



AGECS

The Association of Graduates
in Early Childhood Studies

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Audax

(Latin) courageous, bold, daring

AUDAX 91 – Autumn 2016

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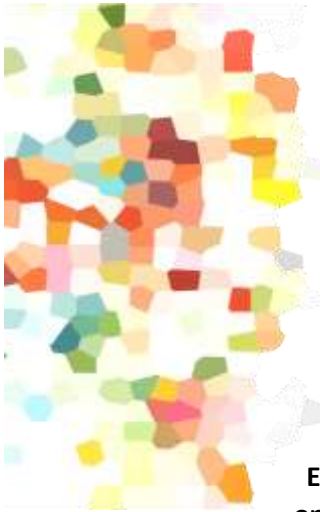
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Art is personal; it can be the enjoyment of working with a variety of materials and the sense of achievement with a finished production. Art can promote cognitive stimulation, social connections and development of self. Children with physical, emotional or learning challenges can experience success in the art in activities.

Early Childhood programs provide opportunities to explore art; resources and space to participate and enjoy, discovering a variety of applications that create abstract meaning.

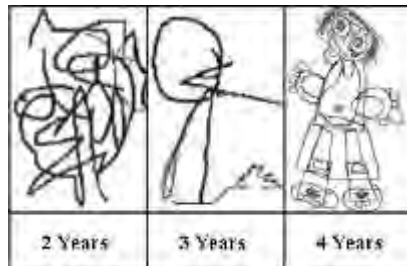
Art introduces children to cultures from around the world; children share art styles that are celebrated by their families. A child's self is readily expressed and enhanced by their connection to their cultural art.

Art activities are not always appreciated for their intrinsic value as compared to academic learning and can tend to be less favoured as a learning tool

According to Kimberly Sheridan, Ed. D., co-author of *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education*, "It's not as easy to test the skills that children learn from the arts, but that doesn't make them any less important". She noted though that participating in a school arts program increases a child's ability to:

- Observe the world carefully and discard preconceptions in order to envision something and then create it
- Go beyond just learning a skill to express a personal voice
- Problem-solve and persist despite frustration and setbacks
- Reflect on the results and ask what could improve them

Early Childhood professionals provide environments that inspire application – a variety of paper sizes, paper on easels/tabletops/floor, opportunity to prepare art materials/clean art materials, different thickness and length of paint brushes and fun activities such as marble and balloon painting. Children are the master of their work; their application is meaningful to them. Children’s artistic development is sequential and can be separated into a number of stages. The importance of these stages increases our understanding and appreciation of a child’s artistic creation.



Craig Roland “suggests that there are four stages of children’s artistic development: scribbling, pre-symbolism, symbolism, and realism. It is based on the popular view that the desired “end state” of this progression is graphical realism. However, this should not be taken to mean that the drawings that children typically do in earlier stages are inferior or less desirable to those accomplished in later stages. On the contrary, some of the more aesthetically pleasing works often are produced by children just beginning to discover the joys of mark making.” (*Young in Art: A developmental look at child art*, 2006)

The experiences and relations you make with children through art will develop in the form of millions of connections in the brain, and children can develop capacity to –

- learn to think creatively, with an open mind
- learn to observe and describe, analyse and interpret
- learn to express feelings, with or without words

Maree Wiggins

AGECS Members' tour at the National Gallery of Victoria



AGECS Members dressed the parts of the story



The tour provided an inspiring presentation of how to look at art through a child's eyes.

Children will naturally see art from their height and relate what they see to their experiences. Children explore through art and build confidence with their work and strengthen their creativity and imagination.

Participation in community activities such as art shows or displaying of children's art in local venues increases the child's participation in the community and a sense of belonging to the community. Early Childhood professionals provide the foundation for children's learning and art is one of those activities that can challenge and further develop the child as a whole.

Maree Wiggins

OUR FIRST FORUM FOR THE YEAR: February



Two lively forum/workshops with leading Aboriginal Early Childhood practitioners sharing experiences that embed Indigenous perspectives into early childhood programs. The forums included practical examples that can be duplicated with young children.

Tuesday 16 February – Ballarat – Federation University
Tuesday 23 February – Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

This year was our first time going regional! Thanks to Sue Emmet from Federation University for supporting this inaugural Forum. Over 300 participants registered for the two events leading to lively discussion and a sense of awe and inspiration from our presenters Sue and Annette. Witness the focus, fun and seriousness of educators investigating, observing and experiencing natural materials to create, feel, see and smell the materials provided. I am sure early years programs were including more natural pieces after those forums.



NB: The Podcast of this forum is available on the AGECS website.

