby they can 'try' other written representations that make the target sound. For example, when trying to spell 'school', children can try the range of 'ou' (as in you) written representations and draw on their visual memories of the word structure to identify the best fit. It may be that attempts to spell the word 'school' comes up with 'schuel', 'schewl', 'schul', 'school', 'scheaul' and 'schoel' before settling on the conventional spelling of 'school'. This activity emphasises the importance of visual skills and a learning environment rich with (meaningful) printed words.

5. As young children explore different written phonemic representations, teachers can encourage them to formulate some rules or patterns. For example, it's unusual to see 'ew' (as in grew) occur in the middle of a word. Typically, 'ew' is that end of words, such as grew, stew, few, dew, drew, flew and new.

Eventually, children have to learn that English does not guarantee correspondence between phonemes and written representations. Not only are they capable of mastering this understanding, it's helpful if we don't pretend that the letter 'a' only says 'a'. Jingles, such as 'Ants on the apple', are confusing for children and should not be used.

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Pre-teaching vocabulary = better comprehension

Deb Lawrence

Deb is currently the Deputy Principal at Kilcoy Primary school, but is best known for her role as a Principal Education Advisor for the Australian Curriculum (English). She was seconded to this role in late 2009 and provided support to schools for literacy within English for three years. Her main role was to evaluate and refurbish reading programs for schools. This resulted in hours of study, research and practical application of what she learnt in schools with teachers and their students. She has spoken nationally for the Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA) and the Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA), and also internationally at the New Zealand Reading Conference.

Why do we need explicit, focused vocabulary instruction? Research conducted in the past ten years reveals that vocabulary knowledge is the most important factor in contributing to reading comprehension. Moreover, studies conducted on the importance of vocabulary instruction demonstrate that it plays a major role in improving comprehension.

What is vocabulary?

Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world (Steven Stahl 2005 in Diamond and Gutlohm, 2006).

Instruction in vocabulary involves far more than looking up words in a dictionary and using the words in a sentence. Vocabulary is acquired incidentally through indirect exposure to words and intentionally through explicit instruction in specific words and word-learning strategies. There are four components of an effective vocabulary program (Michael Graves, 2000 in Diamond and Gutlohm, 2006):

- wide or extensive independent reading to expand word knowledge;

- instruction in specific words to enhance comprehension of texts containing those words;

- instruction in independent word-learning strategies; and

- word consciousness and word-play activities to motivate and enhance learning.

One of the most important reading skills is to know and control cognitive and metacognitive strategies to develop and use a wide vocabulary. Students need to be taught how to use morphological and context strategies to help them work out unknown words. For students to be able to do this, we have to explicitly teach word-learning strategies.

Word-learning strategies include:

- dictionary definition;

- contextual analysis; and

- morphemic analysis (Diamond and Gutlohm, 2006).

Teachers need to develop this kind of 'word consciousness' with students to improve their vocabulary.

What do I mean by contextual analysis?

Consider the word 'run'. How many meanings does it have in different contexts? For example, run in a stocking; run of luck; take the car for a run. I could go on and on. There are more than 50 different meanings of the word 'run' in different contexts. Teach words with the specific text and context in mind.

So how do we plan to pre-teach vocabulary?

We anticipate the challenges of the words in the text that the students will read. Teachers achieve this by:

- pre-reading the text;

- making a list of difficult vocabulary;

- planning an engaging way to interact with challenging vocabulary before looking at the front cover;

- setting a learning goal – e.g. Today We Are Learning That (WALT) good readers use word-learning strategies to decode new vocabulary; and

- setting success criteria – e.g. I know I have learnt today's goal when I can show my teacher how I use the five word-learning strategies and investigate what the words mean in context.

Classroom activities that work

1. **Create a PowerPoint.** This works well with picture books using another culture as the setting, For example, *Peasant Prince*

or picture books based on real creatures or things such as, *The Pout Pout Fish*.

a. Make a list of the challenging vocabulary.

b. Find real pictures to match the words.

c. Make up and tell a story to match the words you want them to learn.

d. Get students to 'turn and talk' about the story and what they learnt.

e. As a memory game, students list the new vocabulary learnt.

Below is an example of a PowerPoint I used to support vocab development for *The Pout Pout Fish*. The benefit for students is that when they read the book, they can instantly make text connections and access their prior knowledge.

2. **Print a picture and list vocabulary to describe it.** I chose *Schumann the Shoeman*. I wanted students to connect with the difficult figurative language and understand the word 'cobbler'.

Have students respond to stimulus questions, such as:

- What can you see in the picture?

- What do you already know about what you see in the picture?

- What might you learn more about if you read a book containing this picture?

- What type of text does this picture come from? How do you know?

- What do the following phrases mean? For example, 'promenade the footpath'; 'like clouds to walk on' in the context of shoes.

3. **Five word activity.**

a. Pick five words from a text you will read.

b. Choose topic words that will present a challenge. Students are not to see the text.
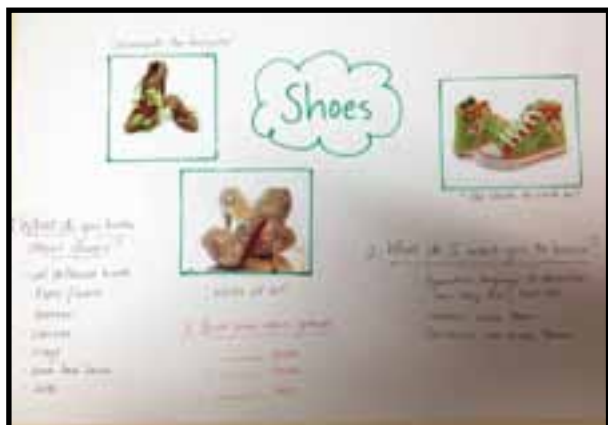
Listing vocabulary.

c. Ask students to use the following five strategies to show their knowledge of each word: write a synonym; define it; write it in a sentence; use it in a sentence as a cloze; sketch it. Teachers must explicitly teach how to use each strategy.

d. Provide a proforma for students to keep a record of their work.

e. Ask students to make a prediction about what they think the text is going to be about.

f. Show them the front cover and discuss.

g. Go back to the record sheet and add new ideas or change original definitions.

h. Read the first page of the text.

i. Highlight the new vocabulary on the page.

j. Go back to the original record sheet and add more ideas about the five key words.

k. Extend this activity to include some comprehension questions about the text containing the new vocabulary words.

