



Educating Young Children

Learning and teaching in the
early childhood years

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EDITORIAL PANEL

Lynne Moore (Editor)
Angela Drysdale
Archana Sinh
Sue Webster
Mathilda Element
Nebula Wild
Sarah-Jane Johnson

PROOFREADING

Angela Le Mare

ECTA JOURNAL LIAISON

Lynne Moore
e. journal@ecta.org.au

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Address all correspondence and advertising enquiries to

Early Childhood Teachers' Association (ECTA Inc.)

20 Hilton Road, Gympie Qld 4570

Ph: 0418 157 280 Fax: 07 5481 1148

e. info@ecta.org.au w. www.ecta.org.au

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From the President

Kim Walters

Following the success of the ECTA Annual Conference my batteries have been recharged. I am once again empowered to continue to advocate for what we know works best in early childhood settings - PLAY. Yes, I used 'that four letter word'. Play in its many forms is very often misunderstood by non-early childhood trained professionals. It is therefore vital that we as a profession work proactively to distil the myths surrounding play.

Marc Armitage, during his keynote address and master class, emphasised that play is essential to a child's development and life. Play is natural, seen in all children across the world. Play is spontaneous, can change quickly and is everywhere all the time. Play is intrinsically motivated, children desire to want to do something i.e. their body wants to climb. Children and adults play in their own way and for their own reasons using their own ideas and interests. Play is environmentally-based therefore we as professionals need to provide environments that are play ready. Children must have play to reach their full potential. (Marc Armitage, ECTA 2014 annual conference)

Ninety-four per cent of delegates who completed the online evaluation survey rated the educational content of Marc's keynote as either 'excellent' or 'very good'. Kasey Cowell stated in her survey submission:

[I]thoroughly enjoyed the keynote address from Marc Armitage. A wonderful insight into what is happening around the world and also an excellent reminder about why play is so important. He was engaging and thought-provoking.

A copy of Marc's keynote is on the DVD that accompanies this journal. Organisational members and ECTA groups are encouraged to share this presentation with colleagues. The

recording of Marc's master class '*The role of the adult in children's play: The play cycle*' will accompany EYC Vol 21.1 next year.

Congratulations to conference co-convenors Toni Michael and Robbie Leikvold, conference committee members along with volunteers from other ECTA committees, ECTA office bearers and early childhood students for another successful and extremely professionally run conference. Delegates agree, with 94% rating the conference organisation as 'excellent' or 'very good'. Janiene Bate's, survey comments were typical of most delegates:

Thank you so much to all the ECTA conference committee for their hard work! This was my first time at the conference and what a wonderful, inspirational, exciting and challenging day it was! I greatly appreciate all your efforts!

At the conference it was my great pleasure to thank outgoing conference presenter coordinator, flower-arranger extraordinaire and life member Pam Fulmer for her dedication over many, many, years to the conference committee. The ECTA community wish Pam well in her retirement from the committee.

Five-hundred early childhood professionals demonstrated their professionalism and commitment to the young children they teach by attending the 2014 conference. Thirty-five high quality, practical presentations, with many presenters currently teaching young children in long day care, kindergarten and primary schools, were offered during the conference. I thank these professionals for generously sharing their wealth of knowledge and expertise with delegates.

Congratulations to Marilyn Beale who won conference fee reimbursement in the online evaluation survey lucky draw.

This year ECTA sponsored the attendance of five regional and remote members at the conference. Congratulations to Melissa Gillard (Hervey Bay), Paul Brazier (Gulliver), Virginia Ward (Maidenhead), Joanne Young (Rockhampton) and Rhonda Campbell (Cordalba) who received up to \$500 travel expenses and conference registration reimbursement.



Successful conference support applicants, Melissa Gillard and Paul Brazier discuss the conference with ECTA Treasurer Lisa Cooper and President Kim Walters.

Regional office bearers from eleven ECTA groups from across the state played a vital support role at this year's conference. Office bearers took on many conference tasks, helping to prepare the venue, directing parking, supporting presenters, distributing sign-in sheets and presenter trays, photographing events and introducing and thanking presenters. Being involved in the facilitation of the conference not only supports the conference committee but strengthens and deepens the knowledge and skills of those involved. Office bearers then take these skills back to their ECTA groups to help facilitate local events. Regional office bearers met with remote and regional delegates during the remote and regional delegate morning tea to share advice and professional development opportunities in their respective areas.



Romayne Boniface, Leanne Trace, Melissa Gillard and Lisa Cooper (Hervey Bay) share ideas for regional events with Keriann Reissenberger and Tracey Town (Townsville) and Michelle Carsburg (Biloela).



ECTA Gladstone regional members Deb Hancock, Katie McCafferty, Judy Larsen, Sue Norwood and Liz Fallon facilitated the wine and cheese event with streamlined efficiency.

This year the Gladstone office bearers and members of the Gladstone regional group volunteered to facilitate the wine and cheese event. Always a highlight on conference day. They did a tremendous job keeping things flowing and making the event enjoyable for all.

If you would like to support the conference committee please email Toni Michael at conferenceconvenor@ecta.org.au.

The morning after the conference saw the sponsored ECTA regional group office bearers attend the annual ECTA group networking breakfast to share details of professional development and successful local initiatives and achievements. Office bearers also reflected on the conference and their input and were updated on ECTA policy and procedures. The breakfast meeting strives to develop the capacity of each regional group and is a key point in the ECTA calendar.

I would like to acknowledge the vital support that ECTA groups provide to early years professionals in their local areas. I am very excited about the upcoming ECTA funded Maggie Dent tour, which will see our 2013 conference keynote speaker visiting regional groups across the state to provide international standard professional development to educators and parents. The tour commences



CTA group office bearers attending the ECTA annual breakfast meeting.

ECTA groups

Cairns (cairnsrg@ecta.org.au),
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Logan (loganrg@ecta.org.au).

With interest from Northern NSW and Rockhampton to form groups. If you are from these areas, please connect with office bearers via email. If you would like to form an ECTA group in your area we require three individual ECTA members to be office bearers. Contact Libby Gaedtker at ectagroups@ecta.org.au to discuss forming a group in your area.

in Cairns on 2 August and concludes in Logan on 6 September. Registration details are available at www.ecta.org.au. A member of the ECTA state coordinating committee will attend each event.

While the sand continues to shift in education I commend you on holding strong to your early childhood pedagogy and integrity. I encourage you to continue to advocate for high quality early childhood practice. Teaching young children in the way you know is best for learning engagement. Giving the children whose lives you touch, ownership of their learning, with play in all its forms remaining at the forefront as a key component of your curriculum delivery in all settings from long day care through to the early years of schooling.

It is through networking with like-minded colleagues at conferences and other professional development and social events that we recharge our batteries, build our strength and focus to maintain integrity and be empowered to continue to have professional conversations with those who challenge our philosophy.

Kim

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From the editorial panel

Lynne Moore

Where were you twenty years ago? In this issue of *Educating Young Children* we are privileged to have four of Queensland's respected early childhood educationalists share their professional journeys. As you will discover, a career in early childhood can take a myriad of pathways.

We begin with a delightful story from Tui Bensen. Fynn loves everything that crawls, especially Goldie, a fully grown female Golden Orb spider. What wonderful discoveries there are to be had when we harness children's curiosity and zest for the scientific!

Rachel Towill offers an Australian slant on the design and construction of a Reggio-Emilia inspired early learning space. Following Reggio principles, and involving children in the design process, the result is a building filled with natural light and ventilation.

We are pleased to include an article from Professor Karen Stagnitti that provides strong research evidence about the importance of pretend play in the development of children's literacy capabilities.

Charlotte Bowley and Jenny Clarke show how sustainable practice and pedagogy can be authentically embedded in all aspects of a children's service, and Desley Jones shares her beliefs about the importance of creating a caring community of learners.

Educating Young Children stalwart Bronwyn McGregor once again challenges thinking and practice. I implore you to read this passionate article before handing out photocopied worksheets to the young children you teach, this week.

Jane Taylor outlines seven ideas to take care of your wellbeing, Robyn Mercer reminds readers that it is a case of less is more when considering the technology used with young

children and Nicky Leonti gives three easy steps to educating children about the joy of food.

Finally, Mathilda and our media reviewers bring six new titles to delight.

This is an exciting profession with much to celebrate. We are each drawn by our own passion for the very best for children and their families. I am proud to be an early childhood professional and look forward with optimism to the next twenty years.

Lynne

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39th Early Childhood Teachers' Association Annual Conference

Lisa Cooper



Over 500 early childhood professionals demonstrated their commitment to early childhood education by attending the 2014 ECTA conference. ECTA President Kim Walters thanked the conference committee for their tireless efforts in organising the conference. Special thanks were expressed to Pam Fulmer who is retiring after many years as an active member of the conference committee.



Life Members Noeleen Christensen, Pam Fulmer and Toni Michael were on hand at the Information Desk to welcome delegates and presenters.



Marc Armitage empowered delegates to achieve, with confidence, what they know to be best for children. Sharing the most common barriers that services may face, Marc explored possible solutions in his conference keynote 'We all want 'more play' in our setting - so what's putting us off?

Thank you to our sponsors:



Janine Peace and Melissa Thompson, from Platinum sponsor Modern Teaching Aids, show resources to ECTA Treasurer Lisa Cooper and President Kim Walters.



Kim discusses programs and solutions with Connie Giorgi and Dennis Playford from Gold Sponsor ANZUK.



Kim and Conference Committee member Bec Trimble-Roles discuss the options available for health cover with Kevin Craigs and Susan Jesberg from Gold Sponsor TUH.



Kim chats with Lee Areke and Kiri Combi, Gold Sponsor Backyard in a Box.



JJ Stranan and Nu Sims, Supporting Sponsors Global Kids Oz, enjoyed showing off baby Oscar at the conference.



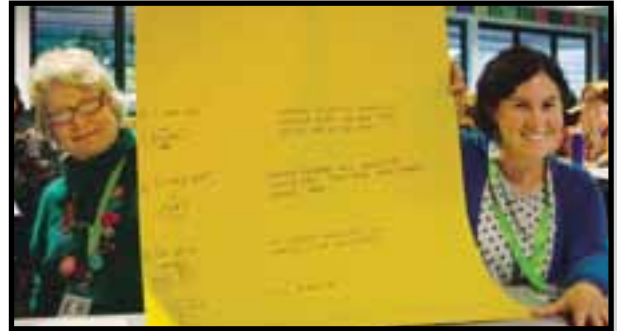
Lisa and Bec try out some of the sporting equipment with Julie Telfer and Stephanie Lavery from Supporting Sponsor Hart Sport.



Delegates enjoyed networking during the IEUA-QNT morning tea and QNTU lunch breaks while sitting in the warm winter sun.



Conference coordinators Robbie Leikvold and Toni Michael took time over lunch to network with presenters.



Suzanne Burdon and Nicole Jones share their poster activity in Konfident Kids in the Classroom presented by Siobhan Gordon and Alaine Bull.



Desley Jones encouraged participants to reflect on their understanding of self-regulation, and to share and build upon practical strategies during her presentation Self-regulation: the what, the why and the how – understandings and strategies.



Five delegates from the Gold Coast took out prizes at the QIEC Super wine and cheese event. The event is always a highlight, allowing delegates to celebrate a successful conference, network with colleagues and participate in the multi-draw raffle. This year the Gladstone Regional Group coordinated the draw. Thank you to all traders who donated prizes. Congratulations and a special thank you to the hard working conference committee.

Thank you to our sponsors:



Goldie

Tui Bensen



Tui is currently working as a Kindergarten Director/Teacher with C&K. She has fourteen years' experience working with children and their families including working as a social worker and an Early Childhood Advisor.

Growing up immersed in a culture of science, including having her own working laboratory as a ten-year-old, has enabled Tui to see science everywhere, have a critical approach to life, and to develop keen observational skills. As an early childhood educator, Tui believes educators must capitalise on their own experiences to enhance those of children.