NEXT AGECS FORUM – May 18th

**Responding to challenging behaviour
How to respond when children endanger themselves and others**

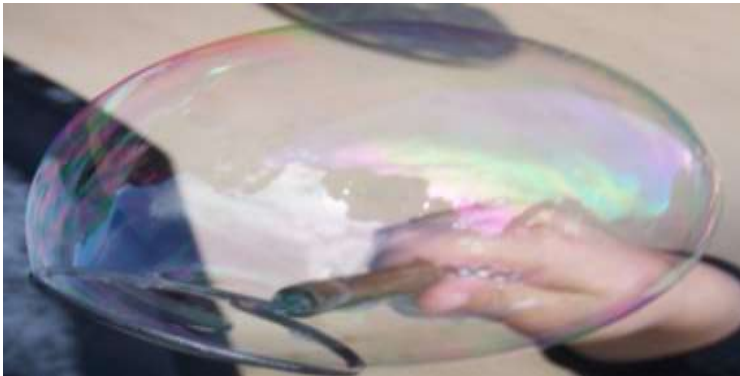
Wendy Bunston and Dr Nicole Milburn

<http://agecs.org.au/>

The AGECS Fellowship Programme:

The AGECS Fellowship Programme for Leadership and Change was launched at the AGM in 2014. The Fellowship Programme is open to AGECS members. We are pleased to present our first Fellowship articles by **Josette Nunn and Kerry Neebone**, two of the three Fellowship recipients from 2015.

1. The “Art” of Dreaming and the “Praxis” of Imagining through the interface of Positive Psychology, human systems and early childhood environments.



The Journey into Positive Education



Can the bubble keep growing – is it resilient enough – what are the climatic conditions

Positive psychology is a relative new branch of psychology that supports individuals, communities and organisations to thrive and build on their strengths and virtues. *the Focus is placed on wellbeing, flourishing character, meaning and virtue.* (Gable & Haidt, 2005)

The indicators from early brain science research, the social sciences, educational fields and economics highlights how crucial the early years are for the long term development of children – responsive warm nurturing environments, secure relationships, attachments and the building of “rich varied learning opportunities all of which lay the strong social, emotional foundations and develop the dispositions for positive long term resilience”.

The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2006, p.7) states that teaching for wellbeing is the key aspect of the 21st century education.

We are aware of the broad range of social issues in our lives both locally and globally that have enormous repercussions on the lives of children and families. However the effects of everyday life - the juggles of families, work and life where these complexities also cause “moments in time”(struggles) for both children families as well as educational practitioners.

So how do we find the essence of direction to support mechanism for the human systems with in our lives.

Whether the complexities are small or large, new paths are required to point our directions.

As Martin Seligman reported (2011), *Elizabeth Lesser (a wellness writer) suggests – so how do we resolve our most divisive conflicts and solve our most difficult problems?* (

“Our world’s nations wellbeing and the earth’s wellbeing is at the heart of this”

Every day within any early childhood setting and other fields of society there will be conversations involving how to navigate the human systems within the organisation where the interface of our ontology, perspectives, values, principles and practices evoke the spheres of questioning and the dissecting of information in order to understand them.



“The ontology of the bubble”

We all encounter these thresholds where the complexities within our work as educational practitioners needs contemplation and confrontation to meet the optimum legacy for the children, families and the staff within our centres. However in addressing our navigation of the existential interfaces that occur within our days there is still the tendency to view the woven fabric of our organisations with the linear lens of functionality and causes even with the use of strengthening approaches . We now need the interface of our complexities to be reflected from other perspectives, “as if we keep trying to do things the same as we have always done hoping the results will be different then we are not facing reality” (Stephen Covey).

As Albert Einstein suggests *“The significant problems we face cannot be solve at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them”*. (Positive Education Lecture 18/2/15).

What then are the dreams and wonderings of children whose lives are at the interface of the complexities that are in their everyday lives. How does the essence of the bubble(their well being) stay resilient and flourishing after it has popped – do the children try and grow another bigger bubble, give up, or wait and come back to grow another bubble.

The coming back to grow another bubble with “hope” was why I enrolled in the Positive Education course within the new Centre for Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne, so that I could strengthen my knowledge of how to teach the process and skills that build the world to thrive.

What I found from the course was much more than I anticipated. The group consisted of 20 passionate participants who came from all over Australia and overseas with a wide range of professional sectors - business, medical,

health, social welfare organisations, education and early intervention. Our weekend sessions were ignited by Dr Peggy Kern who welded the group through the lens to flourish and inspire the light of positivity with in our work and own lives.