4. **Word knowledge** – In a book (e.g. *Click Clack Moo, Cows that Type*), select words to engage students in a word investigation (e.g. 'note' and 'farm'). Focusing on chosen words will aid comprehension.

Lesson ideas (WGBH Educational Foundation, 2002):

a. **note** – note has more than one meaning. It can be a noun or a verb; compound words – notebook, notepaper, notepad;

b. **farm** – list/discuss what students know about farms; discuss different types of farms; farm can be a noun or a verb; the word 'farm' can be morphed – farms, farmer, farming, etc.; compound words for farm – farmhand, farmhouse.

In conclusion, the critical feature of an effective comprehension program is explicit and systematic vocabulary instruction. When restructuring your reading program, the activities listed above will support you to create the explicit and systematic vocabulary instruction required to improve reading comprehension.

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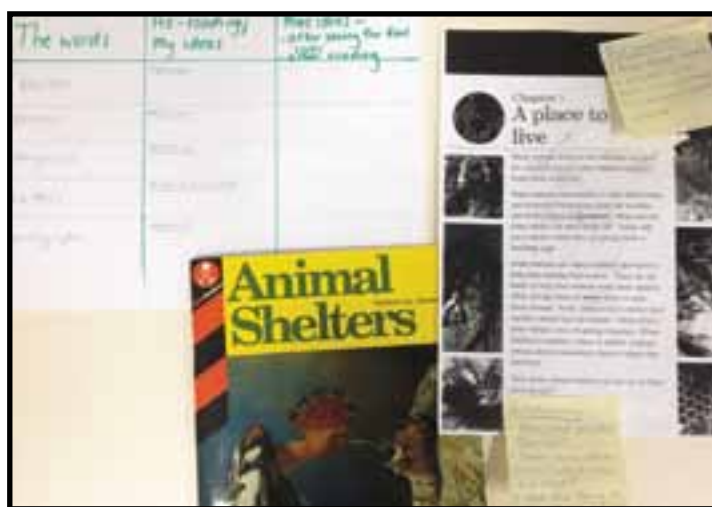
Word investigation.

Getting in touch with technology without losing touch with early childhood pedagogy

Tracy Moir

Tracy's experience in education spans 30 years; ranging from kindergarten through the early years in primary schools in both state and private schools. In 2007 she joined the C&K team with the opening of one of the first kindergartens on a school site. During this time she has completed her Masters in EC and pursued her developing interest in ICT with the use of interactive whiteboard and mobile devices in a kindergarten setting. In 2012 Tracy participated in a C&K action research project on the use of technology in the kindergarten setting.

Excitement was paramount with the arrival of the interactive whiteboard (IWB), digital camera and laptop into the kindergarten room. This excitement was heralded by a team who on one hand firmly believed that educators had a responsibility to incorporate new digital technologies and on the other remain true to providing a play-based curriculum. This article tracks my thought process as I grappled with learning how to use the IWB while incorporating information, communication and technology (ICT) into early childhood practice for the first time. Research on technology in early childhood provided a foundation for my reflections on philosophy and pedagogy. The addition of mobile devices three years later only confirmed my belief in technology as a tool to enhance children's desire to know and learn through collaborative practice.

I surmise that the addition of technology creates numerous possibilities for learning without compromising early childhood principles and practice.

First steps

With the arrival and installation of the IWB came the urge to play with the new equipment. Initially, the board was used as a data projector displaying photos of the day's activities. Although glamorous and impressive through its size, the whiteboard's potential was not being utilized. It was at the introductory training workshop that the journey of discovery began. Inspired by the session, exploration began with the drawing capabilities and downloading free games through educational sites. It is through this investigation stage that Finger, Russell, Jamieson-Proctor and Russell (2007) suggest that a teacher is developing the initial stages towards transforming learning with ICT. The developing interest was hallmarked by trial and error, reaching for the manual whilst trying to remember the steps to simple functions and fear that something would happen without knowing how to rectify it.

The natural inclination was to follow the suggestions and programs by the instructor in the initial introductory session. It was at this point that we realised that many of the practices were based in teacher-directed pedagogy not aligned with socio-cultural philosophy on which our early childhood community was based. For this journey to continue, further investigation about how others attempted to resolve this issue was required.

Critical reflection

Two common threads wove through the articles on IWB usage in education; motivation and learning styles. Bell (2002) termed the IWB as a kid magnet. Solvie (2004) noted that this technology increased motivation when the board was used as it was intended – interactively. Motivation from students did not increase if it was simply used as a flashy whiteboard for demonstration purposes. Logan and Connell (2008) added that it engaged boys, citing examples of preschool boys becoming dramatists and filmmakers, where traditionally these boys would remain firmly entrenched in the block area or sand pit. The accommodation of different learning styles was also mentioned by several authors with the IWB's capacity to include visual, audio and tactile learners alongside children with limited motor skills (Bell, 2002; Miller & Glover, 2002; Solvie, 2004).