She believes in the need to value science and its role in the continued development of young children. She is currently involved with an 'Action Research Project' *Embedding Cultural Perspectives in our Program*. One aspect of this is developing an edible bush tucker garden.

Lake View Kindergarten, like many kindergartens, encourages children to engage in a variety of forms of exploration. Our story will illustrate how our children experience and grow their curiosity, not only in the physical environment but also what lies unseen. How we go about investigating possibilities, building on scientific discoveries and removing barriers to scientific knowledge. It is also about being able to identify children's dispositions for learning.



Meet Fynn



I want you to meet Fynn. He loves everything that crawls, and that often provokes an extreme reaction from the less *bug-loving* community.

What a *treasure* he is to have as part of our Kindergarten group. Fynn found every creature imaginable in our Kindergarten yard, including some that had found their way inside. Each one of these amazing little lives was carefully transported, usually by hand to a specimen container for further investigation. Fynn has

a wonderful presence which enables him to hold a group together while the identifying process begins. His passion does not stop there.

Creatures are often named and of course released to return to their families at the end of session. Fynn's ability to recall events is second to none, returning the next day or even a week later to again take ownership of our beautiful fauna. The most prized exhibit was *Goldie*, a full grown female Golden Orb spider. She made a wonderful web in a developing tree towards the rear of our yard. Fynn took on the responsibility of being her special guardian. Several times a day, he checked her well-being. When some rather boisterous individuals decided to stone her web, emotion took over. Fynn defended her until help arrived.



Children's representations



Clay sculptures



Children's representations

The Kindergarten children soon began representing these incredible creatures in other media, including painting, drawing, clay sculptures and stories. This also included counting legs and body parts, learning to identify whether or not we had an insect or spider. The digital microscope was introduced allowing for closer examination of our *finds*. This encouraged the children to consider other possibilities and to begin the process of making predictions. What might it look like using our eyes? Then use the digital microscope, take a photograph and discuss.

As educators we need to be honest. If you do not know the answer, say so. Model how we might find an answer. We know that learning has a social component and, as many would argue, knowledge is firstly constructed by the group before being internalised as a concept individually. (Vygotsky, 1978), suggesting that a vital role of the educator is to scaffold children's learning.

Goldie survived through 2013 and almost half of 2014 with a new self-appointed guardian, *Emilie*.



Emilie

Recently, *Goldie* passed away and everyone was sad. However, several babies live on and last week new names were being discussed.

Educators have expressed to me in the past that their lack of (perceived) scientific knowledge puts them at a disadvantage when beginning this wonderful journey with children.

I would suggest we travel the *scientific road* as one, the children, families and educators. It takes motivation, inspiration and curiosity mixed together with a group of young children. You will be amazed at the ideas, discussions, and hypotheses that unfold while experimenting as budding *scientists*.

With our rapidly changing world and a continued emphasis on becoming scientifically literate citizens, there is increased interest in research around young children engaging in all things science. The most effective way for children to gain science literacy is to expose them to it. Using scientific language is important and we should not underestimate our children's ability to understand and be able to remember these concepts. Just think about dinosaur names. Young children find science concepts fascinating. Exploration is a vital part of their learning, working cooperatively, experimenting, collecting data, developing theories, including literacy skills and research. We can collate the data with the children and make a book to revisit or to use with future groups. Create wall displays and areas for continual investigation. Not a dusty table in the corner with a sign *Science*. Provide real things that are changed often, allowing the children ownership of the space. Sometimes, very precious items are provided by families. Of course these need the respect of everyone and group time is often the acceptable time for sharing. I encourage items that come from home to be robust and that can be examined by many curious little hands.

As educators of young children, I believe we need to value science and its role in their development. Children are naturally curious and always exploring. Our role is to extend this with as much enthusiasm and excitement as we can muster. If we do this, we will be rewarded.

References

Vygotsky, L. S. 1978. *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

Rewind 20 years

This year we celebrate the 20th year of *Educating Young Children*. In this conversation with past EYCers we rewind the clock 20 years to reveal the many ways a career in early childhood can be lived. We hope you enjoy travelling back in time alongside four early childhood educators as they share their passions, aspirations and hopes for their profession. Through these personal accounts, representing 80 years of accumulated knowledge and wisdom, there is much to celebrate, and much to heed. The early childhood profession is indeed truly unique, with multiple pathways open to individuals in their quest for optimal programs for children and families.

Toni Michael



Toni is past President of ECTA and conference co-convenor.

In an area of interest in early childhood, where were you then?

... I had just started working in

the tertiary sector and really enjoyed working with students while trying to impart into them my love and knowledge about early childhood. I had also just enrolled in a Masters of Education.

Where are you now? ... I am now semi-retired but still doing some casual work for Griffith University and QUT. This is mostly supervising students who are doing their field placements in various early childhood settings. However, I am very actively involved on the ECTA Conference Committee as the Co-Convenor.

Then I saw ... teachers who were early childhood trained teaching children from 4-6 years and children who were actively learning through play and enjoyed being in a supportive caring environment where learning was fun. Indoor and outdoor play were of equal value in the learning process. Teaching was often

spontaneous, based on the children's needs and interests. Children with special needs were well catered for as there was always another adult in the room and the teacher could devote more 'special' time. I also saw young teachers who had time to volunteer on various professional committees.

Now I see ... many teachers who have little, if any, early childhood training, teaching children from 4-6 years in school settings and children who mostly sit at desks or in large groups being taught 'lessons' about various aspects of the curriculum. There is very little emphasis given to indoor play and hardly any to outdoor play. Teachers are stressed because of the amount of assessment that is required and the paperwork associated with that. Children are often being asked to do things that they are not developmentally ready for and consequently their frustration is expressed in inappropriate behaviour. Children with special needs struggle to cope in this very structured environment. Now I see teachers (young and old) who are doing so much paperwork out of school hours that they have very little time or energy to give back to the profession in a voluntary capacity.

I would like to see ... Early childhood trained teachers teaching children from 4-6 years in school settings; more emphasis on indoor and outdoor play and less emphasis on assessment; a teacher and teacher-aide in the classroom at all times and no more than 25 children in the class; and young teachers having more time and opportunity to respond to the needs of the early childhood profession.

Megan Gibson



Megan is a Lecturer in the School of Early Childhood, QUT and past member of the EYC editorial panel.

In an area of interest in early childhood where were you then?

... 20 years ago, in 1994, I was the Director of St Michael's Grammar School Kindergarten, Melbourne. In that same year I attended the first conference in Australia that focused on the *Reggio Emilia Municipal Infant-Toddler and Preschool Centres*. Carla Rinaldi, Jan Millikan, Jillian Rodd, and others, spoke with passion about different ways of thinking through images of children. They made connections with how these images of competent and capable children called for new ways of thinking about images of early childhood teachers as protagonists and co-constructors of meaning. I remember visiting the *100 Languages of Children Exhibition* at the Melbourne Museum and being quite mesmerised by the ways in which children's ideas and thinking were eloquently and aesthetically expressed through pedagogical documentation. I found the conference and the exhibition captivating, coming at a time when I was thirsty for knowledge that would enable me to re-think my role as an early childhood teacher working with children, families and communities.

Also at this time I was studying my Masters of Education at QUT. Through these studies I was fortunate to (re)connect with some extraordinary early childhood educators – Lyn Bryant, Abigail Sawyer, Sue Grieshaber, Rich Johnson and Di Nailon. Their thinking about re-conceptualising early childhood in Australia has left traces in my thinking that remain to this day.

Rather than look to answers as to how to 'do' early childhood, my encounters through these studies and conversations with these people provoked me to ask important and challenging questions.

Back then (and to this day) these professional development experiences, including conferences and formal studies, ignited my interest in leadership, how organisations operate/function and organisational systems and structures.

Where are you now? ... I continue to be interested in the workplace conditions that enable the provision of optimal early childhood programs for children and families.

Today I am proud to work in the School of Early Childhood (SEC), QUT, with Prof Ann Farrell as Head of School. In some ways I am back to where I started my career as an early childhood educator, as I studied at what was then Brisbane College of Advanced Education (BCAE), graduating in 1989. It is a thrill for me to work alongside three of my Alumni from BCAE – Lyn Zollo, Maryanne Theobald and Jill Fox.

As a Lecturer my role includes a focus on teacher education, research and engagement with the field. My work with preservice early childhood teachers sees a focus on leadership, professionalism, sustainability and health and well-being. My PhD research examined early childhood teacher professional identities, and I was fortunate to work with Felicity McArdle and Caroline Hatcher to complete this study of which I am very proud. Implications of this research pertain to the ways in which child care and work in child care are constructed in policy, preservice teacher education and the field. What has, and continues to drive me in my work as an early childhood educator, is working with children and families. To this end I continue to seek opportunities to make connections with early childhood centres, and work collaboratively.

I am honored to be part of the Early Years Collaborative Research Network (CRN) – a team of over 80 early childhood researchers

from three Universities in Australia, QUT, CSU and Monash. Together with these researchers, we continue to develop a program of work to address a range of key research areas in the early childhood landscape, including a key focus on early childhood workforce.

Then I saw ... Over the course of my career as an early childhood educator, my thinking has emerged and grown. I like to think I am open to new ideas, and find the possibilities of acquiring new knowledge and new ways of thinking. Looking back I was (and still am) committed to the early childhood profession, and saw an exciting career ahead teaching young children and working with families.

The early childhood profession is unique, with many possibilities for carving out career pathways.

I have been fortunate to work in a range of early childhood contexts, including lower primary, kindergarten/preschool and child care, in state schools, independent schools and community-based prior-to-school settings, in different parts of Australia. I entered the profession with a belief that each and every person is unique and worthy of value. I saw (and continue to see) my role as an educator to enable each child to reach his or her potential within a program that included love, care, and respect for each and every family. Relationships have always been the basis of my approach to pedagogy, and I fondly remember each and every child I have taught, and had the privilege of spending part of their lives with.

An incredible chapter of my career as an early childhood educator was working at *Campus Kindergarten, UQ*. From 1996 – 2005 I was fortunate to work with an extraordinary team of staff, who engaged with early childhood education in dynamic ways. It was a pleasure to be at work each and every day – we put into action many of our thoughts and ideas about working with children and families; we took risks, and we had lots of fun. Around this time, I was fortunate to sit on the editorial board of *Educating Young Children*. These opportunities further enabled scope to learn, grow and evolve

in my thinking as an early childhood educator.

Now I see ... Early childhood is in an unprecedented time, where there is increasing attention nationally and internationally on the importance of the early years. Key changes have occurred in Australia, notably with universal provision of preschool, a national curriculum, uniformity of standards and intense scrutiny of workforce issues (including qualification requirements).

I see opportunities to re-conceptualise the ways in which we, as a profession, 'do' early childhood – for children, for families and for staff. One way of doing this is to ask important, and sometimes hard, questions.

Questions need to be asked of policies that reflect images of children for what they will contribute to a country's economy and prosperity. How do we as a profession hold such images together *with* images of children with rights for who they are here and now? Questions need to be asked of policies that include narrow images of families, where some families become more marginalised. How do we as a profession ensure the rights of each and every family to be acknowledged, valued and supported? Questions need to be asked of the conditions for staff working in early childhood centres. How do we as a profession ensure that staff are afforded worth and status commensurate with the importance of the early years driving policy reform? These are challenging questions, though ones that open rich possibilities for our profession.

I am increasingly aware of the importance of embedding Indigenous perspectives in early childhood programs – to challenge deficit discourses, make visible history and construct positive images of Aboriginal and Torres Islander people. A Standpoint Statement – either your own, or an organisation's – is one way to make visible some of the guiding principles and values that shape encounters with Indigenous perspectives. There is a role

for both individuals and the early childhood profession to play - where Indigenous people are acknowledged, valued and respected. I have become increasingly interested in Standpoint – how I see my role connecting and engaging authentically with Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples and how this impacts on my work as an early childhood educator. I see this as an exciting space to be in.