“ Knowining your navigational directions through standing firm whilst the earth is moving under your feet”

Within the course there are two subjects –

Introduction to Positive Education which focused on the empirical science of positive psychology – the brain science that underpins learning and development. A **range of well-being frameworks** and the important factors associated with well-being such as **resilience, hope and gratitude**. **Along with what hinders healthy life trajectories.**

The second subject *Building Positive Education Communities* constructed the **groundedness** (like **building the best compost in the world**)and the evidenced based systems (**the nutirents to bring alive (the fluorishment)** for growing frameworks of positive education into your curriculum and pedagogy.

I am now designing into my pedagogical practices and daily program the praxis of "Positive Organisational Science" through the

Art of Interfacing

Acting on the deep

listening

Dreaming



To ask the question:

"What can happen when we stand firm on the tight rope of positivity and use the questions of 'the bubbles' of our successes; to dream and imagine a compass that navigates only with the shining lights of what is working well and then use this as a 'tool kit' of our imagination for the desired changes at our interfaces?"

In asking a group of kindergarten children the meaning of Hope / Dream – this meaning wraps 'the art of a child acting from the deep listening around him.'

Hope is "So I won't let go"

"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass or only knowing how to dance in the rain" for many children it is about as Ann Pelo writes "coming to know the goodness of the rain"



***Two wonderful practitioners feeling the 'praxis' of the children's imaginative theory of a rain dance
'the goodness of the rain'***

This is just a small snippet of the learnings from the Positive Education Course at Melbourne University and gratitude goes to the dedication of past and present early childhood professionals who have paved a path for the opportunities that are available through The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies and I look forward to sharing more of the learnings with many practitioners. Thankyou for the opportunity and to the many other early childhood practitioners who's conversational learnings continue to inspire the sector.

As a dear friend and colleague highlights" You take the best of the past to imagine the dance of the future."

Rachel Carson writes from a 'Sense of Wonder' "The sharing includes nature in the storm as we as the calm, by night as well as day.. it is not so important to know as to feel"

Josette A Nunn

2. Nature Program Study Tour

Last year I had the opportunity to visit several nature-based early year's programs in Scotland. This opportunity was the result of receiving a Fellowship grant from AGECS. This experience enabled me to observe and engage with nature programs in Scotland and reflect on some of the early year's practice that we have in Australia. It has been an opportunity to extend my knowledge and evolve my understanding of nature play experiences. While on the study tour in Scotland visiting a number of nature play early years programs I spent time at a Nature program in Dunblane.

Dunblane Nature Kindergarten provided education to children 6month up to school as well as an afterschool program for local school aged children. This service had only become a nature based kindergarten 1 year before my visit. The Director and educators had spent a lot time and effort working on the core philosophy of the service which was evident in my visit.

Dunblane Nature Kindergarten

A case study

1. The indoor environment is a beautiful, calm and uncluttered natural space with many open ended opportunities.



2. The naturalistic outdoor garden space offers children a large range of open ended natural resources and opportunities to manipulate and use in so many ways.

3. Children regularly access the local community and 'wild' natural spaces within their area for prolonged periods. Children went on daily walks to the local creek. From babies to preschool aged children. This would occur in the rain, when it was very cold and on warmer days.

4. There is genuine caring, consultative and respectful atmosphere between management, staff, parents and children.

5. All educators and children wore plastic protective pants. Babies were encouraged to crawl on the ground in dirt and puddles. All children were provided with the opportunity to explore through senses and to explore play in an uninterrupted and unrushed manner.

6. Children of all ages played with large sticks. Freely moving around the yard with tools such as carts, large sticks, bricks, and rocks then using them in a variety of play.

7. There were lots of opportunity for “risky” play



Highlights of the service

- What amazed me was the calm and gentle way all the staff interacted with the children. We did not hear any elevated voices; in fact we did not hear the adult voices, only gentle murmur of the sound of children playing.
- Children were fully engaged in their chosen opportunities - often linked to sensory experiences of water, sand, and mud.
- Educators were responsive to children – they provided children with time to explore and encouraged children to make choices around risky play. Educators had a sound understanding of each child’s skills and ability and as a result guided children based on their needs. Educators supported children’s play ideas and waited to be invited into play experiences. Educators and children sat and had lunch together. Educators cooked the food on an open fire. Educators ate meals outdoors.



What can we learn from Dunblane Nature Kindergarten?

