



AGECS

The Association of Graduates
in Early Childhood Studies

A

U

D

A

X

Audax

(Latin) courageous, bold, daring

Audax 86 –Autumn 2013

Journal of the Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies
PO Box 12163, ABeckett St, Melbourne VIC 8006

Council Members 2013

President: Maree Wiggins
Secretary: Kay Margetts (Assoc Professor)
Treasurer: Avril McHugh

Wendy Grenfell

Ron Holmes

Anne-Marie Morrissey (PhD)

Sophie Patitsas



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members,

The Early Childhood profession has been through many changes to ensure quality engagement and responsive teaching to nurture children in their environments to unleash their potential.

As Early Childhood Educators we have strong relationships with children and their families and this extends to other partners who support the growth of children in their community; Maternal Child Health Nurses, Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Kindergartens, Early Intervention agencies and playgroups.

Early Childhood Educators are building individual capacity in children rather than dependency, and an increased understanding of children generates their further learning.

Early Childhood Educators get the greatest return in experience; children develop their ideas using a variety of skills. To have an idea and to explore this further through planning and production and to link this to other ideas is the world of the child. This is their play and a very powerful learning tool that provides insight into children's development.

Teaching styles matter and understanding child development gives Early Childhood professionals a unique skill that complements a child's learning. We observe children and provide an environment that encourages children to explore and express their needs and ideas. The child's contributions are valued; they are developing problem solving skills, cause and effect and my favorite 'trial and error'.

A child's participation and contributions are respected, and observations are recorded with deep care and understanding. We walk a creative path alongside children as they question and respond to challenges.

There is so much satisfaction seeing the excitement and determination in a child's actions and responses when their curiosity is inspired further because they can extend their ideas; they take the lead to discovery.

Change starts with a vision to achieve the best outcome and it is our ability as Early Childhood Educators to provide the resources to develop the connections with children and their learning.

Promoting children's learning is an exciting and honorable profession.

Children are powerful learners and their curiosity and capacity to explore and problem solve is evident in their play. As Early Childhood Educators we have the theoretical knowledge of how children learn and develop.

AGECS is an Association that aims to inspire, respect and challenge Early Childhood professionals through forums, information and networking; providing the platforms that will strengthen the Early Childhood profession.

Maree Wiggins

AGECS Highlight Event 1, 02/2013

Very successful evening, attended by over 150 people.

Some comments by participants:

- A wonderful conversation. Was able to take LOTS of ideas away to share with peers in the field. It was so valuable
- Have been reflecting our practices on the theorists with my term. I have lots of positive feedback
- - enjoyed a lively evening of discussion which continued with colleagues for many days afterwards



Kathy Walker



Anthony Semann

AGECS Highlight Event 2, 04/2013

Another successful forum for over 70 people.

Kathy Walker facilitated the forum this time, with Anthony Semann, Wendy Shepherd and Natalie Harris.

What are the organisational structures we need to transform early childhood education and care?

Many people had opinions on this topic which showed that the question had provoked participants into thinking about it before they came. Discussion was lively and respectful, with each forum member sharing their thoughts as the topic was unpacked.

- *'Should we drop the word care?' Do schools use the word care or only education?'*
- *Great panel with some great provocations that truly made me reflect on how to work with Educators in my organisations*

Please go to the website for the podcast if you missed the evening.

AGECS Highlight Event 3, 06/2013

What do a **Professor**, an **Ex-Principal** and a **Criminal Barrister** have in common with Early Childhood Consultants **Anthony Semann** and **Kathy Walker**?

Professor Frank Oberklaid from the Centre for Community Child Health - RCH and Criminal Prosecutor **Carolyn Burnside** will join the panel and use their expertise in their relevant fields to contribute to the discussion. We also welcome **Bella Irlicht AM**.

June 17th, Melbourne University, 7.00 – 9.00pm.

SUGGESTION FROM THE EDITOR

Some Alumni journals contain a section of what members are up to in their professional or private lives. This is usually organised in year of graduation. It can be a great way to hear of your past student friends and what they may be doing now.

If you would like to share a brief note about yourself to be added to AUDAX, please email it to AGECS for inclusion in the next edition.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....

Heather Low (grad 1942) has kindly passed on some newspaper clippings from herself and Win Leslie to share.

- **Joan Hands over her Press Badge 2012-13**

After six illustrious years editing net Work magazine, Joan Waters has handed over the baton to new Editor Helen Beeby. We thought it would be nice to remind everyone of Joan's amazing journey from kindergarten teacher through to her current project – writing a book about the history of UCAF.

In my last year at school, advised by our minister's wife, I applied for a church scholarship to train as a kindergarten teacher. After graduating, I

taught in Essendon until marrying Reynolds, and we moved to his first parish in Eaglehawk. There I taught Sunday School, led the Ladies Guild and PWMU and also taught part time. We served in various parishes in Vic, SA and then Pennsylvania, USA, while raising our three children. When we returned to Australia, I continued my career as a Preschool Advisor in the DoH, developing quality education for young children. Later, I was appointed to supervise kindergartens in the Diocese of Melbourne. When these became state run, I worked for eight years at the Lady Gowrie child Centre, managing the Resource service, bookshop and library for teachers and childcare workers. I resigned to write full time, the last book being *The rightful Heritage: The Story of Early Childhood Services in the Uniting Church of Victoria*. I have been Vice President of the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education, responsible for the work in Asia Pacific, visiting our Sri Lanka and Indonesian projects after the tsunami in 2004. Of her time editing *Net Work* for UCAF, Joan adds: "I have enjoyed it. It has enabled me to meet lots of good women and see how they are keeping the 'good life' message going in so many places; building good relationships between people and taking care of the poor and needy".