I would like to see ... For early childhood profession, I see a time in history where early childhood has gained Government attention in unprecedented ways. I see an opportunity, to collectively as a profession, carve out the next chapter in the history of early childhood.

I would like to see early childhood policies where each and every child, each and every family, and each and every educator are seen as worthy and valuable - where judgements are suspended, and relationships are forged that are built on love and respect.

Lyn Hunt



Lyn is Deputy Deputy CEO, Australian Dental Association (Queensland Branch) and past Editor of EYC.

In an area of interest in early childhood, where

were you then? ... Child health has always been of interest to me. In my life pre early childhood education, I worked at the University of Qld School of Dentistry. My experiences in working with profoundly and multiply, physically disabled children

had a significant effect upon me as a young person in that career. Subsequently, in my early childhood teaching life, I worked with both disadvantaged children and children who would be considered privileged. I soon realised that both had their own set of inherent health issues. Being from a wealthy (or even a comfortably-off) family did not automatically mean that health issues were understood or effectively addressed.

Where are you now? ... I am currently the Deputy CEO of the Australian Dental Association (Queensland Branch), commonly known as ADAQ. In my role I get to see first hand the impact of all health services upon children and families, but particularly, of course, oral health services. I am fortunate enough to be involved with the ADAQ Oral Health Promotion Committee, which organises and runs an annual Dental Health Week in the first week of August. Dental Health Week 2014 has young children as its focus, so naturally I am delighted to be involved.

Then I saw ... 20 years ago, as Director of a long day-care centre, I saw first hand how, in so many families, oral health was just not considered to be a part of the overall health of the child, while simple and basic preventative strategies – e.g. like good tooth-brushing habits and good nutrition – were often not considered as essential for good health. So many children needlessly suffered from dental caries.

It was evident to me that there was much education to be undertaken before the health of the whole child was adequately considered by parents, health professionals and the general community alike – and that education had to include matters of oral health.

In spite of much resistance from several staff members, I successfully introduced tooth-brushing after lunch in an effort to start children on the path towards good habits in oral hygiene.

Now I see ... Unfortunately, I now see that after 20 years, a great deal remains unchanged in terms of an awareness of oral health and the very young. A stint at the ADAQ stand at the recent Pregnancy, Baby and Child Expo reinforced that parents still have many questions about all aspects of oral health – from when to start tooth-brushing to when to first visit the dentist. My friends and colleagues are now grandparents and it is interesting to hear how few have ever seen or heard any oral health promotion throughout their child's years in a range of early childhood services.

I would like to see ... If I have a personal mission for children based on my work now, it is to try to ensure that common and preventable diseases are lessened through education and the teaching of positive habits – rather than seeing children suffer from the ravages of disease caused by poor diet, poor habits and lack of information. I am fortunate in my current role that I am in the position to work with dedicated health professionals, who hold prevention rather than cure as their preferred position. It would be great to see the preventable disease of dental caries no longer causing young three-year-olds to have full mouth extractions due to rampant disease ... but right now, it still happens far too regularly!

Kim Walters



Kim is ECTA President. She is passionate about expanding support for all ECTA members, especially those in regional and remote areas.

In an area of interest in early childhood

where were you then? ... In the year 2000, for the not-so-special price of \$1000, I had purchased my first digital camera. I was madly teaching myself to use this amazing device to access and use digital images to create and share

documentation of children's learning, experiences and relationships with parents, colleagues and, of course, the children themselves.

Where are you now? ... My interest in ICT continues today and I keenly keep track of the release of new technologies e.g. digital audio recorders, Echo Pens, iPads, Smartphones and tablets and the multitude of Apps that can be used on them. I must confess I have one of everything. I enjoy finding out how, as educators, we can use these digital tools to improve pedagogy and I especially enjoy sharing my knowledge with other professionals.

Then I saw ... In the year 2000 digital cameras were very expensive and this prohibited many educators from using the new tool in their early childhood settings. Those educators who were eager were purchasing their own equipment. The technical skills required to fully utilise digital images in combination with computer software to create time-efficient documentation and communication, prevented many educators from using this new tool.

Now I see ... With the low price of digital cameras and the multitude of other devices available, it would be hard to find an early childhood setting that doesn't use digital photography to capture the moment. Most educators are digitally literate, having the skills required to use these tools to their full potential.

The most exciting benefit of this for me is that educators are now able to empower children to document their own interests and experiences.

I would like to see ... settings embrace the use of Cloud storage and Wi-Fi technology to streamline workload and share images and documents between devices and staff. The multitude of passive rote learning Apps available with little or limited value, require educators to select Apps that promote children as creators not consumers of technology. The potential is for children to not only capture images but to create and share their own documentation.

The journey of designing an Australian approach to a Reggio Emilia-inspired early learning space

Rachel Towill



Rachel has been specialising in architectural education design for over eleven years and has designed facilities for all ages. Originally from the ACT, Rachel has been designing for Queensland schools since 2008. Rachel has a strong passion for designing and delivering sustainable school buildings. Travelling to Italy in early 2013, Rachel attended the Reggio Emilia Conference to gain a better understanding and appreciation of this teaching philosophy. She was asked to present the St Paul's Kindergarten to teachers at the Reggio Australia Conference in July 2013

When approached to design a Reggio Emilia-inspired kindergarten for St Paul's School, I realised the initial research stage involved understanding the teaching principles of this teaching philosophy and how they would shape and mould a building design.

Workshopping with the client

Architecturally, one of the main concepts in this teaching philosophy is that the environment, both built and landscaped, acts as the third teacher for the children. We worked through a range of ideas with the staff at St Paul's, holding workshops with the teachers to explain our understanding of the importance of:

- strong visual and physical connections between indoor and outdoor environments
- connecting students to nature



Exterior St Paul's Kindergarten

- flexible interior environments
- high visibility between teaching areas, both indoors and outdoors
- stimulating and tactile learning environment for children
- a diverse selection of colours and material selection and building forms
- natural light and natural ventilation within the indoor learning environments.

As an architect, when approached by a client, I suggest the general project process in the development of the design and construction of a building includes:

- researching the requirements of the building and understanding the client brief
- workshopping with the client to discuss initial design ideas and concepts
- site visits to other facilities that have a similar program
- developing the ideas with the clients, designing the form and materials
- working with builders to construct the building.

Site visits and developing ideas

Following the workshops, we conducted site visits to other childcare facilities inspired by the Reggio approach as well as holding workshops with the students. Workshopping with children involved sessions of discussion around images and at the end of the session, we allowed the students to draw and design what they wanted their kindergarten to be. Almost all of these drawings were of the external environment, expressing ideas of climbing frames, rolling hills, trees and nature. All of these images were collected, scanned and sent to the landscape architect to inform his brief for designing the outdoor environment.

By workshopping with the students and staff, researching the teaching philosophy, visiting other kindergartens and presenting and discussing all of these ideas with the staff at St Paul's, a design for the kindergarten emerged.

The site selected was directly opposite the Junior School, enabling the children at the kindergarten to have a strong visual connection to where they would be in the following year, allowing for an easier transition from kindergarten to Prep.

Form and material selection

Although this building was part of a school, it was important that the kindergarten felt more like a

home than an institutional building. As such, the development of form and material selection was particularly important. By following the Reggio principles, materials needed to be selected that were natural, recycled or recyclable, and non harmful for children. The building needed to be designed to encourage as much natural light and ventilation through it as possible.

A significant amount of time was involved in researching materials – it was important to include as many locally-sourced materials as possible and, most importantly, that none of the materials used in this project were harmful to children. This not only included the surface building materials, but also the hidden components of the building including insulation, termite barriers, floor sealers and adhesives.

We visited a number of demolition yards as we wanted to use as many recycled components (such as doors, windows, baths for outdoor veggie patches) as possible to give the kindergarten an eclectic sense of home.

From design to reality

Once the design was developed enough to tender the project, an information session was held with potential builders. The information session enabled us to explain the design intent of the project and clearly highlight that this project had a large amount of recycled content. Also, at this stage, we planned to work with a builder to assist in resolving issues, for example, how to reuse old doors and windows when they don't comply with current glazing standards. The information session also provided the builders with a clear understanding of the project.



Interior St Paul's Kindergarten



Drawing glazing strip



Naturally ventilated play spaces

The building houses two classrooms connected by a central core of a large kitchen, stage areas and toilets. The combination of large, open play spaces, exposed structure and varied flooring types give the teachers flexibility to easily shape larger spaces into smaller play areas through the relocation of mobile furniture.

The two play spaces have large sliding glass doors which open out onto a generous deck, providing an important connection between indoor and outdoor environments. Natural light enters through high level-louvres, custom-made stained glass windows, double-hung windows and sliding doors – providing a strong visual connection with the outdoors.

Large glass sliding doors open up onto a generous deck made of recycled timber. The deck provides a covered connection between indoors and outdoors. A diverse natural landscape is provided with which children can interact. Each section of landscape provides a distinct sensory quality and includes a sand pit, hard climbing spaces, areas to run and a herb garden and cubby house.



Generous deck

The building includes:

- as many natural, local or recycled products as possible
- high levels of recyclable insulation in the walls and roof to decrease heat transfer through the roof
- naturally ventilated play spaces through operable windows, large sliding doors and ceiling fans to encourage cool breezes to enter through the building, while naturally dispersing hot air out through high level louvres
- low energy light fittings and appliances with infrastructure in place for the future installation of solar panels
- exposed timber, flooring and cladding from recycled spotted gum timber and iron bark sourced from a local company
- custom-made feature stained glass doors and highlight windows with frames and doors made of a mixed recycled timber species, all made in Brisbane.



Furniture

The construction of the kindergarten was an exciting time for the students of the school. The students who were involved in the drawing workshop would often look through the construction fence to see how the project was developing and if their drawings were becoming reality. The kindergarten, constructed over a six month period, opened for Semester Two of 2012.



Connecting indoor and outdoor environments

Pretend play and literacy

Karen Stagnitti



Professor Karen Stagnitti currently works in the Occupational Science and Therapy program in the School of Health and Social Development at Deakin University. Over the past thirty years she has worked in early childhood intervention programs in community-based settings as part of a specialist paediatric multidisciplinary team. Her area of research is children's play. Karen has over seventy national and international papers as well as fifteen book chapters, and a norm-referenced standardised play assessment, the Child-Initiated Pretend Play Assessment.

One type of play – pretend play – has evidence behind it to show that when children engage meaningfully in pretend play they experience an increase in their story comprehension, language and narrative language capabilities. Pretend play occurs when children impose a meaning on what they are doing. There are three main cognitive skills that occur when children engage in pretend play:

1. using an object and pretending it is something else (for example, the box is a bed),
2. attributing a property (for example, the teddy is sick), and
3. referring to absent objects (for example, the boy is driving the truck to the market) (Lewis, Boucher & Astell, 1992).

When children engage in pretend play they are using symbolic thought (for example, the stick is a person driving the car which is a shoe) and they are taking on roles and creating contexts (for example, the props, toys, characters and setting needed for the play story).

Pretend play is a cognitive ability that is closely associated with language (Stagnitti, 2010; Whitebread et al. 2009). When children engage in pretend play, the parts of the brain associated with narrative are activated (Whitehead et al. 2009) and this link between narrative and play is explained by Nicolopoulou (2005) as the verbal telling of the story (narrative) and the acting out of the story (play). In Table 1 the development of pretend play and narrative language is compared.

Children who have competent pretend play ability:

- have long sequences of play actions
- follow a line of thought, and change the storyline of the play in response to a problem
- initiate ideas and add to the ideas of others
- explain what they are playing, and give reasons for resolutions to problems
- use lots of objects for lots of different things
- use language to describe the context of the play scene
- play out a role and stay in character for the duration of the play
- understand the play of others.

What sets competent players apart from children who do not play well, is the cohesiveness and high level of organisation of their play. Children who play well 'get lost' in the play and become deeply involved in the process of playing.