1. We can work with families, children, management and educators to create a philosophy that is embedded in practice that drives the decisions made daily in the program.
2. Educators working with children need to be sensitive to their verbal and nonverbal cues and respond to children's needs through nurturing interactions and environments. It is important to know children skills and abilities and engage with children at an individual level.
3. We need to create environments that are calm, relaxed and unrushed.
4. Set up a philosophy to support children's play using benefit verses risk to guide our decision making. It is important to empower children to know their own capabilities and for them to then be responsible to make safety decisions under the guidance of educators. Genuinely engage children in making choices. It is essential that adults are to share decision making with children, and trust that children are competent decision makers.
5. Provide opportunities for children and educators to connect with their community. Regularly visit local reserves and parks to experience nature in the wider community



Kerryn Kneebone

ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

A morning with Mrs Heather Low, graduate of 1942

In 2015 Mrs Low aged 94, welcomed me into her home and I had the pleasure of chatting with her about her experiences as a Kindergarten teacher. She was very pleased to share her story.

Mrs Low had always wanted to be a teacher. As a student at Ivanhoe Girls Grammar she was inspired by Doris Walkers' sister Eva who was one of her teachers. She left school in 1939 to train as Kindergarten teacher at the then 'Victorian Kindergarten Training College' in Kew. She graduated in 1942 with about 25 other women after 3 years of training. The graduates wore white dresses. As students they had worn green divided skirts as uniforms when in Kindergartens.

Dr Floyd the music teacher, was a strong influence on her, she was passionate about music and had studied piano theory and music at matriculation level. Mrs Low still plays the piano every day.

While she was doing her training there were many kindergartens set up for deserving people who had endured the depression and the war. She was always happy to work in the Free Kindergartens but she also felt that the children of the middle class should also be aware of the opportunities that Kindergarten gave. Mrs Low was unique in that she was the only one in her graduating class to go onto teaching in Kindergartens attached to schools.

She enjoyed a long teaching career and over the years she taught at Ivanhoe Grammar School, Melbourne Girls Grammar and Preshil. These schools she described as 'very progressive', the whole school was run like a kindergarten in some ways, particularly Preshil. The children at Preshil had a lot of freedom of activity and could come and go in classes. She took her passion for music and movement into Kindergartens and became known as 'Music Heather'. She also did music groups with a range of kindergartens apart from her own. She recalls how she enjoyed improvising and the enjoyment she and the children experienced. Mrs Low saw Kindergarten as important for children in making their 'first step out into life' in learning social skills in particular rather than learning to read and write.

She observed that kindergartens had changed physically over the decades with 'lots more fences and gates than there used to be. When she was teaching at Melbourne Grammar after WW2 the kindergarten room was on the side of the boarding house. She recalls "There was no electricity and we had a cubby house out in the garden and no fences".

There were also a broader range of age groups attending. Two year olds were admitted to kindergarten at one stage with Lady Gowrie for example having 2 or 3 age groups.

As her husband was seriously ill when her oldest child was small, she recalled combining motherhood and teaching, taking her kindergarten aged child with her on her bicycle.

Mrs. Low is mother to 5 children including twins, and a proud grandmother and great grandmother

Her advice to young teachers today is to 'keep a broad picture of child development'

Written by Sue Lopez Atkinson

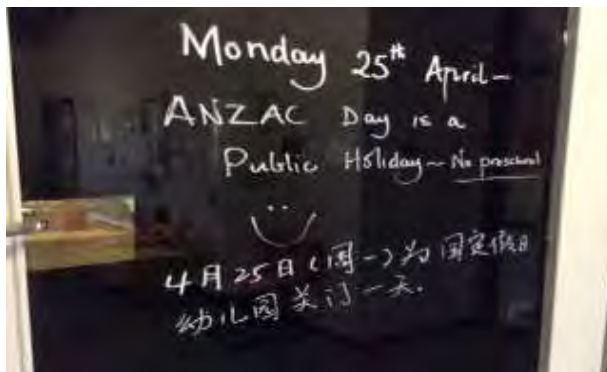
PS from Editor:

Melbourne Girls Grammar School Early learning Centre refers to Mrs. Low in their handbook for new families:

'One of our pioneer kindergarten teachers, Mrs Heather Low, who taught the four year olds during the late 1940s, described the enriched environment the young children experienced at Melbourne Girls Grammar as a "garden program", where the emphasis was on exploration and play in a natural setting; they even had their rest time in the relaxing setting of the Botanic Gardens.'



Editor's Choice:



Message to families in outer east preschool where a new Educator shares her first language with families.



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

- **Exchange EveryDay.**

- 1. Gun Play in Early Childhood**

Merryl Gladstone talked about her struggles with gun play in early childhood programs. She shared some insights from Elizabeth Criswell:

"She explored zero-tolerance gun play policies and shared how and why she tried to create space in her early childhood classroom for gun/weapon play. It was eye opening and a relief to hear her ideas and experiences. Elizabeth shared that she decided to change the zero-tolerance policy in her classroom because she felt first and foremost, it wasn't

working. It was fostering a culture of dishonesty in her classroom. In having a zero-tolerance policy, Elizabeth wondered what message she was sending to children about their imagination and what message she was sending about the difference between real and pretend.