- **Founders' efforts honoured** (Moyne Gazette 2009)

The Hawkesdale community is happily reaping the results of years of hard work from a group of dedicated ladies. Kindergarten teacher Rhonda Allardice said that before the new facility had been built, the kindergarten operated in the Hawkesdale hall. Rhonda said the open day had been held to tell the community about the wide range of services available at the Moyne Shire managed facility. The centre houses a kindergarten group, a 3 year old group and a childcare group 2 days a week. Maternal Child health is in there and also hosts visits from health care professionals. The centre is across the road from the Hawkesdale P12 College and Rhonda sees this as a major positive. :It means that this area covers the needs of babies right through to the finish of secondary college, so it is ideal for families coming from as far as Woolsthorpe and Penshurst".

Perhaps Rhonda Allardice could provide us with an update to the success of such an integrated community service for families? Editor



Notes from The Field of Parenting in The Early Years.....

- **Building Resilient Children**

There has never been a time in history where children are so subjected to information about and pictures of, suffering. Some families are eating dinner while there are images of great suffering on the television news and both print media and radio news can conjure up pictures that children may find anxiety provoking.

Children can often be overlooked when there is a world tragedy, family or school upset or when adults around them are dealing with relationship breakdown, separation issues, illness, grief or depression. Some people think that children are mostly oblivious to these peripheral stresses in their lives but this is a great error in judgment.

Science has now proved what intuitively our grandmothers knew: a happy stable loving child grows up in a happy stable loving environment. The neurochemistry laid down in the first three years of life has a profound impact upon the child's growing brain. While children don't understand the intellectual underpinnings of many adult conversations, they are acutely aware of the 'sound' or tone of the voices around them. There is a tone of voice that conveys judgment; there's a sound conveyed by resentment or despair and a sound around blame, frustration and anger.

Children don't understand the beliefs that adults may hold, but they can certainly 'read' the feeling being expressed and will associate that tone of voice with the subject of the adult's judgment. In this way children learn to close their hearts and minds to whomever their family sees as 'the others' – those that are richer, poorer, better educated, less educated, from a different religion, sexual orientation or cultural background.

Children's bodies and brains react to these sounds by secreting increased amounts of adrenalin and cortisol. The secretion of these chemicals is necessary at times when we need to run away from a valid fear or to front up and deal with it and these physical activities use up the benefit of these chemicals. When a child feels stressed a good deal of the time, these chemicals negatively activate and speed up some processes in the body as well as suppress the capacities of the child's immune system.

Young children have a natural capacity to be still and enjoy the present moment. As babies and very young children, we were content with very simple pleasures derived from our senses. Just taking on all the new sounds,

sensations, smells, sights and tastes was a full time job! This ability to be happily absorbed in whatever activity is at hand gradually wanes as a child becomes caught up with the busy-ness of life and its challenges.

It is natural for young children to be compassionate and caring. A young child doesn't require knowledge of your bank account or your educational history in order for them to bestow upon you their bountiful love.

As children grow and realise there are things to be achieved and challenges to be overcome, they may lose this capacity to find pleasure in the simple things of life. In addition, many children become sensitive to the upsets in their loved-ones or the wider world.

We can build resilience in our children by giving them practical skills and strategies to utilize whenever they feel anxious or upset. We do this best by being a living demonstration to our children because as we all know, children watch what we do rather than follow what we say! When we bounce back from life's challenges and disappointments we can share with our children how and why we did so. This is something that needs to be taught to children and is a vital part of them learning to be capable when life's unexpected disasters or disappointments happen. Spending time with children explaining to them how they can build resilience and reading them stories where children demonstrate these qualities helps children understand how they can embrace their difficulties in life with skill.

Over the past twenty five years I have listened to thousands of stories from adults who were physically, sexually or emotionally abused as children. Paradoxically, many of these people find that once they integrate these past emotional wounds, they find some of the strengths that they developed because of these painful experiences. They may have developed resilience, self-reliance, capabilities and determination. I have also heard many people say that they had such a happy experience as a child that it never prepared them to deal with difficulties and disappointments when they encountered them! Either way, as parents, we can actively promote and teach resilience skills to our children or grandchildren and equip them as adults to grapple meaningfully and creatively with the challenges they will encounter in both their personal and global lives.

Petrea King

Author of *You, Me & the Rainbow*, *Rainbow Kids* and *The Rainbow Garden*

www.parentingaustralia.com.au

- **Holey Brains**

"Children who have had almost non-stop stress — from abandonment, threat, violence, neglect, or abuse — have huge holes in their higher

brain structures," observes Pennie Brownlee in [Dance with Me in the Heart](#). "They don't have the hardware to run the software of peace and partnership. Instead, they have highly developed defensive brains for fight and flight. Highly developed defence-department-brains don't grow healthy partnerships; they lead to baby-battlers, violence, and war. Scans of violent adults reveal the holes are still there — they don't repair themselves. It is the first three years that the growth is laid down, or not....