For children who are not competent players, there are several play behaviours that provide information on their difficulties in literacy or language. Table 2 lists some types of play behaviours that indicate a child is struggling in their play ability and what this means for their literacy. Children who display these play behaviours commonly have difficulty with one or more of the following:

Table 1
The development of pretend play and narrative language

| Pretend Play Development | Narrative Language |
|--|---|
| By two years of age children have logical sequential actions in their play. For example, stir the spoon in the cup and lift the cup to the teddy's mouth for teddy to drink. Their play scripts reflect their own life experiences and are centred on themselves and their home. They can use similar-looking objects in object substitution, for example, a box can be used as a bed. | 2 years – children can tell a story about themselves. They tell stories before they can read. |
| By two to three years, children begin to add into their play characters and events from their favourite books, TV, movies or electronic devices. A competent player will embed these fictional characters and events in their play in their own original stories in the play. | 2-3 years – Children attempt fictional storytelling |
| By three years children have longer logical sequences of play actions, they use lots of objects in object substitution. The older three-year-old will begin to pre-plan their play by thinking about what to play before they search for the props needed in the play. By four years of age, children create problems in the play. The larger the problem the more intellectually challenging with children taking two to three days to resolve the problem. | 3 years – children begin to develop narrative ability 3 – 5 years – children move from description of objects and events, to temporal sequencing of actions relevant to solving a problem. |
| By five years, children can carry out a pretend play idea over two to three weeks. They can negotiate and cooperate with peers (and have disputes!). They can use any object for anything. They can extend the play and think of more ideas. | Preschoolers can tell stories and their storytelling can be enhanced. |
| By five to six years, children carry play over two to three weeks, they can include peers, their play scripts can be about their life, fantasy stories, or they create completely original stories. They use language to describe the function of objects in the play (for example, the show may be a telescope). They embed problems, resolve the problems and add more problems. They can stay in role for the whole play scene because now they understand what that character does, how that character acts and what that characters says. | School age – the majority of children possess a basic repertoire of narrative abilities. |
| Children have honed their skills in negotiation and cooperation (although there are still disputes), they can use any object, they can include multiple subplots with the play and use hypothetical reasoning. | By 3rd grade – children tell complete stories |
| The dolls, teddies and special toys stop talking. They are no longer alive and return to objects. Pretend play changes from playing with toys and props to being verbal and 'in their head' with ideas, hypotheticals, lateral problem-solving, social negotiations, and understanding language. | 11 or 12 years of age – children reach a peak in their ability to tell oral narratives. The average child has mastered story grammar. |

Source: from Stagnitti and Jellie 2006

Table 2
Play behaviours and what it might mean for literacy

| Play Behaviours | What it might mean |
|---|---|
| 'The Imitator' – These children cannot initiate play easily. They can be quiet, watching others and on the sidelines and follow what other children do. They can also be disruptive to peer play. They imitate others and have difficulty using objects for something else in play. | Language is usually below that of peers, their narrative language may be particularly delayed. Story comprehension will be below peers. |
| 'No initiation' – These children are engaged in physically active play (e.g. football, riding bikes). Parents comment they need to be entertained all the time if on their own at home. At preschool or school they may wait to be shown what to do. They prefer 'template' play: computer games, xbox, ipads. | Language will be below that of peers, especially narrative language. Writing a story is very difficult for these children. |
| 'All at Sea' – These children are not noticeable when play tasks are organised, e.g. puzzles, table-top activities, and the teacher is giving instructions on what to do. They have difficulty in recess time (for example playing in the sand-pit or in home corner) and can be disruptive to peers. They can destroy other children's play scenes. They cannot use objects as something else. They tend to be literal – will say you are 'silly' or 'stupid' if you pretend with an imaginary object. | Recess time may be a problem with behaviour, story comprehension is usually down, hypothetical reasoning poor. Language will be below that of peers. |
| 'They look busy' – These children are functional players. That is, they move the toys and props around, they look busy but do nothing. The play is empty because there is no storyline or complex organisation. They relate objects together but nothing happens. These children melt into a group because they are not disruptive and tend to follow others. | Risk for failure later on in school. They have difficulty writing a story, story comprehension may be down. Language is below that of peers. They have learnt to look busy so adults leave them alone. |
| 'Pretend Play Basics' – These children can substitute objects, attribute properties to objects, and refer to absent objects. They can have good ideas in play but their play is chaotic and they have difficulty 'pulling it together'. | They find it difficult to stick to a line of thought, as noted through their inability to have long sequences of logical play actions. Their language may seem to be doing well but it is recommended to have a speech and language assessment. Teachers express concern that these children have a superficial understanding of literacy tasks because there is no follow through. |
| 'Can't stick to limits' – Children love symbolic play and use objects for lots of things – infinite play possibilities. However, these children have difficulty working within a limit and in play they find toys are too limiting. They can have repetitive solutions to problems in play. Socially in play, their peers tend not to play with them because they start their play ideas 'in the air' with little background or grounding. | These children tend to be isolated in a group as peers don't understand their play. These children may also have 'better ideas than you' or suggest they have 'a better way to do things'. Sticking to limits is a difficulty. These children are usually very verbal but not grounded and it takes a while to work out what they are talking about. |

- they can't initiate a story
- their story comprehension is basic or they miss the point of the story or cannot explain where the storyline is going and what might happen
- they rely on others to give them ideas
- they don't understand the context of what is happening
- their language is not as rich as children whose play is highly organised as described above.

How a child plays gives you information on how they are functioning. Table 2 is based on my experience as well as researching play assessment in children.

Having play sessions in the classroom, set around particular play stations (for example, home corner, transport corner, shop corner), allows observation of children's ability to sequence a long logical play story. For children who cannot do this, the teacher can either model the next play idea or set up a child with a competent peer. Embedding the talking within the play, and modelling how to add an idea to play, gives strategies to children who cannot play well.

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More than just a vegie patch: sustainability and sustainable practices in early childhood education – the way forward

Charlotte Bowley and Jenny Clarke



Jenny is a Children's Services teacher at Brisbane North Institute of TAFE. She is passionate about inspiring educators to have confidence in embedding sustainable practices and education for sustainability in children's services.

Charlotte is a Family Day Care Coordinator for Wesley Mission involved in assisting educators to implement the NQS and EYLF into their family day care environments. She is passionate about sustainable practice in the early years and setting the foundation for children and educators to practice this in their everyday life now and into the future.



Sustainability is a key component of Quality Area 3 of Australia's National Quality Standards for early childhood education and care. Yet many services are struggling with meaningful ways of incorporating sustainability into their programs and practices. The inclusion of 'nature' both indoors and outdoors is one aspect of sustainability. However, it should be included as part of a larger picture including

economic and social sustainability where educators collaborate with children and families to make positive change for their futures.

Why should early childhood services focus on sustainability?

Our legislations and guiding documents have included sustainability as one of their major platforms as shown below.

| Legislation and guidelines informing our approaches to sustainability | |
|--|--|
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child | Article 29 (Goals of education): A child's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage a child to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help a child to learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. |
| National Quality Standard (NQS) | Element 3.3.1 Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations: educators and children work together to learn about and promote the sustainable use of resources and to develop and implement sustainable practices. Element 3.3.2 Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment: children develop an understanding and respect for the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. |
| Early Years Learning Framework- Outcome 2 | Children are connected with and contribute to their world – Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment – Educators promote this when they embed sustainability in daily routines and practices and when they find ways of enabling children to care for and learn about the land. |

The concept of sustainability is broader than we may think

Sustainability is a broad concept encompassing the child, their family and extended family, their early childhood service, local community, Australian society and then global society!

Children are and should be seen as competent beings who are able to be leaders, active citizens in their own learning and agents of change. Children are naturally attuned to the environment – as adults, some of us have lost this trait. Sustainability is an issue of social justice and equity.

What can we do to include sustainability in our service?

Communicate

- Install a bulletin board in the foyer of the building to inform parents and visitors of the current work being undertaken and where they can go for more information if they are interested in taking action at work or at home.
- Include hints and tips related to the current project in the newsletter that goes home to each family.

Use energy wisely

- Develop an action plan for energy use and minimisation.
- Investigate alternative energy sources, e.g. solar PVC's or solar hot water.
- Review heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) efficiency.
- Collaborate with alternative energy suppliers/green electrician.

Get into the garden

- Encourage a worm farm.
- Build a compost area.
- Make a vegetable garden or use hanging baskets.
- Collaborate with local nurseries, supermarkets, local food groups and involvement with the parents and grandparents with the garden and the children.

Commonly accepted definitions in sustainable practice in early childhood education and care

Sustainability - living within our limits and understanding the interconnections among economies, society, politics and the environment and providing equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. A commonly-accepted definition is 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. (Brundtland Report: Our Common Future, 1997)

Environmental sustainability - the long-term maintenance of ecosystem components and functions for future generations.

Education for Sustainability - **working with** peers, adults and educators to observe, decide on and partake in responsible actions for the future.

Early Childhood Education for Sustainability refers to children aged 0 – 5 years undertaking Education for Sustainability (as above).

Embrace biodiversity

- Plant bird-attracting plants and install a birdbath.
- Create a lizard lounge.
- Increase the number of native plants.
- Collaborate with Catchment Management Authorities (CMA) and wildlife educators.

Re-use

- Re-use resources and equipment: boxes, containers, tins and bottles can be re-used for collections, storage and sand/water play.
- Use fabric and other materials in pretend play.
- Collect plastic shopping bags for children's soiled, wet clothes.
- Reuse face washers and hand towels.
- Collect rain water and use in the garden, for water/sand play and to clean.



Re-use resources

Reduce

- Role model behavior you want to teach to children
- Use simple language to discuss with children:
 - Why you turn the lights off
 - Why the scraps are collected after meals
 - Why we don't let the taps run
 - Why rubbish goes in the bin.
- Discuss rubbish trucks, rubbish and land fill.
- Implement a sustainable purchasing policy.

Recycle

- Make recycled paper with the children.
- Explore with children the items in your environment that are recyclable or non-recyclable.
- Purchase toys made from recycled plastic.
- Recycle paper, glass, tins and other materials either into recycle bins or use within the program and classroom.
- Look at containers – can you source baskets instead?

Consider aesthetics and design

- Does the service reflect the natural environment, local community and Indigenous culture?
- What types of plants are used - are they native or drought resistant?

- Have you considered the design and dimensions of the indoor and outdoor physical environment?

What sustainability practices are you already engaged in?

Are you keeping scraps for chooks, using both sides of paper, using only one sheet of paper to dry hands? You are probably doing more than you think.

It is widely recognised that 'embedding' is the key to success in the Assessment and Rating process. Sustainable practices must be authentically entrenched in all aspects of the services. Assessors will expect children to know what these practices are, as well why the practices are implemented. Conduct an environmental audit in your service to determine what you are doing and where there are gaps.



Use natural materials in pretend play

Embedding sustainable practices and pedagogy in all aspects of the service:

- **Staff practices** within staff areas of the centre e.g. office practices, food disposal, use of white goods.
- **Pedagogy** – what we as educators do and say, projects and spontaneous learning, intentional teaching.
- **Physical environment** – the third teacher - turn off lights, open windows, plant grass, care for animals, consider textures, surfaces, senses.
- **Children's learning and engagement** – thoughts, processes and projects that come from their interests that are empowering – remember not to underestimate the capabilities of children.
- **Whole-service approach including all stakeholders** – educators, management, maintenance crew, kitchen staff, administration, families, extended families, sister centres, local community including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and cultural groups, Australian community or even worldwide global community.

Conclusion

Sustainability is an ongoing and evolving process. We can never say, 'That's it, we've nailed it!' We must keep learning, changing, improving and evolving.

Sustainability needs to be individual and tailor-made just for each individual service!

It involves all of us and impacts on all parts of our lives. Sustainability is a broad issue of social justice which allows us to use the principles and practices of our curriculum documents to work collaboratively with children, parents, other educators and the community to achieve positive learning outcomes for young children.