"She turned to research and learned that gun or weapon play is a universal truth in early childhood. Studies where gun play is permitted show a short spike in aggressive behaviour, but then this behaviour notably recedes as the games are allowed to progress. Lastly, her research affirmed that 'aggressive,' rough and tumble play, play fighting have been consistently linked to increased social competencies. In the end, Elizabeth found that as it was in the studies she read, when gun play is allowed and is treated like any other type of play, it eventually moves from high interest to the periphery.


"Play is a tool that children use to explore and know their world. When children are given the chance to explore and play with weapon play, it eventually gets played out. They have explored it and they are not as driven to explore it. It seems to me a better outcome then if we are to deny them the chance to explore an issue they are curious about and as a consequence they feel they have to hide their interest or curiosity."

Contributed by Kirsten Haugen

2. A Crystallizing Moment

In **Lisa Murphy on Play: The Foundation of Children's Learning**, Murphy makes this observation:

"Howard Gardner tells us that at any given moment or any given day we could be facilitating an experience that makes a lifelong impact. He calls this a 'crystallizing moment.' And as teachers, we never know when one might occur. Could be Monday, Friday, the rainy day, the day we are in a good mood, the day we are in a bad mood. We cannot plan or schedule, buy or coordinate a crystallizing moment. There isn't a signal, a bell, or a loud trumpet indicating what has happened.... Ideally, crystallizing moments occur when we are at our best. Unfortunately, for some, it's when an adult was at her worst. Crystallizing moments can be happy memories or sad ones. This is only one of the reasons why we **MUST** be fully present when we are with children and must never, never, ever, ever underestimate the power of what we do."

Well worth a look. 

A Healthy and Active Australia

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a whole body-mind state of awareness that involves ‘tuning in’ to the present moment, with openness and curiosity, instead of ‘tuning out’ from experience. Mindfulness is a state of being fully awake to life – being aware and undistracted in the present moment. It is about focusing attention on the present, rather than thinking about the past or worrying about the future- which is often our brain’s default mode.

Mindful awareness is something that we all possess and that can be strengthened through practice. Mindfulness can be developed through formal sitting meditation practices, or through informal everyday mindfulness activities that use the senses to anchor the attention: such as mindful walking, listening to music, eating or conversation. Mindfulness is a clinically proven tool to support wellbeing and mental health by reducing stress and allowing life to be experienced more fully.

Why practise being mindful?

The way we interact with our kids has a huge impact on the way they think about themselves and their levels of personal resilience. Ellen Langer and team, a world-renowned mindfulness researcher found that children not only prefer to interact with mindful adults, but actually devalue themselves following interactions with mindless adults (Langer, Cohen & Djikic, 2010).

The benefits of mindfulness with children

Research shows that mindfulness training increases connectivity in the frontal lobe of the brain, which is linked to improved attention, memory processing and decision making abilities.

Mindfulness training involves tuning in to internal and external experiences with curiosity resulting in increased self-awareness, social awareness, and self-confidence.

Mindfulness training increases children’s ability to self-regulate their emotions, especially difficult emotions such as fear and anger, through breathing and other grounding techniques.

Mindfulness has been shown to improve empathy or the ability to understand what another person is thinking or feeling, which improves children’s awareness of others and helps them to build positive relationships.

Mindfulness and childhood mental health

Mindfulness training has been shown to reduce the severity of depression, anxiety and ADHD in children. Mindfulness builds resilience by giving children skills to help them to cope better with stress, as well as engage more fully with themselves and the world.

Mindfulness for parents

The best thing parents can do to help their children become more mindful is to commit to some regular mindfulness practises themselves! The more present and mindful you are with your children, the more happy, mindful and resilient they will be. Mindfulness training can assist parents to remain in the present moment and engage more fully when interacting with their children. Research shows that parents and carers who practice being mindful around their children contributes to improving their child's sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Mindful play: Dedicate a window of time each week to mindfully play with your child or children. Turn off all other distractions such as TV, and put your mobile away and on silent. Try to give them your full attention during this time and if your mind wanders off to all the things you should be doing, that's fine – that's just what minds do! Use your child as an anchor to come back to every time your mind wanders away.

Mindful cooking: Cooking together can be a great way to spend quality time. Help your child notice the colours, smell and taste of the ingredients as you add them to the meal, and the touch of the different items as you cook.