"Babies who have been peacefully nurtured throughout their growing are very different. Their brains have huge prefrontal cortices. Researcher Paul MacLean termed that part of the brain the angel lobes because they are associated with the highest human qualities. These children are perfectly set up for their divine birthright; the happiness that comes from loving and being loved.... If your baby could tell you what she would really like from you, she wouldn't ask you for toys and things. She would tell you that she wanted to feel safe and loved, and now you can see why it is so important for her. Her future rests on it."

• What is Play?

"Historically, play has been viewed as a frivolous break from important endeavours like working and learning when, in fact, a child's ability to fully and freely engage in play is essential to their learning, productivity, and overall development," observe Steve Gross and Rebecca Cornelli Sanderson in their article, "[Play is the Way](#)," in the Beginnings section of the September/October 2012 **Exchange** magazine. They continue:

"A natural drive to play is universal across all young mammals. Children from every society on earth spend time playing. Why? Because play is a crucial vehicle for exploring and learning, developing new skills, and connecting with others. From an infant's first smile to a preschooler's careful construction of a tower, children use play to engage with and learn about their world. Play has key neurological, cognitive, socio-emotional, and physiological benefits for children's health. Most importantly, play is the way in which children form loving, trusting relationships.

"People often think of play in terms of specific 'play activities' such as tag,

soccer, or playing in the sandbox. In contrast, they think of work in terms of activities like raking leaves, cooking, cleaning, or doing homework. It is our belief that any activity, as long as it is done with a playful approach, is play. In other words, it's not about what you do, it's about how you do it. Playfulness is the expression of our natural drive to freely and joyfully explore, engage, and connect with the surrounding world."

Exchange Everyday. <http://www.ccie.com/eed/>



- **Reading and storytelling with babies and children**

- **Reading to your child in other languages**

You can read, sing and tell stories with your child in whatever language you feel most comfortable speaking. Using a language you're comfortable with helps you to communicate more easily and helps to make reading, singing and storytelling more fun for you both. Your child will still learn that words are made up of different letters, syllables and sounds, and that words usually link to the pictures on the page. Don't worry if English isn't your child's first language. Knowing another language will actually help her learn English when she starts playgroup, kindergarten or school. Dual-language books are a great resource, and many children's books are published in two languages

When to read, sing and tell stories with your child

Bedtime, bath time, on the train, on the bus, in the car, in the park, in the pram, in the cot, when you're in the GP's waiting room ... any time is a good time for a story! **You can make books part of your daily routine** – take them with you to share and enjoy everywhere. Knowing when to stop can be just as important as finding the time to share a story in the first place. Pay attention to your child's reaction to the story, and stop if he's not enjoying it this time. You can always try another book, song or story at another time.

Tips for sharing books with babies and young children

- Make a routine and try to share at least one book every day.
- Turn off the TV or radio, and find a quiet place to read so your child can hear your voice.
- Hold your child close or on your knee while you read, so she can see your face and the book.
- Try out funny noises and sounds – play and have fun!
- Involve your child by encouraging talk about the pictures, and by repeating familiar words and phrases.
- Visit your local library – it's free to join and borrow.
- Let your toddler choose the books when he's old enough to start asking.
- Be prepared to read favourite books over and over again!

If you have older children, they can share books with your younger children, or you can all read together. Taking turns, asking questions and listening to the answers are all **important skills** that will help your child when she starts learning to read.

Raising Children Network

www.raisingchildren.net.au



• INDIGENOUS RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Indigenous Parenting Support Resource

The content for this extensive resource, *Parenting Support Resource: for Home-visiting Practitioners*, was finalised in collaboration with five Indigenous communities across Victoria for in-home support practitioners working with families. These five communities participated in the development of the resource materials. The aim was to support parents to raise happy and healthy children. The resource is for home-visiting practitioners working with Aboriginal families, and it acknowledges and respects Aboriginal culture and values. The content was grouped into two age categories: one for children aged up to 36 months that builds on the existing skills and strengths of Aboriginal families; and the other for children aged three to five years to support families of preschool children and help parents get their children ready for school.

Parenting Support Resource was developed in partnership with the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Aboriginal Early Years, for in-home support practitioners working with families. The resource was also developed in CD-ROM format with additional resources such as tip sheets for practitioners to give to families as home-learning enrichment tools. www.parentingrc.org.au



Yingabeal: naming of the songline Tree at heide museum of modern art

Saturday 1 June, 11.00 am – 2.00 pm

Heide Museum of Modern Art, 7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen
(meet at gardens near top car park)

Join us at Heide Museum of Modern Art for National Reconciliation Week and celebrate one of the most important Wurundjeri Scar Trees in Melbourne. This magnificent tree is at the junction point of five traditional Wurundjeri Songline routes.