References and further reading and resources

The Early Childhood Educators Place - <https://www.facebook.com/TheEarlyChildhoodEducatorsPlace>

Little Green Steps Sustainability Education for Childcare Centres - <http://www.canterbury.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/little-green-steps-report.pdf>

Little Green Steps, tips on how to be green - <http://www.littlegreenstep.com/Home/>

Clean up Australia Day - <http://www.cleanupaustraliaday.org.au/>

Keep Australia Beautiful - <http://kab.org.au/>

Rubbish free lunchbox - <http://sustainability.ceres.org.au/node/409>

Queensland Early Childhood Sustainable Network - <http://www.qecsn.org.au/>

NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network - <http://www.eceen.org.au/>

Planet Ark - <http://planetark.org/>

Green Home - <http://www2.acfonline.org.au/>

Environmental Education in Early Childhood (Victoria) - <http://www.eeec.org.au/>

ECTA Article (09-09 EYC, Sustainability) "Beyond Recycling and the Veggie Garden" - http://www.ecta.org.au/_dbase_upl/09_09_EYC_Sustainability.pdf

Australian Association for Environmental Education - <http://www.aaee.org.au/members/special-interest-group-1/>

Birds in Backyards - <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/>

CSIRO - <http://www.csiro.au/>

The Edible School yard - <http://edibleschoolyard.org/>

Australian Museum - <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/>

The Kitchen Garden Foundation - <http://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/>

National Chemical Information Gateway - http://apps5a.ris.environment.gov.au/pubgate/cig_public/!CIGPPUBLIC.pStart

Kidsafe - <http://www.kidsafe.com.au/>

Reverse garbage - <http://www.reversegarbage.com.au/>

Living Sustainably - <http://www.livingthing.net.au/go/news/living-sustainably/issue-25-november-2012/issue-25-contents.aspx>

Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities - <http://www.environment.gov.au/>

My Green Life - <http://www.mygreenlife.com.au/>

NSW Aboriginal Land Council - <http://www.alc.org.au/>

Australian Aboriginal Land Council - <http://australia.gov.au/people/indigenous-peoples/land-councils>

Playing with maths

Desley Jones



Desley has over 25 years' experience in early childhood education and is director of Ballymore Kindergarten in Brisbane. Desley is a recipient of a NEiTA ASG Inspirational Teaching Award. She was nominated for the award by kindergarten parents in recognition of her emphasis on children's social and emotional wellbeing in her educational program. Desley's framework for intentional teaching for relationships – Creating a Caring Community of Learners – was accepted for presentation at the Infants and Early Childhood Social and Emotional Wellbeing Conference (IECSEW) held in Canberra in 2013. In addition to teaching fulltime, Desley presents workshops and writes journal articles for educators.

Our intentional teaching decisions rest within our philosophies and beliefs about the nature of education, and effective teaching and learning practice. How we approach young children's mathematical development must fit within the parameters of our professional understandings.

Beliefs about teaching and learning

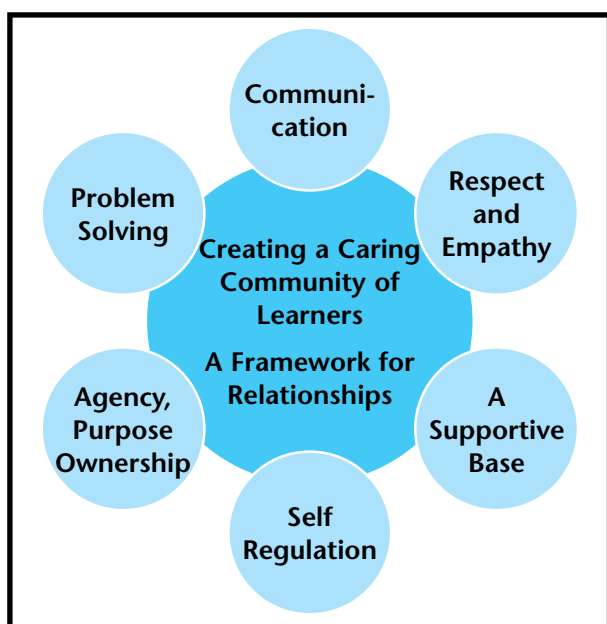
At Ballymore Kindy we have a core focus which underpins all our work with young children and their families. This core focus is on positive relationships within the early childhood setting using our framework titled – *Creating*

a Caring Community of Learners. It comes from a fundamental belief that a child's social and emotional wellbeing is crucial to the quality of their educational experience and impacts significantly on their level of engagement and learning.

Through this framework, emphasis is placed on the agency of children and the importance of seeing them as capable and competent learners who are generators of ideas and problem-solvers across all areas of the curriculum. This approach has a direct influence on how we support children in developing mathematical understandings.

Other beliefs underpinning our approach to teaching and learning include:

- a significant role for teachers and educators is to provide an environment (social, emotional, physical, psychological and cognitive) that supports and scaffolds children's endeavours as they play, explore and create
- make-believe play is an effective teaching/learning tool facilitating all elements of our relationships framework and engaging children in rich, personally meaningful experiences that support the social nature of learning and contribute to deeper level learning
- most significantly we can assist children to develop positive dispositions for learning including curiosity, cooperation,



Desley Jones 2013

confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity (EYLF, 2009, 34) as well as skills and processes such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesizing, researching and investigating (EYLF, 2009, 35) thereby providing a strong foundation for more formal learning in the school setting.

According to Professor Ferre Laevers, from the Experiential Education Research Centre in Belgium, children's wellbeing and level of involvement are measures of the quality

A group of six boys, including Cameron, have established their game of *airport control station* by the front door. Cameron has moved over to the light table which is set up close to where the boys are playing. Cameron takes some red cellophane strips and places them on the light table. As he does so, he says, 'This is the BOM (Bureau of Meteorology) radar screen.' (Cameron checks the BOM radar most days with his dad and knows a lot about approaching storms). As he places some red plastic squares on the screen he says 'These squares are the storms. They are getting closer. The planes won't be able to fly.' The teacher approaches Cameron and asks, 'What else can you see on the radar Cameron? Will the weather clear so my plane can take off?' 'Yes,' says Cameron, 'The blue circles are the fine weather and it's coming. You can go soon.'



of an environment. Professor Laevers (2012, 5), explains that 'when these two conditions are fulfilled, we know that both the social-emotional and cognitive development of the child is secured'. These factors should be the first consideration in asking 'How is each of the children doing?' rather than focussing initially on what they have, or have not, learned.

Luke has taken down the basket of magnetic building pieces and is joining straight pieces onto balls. He says, 'I made a spider! I made lots of spiders.' The teacher approaches Luke with a container of chalk and suggests that he could use the chalk to make a web for his spiders. Luke draws a spider web on the carpet, using large circular motions. He places one spider in the middle. He then proceeds to draw several 'webs', placing a spider in the middle of each one. The teacher sits down beside Luke and says, 'Look at all your spiders, Luke. Each spider has its own home.'



Beliefs about maths

- Maths, like literacy, is all around us. It is a fundamental part of our everyday lives and we need to be aware of opportunities to talk about, and play with, maths.
- Maths is a language – it is one way to understand the world in which we live
- There is no one way to solve maths problems or to arrive at an understanding of maths concepts (Berk, 2001, p197).

Beliefs about the teacher's role in fostering children's mathematical understandings

To capitalise on 'maths moments', teachers and educators have to be:

- effective observers of children's play and interests
- mathematically aware
- facilitators of mathematical language
- co-constructors of curriculum with young children, linking children with one another, and with ideas and play within the environment. Both play and group times for planning and reflecting, provide opportunities to share with one another the conversations and ideas individuals have engaged in or plan to engage in – 'Bill says we need \$10 to buy a ticket to his puppet show. How would he write that on the sign?', 'I just brought this basket of tiles to show you. Today when I visited Lucy's house, she had used some to cover the floor of her verandah. That might be an idea someone else would like to use.'

- players and conversationalists - not inquisitors. Our role is not one of continual questioning of children to assess their maths understandings – a strategy which can so often lead to the child's withdrawal from the experience. The initial scenario of Luke and his spiders could so easily have become a question/answer situation. Instead it was a shared moment in one-to-one correspondence using language to describe a concept: 'Each spider has its own home.' And sharing the joy of play.

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Using alternatives to worksheets in early childhood settings

Bronwyn MacGregor



Bronwyn has been an infant, preschool and primary teacher, a tutor and consultant in early childhood education in NZ and for C&K services in South Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Bronwyn has also worked in the health sector, working with Qld Health to develop the Social and Emotional Early Development Strategy (SEEDS) framework for mental health promotion in the early years, as well as the Healthy Early Years Training Strategy. Most recently Bronwyn has worked on the pilot project for the delivery of the eKindy program to kindergarten-aged children via distance education and is currently working as an eKindy teacher at the Brisbane School of Distance Education.

In 2010, I wrote an article for the EYC Journal entitled, *'Where is the PLAY in worksheets, colouring-in, art templates, phonics programs, sight words and early readers?'* The intention of that article was to highlight some of the pedagogical practices beginning to emerge in Prep classrooms. At that time, the Australian Curriculum had not been implemented. However, there was already beginning to be a marked change in the way young children were encouraged to learn in these early childhood settings. Early readers, phonics worksheets, structured 'craft' activities and colouring-in were beginning to find their way not only into Prep classrooms, but also into child care centres and other early childhood settings where the curriculum ought to have been 'play-based'.

When writing this article four years later, I feel as if the early childhood philosophy, pedagogy (and even early childhood educators) have been beaten into submission by an unruly big brother ... the primary school context. It seems the pedagogy of 'explicit teaching', 'content areas' and 'assessment-based learning' have become the norm. The 'play-based' approach intended in the Prep curriculum has been replaced by 'performance-based' and all of those pedagogical tools mentioned in my first article are now common place in many Prep and some pre-Prep settings. Children are arranged in desks and participate in 'circuits' while learning areas like the painting easel,

water trough, construction toys, the sandpit and the collage area are used when the 'real work' has been done...if at all. So, the challenge for me is not only to write about something that will be useful to those who are constantly faced with the day-to-day dilemma of teaching young children in an educational environment that is at odds with their own pedagogical beliefs and philosophical value (many of whom are still providing excellent examples of play-based alternatives in their learning environments), but also to write to inspire and encourage those who have given in to pedagogical pressure. If you think worksheets, phonics programs and early readers are the only way to work in Prep environments ... prepare to be challenged!

Below are some examples of worksheets that might typically be used in some Prep classrooms to promote 'content' and 'skill development' in reading and writing. Using reflective questioning, we can explore some alternative suggestions for assessing children's competencies in early literacy skills.

Worksheet Type 1: Rhyming words

An alternative

- *Encourage children to innovate on a familiar rhyme or story or to act out a favourite poem. We have known for a long time that children learn to 'tune in' to the sounds of words and*

rhymes from a very early age, if exposed to lots of opportunities to learn and say simple rhymes and songs.

Because rhyming words – words that have sounds in common – often share spelling sequences in their written form, children sensitive to rhymes are well-equipped to develop their reading. By making children aware that words can share segments of sounds (e.g. the *-ight* segment shared by rhyming words such as *light*, *fight*, and *might*) you can help prepare them to learn that such words often have spelling sequences in common too (Goswami, 1986, 1988).

- *Reading and re-reading rhyming books* and allowing children to complete the rhymes as you read will help to establish who in the group can recognise rhyming patterns. There are numerous books containing rhyme that can be read, used in context and explored in detail with children, so that they develop enjoyment and understanding in rhyming words. Dr Seuss books remain popular children's favourites because of their silly, rhyming words.
- *Children's CDs containing nursery rhymes and other songs that rhyme can be sung as part of daily routines.* Surprisingly, many young children are no longer familiar with a variety of traditional songs and nursery rhymes. Butterfly Wings Early Years Consultancy is a useful resource for rhymes and songs that can be accessed on their website at www.butterflywingsearlyyearsconsultancy.com.au
- *Poetry cubes, a poem box or poetry corner.* (Schlosser & Phillips, 1991). These old but simple ideas work well in a prep classroom to extend awareness and understanding of rhymes. *Dramatic play around a familiar rhyme or rhyming story* remains a legitimate (and FUN) way to promote oral language. The interaction with children, whilst enjoying rhyming stories and songs, is more powerful than the interaction that occurs when a peer or parent helps a child complete a worksheet. While a worksheet provides an assessment task to determine a child's knowledge, acting out a poem allows the child to both demonstrate their understanding and construct new knowledge and, when documented, is a valid tool for assessing learning.