Mindful dinnertime: Create a time for your family to appreciate and savour their food at the start of a meal by spending the first few minutes of dinner in silence, just eating and enjoying the food. It's a surprisingly nice activity to do with the whole family, and done regularly, can become a lovely ritual.

Mindful teeth brushing: Getting kids to brush their teeth can be a challenge, so why not make it a challenge, by inviting them to try to do it mindfully with you? Invite them to pay attention to the feel of the brush in their mouth and the sensation and taste of the toothpaste. Ask them three things they noticed that was different about their brushing tonight than from the previous night.

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www.kidsmatter.edu.au

Entertainment for Educators.....

At the movies



Eddie Eagle: A story of courage, determination and confidence in your own abilities. A young man fulfils his dream with his mother's encouragement, Father's disbelief and official's disdain. An inspiring, 'feel good' movie.

Jungle Book



Raised by a family of wolves since birth, Mowgli must leave the only home he's ever known when the fearsome tiger Shere Khan unleashes his mighty roar. Guided by a no-nonsense panther and a free-spirited bear the young boy meets an array of jungle animals, including a slithery python and a smooth-talking ape. Along the way, Mowgli learns valuable life lessons as his epic journey of self-discovery leads to fun and adventure.

Books



A Mother's Reckoning by Sue Klebold.

We think we know our children. This extraordinary book shows how mistaken we can be.



Choosing Positive Paths is a series of fact sheets to help mothers, other protective parents and/or carers, respond to children affected by family violence at different ages and stages, from infants to adolescents.

The information is also helpful for a range of professionals who work with families. The Choosing Positive Paths resource kit is a joint initiative of Women's Health West and Berry Street and is based on a resource developed with community participants in 2003. The fact sheets have been re-written to reflect changes in legislation, policy and practice since their original release in 2003.

Phone Apps

Learning Potential August 2015, the former Minister for Education and Training, the Hon Christopher Pyne MP, announced the release of a free app for parents packed with tips and inspiring ways to be more involved in their child's learning. It's for all ages, from the high chair to high school, and it gives you:



learning
potential

- tips and hints
- relevant information tailored to your child's age
- fun and easy ways to stimulate learning

What's on around us.....?

Until May 8th

ACCA Using visual language as a form of storytelling. The result is a very human exhibition – prompting us to reflect upon our own relationships, both with one another and our surrounds. accaonline.org.au

Thursday, 23 June

Rock-A-Bye-Baby Sessions are for adults and kids alike and feature artists from all genres and cultures. Come on down for a no-frills, daytime show for families of all ages and your chance to see a real band without fear of sugary drinks or costumed characters and welcome noise, encourage crawling and expect dancing!

Fitzroy Town Hall, Fitzroy www.yarracity.com.au

September 10th

2016 Pedagogy in Nature Conference Tour

Juliet Robertson keynote: 'Place value, Nature counts'

Melbourne

EC Inspired www.inspiredec.com

Until October 9th

Melbourne Museum 'Jurassic World: The exhibition'

An immersive look at the prehistoric creatures.

Museumvictoria.com.au



• SUSTAINABILITY

Green Cleaning in Childcare

Toxic chemicals can do harm to the environment and humans and ongoing use of these makes it increasingly harder for the environment to recover. Chemical based cleaning and sanitising products causes asthma, allergies and chemical sensitivities. An alternative to chemical based cleaning is to use natural/ green cleaning products. Here are some green cleaning ideas which can be used within the service.

Benches - warm soapy water can remove bacteria on most surfaces. Use biodegradable and pH neutral soaps

Floors - mop with hot/warm water, marks can be removed by using a rubber. Timber floors can be cleaned with cold black tea with a mop (use a damp mop only)

Carpet - apply shaving cream to marks and spots, wash off with warm water. Mud and dirt marks, sprinkle with salt or bi-carb soda leave to dry then vacuum

Sink - rub with bi-carb soda on a damp cloth

Basin - rub with bi-carb soda on a damp cloth/vinegar on a cloth

Toilets - white vinegar (mild disinfectant), add sprig of rosemary or lavender

Windows and Mirrors - clean the windows vinegar and crumpled newspaper or paper towel to avoid black ink

Tables, Walls, Ledges and Chairs - for paint or crayons – eucalyptus oil mixed with water, add a few drops of oil on a cloth and rub on stain directly. New rubber and toothpaste can also remove crayons

Microwave and Fridge - clean exterior and interior with bi-carb soda on damp cloth

Fridge Interior - use a few drops of vanilla essence in water, to new sponge helps to freshen up fridge. Place a small container of bi-carb into fridge to draw out any unwanted odours



