



AGECS

The Association of Graduates
in Early Childhood Studies

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Audax

(Latin) courageous, bold, daring

Audax 84 –Autumn 2012

Journal of the Association of Graduates In Early Childhood Studies
PO Box 12163, 58 Franklin Street, Melbourne VIC 8006

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members

Welcome to this Autumn edition of AUDAX. Many of you will be reading this as an electronic copy for the first time. In the last edition of AUDAX, members were advised of this move to electronic distribution for those who have provided us with an email address. If you are reading this and wondering about colleagues who are not using email, be assured they will receive a normal paper copy in the post shortly. Thanks go once again to Wendy, our volunteer editor, who has put together some very useful and challenging articles for our readers.

In a recent meeting with our web consultants I was reminded that current practice for professionals and others researching an issue is to surf the net widely using a variety of sites and links in order to access information they need or are interested in. The days of hearing about a new professional book or article and going out to an educational book shop and buying or ordering the book has become an outdated activity. Wendy has provide some teasers to read which will, no doubt, send our savvy surfers, young and old, off to their computers, ipads or iphones to discover more about a topic of interest.

Having said this, I believe it is still useful and, for many of us, more pleasurable, to have a book or articles on the side table at work or at home. A piece of literature that invites us to read information we would not have gone out of our way to acquire. As professionals, our thirst for professional reading will always be there, just under the surface, like our need for daily news or, for the billions so inclined, a Facebook fix.

Happy reading!
Judy Dunn
President AGECS

AGECS Highlight Event 1 2012

An Evening of Critical Thinking

with Anthony Semann and Kathy Walker

MC was George McEnroe

Early childhood professionals filled an auditorium at Melbourne University in February for the second time to hear Kathy Walker and Anthony Semann talk about curriculum in the age of EYLF.

AGECS presented a discussion on theories in early childhood education, following on from the earlier 'Conversation with Curriculum'. On the earlier occasion, Kathy Walker and Anthony Semann had emphasised that the national curriculum framework (the EYLF or the VEYLDF for those in Victoria) is a framework, not a curriculum. It is up to early childhood professionals to build a curriculum within the framework provided by the EYLF.

In the February session, Walker and Semann addressed the role of theory in early childhood education. Our work as educators draws on theories. We are all involved in putting theories into practice. However, since we learn much of our teaching skill through imitation we are not always aware of the theorists or theoretical underpinnings our work is based in. Walker and Semann outlined a number of theories that feed into the practice or study of early childhood education – such as constructivism, developmental theory, critical theory – and looked briefly at how these theories play out in practice in early childhood educational settings. Walker and Semann do not see a case for choosing only one theory. Rather, different theories provide us with different insights into practice, and different stimuli for reflection. They urged us as educators to know our theorists, and to reflect on our educational practice with conscious knowledge of which theories we draw on and why. Much food for thought.

Siobhan Hannan

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www.earlylife.com.au

AGECS highlight Event 2

Coming soon.....

The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies invites you to:-

An evening of critical thinking.

COAG's commitment to ensuring high quality and inclusive early childhood education for children in their formative years has consisted of reforms that have never been experienced in the field.

We ask these questions:

Has political correctness gone too far in early childhood?

Are we trying too hard or not hard enough?

An evening with a distinguished panel exploring elements of inclusive practice.

Details for registration will be available on the AGECS website soon

AGECS highlight Event 3

Coming.....

November 7th

The Association of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies invites you to :-

An evening of critical conversation.

With Dr Wendy Lawson and Dr Richard Eisenmajer exploring Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

We ask this question:

Diffability or Disability?

Come along and challenge your perceptions on ASD.

Dr Lawson will take you for a ride into her world of high achievement. Wendy explores the use of the word 'disability' when describing her diagnosis of ASD. Who says it is a disability? Diffability is really what it's all about.

Dr Eisenmajer will share his experiences as a Clinical Psychologist working closely with ASD clients.