With only a few weeks usage, it was confirmed that this technology was drawing children like a magnet. Motivation to use the board was apparent.

It was at this point after reading the majority of articles relating to school experiences that one of the greatest fears emerged; this technology would cause the loss of a play-based curriculum and the re-introduction of traditional pedagogical approaches. This is a valid concern as software companies began to promote programs that look very much like glorified teacher-directed workbooks. Kearney's and Schuck's (2008) research into exploring pedagogy with the use of IWB in six Australian schools suggested that the introduction of the whiteboard did not require any great changes to mainstream teacher-directed pedagogy. Morgan (2010) noted these observations even though the early childhood teachers interviewed supported socio-cultural principles. The construction of knowledge continued to be dominated by the teacher, although the access to the web provided exploration of real contexts through a variety of modes of

meaning. There seemed to be little evidence of collaborative learning between teacher and student using an IWB. Kearney's and Schuck's (2008) initial summation for this was through the lack of familiarity of the potential of the technology. Miller and Glover (2002) also cite early research which highlighted confidence, time and willingness for staff to utilize new technology as key problems in their introduction. Considerable time needs to be set aside for staff to play, prepare and present lessons with confidence.

Focussing specifically in a preparatory classroom in Melbourne, Vincent (2007) provided a five month case study on the changing pedagogy of an early year's teacher. Before the introduction of the IWB this classroom functioned under an environment where the teacher regularly involved the children in decision-making and problem solving. With the introduction of the IWB, the teaching style moved to the other end of the continuum, suggesting at first glance that the use of IWB supports teacher-directed classrooms. The researchers for the project stepped in and mentored the teacher on multimodal uses of the equipment. The mentoring and professional development allowed the teacher to relax control of directed lessons and by the end of the time frame had reverted back along the continuum towards a socially constructed pedagogy.

Hodge and Anderson (2007), Vincent (2007), Kearney and Shuck (2008) all cite the changes in pedagogical practice after reflection. Reflection is a crucial tool in identifying and investigating the connections between practice and theory (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett and Farmer, 2008). Contemporary early childhood theory originates in socio-cultural, postmodern and post structuralist theories which support collaborative learning in authentic real life experiences (Arthur et al, 2008). McCormick and Scrimshaw (2001) linked the teacher's view of learning with how ICT will be introduced and used within the classroom. From a socio-constructivist viewpoint, success relies on technology becoming an inclusive part of the social environment.

IWB and mobile devices in practice

Investigating and expanding on children's emerging interests
- When an Eastern water dragon ambled along the veranda we were able to use the IWB to collaboratively investigate what it was and how to look after it.
- When Zoe was going on a trip to London, we used Google Earth to discover where she was going in relation to Australia, which led to an interest in finding areas of the globe where there was snow and ice.
- The portability of the tablets means we regularly take them into the yard to investigate questions and emerging interests e.g. taking the tablet into the mud patch and taking a photo of the bird tracks and then investigating which bird could have made the tracks

Exploring and expanding children's understanding of numeracy
- Use the IWB for a sign-in sheet then count and write how many children are here and away.
- Use the drawing feature on the IWB to write numerals where children can come and trace over.
- Manipulate and organise objects to impose order and create groups, patterns, lines and sequences in 2D form on the IWB as an extension from hands-on manipulative play with objects.
- Utilize early numeracy Apps designed for the mobile devices.
- Use real life examples of graphing on the IWB e.g. how many chickens hatched each day, voting for the colour of the play dough or choosing a new theme for the dramatic area.

Exploring and expanding children's language and ideas
- Experiment with approximations of letters and early writing when drawing on the IWB.
- Collaborative writing experiences using the IWB for large groups or the mobile device for individuals or smaller groups.
- Retell stories e.g. we read the story of *Rosie went for a walk,* then collaboratively rewrote the story in the Kindy context. The children took photos of our Rosie with the mobile device in and around the Kindy, adding their own drawings and words, recreating a digital story on the IWB.
- Retell events e.g. using the mobile device and a productivity App to recall the events of the hatching of the chickens, taking the photos, with the children adding the story as it happens.
- View multimodal texts on both the IWB and mobile device.
- Utilize early literacy Apps designed for mobile devices.

Sharing family and community experiences
- Show and tell with pictures on the IWB e.g. children bring in a USB stick with their photos of holiday experiences.
- Communicate with children who are travelling overseas with photos and narration via a closed blog site using the IWB.

Exploring and experimenting with ICT with expanding complexity
- Children are capable of saving their own work on the IWB and, in turn, those who can do this to teach their peers are empowered.
- Empower those with prior knowledge of mobile devices to teach their peers and educators e.g. Samuel knew how to make movies and was proficient in making funny face movies. He, in turn, taught the staff and his peers.
- The camera feature on mobile devices is very easy for children to use and likewise the children are very capable of editing the photos.

Creating intentionally and purposefully
- The IWB is a large canvas that enables both individual and collaborative art works.
- Mobile devices can be used as a tool for research in the art and craft area which children can refer to when they have an idea for drawing, painting or constructing.
- Both the IWB and mobile devices can be used to explore drawing or painting digitally.
- Technology can be used intentionally and purposefully to represent ideas e.g. after a visit by the ambulance service we had a hospital set up in the room. Miles asked to make a book about the hospital. He used the mobile device to take photos, then sending them to the printer. He cut around the photos, placed them in order, asked us to write the words and he made it into a book for the reading area.

The impact of technology is summed up by Davis and Shade (1999):

> it must be integrated into the classroom in such a way that children come to view it as a practical problem solving tool that is used every day to accomplish real goals (p 222).