Alternative Disinfectants - 500ml white vinegar with 1 L of water. 15ml tea tree oil 5 ml spirit orange – mix and use for cleaning instead of disinfectant (effective for vomit, faeces, etc. (do not dilute further)

Toys – hot soapy water, air-dry in sunshine

Tea Towel/Bibs – soak in mix of 2 tablespoons of cream of tartar and 1L of water before washing

Urine – soak white vinegar or lemon juice with water, after dry in sunshine

When using green cleaning ideas/recipes check for allergies and sensitivities with smells and scents from the children and their families. Ensure that oils and natural products are still kept out of children’s reach. Safe labelling on all cleaning items is required at all times and bottles



<http://aussiechildcarenetwork.com.au/>



THE AGE NEWSPAPER

Numbers add up in favour of maths-related bedtime tales to boost numeracy skills

Colleen Ricci

What is happening?

Reading maths-focused stories to children at bedtime significantly enhances their numeracy skills; a new study published in the journal Science shows. In the study, conducted by researchers from the University of Chicago, 587 first grade children across the Chicago metropolitan area were given tablets featuring an application known as Bedtime Math. Parents were asked to read to their children four nights per week over several months.

One test group:- parents read short passages with a maths-focus and completed simple maths problems with their children. In the second "control" group, passages were also read, but without the maths focus. Children were assessed at the beginning of the school year and again at the end.

What were the main findings?

Children who read and discussed stories showed significant their maths learning.

For children across both groups most frequently, those in the three-month numeracy advantage reading group by the end of the

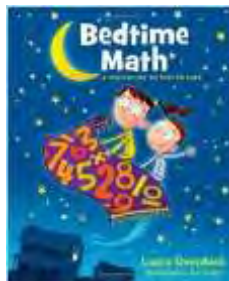
The study has found that "brief, child" maths interaction at home helps alleviate anxiety for parents about the subject; develops maths understanding for both parents and children; and helps break "the intergenerational cycle" of low maths achievement.

Why was the study undertaken?

Research has shown that parents tend to prioritise language learning over maths development when children are young.

Study author Professor Sian Beilock hopes the research will change the notion that maths is "the purview of the school" and highlight the benefits of maths discussion at home.

Research also shows that parental anxiety about maths can transfer to children and result in less engagement and missed learning opportunities in the classroom.



the maths-related improvement in

who used the app maths group had a over those in the school year.

high-quality parent-

They say the Bedtime Math app, which was developed by a non-profit charity organisation, has benefits for anxious parents because it incorporates a written script that allows for maths discussion in a comfortable, natural way.

Where is it happening?

In Britain, advocacy group National Numeracy provides a free website dedicated to helping families enjoy maths together.

Trustee Di Hatchett says mathematical stories "support the development of positive attitudes to maths" and help parents engage with their child's learning.

The organisation offers a family maths toolkit to promote maths at home; to help build children's maths confidence; and to help them see how maths is used in everyday life.

While educators in the United States have been heartened by the study's results, some want more investigation.

What is happening in Australia?

While reading bedtime stories to children is known to enhance literacy development, a clinical teaching specialist from the University of Canberra, Kylie Robson, says the US research shows how nightly reading routines can also be used to improve numeracy outcomes.

She says natural conversations about maths in a calm environment "should be encouraged" and will help children see maths as "part of everyday life".

Education Minister Simon Birmingham says the government is providing \$6.4 million to support the development of maths resources and to make maths "more meaningful and attractive" to students by relating it more closely to "their own experiences, careers and lives".

The move follows a global trend towards promoting science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects and represents a desire to lift the performance of Australian students on international tests.

What are some other benefits?

The researchers, whose study was funded by the charity that produces Bedtime Math, say the app is a cost-effective, simple way to enhance children's maths skills.

Many commend the US study for its "real world" research application, adding that only a small percentage of apps in the billion-dollar app industry are supported by concrete, real world evidence.

Others say that in building parents' confidence with maths, they are more likely to engage in maths discussion with their children, even when not using the app.

They say that changing parental attitudes will improve children's attitudes towards maths and, consequently, enhance their mathematical achievements.

Professor Beilock says the key is to talk to children about maths: to integrate maths activities into daily routines such as "counting out cookies" or "minutes to bedtime".

What are some issues?

While many agree the results are promising, some say more investigation is needed to understand what makes the app effective.

Others query what generalisations can be made from the study.

A maths education researcher at San Diego State University, Janet Bowers, says the app will be unlikely to work in low-income areas because "there just aren't parents who sit there and read". Some in the US say maths anxiety is "culturally ingrained" and needs to be overcome for the nation to experience success in maths and science.

They highlight the importance of both teachers and parents conveying to children that maths can be learnt and enjoyed, rather than feared.