To honour this special tree, Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Bill Nicholson will conduct a traditional Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony and officially name the tree. You will also be treated to a performance by One Fire Dance Troupe and discover fascinating facts about the Wurundjeri movements on a guided tour through the Indigenous Remnant Conservation Zone. Kids will be entertained throughout the day with storytelling and art activities. No Bookings Required.

Enquiries: Jim Poulter, 9842 3598 or email jpoulter@aapt.net.au
www.heide.com.au

Presented in association with Wurundjeri Tribe Land Cultural Heritage Council, Manningham Reconciliation Inc and Heide Museum of Modern Art.



• PARENTING AUSTRALIA

Vision Check up

Parents urged to book an eye test for their kids, as vision problems affect approximately one in four Australian children, Parenting Australia is urging parents to prioritise an eye test to ensure their child starts school fully equipped to learn. According to optometrist Peter Larsen, undiagnosed vision problems can have a significant impact on school children and can lead to poor results, learning difficulties and low self esteem. “More than 60% of children who are ‘problem learners’ have been found to suffer from undetected vision problems”, said Mr Larsen. “It’s a significant problem in our schools, and the solution could be as simple as a pair of glasses. “Around 80% of everything a child learns is through their vision, so good eyesight is one of the most important tools for their learning and development.”

Some signs to look out for include: ·

Reading problems – Children who frequently skip lines or lose their place while reading books may have vision problems.·

Squinting – If a student is frequently squinting at the blackboard, they may be trying to compensate for their poor vision. ·

Sitting too close to the television – Short-sighted children generally have clear vision at a close range and poor vision at a distance. ·

Rubbing eyes and headaches – If your child rubs their eyes excessively or complains of headaches regularly, it may mean their eye muscles are fatigued from straining. ·

Clumsiness – Children might have trouble realising how close or far away objects really are. Sometimes young children who do not walk well actually have problems with their vision.·

Behaviour – Some children who have vision problems appear to have a short attention span and may misbehave due to frustration. “It is so important to make kids feel good about wearing glasses. Specsavers offer a wide range of kid’s frames in popular styles, such as Star Wars and Disney characters,” Mr Larsen said. “These fun ranges are designed to make any child feel happy and confident in their specs.”



Entertainment for Educators.....



At the Movies

Midnight's Children

At the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, as India proclaims independence from Great Britain, two newborn babies are switched by a nurse in a Bombay hospital. Saleem Sinai, the illegitimate son of a poor woman, and Shiva, the offspring of a wealthy couple, are fated to live the destiny meant for each other. Their lives become mysteriously intertwined and are inextricably linked to India's whirlwind journey of triumphs and disasters.

Miffy the Movie [G]

Miffy, her friends Melanie and Grunty and her dog Snuffy set out on a treasure hunt through the zoo.

Bolshoi Ballet: Romeo and Juliet [CTC]

This ballet is now considered to be Prokofiev's most valued piece of work because of the high melodic inspiration, the great variety of rhythms and the memorable main character.

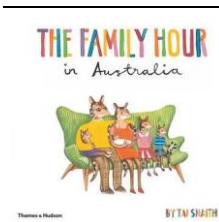
.

Books

Adult Children: Secrets of dysfunctional families, by John and Linda Friel.

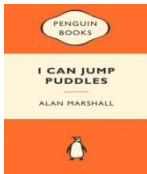
What about families that had no alcoholism, but did have perfectionism, workaholism, compulsive overeating, intimacy problems, depression, problems in expressing feelings, plus all the other personality traits that can produce a family system much like an alcoholic one?

The Family Hour by Tai Smith



Local artist Tai Snaith reinterprets the daily lives of 15 Australian native animals in her signature style with vibrant watercolour illustrations, a quirky sense of humour, references to mid-century modern design and curious, scientific facts.

I can jump puddles by Alan Marshall



Alan Marshall's story of his childhood - a happy world in which, despite his crippling poliomyelitis, he plays, climbs, fights, swims, rides and laughs. His world was the Australian countryside early last century: rough-riders, bushmen, farmers and tellers of tall stories - a world held precious by the young Alan.

Phone Apps

ABC iView the national broadcaster's iView service has long been the gold standard for catch up television services in Australia. The ABC iView app not only offers instant and unlimited access to ABC shows on demand, it also offers live streaming of ABC News 24, the ability to stream via Airplay and parental controls for parents.



Wikipanion is a freebie which gives you quick access to article sections, in-article search, viewing options, bookmarking, and the ability to tweet about whatever odd fact you've just unearthed. Also, wonderfully, there are no ads.



T.V.

Call the Midwife: ABC Sundays 8pm Can see past episodes on 'iView'. Set during the war, showing past cultural values of families.

Jabbed: Love, Fear and Vaccines.

SBS One May 26th The vaccine question is a testing one.

ABC4Kids

ABC4Kids programs are designed to appeal to pre-school children aged up to 5 years. They are broadcast on the digital channel ABC4Kids every day from 6am to 7pm



ABC Parenting

ABC Parenting offers information and advice on raising children from pregnancy through to school years. The ABC has partnered with the Raising Children Network to present content about everything from health and nutrition to relevant media and games



What's on Around Us.....