Reflection on practice clarifies how to incorporate new technologies into an early years classroom without compromising philosophical understandings.

Summary

The introduction of the technology created a learning journey. The ride began with learning how to use this new technology through experimentation and an introductory tutorial. This led to questions about how the incorporation of ICT would fit under current perspectives and theories in early childhood education. Undertaking research into the incorporation of technology, identified issues regarding traditional teacher-led pedagogy compared to socially constructed learning. The Vincent (2007) article identified a similar early childhood scenario at the same time as providing a resolution to the issue; mentoring, professional development and reflection. Examples of how we incorporate the IWB and mobile devices indicate that the addition of new technology does not need to revert to traditional teaching practice. On the contrary, it creates numerous possibilities for early childhood educators to get in touch with technology without losing touch with early childhood pedagogy.

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Language is the core for the concept of addition

Rosemary Irons

Rosemary is a consultant and curriculum developer for mathematics education specialising in early childhood. She has advised teachers on mathematics curricula in the United States, Singapore and Australia. Rosemary was a Senior Lecturer in Mathematics Education at the Queensland University of Technology for over 35 years and has written a wide range of innovative and practical classroom resources to help young children build their mathematical understanding. Rosemary conducts seminars for teachers and presents at mathematics education conferences around the world.

Young children have many opportunities to explore and investigate in early childhood environments. Children naturally solve problems that occur in their day-to-day lives. For example: moving (rotating) a puzzle piece to fit into position or stabilising a block structure to avoid the tower falling over. Mathematical concepts contribute to children's confidence to try out ideas, take risks and change procedures to solve problems. Every learning experience in mathematics supports each child's reasoning in thought processes. A variety of books, opportunities for play and a range of resources provide a rich mathematical environment.

As children progress to primary school, operating with numbers becomes a strategy for interpreting and solving story problems. When children encounter problems given verbally or with written stories, they must interpret the words. There are never mathematical symbols in the story problems. To be able to interpret a story situation to be solved with addition, children must have a very good understanding of the addition concept by having a picture of the idea in their minds and a knowledge of the words that represent addition in different contexts.

The *Early Years Learning Framework* (2009) guides educators to interact, support children's interests, plan and motivate for discovering literacy and numeracy. The *Australian Curriculum: Mathematics* (ACARA, 2010) states that addition and subtraction within the Number and Algebra Strand are concepts to be considered in Foundation and Year One. The ACARA document publicises the curriculum to teach but it does not state how to teach it.

The concept of addition is the first operation concept developed in Prep and Year One. Over years of experience working with young children, some suggestions for developing the concept of addition through a language approach are offered in this article. Conceptual ideas are developed through language to enable children to have a picture of the idea.

Theoretically, Irons and Irons (1989, 2003) have adapted the Payne and Rathmell (1976) teaching model to guide teachers in the development of any mathematical concept through a language approach. (Figure 1)

Language stages described

The language stages help educators with a sequence of activities to establish the idea of addition.

- *Child's Language*
  The language from the child's real world experiences - including both fiction and non-fiction. Stories, pictures and the children's experiences are the source for this language.

- *Materials Language*
  The language that comes from using **concrete and pictorial** materials. Children use new language as they explore the idea with concrete materials. Pictorial materials help expand the idea.

CONCRETE/
VISUAL ⟶ VERBAL

Real

Substituted
Objects

Photograph

Pictures

Diagrams

Non-Word
Symbols

Student
Language

Materials Related
Language

⎱ Language

Mathematical
Language

Non-Word Symbolic
Language

⎱ Extension

SYMBOLIC
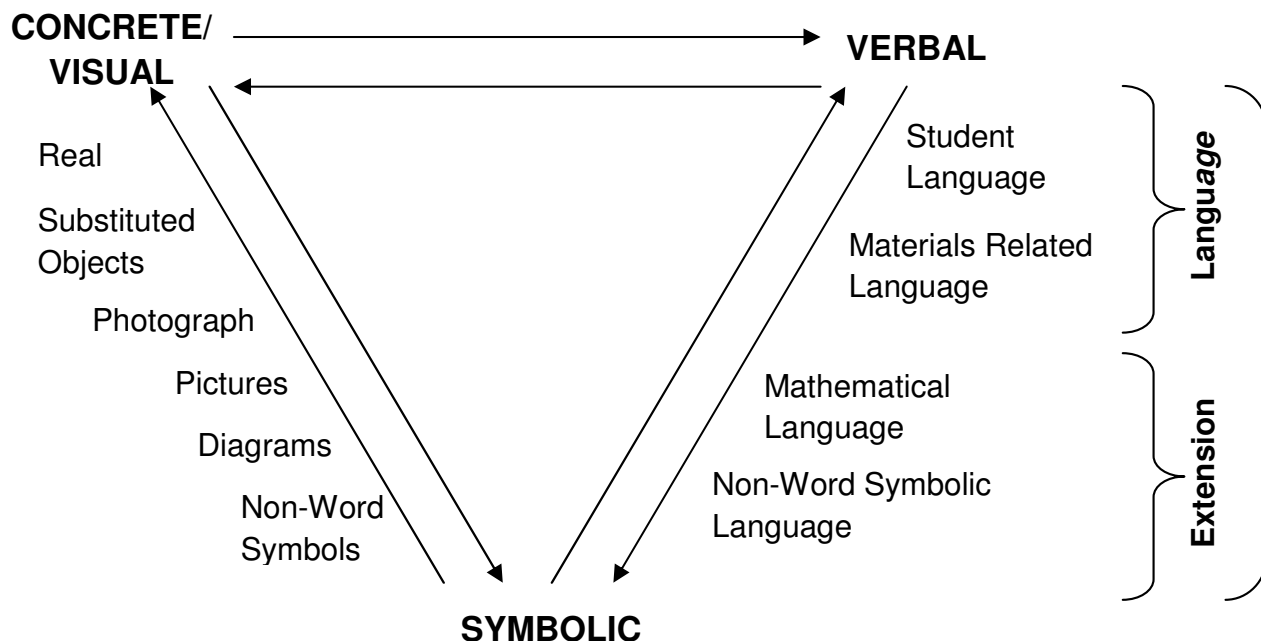
- *Mathematical Language*
  The specific words from mathematics
  that relate to the idea being developed.
  Mathematical words are verbalised and
  read that relate to the idea. By this stage,
  some children want to write the words and
  expressions.