AWARDS



• **Victorian Education Excellence Awards**

Celebrating Victoria's Learning Community by recognising the outstanding achievements and practice of education professionals.

Victoria Teachers Mutual Bank Early Childhood Teacher of the Year - Rachael Weber

Rachael Weber, from Karingal East Kindergarten, is pioneering a new



inclusive preschool program. Visit her kindergarten and you will find a small group of children with additional needs mixed in with a larger group of mainstream four-year-olds.

Supported by the local Special Development School, the program has proved to be very successful. In 2013, all

the children with additional needs improved their social, communication and learning skills.

Rachael also facilitates a 'buddy' program with a local primary school. Students from Years 3 to 6 visit the preschool to help the younger children prepare for the next phase of their education.

'High expectations of the children in her care and faith in their ability to succeed, is something that Rachael has always firmly believed in', a colleague stated. Thanks to Rachael, Karingal East Kindergarten is going from strength to strength.

Nominations and applications for the 2016 Victorian Education Excellence Awards will close by May 13th,

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/>

• **Premier's Sustainability Awards 2015**

The Premier's Sustainability Awards acknowledge and celebrate outstanding achievements in the sustainable use of Victoria's resources through innovation and sustainable practices.

The COMMUNITY Award went to:– Recycle, Reuse, Rehome

St Kilda Mums, Geelong Mums and Eureka Mums are voluntary networks of parents who collect and sort donations of baby and young children's essential nursery equipment, clothing, prams and strollers, car restraints, highchairs, toys and books

The HEALTH Award went to:

Monash Health – Cleaning Without Chemicals in Healthcare using microfibre and steam technology.

2016 Awards close for nominations June 2016.



GENERAL ARTICLES OF INTEREST

• **Specialist Equipment Funding from Brainwave**

What we are seeing more and more is a requirement for often expensive, specialised equipment to get children out of hospital and back into their home environment to help their recovery. We also see homes and family vehicles requiring expensive modifications to enable children to move about and be integrated back into family life. Brainwave funds equipment and aids that assist children with a neurological condition to improve their quality of life. In general but not limited to, this includes:

- equipment for home care (standing frame, pressure mattress, bathing aid)
- rehabilitation and mobility equipment (wheelchair, walking frame, specialised trikes)
- home and car modifications (ramps, door frame widening, chair lifts, car hoists)

Each family's needs are unique and in fairness, each case is decided individually.



www.brainwave.org.au

- **CHILD** is an evidence-based framework that is used as an organising principle for all of the student activities in the Response Ability resource. –



C Creating safe and supportive environments for optimal wellbeing and development

H Helping children to learn social and emotional skills and manage their own behaviour

I Identifying babies, children and families who may be in need of additional support

L Linking families with support and information services for mental health and wellbeing

D Developing broader organisational and community strategies that support wellbeing

The CHILD framework summarises the practical strategies that teachers and educators can use to support children's optimal social and emotional development and wellbeing, ultimately supporting their mental health.

 Australian Government
Department of Health

www.responseability.org

 Response
Ability

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Early Childhood Teacher Registration

All Victorian early childhood teachers were required to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching as of 30 September 2015.

The new requirement was introduced to recognise early childhood teachers as professional educators, and provide parents and carers assurance that their children are receiving top quality care from professionals who meet consistent standards of practice.



2016:- The Victorian government has made a strong commitment to improving access to and participation in learning for children and young people with special needs (disabilities)

Feedback from teachers has indicated that many don't feel well equipped to deal with learners who have a disability and would like more opportunities to understand the needs of these learners to improve their learning outcomes. By asking you to focus on learners with a disability when selecting professional learning for your renewal of registration, we are supporting the development of your capability in this area of practice.

For more information, see:

[Early childhood teacher/provider – Victorian Institute of Teaching](#)

2016 AUDAX

We are providing 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 2016.

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

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

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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.

The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies

is a membership-based, not-for-profit organisation providing professional development and networking opportunities for their members.

AGECS members work, or have worked, in the field of Early Childhood education and care and /or they have significantly contributed to the field in other ways.

The Association has a 70 year history of philanthropic work, which continues through its establishment of the [Foundation of Graduates of Early Childhood Studies](#).



[History of the Association](#)

The history of the Association goes back to 1922 when the principal of the Melbourne Kindergarten Training College, Kew, Miss Mary Gutteridge encouraged the students to form the Past Students Association (PSA). Its aim was *“to bring together graduates for the purpose of fellowship, to maintain links with, and to contribute to, the College and to explore ways of establishing a home where deprived children enrolled in the Free Kindergartens could spend a holiday and have their health restored.”*