Worksheet Type 2:

Phonics and letter recognition

An alternative

- *Watching and listening to how children retell stories orally, in a variety of ways,* can provide more information about children's language development than a letter sound worksheet. A rich oral language is a child's best foundation for reading and writing, and thoughtful, planned literacy experiences using quality children's books can open up opportunities for children's self-expression and oral language.
- *Comprehending written text can also be done through book-based experiences using quality children's picture books.* Most children do require some explicit teaching around letters, sounds, words, sentences and strategies to read and write for meaning. What is important is knowing how to do this in a way that is appropriate for the age and stage of the child. McGuinness (2004) suggests that 'teaching reading' via decoding is best done before teachers focus efforts on more complex language skills like grammar and vocabulary after children master the code, rather than while they are learning it.
- *Reading for a purpose* is a powerful way to engage children in early reading experiences, for example using a cook book. Real-life experiences provide an opportunity (and reason) for reading. They also establish a context for learning and extending the child's oral vocabulary. Children's awareness and understanding of letters and sounds, words and sentences can be built on through these real life opportunities for working with words.

Worksheet Type 3

Fine-motor practice and letter formation

An alternative

Many children of Prep age are mastering the gross motor control required to sit at a desk, as well as the fine-motor strength and agility to produce controlled lines and letter formations. A worksheet is only of value if children have had many and varied previous experiences in

painting, scribbling and drawing. Letter tracing and colouring-in offers practice at repetition and pencil control. However, those children who lack fine-motor skills often show little or no interest in colouring-in and find it a frustrating experience.

- *Establish a painting and writing centre, well-equipped with the tools necessary to promote writing will attract children to draw ... and write.* Blank paper (particularly large paper on a painting easel), is still an appropriate place to begin making marks. Moving children from this large space to the confines of a piece of A4 paper should happen over time. Children should be well-practiced in forming the patterns necessary for letter formation in other contexts prior to formal writing. Letter formation also requires some explicit teaching and modelling. Tracing can assist with strength and flexibility. However, directionality for writing letters can be established through large movements such as writing in the air, scratching in the sand, making the letters with our bodies on the floor, or with playdough on a flat surface.

Worksheet Type 4:

Matching

An alternative

- *Both fine-motor manipulation and visual 'matching' tasks can be done with real things.* Providing opportunities for children to look at real-life photos and objects, to sort, manipulate and construct with a range of everyday objects is an ideal way to introduce familiar names of objects 'naming words or nouns', as well as introducing 'describing words or adjectives'.

This article is by no means a definitive list of pedagogical alternatives that can be 'revived' to replace well-used worksheets. It is, however, an intentional reminder that while worksheets may have their place, they are not always the only (or the best) way to support early literacy learning. It is an invitation to observe and reflect on the practices of other educators who do not use or rely on worksheets. It can also be the starting point

for professional discussions amongst staff in Prep and other early childhood settings about appropriate ways to meet the requirements of a content- and assessment-heavy curriculum. Such discussions need to weigh up all alternatives to providing a meaningful learning experience for all children in the early years. The reflective questions that I offered in my article four years ago are still a valid way to examine your practices if you or your colleagues are planning on handing out some photocopied worksheets to young children this week. Ask yourselves:

- *What is the purpose of this work?*
- *Is there an alternative approach that will provide similar (or more meaningful) learning? How can I provide this instead?*
- *Does this worksheet extend on the child's own ideas (open-ended) or is it teacher-driven, with only one answer?*
- *Do all children need to do this? If some children can do it without my assistance... do they really need to do it? If some children can only do it with my assistance ... is this the best way for me to support what it is they need to learn?*
- *When this work is done, who will gain the most satisfaction and pleasure from it ... the child ... the teacher ... the parent?*
- *When this work is done, will it have told me something I didn't already know about each individual child who has completed it?*

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Seven ideas to help you put on your oxygen mask and take care of your wellbeing

Jane Taylor



Jane Taylor is a teacher who lives on the Gold Coast. Jane began her career as a professional athlete competing on the world tennis stage before finding her passion for learning and building relationships. This passion evolved into a career in education as well as facilitating national coaching programs for Tennis Australia and co-ordinating national initiatives for education. Jane has trained over 13,000 people in coaching, mindfulness meditation, mental health promotion and prevention and organisational wellbeing.

As people working in education, we are quite often filling many roles in our classroom, child care centre or school. Sometimes it can be challenging to get to the end of the to-do list each day. Then before we know it, it's the weekend and we have forgotten to take time out for ourselves and look after our health and wellbeing.

A few years ago, I noticed this becoming a pattern of mine and I wanted to change it. I knew if I didn't I would burn out. So what are some strategies I can do to find a little more balance in my week?

The following seven strategies may help you find more balance in life and work.

1. Know your why.

Why do you want balance? What fuels your desires? What gets you out of bed each morning? Knowing the answers to these questions relate to your why! Many of the influential and successful people in this world are driven by more than just money. Money can be a spin-off from living our lives on purpose. However, for the majority of people, it is not the driving force.

What is your driving force or your why? Is it to have more freedom, to leave a legacy, to inspire people or to show them that they matter? Is it time to find out why you do the things you do?

2. Become aware of and align your professional goals or intentions with your school or child care centre.

For example, one of the school and/or child care centre goals may be to provide a safe and supportive environment. How do you contribute to this goal in your role? Once you have identified this, how can you break this down in to an achievable action for yourself? Having done this, you can identify how you can measure this in your daily actions and by when you will achieve it Keep it SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

One thing I have done with my essential tasks (both personal and professional) is

identify what I need to do daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly. Then all of these tasks have been scheduled, with the time it takes to complete them, in my diary as reminders, so I know what I need to do. This keeps me on track with my balance and limits the number of surprises, for example, reporting deadlines.

3. Schedule and complete reflection time each week in your diary.

As indicated in strategy number 2, I have broken down my personal and professional intentions or goals into small weekly actionable steps. Once these are broken down into the smallest possible step, for example check e-mails, I schedule the actions in my task management system. Most of these actions are recurring actions (daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and, because I like to track my progress, I tick off the actions once I have completed them.

What are your personal intentions or goals for your personal and professional life? Are these intentions or goals in line with your school or child care centre?

After you have identified your personal intentions or goals and they align with your school or centre goals, you can identify your weekly, fortnightly, monthly, 3-monthly, 6-monthly or yearly actions. Then these actions can be scheduled in your task management system or diary with the allotted time it takes to complete each task. These tasks form the basis of your reflection time so you can monitor your progress. You can also take time out to reflect on different situations in your life as well.

4. Allow people to support you.

If you do everything for yourself, you are blocking people from supporting you

and this can have an impact on balance in your life and increase your chances of burnout. I really believe we are all here for a reason and with that we have strengths in a variety of different areas. Subsequently, we cannot be great at everything. So, allowing people to support you is important!

For example, do you ever have times in your life where you really want to talk a situation over with someone to get a different perspective? Have you ever had a time when you knew what you were after but you couldn't quite figure out where to find it? Have you ever had a time when you just needed someone to listen to you? We all need the support of friends, colleagues and family around us to support us through our life.

Share with a friend, colleague, coach or family member one of the things that you are going to take action on this week and allow that person to support you in achieving that task? As you are doing this activity notice how you are feeling.

- The action that I am taking this week is ...
- The person I will ask to support me is ...
- What did I think, feel, notice or observe as I allowed this person to support me ...?

5. Reward yourself and celebrate your results.

This is important, so important in fact that many people forget to do it. When we are setting and achieving goals, many of us are so focused on the achievement of the goal that we forget about the process and the actual achievement of a goal is one single point in time. One wise person said a long time ago *the journey is more important than the destination*. So on your journey to finding balance, identify how you can reward yourself and celebrate the results.

Write down three ways that you are going to reward yourself and/or celebrate for

completing the actions you set for yourself this week. One way I enjoy rewarding myself is going to the movies. It doesn't have to be huge. However, it just has to speak to you and you have to commit to doing it. After you have written the activities down, plan when you are going to reward yourself this coming week. Celebrate and enjoy!

6. Take time out.

Just like professional athletes and nature – it is important to take time out and recharge your energy.

What do you enjoy doing to recharge your energy? Do you exercise and hear the leaves rustling on the trees or the kids playing in the playground; smell the flowers in the garden or the salty air if you live by the beach? What do you do to take time out of your day?

You may like to write down five things you can do this week to recharge your energy, then notice how you feel as you are doing them.

7. Be grateful.

There are so many ways we can be grateful in life. Who or what are you appreciative of in this moment? Who helped you today? Have you said thank you to them?

The impact of gratitude on our lives is truly amazing.

So, there you have it - seven ideas to put on your own oxygen mask and take care of your wellbeing in a busy world. I hope they help you.

If you would like to connect with Jane, please visit the Habits for Wellbeing website on www.habitsforwellbeing.com.

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Less is more when using technology with kindergarten aged children

Robyn Mercer



Robyn is an Early Childhood Advisor for C&K. Since 2008, she has explored how technology can be used with young children and this has remained a personal and professional interest. In 2012, Robyn was part of the C&K Research Team, investigating how new technologies can be introduced into programs for children in kindergarten. As a C&K Early Childhood Advisor, Robyn participates in community partnership meetings and events, Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) response groups and a range of other professional groups. She remains a passionate educator who continually encourages others to critically reflect on their pedagogy.

There has been a growing interest in purchasing Information Communication Technology (ICT) equipment, for use with young children in a range of early childhood settings, such as kindergartens, long day care and family day care. The principles and practices of *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009) are essential to the implementation of technology in an early childhood setting, as they guide educators to make curricula decisions which are based on their professional knowledge and judgments, while being reflective and intentional.

As a C&K Early Childhood Advisor, I was part of a research team to investigate the use of ICT with kindergarten-aged children. At the end of the 2012 Research project, C&K supported the use of ICT in line with *C&K Building waterfalls- A guideline for children's learning and for teaching in kindergarten*. During 2013 and 2014, the focus for our ICT Resources & Development Team is to provide workshops for educators and to develop criteria for their choice of software.

A key focus of our professional workshop program is to support educators to have a clear idea of how, why and what technology they would like to use in their learning environments. We feel a reflective and

balanced approach is required, where ICT resources become one of the many tools and resources used for teaching within the environment to support, extend and enhance the children's learning. ICT offers the greatest opportunity for children's learning when children's engagement and experience is interactive and relates to their current play, ideas, thinking and investigations (C&K, 2012). Careful consideration needs to be given not only to the hardware and where it will be positioned within the environment, but also to the software that accompanies the device.

Interactive LED screens are now widely used in many C&K kindergartens and a growing number of long day care centres. The software provided with the screens provides educators and children the ability to collect and use children's images, audio recordings, while conducting research and documenting children's learning. Beginning to use ICT on a regular basis can be daunting for many. In my experience, educators initially adopt a more explicit teacher-directed approach. Continual critical reflection is needed to ensure ICT is implemented in line with early childhood pedagogy. I have found networking with other educators on the same ICT journey can be beneficial.

At the present time, a selection of apps have been approved for C&K services, based

on a set criterion which supports children researching and investigating their interests, creating with technology, engaging with text, supporting inclusive practice and documenting children's learning and investigations. Apps which do not meet this criteria have been found to provide limited choice and control for children, are product rather than process oriented, have inappropriate content such as violence, gender stereotyping and branding and offer limited repetitive skill-based learning. Studies have found that open-ended child-directed software makes a more significant difference in children's developmental gains than drill-and-practice based software (Haugland, 1997).