- *Symbols*
  The mathematical number symbols that
  represent the idea. At first, these should be
  used to record the ideas. Later the focus
  can shift to developing strategies for finding
  "the answer".

Specific addition concept learning experiences
for the whole group of children and small group
activities are outlined here.

Developing the Addition Concept

The addition concept has two situations:

- Active stories which show the idea of
  combining then later reversing

- Static stories which show balance to support
  the part/part/total idea. Both are important
  for children to experience.

Child's Language – Active

The story *Bears on Buses* presents the active idea
of the addition concept. Read the story with
your own natural interaction and questioning.
Reread the story to stop and count how many

Concept of addition.

bears are on the bus and how many will get on
the bus. On another day, reread the story and
ask children to determine how many bears are
on the bus, how many are getting on the bus
and how many altogether or in total.

Materials Language

With a small
group of
children,
show each
double page
spread and
have the
children
match the
bear groups

Active learning.

with the bear counters. Then encourage pushing one group to the other to support the action in the story.

Mathematical Language

The words cards **add** and **plus** are introduced. The children can read a number expression and make groups to show the addends and then determine the total.
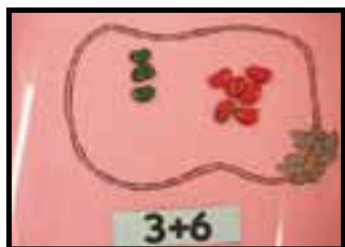

Word cards.

Snaplock bags.

Use cards as shown in the photos to read the addition language word and make the two groups to match the expression.

Using snap-locked bags is another way that the children can work individually to read the addition

word and make the groups. They can show their work to a friend before taking the counters out of the bag.

Add symbol.

Symbols

Introduce the addition symbol + by verbally calling it 'add'. It is suggested to model the word 'add' as it is the verb for addition. Accept 'plus' from the children but modelling 'add' supports their reading skill because children like the double 'd' and find the word easy to read.

Child's Language – Static

The story *Mice Mice, Everywhere* presents the Static idea of the addition concept. Read the story with your own natural interaction and questioning. Reread the story to stop and count how many mice are in each group according

to the rhyme. On another day reread the story and count to determine the total of the mice on each double page spread.

Story to support addition concept.

Materials Language

With a small group of children, verbally state a number of mice for upstairs and another number for downstairs. Children place a matching number of mice using materials such as counters and then determine the total. Each child can then take turns to say how

Using counters to match.

many mice are upstairs and downstairs so the others can act out the numbers by making the matching groups and then work together to determine the total.

Making groups.

Stories can be acted out with familiar resources. Children use various resources to make two groups and then talk about how many are in each group and how many altogether or in total.

Mathematical Language

Introduce words.

Introduce the words 'part' 'part' 'total' verbally, and then word cards as shown in the photo with the gingerbread characters. This encourages seeing the two groups and discussing the total number of gingerbread characters. Felt boards serve as a resource to advance from concrete counters to pictorial work.

Use the word cards with other felt characters to show the two groups. Connect to children's interests to allow many opportunities to see part/ part/ total with objects and pictures.

Felt characters.

Symbols

Use symbol and expressions on pocket cards to reveal the addition symbol as the same for the active stories.

As children become confident and begin number fact activities, pictorial groups and the addition symbol are presented. Dice serve well to support the beginning of using the count on strategy. Practicing the number facts for the strategies of 'add on 1' and 'add on 2' is appropriate for Prep children to develop confidence with the addition concept.

Symbol pocket cards.

Making sense

Language helps children make sense when they need to use mathematics. Having a clear picture of the useful mathematics concepts is a key aspect.

Expanding thinking.

Throughout the development of mathematical ideas, we must keep the language growing. As the language grows the picture of the idea broadens and the thinking expands. Addition is the first operation concept that children encounter. Using the language stages deepens the understanding of this fundamental mathematics concept. Enjoy using stories and familiar resources to create interesting addition learning experiences in your early childhood environment.

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Tools of the trade needed today
– Survival Technology Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators P-3

Allison Borland

Allison Borland is an early childhood teacher, author, teacher trainer and mentor. She provides support and training in the integration of early childhood learning - Information, Communication and Technology in Education (ICT). Allison has worked, experienced and been part of the whole education process. Firstly as a parent herself; a childcare teacher; primary classroom teacher and eLearning mentor. Allison is passionate for technology integration and supporting how children learn and engage through a blended approach in the 21st century.

As we look at Technology in Education today, especially for early childhood and early years education, we are beginning to see different ways this is supporting children's learning. Known as 'digital natives' or 'Generation Z'; children today are born into the technological era. They are growing up with highly sophisticated media, computer and digital devices. Their flexibility to adapt, multi-task and engage with the latest technologies is essential for their survival now and in the future. Right now, assistive technologies or digital tools are supporting their engagement in learning. So why not consider technology in education today?