- **Manningham Art Gallery presents**

Exhibition Dates: Wednesday 22 May – Saturday 29 June 2013

A selection of works by contemporary Indigenous artists
Deanne Gilson and Elizabeth Liddle engaging the themes of cultural
recognition and individual identity.

- **The TEACCH Autism Programme** with Prof Gary Mesibov

Understanding and Applying Structured Teaching

Seminar Date: November 2013 **Location:** Touring Nationally

Details: 9:00am - 4:00pm (Catering and Handbook Provided)

www.compassaustralia.com.au

- **Outdoor Play in Early Childhood Services**

June 21st 2013 at Westerfolds Park, Templestowe.

www.playaustralia.org.au

- **Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc**

is now known as

Early Learning Association Australia Inc



Together we grow – towards excellence

May 31st 2013

- **Stringybark Sustainability Festival**

Saturday 19 & Sunday 20 October 2013

10am - 5pm

Rowville Community Centre,

Fulham Road, Rowville (Melway 81 K1)

- **National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day 2013**
- Right Here, Right Now. Our Rights Matter
August 4th

The theme seeks to support our children by increasing public awareness about major human rights concerns that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across the country; and the unique rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as First Peoples of this country. www.snaicc.org.au

- **Personalising Learning for the Whole Child**

Early Life Foundation Conference October 13th, Grand Hyatt, Melbourne.


www.earlylife.com.au



Some useful Internet sites for recent news and research in the Field of Early Education.....

- **Australian Children's Music Foundation**
www.ACMF.com.au

MOST CHILDREN'S CHARITIES TREAT PHYSICAL NEEDS...BUT WHAT ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONAL NEEDS? The ACMF is a not-for-profit organization that provides music instruments and programs for disadvantaged and Indigenous children and youth in schools, remote communities and juvenile justice centres across Australia. Research has proven that participation in music has a significant impact on a child's mental health and development

Well worth a look. 

- **The Kindergarten Guide 2013** (the guide) is now available on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's website.

The guide replaces the Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria 2010-12 and took effect from 1 January 2013.

The guide contains a number of policy and funding eligibility updates that reflect recent reforms and the changing face of early childhood education and care. The attached table provides a summary of the main policy and funding updates along with relevant page references. It is important that you familiarise yourself with these updates so that you can implement any required changes.

The guide has been produced in three sections for ease of reference:

??Part A: Policy procedures and funding criteria for services offering kindergarten programs for children in the year before school

??Part B: Guidelines for a second year of kindergarten

??Part C: Guidelines for Early Start Kindergarten

www.education.vic.gov.au

The Toy Hall of Fame: The Cardboard Box

"With nothing more than a little imagination, boxes can be transformed into forts or houses, spaceships or submarines, castles or caves. Inside a big cardboard box, a child is transported to a world of his or her own, one where anything is possible." - National Toy Hall of Fame

Did you know that the humble old cardboard box is in the National Toy Hall of Fame?

Cardboard boxes can engage children for hours for minimal cost and minimal impact on the planet. But more than that, playing with a cardboard box can build skills that toys with more bells and whistles can't - creativity, imagination and resourcefulness.



Things to do with a Cardboard Box

"Children don't need a box to be anything more than a box. We didn't really need to make the box into anything, we just need to give the children the box and step back..... " - Amy, Child Central Station



www.letthechildrenplay.net

DEECD

EC026-2013 Influenza Information

Staying Healthy in Child Care – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services

The *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* requires services to implement and encourage effective hygiene and infection control practices.

Children should be encouraged to be ‘germ stoppers’ by:

- always coughing or sneezing into a tissue
- always throwing used tissues in the rubbish
- always washing their hands with soap and warm water and drying them thoroughly, or using an alcohol-based hand cleaner.

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55>

- **Deprivation, Autism and Disability Shine a Light on Development**

By

Krystal Hudry, (Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre, LaTrobe University)

What do newborn babies, children who have been severely deprived of human contact, people with autism, and blind mothers have in common? On the surface, not much. But they provide a common theme for understanding how social and communication skills develop in early life. We are born with basic visual biases, which make us look at faces, as if by reflex (nature). By regularly looking at a parent who talks, smiles, and looks back affectionately at us, we come to understand more about each of these things (nurture). Through this combination of brain-wiring and early experiences, we are set up to become the adults we will be. Babies notice human faces and want to look at them. They recognise human voices and want to listen. As they experience their parents' faces and voices, they also begin to understand more complex social signals - where parents are looking, what emotions they are feeling, what they are saying.

Developmental difference and disability

Babies born blind are at an early disadvantage. They miss out on the experiences of eye contact, facial expressions and gestures. But, they can hear their parent's voice and feel touch so they still learn social information. Many aspects of blind children's development are delayed. They tend to learn social and communication skills in different ways. Their parents adapt, using more voice and touch, so the outcome is usually good.