The software and apps approved for use at C&K, encourage and build collaboration, sharing of ideas, thinking and problem-solving. There is a range of quality children's story apps and eBooks based on familiar stories, for example: Lynley Dodd's *Hairy Maclary*, Nick Bland's *The Cranky Bear* and Dr. Seuss's *Oh, the Places You'll go!* Educators using these apps have thoughtfully chosen to provide both a hard copy book and a digital copy of these stories. A wide range of young children's stories are also available on YouTube. These stories do need to be vetted to ensure there is no advertising and inappropriate pop-ups. Once children enter an online world, it is recommended educators have established centre protocols to protect children in this online environment.

There are a range of apps that provide opportunities for children to create their own stories with photos of themselves, their play, their friends, drawings and annotated photos and images. These apps allow for children to record their voices. C&K educators have found *Book Creator*, *Notability* and *30 Hands* are easy to use with kindergarten-aged children.

There are many educational apps available for download from Apple Store (iPad device) and Google Play (Android tablet). Educators need to be critically reflective on the choice of software and consider how it can support and extend children's learning in ways not otherwise considered possible.

My experience of working with educators and supporting the implementation of ICT

has highlighted the need for educators to be ready to explore alongside the children. The number of apps and software available for young children is varied and overwhelming. A few well-chosen apps or programs can ensure educators learn about all the possibilities of a program and are not overwhelmed by too many choices. Young children require many more hands-on active concrete experiences for their growing minds and bodies and educators need to be mindful of the recommendations of one-hour screen time for children from 2-5 years. (Raising Children's Network, 2014). Less can be more as children engage, revisit and collaborate with their peers and educators and more deeply explore the opportunities and possibilities for learning.

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Engaging children in the art of food

Nicky Leonti



Educating children about good food choices that nourish their bodies is a difficult task, particularly when they are surrounded by fast food, enticing advertising and the influence of poor role models. As educators, we are now expected to provide this information in an appealing way to override what children see on television. Nicky, owner of Tiny Chefs, offers some engaging strategies to get children eating real food.

As Early Childhood Educators, we have the enjoyable task of educating children about food. The basic need for sustenance has become so complex that even parents are confused about what is nourishing for their children.

A simple focus on three key areas can guide both teachers and parents through the maze that teaching children about healthy eating has become.

Food is for nourishing our bodies

The first area is to teach children about why we eat. The answer is very simple: we eat to nourish our bodies. If you were to ask children why we eat there are many possible answers including the fact that it tastes good. There are also many cultural rituals associated with food, particularly birthdays, family dinners, weddings and other special occasions.

Traditionally, food was lovingly prepared at home by family members who then shared it together whilst they talked and laughed. Generally, this is no longer a daily ritual. Instead, food is tipped from a packet, prepared quickly and eaten on children's laps or in the car. Things are changing so quickly that we need to educate children about healthy food choices whilst also understanding that families are busy.

In order to get children thinking about the message that food is nourishing, ask them

during or after meals how they *feel* after eating a particular food. Get them to 'tune in' to the sensations in their stomachs. This is also a great activity for educators. Encourage children to get into the habit of focusing on what they eat, how it tastes and how it feels once it is in their stomachs. This is a great start to understanding how food nourishes our bodies.

Growing food

The second area is to teach children the art of growing food. Growing our own food is starting to come back into fashion and many people have their own veggie patches again. The concept of growing our own food can be overwhelming for some, as it can be difficult to know where to start. With supermarkets providing so much of our food, many people are unaware of what foods grow in particular seasons as we can now purchase fruits and vegetables at any time of the year. Growing your own food doesn't have to be too complicated. Here are three tips to get you started.

Preparing the garden - location, location, location - is a major factor in a successful garden. If your garden is placed out of the way then it will often get neglected. If you choose a spot that has plenty of sunshine and is close to the main area of play, you have the recipe for a garden that is well-used and well-kept.

In order to have a thriving garden, you have to focus on your soil. Soil is vitally important as it provides all the nutrients for your plants.



A thriving garden

Look at the soil like food for your garden. Many services request help to prepare their soil, so if you don't know how to prepare your soil it's best to access some assistance.

When it comes to deciding what to plant, ask your children. This can provide a great teaching moment as children discuss what foods they like, what they want to grow and what time of the year may be appropriate to plant. Write their ideas down and then do a simple Google search for correct planting seasons.

Maintaining the garden - This is where parents and educators often come to a halt when aiming to grow their own vegetables. The easiest way to maintain a garden is to involve your children and families.. There are a few tasks that need to be done daily, weekly and seasonally, so write them down and create a chart. Allocate a particular child to each task and rotate them on a weekly or fortnightly basis. This ensures that all children are actively participating in all the garden activities and learning.

Harvesting your food - This is the fun part. Teaching your children when to harvest different foods is an engaging activity. With

baskets in hand, you can show children how to pick the different vegetables and herbs in your garden. Teaching them how to wash each one is also a great way to get children involved.

For some of your plants – lettuce in particular – you will need to be ready to replace harvested plants with new seedlings. It is important for children to see the whole plant-to-harvest cycle.

Preparing and sharing food

The third and final area is preparing food to eat. There are many important elements to preparing food including tasting, cutting and cooking. Preparing food is a great small group activity as children feel involved

when they learn how to use different utensils, understand hygienic habits and how each type of food is cut for different dishes. Find some simple recipes that incorporate the foods you are growing, as children will be excited to taste what they have grown themselves.

There are some vegetables and herbs that you can eat straight out of the garden without any preparation (other than washing). This is a lot of fun at a garden picnic. To explore the more formal rituals of sharing food together, you can set up a small table with table cloth, plates and even a vase of fresh flowers, to teach children about table manners and the beauty of a set table. This doesn't have to occur daily, but is a great activity to show children how food can be enjoyed in a group, especially for those who haven't experienced similar rituals at home.

To educate children about the joy of food is a beautiful thing. Allowing them to engage with the entire cycle of food growing, harvesting, preparation and eating will help them establish a healthy relationship with food and the environment. Tiny Chefs is all about encouraging children to eat well and enjoy real food-habits that stay with them for a lifetime.



Mathilda Element

Do you ever wonder about your professional development

requirements? If you are reading these words, then you are already a consummate educator, interested in engaging with a professional journal. You should be proud of your commitment to your role. However, if you are ever curious about taking that engagement to the next level, why not think about submitting a media review? We are always in need of new reviewers, and it is a simple, easy way to write an article for a professional publication. You can review any of your own resources, or be sent something new that we source from publishers (and you get to keep the book too, as a special thank-you for your hard work!) Please email me at mathilda@ecta.org.au to ask any questions or to add your name to our reviewers list.

In this edition, some fellow consummate professionals have shared their thoughts on various books, ranging from international publications to Australian authors. Teachers in schools, kindergartens and childcare centres have offered their opinions, and the opinions of the children they work with, and it is always lovely to hear from a range of different voices. Enjoy!

Title: 100 People

Author/Illustrator: Masayuki Sebe

Publisher: Gecko Press

**RRP: hard back \$24.99/
softcover \$15.99**

**ISBN number: 978-1-877579-87-5 -
Softcover**

Reviewed by: Sue Webster

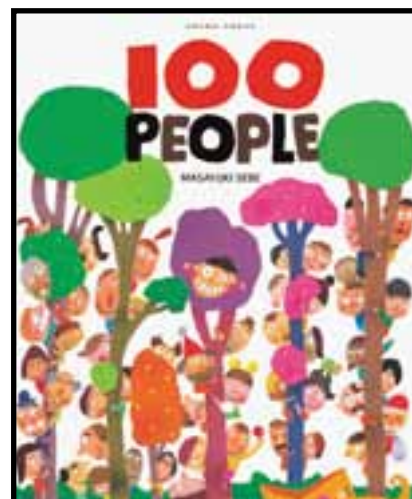
100 People is a follow-up book to the popular *Dinosaurs Galore* and *100 Things* written and illustrated by Japanese author Masayuki Sebe.

It is an oversized book for easy handling by little hands or for good vision when used in a classroom situation.

The book is presented using a look and find format in the tradition of *Where's Wally?*. It shows 100 people: pirates, kings, Santa and children – just to name a few – on each double page. The illustrations are bold, colourful and funny, with great appeal to a young audience. There is a key box showing ten people the reader needs to find on each double page spread to keep children looking deep into the illustrations. Every page has additional stories to discover when you look closely at the illustrations and read some of the bubble text. It is a wonderful way for children to practice counting to 100, visualising 100 and using their visual skills in a fun and interesting manner.

This book will keep children amused for hours and have them coming back over and over to discover more from each viewing. I would recommend this book for children aged 4 and up.

Sebe is a Japanese author/illustrator born in 1953. He is much loved in Japan for his illustrations and I think it is wonderful that Gecko Press specialises in publishing English versions of great books from around the world by well-established authors and illustrators. Gecko choose books that are popular in their own countries and are winners of international awards. Well done!



Title: **My Super Hero**

Author: **Chris Owen**

Illustrator: **Moira Court**

Published By: **Freemantle Press**

ISBN: **9781921888977**

RRP: **\$26.99**

Reviewed by: **Christine Nolan**

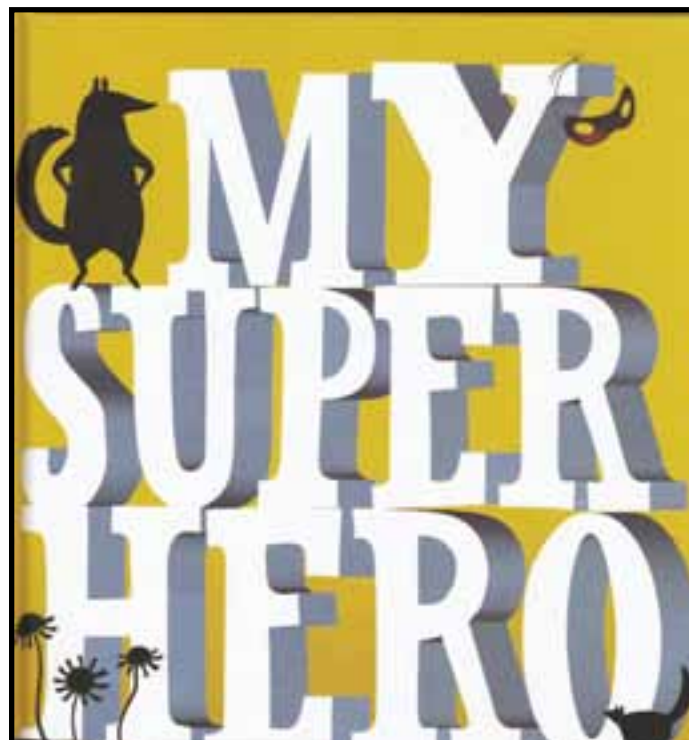
Superheroes have lots of super attributes – astounding strength, incredible speed, and marvelous costumes, but this appealing book is a celebration of super skills of a quite different kind — the kind that are much closer to home ... dads!

This first picture book from Chris Owen and Moira Court has all the right ingredients to make it fun for young readers. With its visually bold, colourful illustrations and rhyming text, this book makes wonderful read-aloud bedtime fare!

A collection of mask-wearing heroes from the animal world reflect the superhero qualities of fathers and here we find a celebration of the super-skills only parents have and need, to help their youngsters through the ups and downs of life.

It would be an ideal text to use when talking about families, superheroes and, of course, dads. It may be just the book to introduce to children around Fathers Day which is how I used the book with my class of six-year-olds. We decided to choose an animal that best described our Dad's superhero skills and made him an amazing painted portrait with a short text explaining why he was so super!

We loved the book and had a lot of fun thinking about the ways animals and our Dads were simply super! A book to enjoy, discuss and have fun with children between three and eight years.