What to look for and why

Technology is a key component in supporting children to learn in the 21st century. As educators, we need to implement teaching and learning strategies that reflect children's worlds and the ways in which they learn. Otherwise, we risk missing the connection for children to engage in the globally connected world. Connection for them is what they are exposed to and connecting with, and includes the experience, both in terms of playing and operating, on a daily basis.

Children need to engage in how to learn to use technology so they are able to survive in the technological world around them, safely and ethically. However, this needs careful consideration, as we balance children's digital learning capacities with real-life experiences. The technology approach to educating children is a must.

There is an endless array of digital tools and devices supporting learning through audio, touch and visual stimulation. These include tablet technology; mobile phones; directional and instructional devices; toys and robotic devices and manipulative 2.0 (educational toys and technology combined).

What makes technology in education connect is dependent on how it is implemented. Having just the tools themselves is not what supports children to learn. There is a need to provide children with a balance of activities for learning and understanding concepts.

Current trends for technology in education

If we imagine technology across the next five years, taking into account the dramatic pace at which it is advancing, with new products being launched at an alarming rate – what does this mean for education? One company, predicts that in the next five years, 80% of the current global population will have a mobile device. http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/pressrelease/36290.wss

So where does this leave technology in education? If education institutions are not concerned at this stage they should start to be. The challenge lies in determining what technology is purposeful and useful in an educational setting. What will the technology do to enhance and support children to learn? By embracing mobile technologies as a means of expression, and teaching children the flexibility to adapt across different platforms, educators can support children to understand how to support their own learning.

The need to support technology

Including technologies in education today will enhance learning value and support children to manage the increasing advances and directions in technology happening globally.

As an educator, it is your role to provide the pedagogy that will enable children to learn using technologies. With the implementation of the Australia Curriculum, teachers are being supported to clarify teaching and learning by providing clear directions for children's learning. Therefore, an educator needs to focus on the teaching practice and the learning that develops from this. As a teacher and educator you already have a passion for what you do best and that is to teach!

Where to go from here – the importance of keeping up

As an educator of young children, it is your duty to be aware of what is happening in the world of technology and to embrace the changes required to support children to learn in the best way they can. So with this in mind, let's look at ways that can assist and prepare you for future changes in our classrooms. I would like to share three

strategies to support integrating technology in your daily practice.

1. ***Start somewhere!*** Even if it is something small, and implement this based on the learning outcome you wish to achieve for the child, bearing in mind all the necessary filters for this, for example, age appropriateness, ability and relevance. A key trigger to keep in mind is the technological capability of each individual child.

2. ***Know your stuff!*** Become familiar with new technologies and their purpose. Adapt and align your teaching practices and source new and engaging materials to liven up your lessons. Provide children with the end result - the learning outcome. Take children from the 'end' first. If they don't know why they are doing what they are doing – the learning is not captured.

3. ***Guide, facilitate and learn together!*** No matter how young the child is a child's development is based on the experience they have gathered along the way. Familiarise yourself with brain-based learning activities. The power of using these techniques and understanding why they benefit young children is a must in the education of young children.

Conclusion

Technology in education is no doubt the future for our young children. We need to support and guide them in using the internet, the safety and stability of what, where and why they need to do certain things. It is okay to let them explore freely as children need to experience learning that also involves 'making mistakes' sometimes. The key part of learning that is crucial for each individual child is to allow them to grow and enrich their lives. It's their journey!

The appropriate use of technology in the classroom is to enrich, engage, extend, differentiate, implement and extend the curriculum being introduced. Your personal view on technology in education will impact on the children that you teach. If you would like further information and free resources go to www.technologyineducation.com.au

Mathilda Element

In the final edition of last year, I mentioned picture books that had shaped me during my early childhood years, and so I thought it was only pertinent to mention some of the more recent works that I return to again and again, both as a teacher and as a parent. I love the humour of Mo Willems, and have experienced the joy of many children learning to read with Elephant and Piggie. (Who can go past a beginner reader series that actually still makes you laugh out loud, even on the fifteenth re-reading?) I love the complexity of Shaun Tan (albeit working with primary schoolers, rather than preschoolers), and the musicality of Pamela Allen. I have so many favourites, for different reasons and different topics, and I couldn't possibly mention them all, so included in this edition is a review I have written of one blog I use that suggests new books (for all ages, not just early childhood) on various themes – 'wherethebooksare.com'. Also in this edition are wonderful new reviews from Kim Mostyn, Melindi Robertson and Sarah-Jane Johnson for you to enjoy, and a review of my prediction for the 2014 Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year award.

Happy reading!

Title:	**The Great Race**
Author:	Kevin O'Malley
Illustrator:	Kevin O'Malley
Published by:	Walker Publishing Company
ISBN:	978-0-8027-2357-4
RRP:	$14.99
Reviewed by:	Kim Mostyn

This story is suited for children aged five to eight years. It does use American vocabulary so I found it necessary to explain some terms to the children.

The story is a modern day spin on the traditional story *The Hare and the Tortoise*. The two main characters are Lever Lapin and Nate Tortoise. Lever Lapin boasted of his speed and Nate Tortoise is annoyed to constantly hear Laver Lapin.

Nate mutters that he could beat Lever in a race. Lever hears Nate and challenges him to a race.

The children enjoyed discussing the concept of boasting or bragging. They thought that Lever was silly and selfish. They didn't like it when everyone laughed at Nate. Lever gets too busy doing other things, to his regret. We talked about the importance of sticking with something until it is finished.

Sometimes we can't guess the outcome!

Early readers enjoy reading the speech bubbles throughout the story. The illustrations are very clear and the facial expressions of the characters made the children laugh.