Children who experience extreme early social deprivation are also disadvantaged. Growing up in a crowded orphanage or with severe neglect and abuse leads to developmental delays and, potentially, lifelong disability. These children can see and hear, but they don't have a carer who gives loving, one-on-one attention. Clearly, it's not enough to be born with all one's senses, early interaction experiences are also critical. Another important condition to consider here is autism. Children and adults with autism have social and communication difficulties, including problems with eye contact and following where others are looking and pointing. The

problem is not a sensory one. Nor is it because of a lack of loving, attentive parents. Autism is rarely diagnosed before children are two, so we don't completely understand its early development. But something must be preventing these babies from learning through early visual interaction. Last year, my colleagues and I made an interesting new finding about early development in autism. We showed a group of seven-month-olds a video of an adult who looked toward them, then away, and back again, and we measured their brain responses. We found that the brains of babies who did not subsequently develop autism responded differently depending on whether the adult shifted gaze to look toward them or away from them. The brains of babies who developed autism didn't seem to notice any difference. So, well before a baby could be diagnosed with autism, their brains seemed to be handling socially-relevant visual information in a different way. Recent research from another group suggests that one early-intervention model for children with autism may work by changing their brain functioning, setting them back on a more optimistic pathway.

Infants of blind parents

Last week, my colleagues and I reported on a new study, in which we followed the development of five children born to blind mothers. The children themselves could see but were being raised by a primary caregiver who couldn't see them. Even though the blind mothers would not have been able to respond to what their children were looking at or doing in the usual way, this didn't seem to put the infants at a disadvantage. They were equally interested in faces and as good at following people's eye gaze as infants of sighted parents. They were also as good at using eye contact and other social skills with sighted adults as children with parents who could see.

But there were some interesting differences. At seven months, these babies tended to use less eye contact with their blind mothers, and by 14 months, they used more sounds and words. They also had better general learning skills than expected, at seven months and again after two years.

Similarly to babies learning two languages, these infants seemed to become "visual bilinguals". Rather than putting them at social disadvantage, growing up with a blind mother seemed to have some positive side effects. The infants became more flexible communicators and had enhanced learning skills compared to their peers www.exacttarget.com

• THE AGE NEWSPAPER

Is Asperger's syndrome a distinct neurological disorder or the latest trendy diagnosis? A new definition has some "aspies" worried. By Tim Elliott.

It's Asperger's, and it's everywhere. Apparently. Hardly a day goes by that the words Asperger's and "autism spectrum" don't get a mention, flung about on radio, TV, in office kitchens and at end-of-week drinks. It seems wherever you turn, the diagnosis is there.

Since they find it hard to use their intuition and to generalise from one situation to another, people with Asperger's commonly work off a strict set of rules or scripts. For this reason, they find it hard to deal with change. But change is precisely what they are about to get. In May, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) will publish its fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)*, in which the term Asperger's will be notably absent. Instead, all diagnoses of autism, of which Asperger's is currently thought to be a subset, will be folded into one overarching category, autism spectrum disorder, and rated from mild to severe. Some believe that by removing Asperger's as a distinct disorder, the APA is attempting to curb its rampant over-diagnosis. (The APA says the new criteria will "lead to more accurate diagnoses".)

Julian Assange recently admitted that, "I am - like all hackers - a bit autistic." Facebook's former head of engineering has said that Mark Zuckerberg has a "touch of the Asperger's". Christopher Hitchens speculated that his hero, George Orwell, may have had it. Politics is riddled with it: the famously awkward former British PM Gordon Brown was rumoured to be "on the spectrum".

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/syndrome-of-our-times->

Also 'Milkshake Tuesday',. Having a child with high functioning Autism doesn't mean living with a genius. by Kathryn Wicks

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/sundaylife>

• PATH OF LEARNING

by: *Education editor Sheradyn Holderhead*



St Joseph's memorial school students Riley and Sienna play music with their preschool classmates. Picture: Dylan Coker Source: The Advertiser

In a radical rethink of South Australia's education system, Italian early childhood expert Carla Rinaldi says that funding and resources should be focused on the time from birth to age six rather than the later years of school.

In her recommendations to the State Government, she will say the system must be organised into two distinct age groupings - zero to three year olds and three to six year olds. This allows children of different ages to mix in a more natural, family-like environment rather than grouping them into strict year levels.

"I was looking at your (SA's) schools and care centres ... and you were offering families centres to leave their child but it was fragmented," Dr Rinaldi said.

"The organisation of school from zero to six has to be solidified. Children will go to one place in the morning, another in the afternoon, but there needs to be consistency from zero to six.

Dr Rinaldi is a leading authority on the Reggio Emilia approach. This involves a child-centred curriculum based on the principles of respect, responsibility and community and was developed in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia after World War II.

She said care and education were inseparable, so day care centres must not simply act as babysitters for busy parents. Centres also need to be accessible

to all families, regardless of wealth. Dr Rinaldi also wants to see an end to the term "preschool" as she says it is not "pre" anything.

St Joseph's Memorial School in Kensington, which caters for children from playgroup to Year 7, introduced the principles of the Reggio Emilia system seven years ago.

Principal Craig Fosdike said students were capable of constructing their own learning with the support of the teachers, wider community and environment.

"We know children want to read, write, count and think, but they might want to do it in their own time and in the environment they choose," Mr Fosdike said.

- **REGGIO EMILIA PRINCIPLES**

THE 12 principles of the Reggio Emilia approach include:

The image of the child. A child possesses high potential for learning and change, and has rights, including being respected and valued.