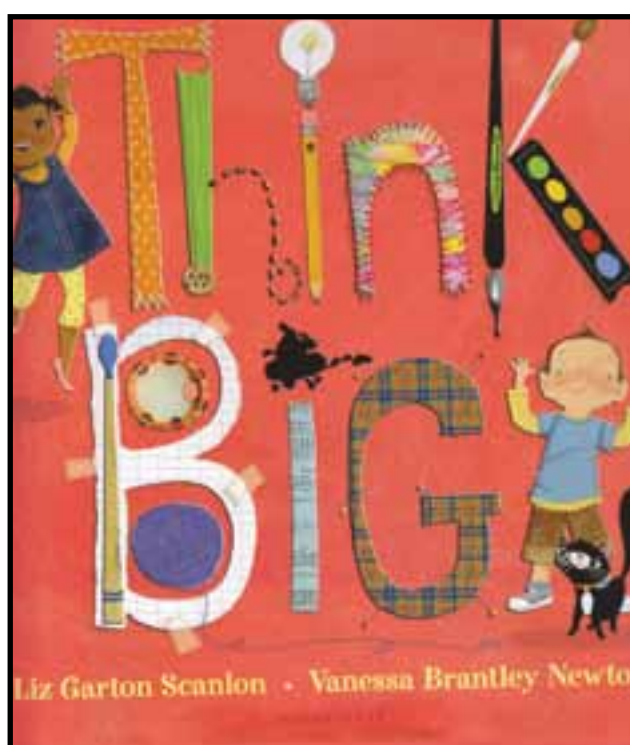
Title: Think Big
Author: Liz Garton Scanlon
Illustrator: Vanessa Brantley Newton
Published By: Bloomsbury
ISBN: 9781599906119
RRP: \$24.99
Reviewed by: Christine Nolan

Art is so much more than paint and paintbrushes as this delightful picture book makes clear. As you read this book you are invited into a vibrant classroom of exuberant young children who are all engaged in a whole variety of 'art' projects. A spirit of creativity in its most varied forms ... painting, music, writing, cooking and performing are all represented. The book makes it clear that there is no end to where imagination can take them. The rhyming couplets of Liz Garton Scanlon's text matches perfectly with the playful art of Vanessa Brantley Newton in this thought-provoking, celebratory and, of course, creative picture book. Young listeners will want to jump right in to find their own special way of expressing their creativity through a wide range of media and styles within the arts.

Reading this book with my group of five- and six-year-olds led to discussion on all the different ways we can be creative and how everyone has their own special way to share ideas. We spent a very happy afternoon expressing ourselves using whatever means we decided upon and shared our 'creations' in the coming days.

The illustrations in this book are multi-layered and I found the children revisited the book simply to draw in the depth each page offered on closer inspection.

This is a beautiful book that can be enjoyed on many levels and is most suitable for children aged three to eight years.



Title: **How to Be a Good Cat**
Author: **Gail Page**
Published By: **Bloomsbury**
ISBN: **978-1-4088-2618-8**
RRP: **\$15.99**
Reviewed by: **Krystelle Senior, Toddlers Room One, Bonnie Babes Childcare Centre**

When we read this book, the children were initially interested and enjoyed looking at the pictures. The toddlers especially liked to point out the pictures of the dog and cat. However, towards the end, some of the children started to lose interest. We felt that this book was more suited to older readers but quite a few children enjoyed it.

At the end of the story, we asked the children what they liked about the story and they mostly responded about the cat and dog as characters. When individually asked to find their favourite page and say why, we got the following responses:

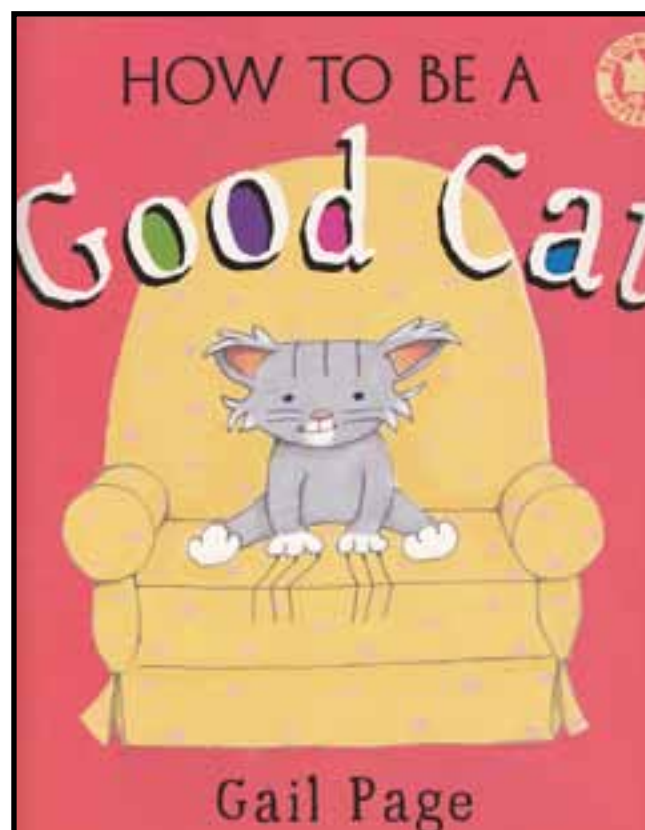
Misha chose a page and said, 'cat ... cat.'

Jake chose a page with a cat and said, 'I like this one because he is naughty.'

Matilda chose a page and, when asked why she liked that page, she pointed to the pink tea pot in the picture and said, 'I like that. It's pink.'

Tayha chose a page with both the cat and the dog on it and said, 'Same as me at my home', pointing to the cat and dog.

Lots of wonderful different responses and different reasons from my unique children!



Title: Don't Wake the Beastie!

Author: Dawn Casey

Illustrator: Kirsteen Harris-Jones

Published By: Bloomsbury

ISBN: 9-781408-800027

RRP: \$14.99

Reviewed by: Tahnee Ledgerwood, Pre-Prep Room Two, Bonnie Babes Childcare Centre

This story captured the children's attention, as it invited opportunities to use loud voices and quiet voices. The story also had many places to point out words and the way they were written on the paper – large, or small, or squiggled across the page. This helped to increase our print awareness and excite the children with possibilities.

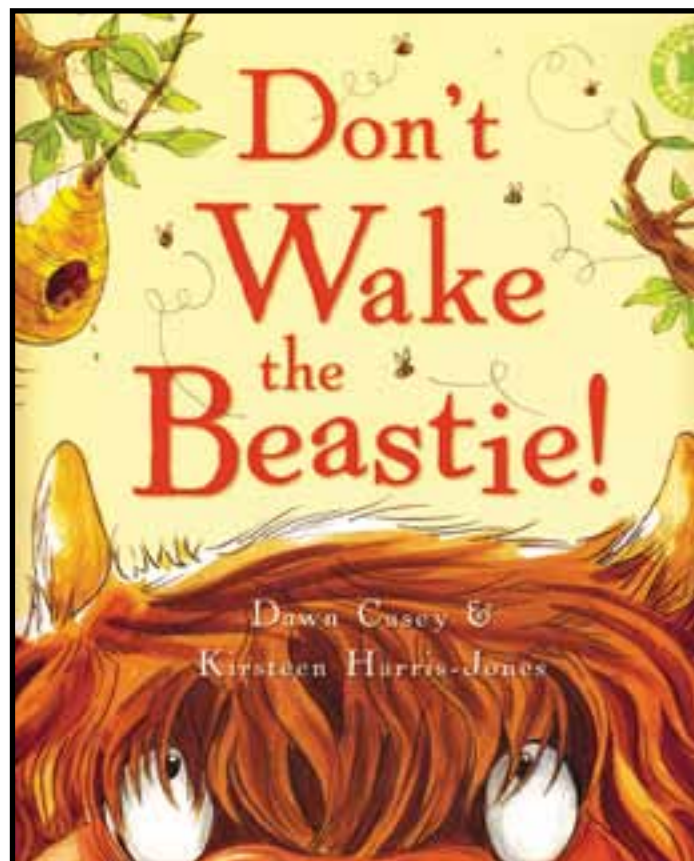
While reading the book, we came across many new words to add to our vocabularies and discuss the meaning of, including: huffed, trotters, bleated, sprang, grimaced, bounded and many more.

The story had the children of Pre-Prep Two interested and waiting to see what would happen next every time I turned the page.

Matthew said, 'Now that was a good story.'

Riley said, 'The beast wasn't scary at all. He was just snoring and wanted his honey.'

The book brought on conversation within the group about bee hives, bees and honey, leading to interesting discussions about how bees make honey.



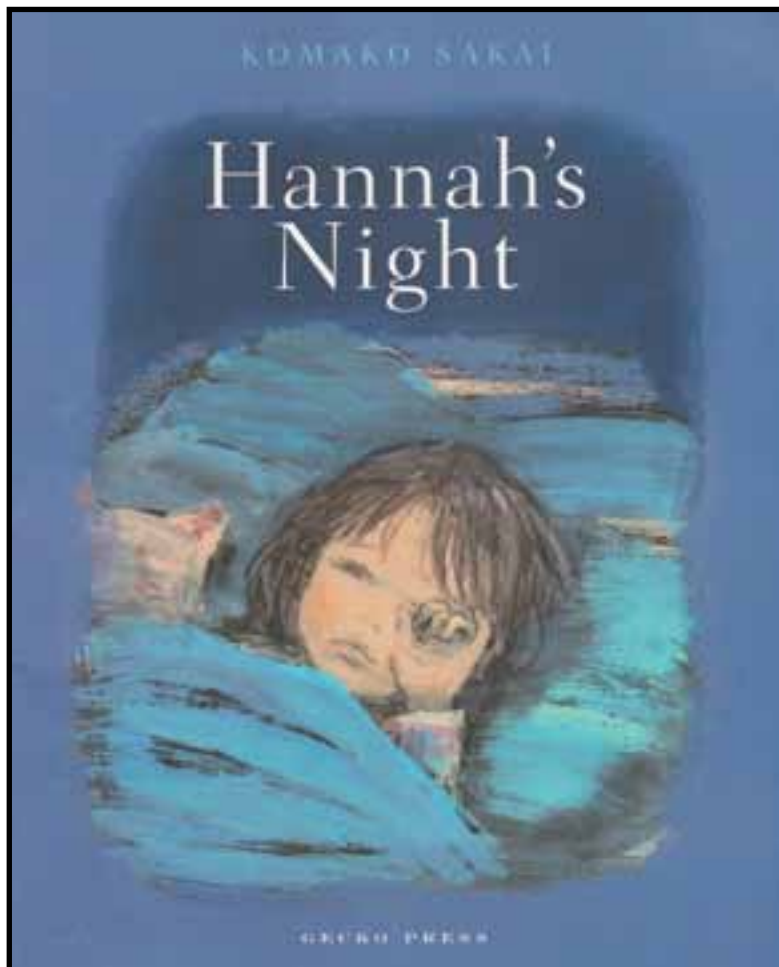
Title: Hannah's Night

Author: Komako Sakai
Illustrator: Komako Sakai
Published by: Gecko Press
ISBN: 978-1-877579-54-7
RRP: \$16.99
Reviewed by: Kim Mostyn

Early one morning, while it was still dark, Hannah woke up, but her sister stayed sleeping. She tried, unsuccessfully, to wake her sister. Then she explored the house, along with her cat, Shiro. She borrowed some of her sister's things.

I read this book to kindergarten children. They enjoyed anticipating what Hannah would do next. They listened intently to the gentle Coo-coo sound. Some thought it was an owl but eventually decided that the sound was for a different bird. They were intrigued by the darkness in the pictures before seeing the colours emerge with the dawn of a new day. The children guessed that soon Hannah would be tired and fall back to sleep.

This is a simple story depicting what happens while it is still dark. It would appeal to children aged two to five. The text and the illustrations are closely aligned, helping the children to follow the sequence of the story.



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.