Title: **Where the Books Are – website/blog**

Authors: **Kim Fulcher and Joan Walker**
Free Resource   **Available at www.wherethebooksare.com**
Reviewed by: **Mathilda Element**

There are so many wonderful picture books out there, it can be hard to know where to start. One website that I have turned to recently is 'Where the Books Are'. While there are many websites that review children's books and literature, what I like about this site is that the focus is not on explicit literacy teaching, but the capacity of good quality books to 'help with the development of complex, metaphorical and moral reasoning' (Fulcher, 2014). The books reviewed are beautiful, fun, interesting and appropriate for answering a variety of moral and ethical questions, without being overtly teacherly. As Fulcher writes 'books that are over earnest or too preachy won't make the collection – this is about layering in a child's mind many possibilities, ideas, beliefs, outcomes and reactions, and then leaving them layered there to be called on throughout life to respond to situations as they arise' (Fulcher, 2014).

The authors of this site are committed to the notion of children being powerful, and the capacity of books to act on that power and increase it. The site uses simple search engines to look for reviews by age group (newborn, one to two years, two to four years, four to eight years, pre-teen eight to twelve years, teen and grown-up) or by categories (categories are extensive, for example empathy, resilience, homelessness, dinosaurs, indigenous, kindness, celebration days, travel, interconnectedness, good for gifts, numeracy and many more). I have found the reviews fun, interesting, easy to read, with links for ways it can be used in the home or school. The authors provide personal anecdotes from their lives and their children's (and grandchildren's) experiences of the books, and also links to various online booksellers so you can buy directly if you wish. (They do a handy job of shopping around for comparative prices also!)

If you are looking for a book site with a difference, I would encourage you to visit 'Where the Books Are' and take a look.

| **Title:**	**Silver Buttons**
Author and Illustrator:	**Bob Graham**
Published By:	**Walker Books**
ISBN:	**978-1-4063-4224-6**
RRP:	**$27.95**
Reviewed by:	**Mathilda Element**

At 9.59 on Thursday morning Jodie drew a duck. Top hat, cane and boots of the softest leather. On the boots she put silver buttons: one....two....her pen hovered in the air for the final button....

And so begins one of the most delightful, profound and joyous picture books of the past few years – Bob Graham's masterpiece 'Silver Buttons'. The book tells the story of Jodie, drawing in her bedroom while her little brother Jonathan pushes slowly to his knees, poised to take his first step. The pictures stream outwards – we see Jonathan's mum playing her tin whistle in the next room, neighbours, early morning joggers, an ambulance sailing past, grandfathers playing with granddaughters, babies being born, a soldier saying goodbye to his mum, tankers departing for distant lands and much, much more. Within the space of that minute, we see the world expand and flow, we experience the preciousness of time, the possibilities of life. We see people of many cultures, diverse experiences, played out in time and space, in a way that is somehow gentle rather than chaotic, embracing and life-affirming on both a small and large scale. Through simple narrative and glorious illustrations, we reach out and then contract back to Jonathan, taking that first step on his little pink knees, Jodie and that last silver button, their mum and the sunlight streaming on her animated face as the clock strikes ten.

I have read this book to my boys (age three and one) many times, because they love it, it incites their questions and makes them feel happy, but I also re-read it because it brings me a sense of peace, a connectedness to the world and to humanity. I have read this book at school, with five and six year olds, and they too have enjoyed it on both simple (it's a great fun read, and there's lot of 'I do that too!' moments) and deep levels. I truly believe this is a book that would suit any age group, young or old.

This beautiful, profound picture book by celebrated author/illustrator Bob Graham is my pick for the Children's Book Council Awards for 2014 – and I will be mightily surprised if it doesn't win! Go and get yourself a copy right now – it belongs in every early childhood teacher's home or school collection!
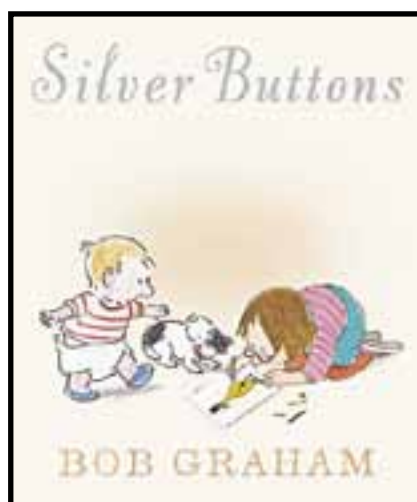
Title: Good Night, Sleep Tight

Author:	**Mem Fox**
Illustrator:	**Judy Horacek**
Published by:	**Orchard Books**
ISBN:	**9781742832579**
RRP:	**$19.99**
Reviewed by:	**Sarah-Jane Johnson**

Good Night, Sleep Tight is another delightful children's book from the creators of *Where Is The Green Sheep?* Mem Fox and Judy Horacek teamed together again to produce a rhythmic story-line that introduces a classic selection of nursery rhymes.

Babysitter, Skinny Doug, takes Bonnie and Ben on a bedtime adventure through his favourite childhood tales. Bonnie and Ben are excited by each nursery rhyme and ask Skinny Doug to hear it again. Instead, Skinny Doug has a better idea; perhaps another he heard from his mother. Whether it's *This Little Piggy Went To Market, Pat-a-cake* or *Star Light - Star Bright* (to mention a few), the chances are that children will be able to join in with the spirit of the story upon the first reading.

Fox's use of rhyme and repetition creates an easily recognisable text to which children will enjoy chanting along. The language is complemented by Horacek's familiar and simple illustrations, which are generally arranged to leave large portions of 'white space'. This type of uncluttered layout draws young children's attention to the main idea of each nursery rhyme.