Listening. Between adults, children and the environment, it is the premise of every educational relationship.

Documentation. Observing and recording the educational experiences, including the little "ah-ha" moments when children work something out on their own.

The hundred languages. Children possess a hundred ways of thinking - 99 are thought to be taken away by school and society restrictions

www.thinkers.sa.gov.au



NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS UPDATE

by Natasha Bitu, The Australian News

The results are revealed in an Australian Council for Educational Research report to the nation's education ministers, based on a sample of 491 childcare centres.

It found 60 per cent of long daycare centres, one in four preschools, three-quarters of out-of-school care centres and 59 per cent of family daycare providers did not meet the standards.

One preschool and two family daycare providers were given the lowest rating of "significant improvement required".

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) said updated data showed 55 per cent of the 1300 centres assessed so far have met or exceeded the standard.

"If a service is rated as 'working towards', it does not mean the service is under-performing - it simply means it is being assessed against a new and more challenging scale," ACECQA chief executive Karen Curtis said.

"(It) does not mean children's health and safety is compromised."

Federal Childcare Minister Kate Ellis said the outcome of the first inspections was "not unexpected". She said parents should not worry if their centre is rated as "working towards" the national quality standards.

Early Childhood Australia chief executive Samantha Page said some centres had to make a "big leap" from caring for to educating children.

"We would certainly be looking for improvement," she said.

Australian Childcare Alliance president Gwynn Bridge yesterday said centres had failed over flaws in book-keeping, or for not teaching babies about the environment. "We have to ensure children know all about saving the environment, all the way from babies to pre-schoolers," she said.

"I know services that have animals and gardens but the babies hadn't been included, so they got 'working towards'.

"You've got to lift babies up to turn the light switch off, or take the babies out to water the garden."

VICTORIAN EDUCATION EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Finalists for the 2013 Victorian Education Excellence Awards

Victoria Teachers Mutual Bank Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

- Lisa Coxon, Woodleigh School Early Childhood Centre - South-Eastern Victoria Region
- Louise Fitzpatrick Leach, Ouyen Preschool - North-Western Victoria Region
- Theresa Madden, Greenwood Park Kindergarten - North-Eastern Victoria Region

The winner is Louise Fitzpatrick Leach.

Based in Ouyen, Louise has introduced a number of programs and changes to her preschool. Video is used for teaching, learning and assessment, for communicating with parents, and for supporting transitions by creating a DVD for each family. Louise participates in mentoring programs for early childhood teachers and has developed a suite of fun teaching materials. Her work in the area of literacy and indigenous education has been praised. This includes a home literacy program with tip sheets for parents, a blog and a column in the local paper. Furthermore she has presented at conferences about the value of digital technology



THE EARLY YEARS AWARDS- 2013

Awarded in Children's week

The Early Years Awards 2013 will be presented in three categories to recognise and celebrate leadership, exceptional dedication and innovation in the provision of early years services. The categories are aligned to the priorities of the Victorian Government's Best Start program and the *2011 Victorian Families Statement*. Winners in each award category will receive prize money of \$15,000 to support the professional development of the partnership involved in their awarded initiative.

Nominations close on Friday 31 May 2013

For more information about applying for the Early Years Awards 2013, please phone (03) 9651 3415 or email beststart@edumail.vic.gov.au



GENERAL ARTICLES OF INTEREST

- **Know Change...or NO Change Will Happen**

by

Michael Morgan and Ann Herrmann-Nehdi

Changing your own mind is hard enough. Changing someone else's is almost impossible. But change is exactly what organizations and the people in them need to do. Organizations will not survive in this highly competitive world unless they learn to change quickly. And the people in them need to change just as fast.

Why is it so hard to change your mind? Even when the facts are overwhelming and the reasons for change are undeniable and life threatening, we still struggle to do it.

One reason is that our minds have already made themselves up. We already know what we are going to do. We have what we call 'mindsets'. Giving someone a whole lot of facts about why they should change will do little to change their minds. Their current mindset will reject them, often before they have had any chance at all to break through the individual's mindset for full consideration. And it is just as well because we could not live effectively without mindsets. They help us make our minds up quickly about things and deal with them. In terms of our survival as a species they are essential. But they can also be limiting as they can close us down to other options and make it hard for us to see other points of view, to change our opinions, and to behave differently.

When 90% of heart patients do not listen to their doctor, then you know something is wrong. What is it about our brains that resists change so tenaciously? Why do we fight, even what we know to be in our vital interests?

The reason is that our thinking relies on our mental maps and mindsets, not facts. Neuroscience tells us that each of our mindsets, the long term concepts that structure the way we think, is instantiated in the synapses of the brain.

In a world where the only constant thing is change, changing people's mind is a critical skill. Howard Gardner, in his book *Changing Minds*, describes a number of levers or persuaders that are needed to alter mindsets. He calls them:

- Reason and Research
- Resources and Rewards
- Resonance

To know change requires an understanding of the mindsets and thinking involved. When change happens successfully, it is because the brains behind the initiative were engaged, focused, aligned and synergistic. All change initiatives require the involvement and the thinking of everyone.

• A great woman has left this world...