Good Night, Sleep Tight is a clever contrast between contemporary and classic stories that is interesting and engaging for young children and adults. The fun selection of nursery rhymes will have children demanding it again … and again!
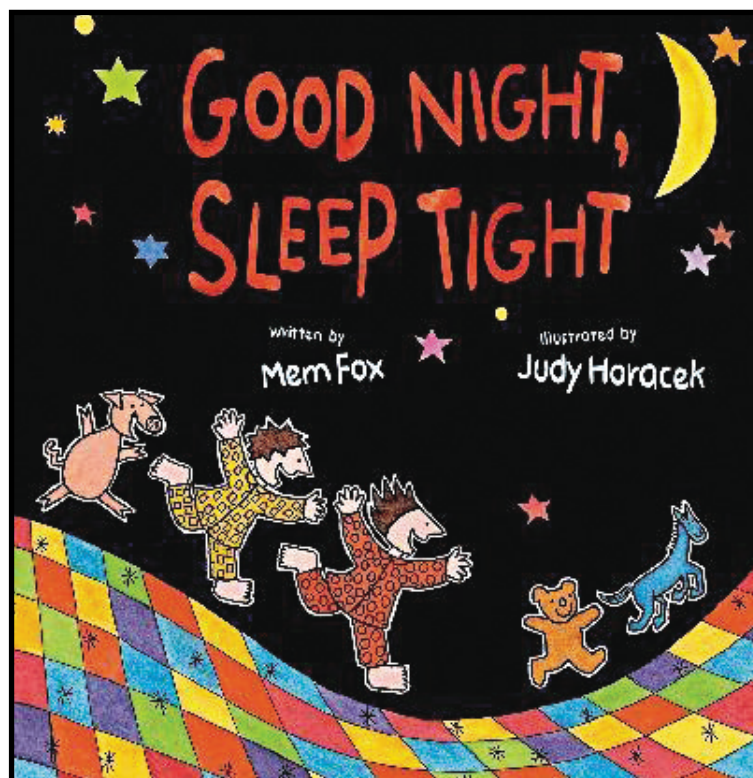
Title: **Alex and the Watermelon Boat**

Author & Illustrator: **Chris McKimmie**
Published by: **Allen & Unwin**
ISBN: **9781 743310076**
RRP: **$29.95**
Reviewed by: **Melindi Robertson (CoDirector Mt Gravatt Kindergarten)**

Chris McKimmie is a well known writer and illustrator of children's books with previous graphic designing experience. His earlier books have also dealt with emotional events and this one was motivated by his experiences in the Brisbane floods in January 2011. Alex secretly leaves his home in his watermelon boat, determined to search for his toy rabbit that jumped out of the window into the flood waters and this adventure is seen and heard from the perspective of the child.

While not being ideal for reading to a group of pre-prep kindergarten children at once; on a 1-1 basis the reaction was fascinating – individual, more mature children studied the illustrations intensely and asked for re-readings on consecutive days, asking many questions. (Remember, these children were only two to three years old at the time of the flood.)

A visually overwhelming mixture of media, fonts and text styles are used to create the illustrations that reflect this time of chaos. Gouache, acrylic, water and house paints, pastels, ink, pencils, tracing paper, masking and sticky tape are all obviously used, with his grandchildren contributing occasionally. His techniques inspired several of my children to experiment at the collage table incorporating painting and drawing media to create their own works.

We also see other visual literacy elements in his use of font size and type. For example, words such as SHOUT and HEAVY are in bold, larger fonts, which convey drama, while the word 'topsy-turvy' is circular and the word 'overflowing' spills down the page to reflect the meaning of the words.

There are still many flashes of humour and irony in the subtexts of the illustrations, as well as the serious subject matter. Escaping the city are Bozo the Clown in full make up; a plumber in his work truck and a man towing a caravan complete with fishing rod.

While I was unsure at first, I am now appreciating this incredibly different, clever book more with each reading and viewing. It is an excellent art resource and particularly suitable for mid-older primary children.

Elisha's thoughts (one of my kindergarten children):

'I like how the watermelon boat is all different green, and the bit behind it looks funny *(crochet & fabric)*. What does overflow mean? I know what topsy-turvy means! It means everything is upside down. Why is all the colouring-in different? Why are these leaves green and these are not?'

What did you like? 'He was lost but he found his way home. I don't how he found his way home. How did he? Why has the rabbit only got one eye? I like the shark and the crocodile and the police bike. Where is the other twin? Are they BBQing her? *(In horrified tones)*.

She also noticed lots of different letters in different fonts.
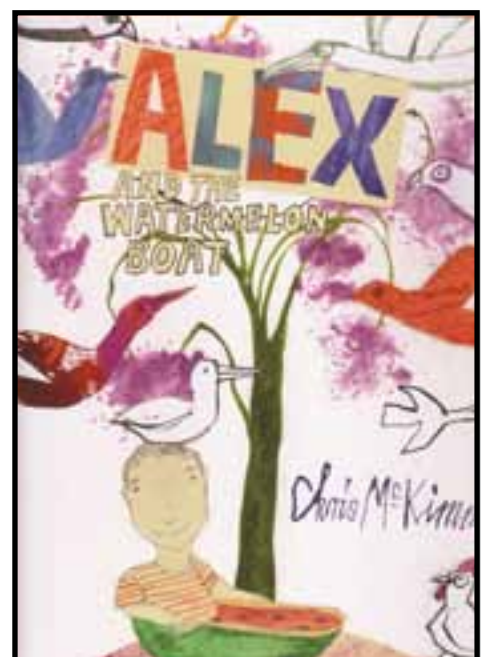
Guidelines for writers

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

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

Style

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

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

Referencing

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

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

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

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

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

Specific terminology

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

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

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

Length of contribution

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

Form of submission

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

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