Vale Dame Elisabeth Murdoch. By Narelle Debenham (from Play Australia)

"My grandmother took me to play in Dame Elisabeth's garden as a little girl, on many occasions. I remember delighting in the discoveries made, finding birds sitting on eggs in their nests, all kinds of insects and butterflies, the most amazing flowers and majestic trees...it was like heaven on earth! I know these rich connections with nature and the direct experiences had, during my formative years, have influenced the work I am doing as an adult, connecting children with nature. Dame Elisabeth had a lifelong commitment to improving children's health and wellbeing. She annually invited our local 'Natured Kids' outdoor playgroup to play at Cruden farm, and has always supported my work with families and their young children outdoors. Most recently helping to fund our 'Play Outside Australia' project. Dame Elisabeth delighted in seeing her garden full of children, up until recently, would come and chat to the families. After our last visit to play in her magical garden, she was less mobile, so we sent her copious photographs of our Cruden farm adventures, and her lovely assistant Hennie, shared them with her via a laptop. This gave Dame Elisabeth great joy. Dame Elisabeth demonstrated a lifetime of superior leadership and commitment to children's health, a very fitting tribute, is the tapestry hanging in the foyer of the new Royal Children's Hospital, commissioned in her name, titled "The Games Children Play" It is worth a look if you are passing by.

I took this photograph in her garden of a beautiful butterfly. As I watched it drying its wings and sipping nectar from the flowers, my childhood 'nature play' memories at Cruden farm came flooding back!





Media Release

March 2013

Boost for quality early childhood education

The Gillard Government will invest \$300 million over two years to boost the quality of early childhood education and support workplace reform. Minister for Early Childhood Peter Garrett, Minister for Early Childhood and Child Care Kate Ellis and Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Bill Shorten announced the Early Years Quality Fund (EYQF) to help support the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Grants will be provided to services in order to offset the cost of employing a higher qualified workforce and ensure quality education and care is being delivered while maintaining affordability for parents. A new Pay Equity Unit will also be established in the Fair Work Commission, with an initial focus on the early childhood education and care sector. The NQF requires early childhood education services to employ staff with higher education qualifications by 2014.

“We know that quality early childhood education and care is dependent on having a qualified and professional workforce,” Minister Garrett said. To qualify for grants, Child Care Benefit approved long day care providers must be able to demonstrate a commitment to quality outcomes for children, including how their services will meet the NQF qualification requirements. Eligible services will receive grants to promote productivity and increase wages for employees with a Certificate III by \$3 per hour from July 1. There will also be proportional increases for staff across the existing classification scale.

“This wage increase for early childhood educators will assist in raising the professional status for our hard working and dedicated early childhood educators,” Minister Garrett said.

Providers will also need to commit to ongoing affordability for families by agreeing to restrain fee rises to reflect only actual increases in operational costs. This will ensure improved fee transparency for families, including the level of financial assistance provided through the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate.

“We know it gives children comfort as well as parents’ peace of mind when a child has the chance to form an ongoing bond with their early childhood educator,” Minister Ellis said. “We know that as a result of the National Quality Framework the early childhood workforce is more qualified and playing an increased role as early childhood educator.

Minister Shorten said “This initiative follows the workplace reforms in Social and Community Services and Aged Care sectors. The Government has achieved significant outcomes in respect to pay equity, but is committed to do more to try to close the gender gap, particularly in female dominated sectors such as child care.”

An advisory board will also be established to oversee the development and implementation of the EYQF and will include employee and employer representatives. “We have come a long way since staff were considered babysitters and they should be recognised as the qualified professionals they are,” Minister Ellis said.

As has been the case with new spending since the 2009-10 Budget, the fund will be offset with savings.

www.deewr.gov.au/earlyyearsqualityfund.



OBITUARIES



We remember and acknowledge all those kindergarten teachers and assistants who have passed away during the 2012 -2013 year.



Rest In Peace

2013 AUDAX

We are offering AUDAX as an electronic Journal to our members.

For those members who have supplied an email address to us, AUDAX will be sent to that address in 2013.

If you prefer to receive a hard copy instead, you will need to email us at admin@agecs.org.au

For all other members, you will still receive your hard copy through the postal service.

AGECS Members – Where are you?
Moved house? Changed email address?

Login to the website at www.agecs.org.au to update your details, email us, or phone 03 8344 0990 and leave a message.

ONCE ONLY MEMBERSHIP FEE
(INCLUDING AUDAX subscription)

Full membership **once only** fee: \$50.00

No annual fee

Join via the AGECS website at www.agecs.org.au

Please send correspondence and articles for inclusion to:

PO Box 12163, ABeckett Street, Melbourne VIC 8006 or email to

admin@agecs.org.au

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in AUDAX do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies. Articles are published to provide a forum to share news and provide opportunities for discussion.



AGECS

The Association of Graduates
in Early Childhood Studies

Spread the word...

Join our community of early childhood professionals with a breadth of knowledge that will provide inspiration and encouragement throughout your career

Visit the website
for online member
resources



Enjoy
instructive, entertaining,
networking events



Find out more about the charitable grants distributed annually through the Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies

www.agecs.org.au

The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies (AGECS) is a membership-based, not-for-profit organisation providing professional development and networking opportunities for members.