Details for registration will be available on the AGECS website soon

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

• **Healthy Start**



HealthyStart

A national strategy for children of
parents with learning difficulties

Healthy Start builds capacity among professionals and volunteers in the health, welfare and education sectors who share a common interest in enhancing the lives of children and their parents with learning difficulties. It does this by helping practitioners and organisations to:

- access best practice information, summaries of latest research, and evidence-based programs
- exchange knowledge with other professionals by sharing ideas and resources at supported events, workshops, or via the online Practice Network
- build the capacity of existing networks, services or programs by working on local initiatives, meet with Healthy Start champions across Australia, and get involved in leadership development activities

www.parentingrc.org.au



• **Tuning Into Kids Program**



What is 'Tuning In To Kids?'

(*Mindful*: Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health
Department of Psychiatry, Melbourne University)

Tuning in to Kids is a 6-session group parenting program that helps parents support their children in learning to understand and regulate their emotions. It teaches parents:

- awareness and regulation of their own emotions
- awareness of their children's emotions
- to use children's emotional experiences as an opportunity for closeness and teaching
- skills in assisting children to verbally label and manage their emotions
- skills in assisting children in problem solving to guide children's behaviour with appropriate limits

The research evaluation of Tuning in to Kids found that when parents learned these parenting skills, this was related to improvements in children's emotional competence, social skills and behaviour. For children with behaviour or anxiety problems, the program was particularly effective.

The ideas and techniques taught in the program are useful for parents of children of all ages, but are particularly relevant for parents of preschoolers.

What parents are saying

'I felt there has been a free flow of information from my child — there is more willingness to discuss things that have happened during the day, both good and bad, happy and sad etc.' *'The idea of emotion coaching was easy to understand, but felt very strange doing it at first*

'The entire family is now more conscious of their own and other's feelings/emotions

www.tuningintokids.org.au



At four and five years of age, your child will be learning more about feelings – both her own and other peoples'. She'll have a strong foundation for later development if she can start to manage her feelings, understand others' feelings and needs, and interact positively with others.

Four-year-olds are continuing to learn what causes certain feelings, and are starting to realise that others might react differently from them when in the same situation. They're learning to better manage intense emotions with coping strategies like talking it out or drawing a picture.

Four-year-olds also show further progress in their social interactions with peers, such as by smoothly joining in a group play situation, being sympathetic to others, or suggesting ways to resolve conflict.

Discussion forums are available for parents on any topic.

www.raisingchildren.net.au

What is the right age to start school?

The Age, 16 April, 2012, p. 14



By Kay Margetts. Associate Professor in early childhood studies at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education

THE decision about when children should start school is difficult. In most states and territories in Australia it is compulsory for children to have commenced school by the year they turn 6. In Victoria, children may commence school if they turn five by April 30 in the year of starting. This means that in many prep classes there can be an age difference of almost 18 months.

While there is little or no research suggesting that starting school before the age of five is beneficial, we need to be mindful that age is only one factor in children's readiness for school. Children are individuals and each one develops at their own rate. The transition to school involves strong emotional arousal and a new identity for children as they take on the role of being a schoolchild along with the associated demands. Difficulties can arise when children are easily distracted or disorganised, have difficulty persisting with tasks, in controlling their emotions, or lack confidence.

Children need to be socially and emotionally mature, able to cope with change, and to handle the demands of the new school situation. The way children cope with stress and school adjustment may vary according to their temperament as well as with the demands and philosophy of the school. Children need to have skills for being part of a group, for interacting with other children and doing things independently.

For example, they are able to wait, take turns, share materials and help others, listen to and follow instructions and rules, to be responsible for their belongings and behaviour, and seek help when it is needed. They are able to control themselves in the conflicts that are part of normal school life, and behave in ways that do not disturb or hurt others.

Children also need to be able to manage their personal care associated with clothes, lunch and toileting.

School involves a strong focus on literacy and maths. Children benefit when they enjoy books and stories, are interested in letters and numbers, can express their own ideas and talk about familiar experiences, and are curious about the world around them.

Physical skills are also important, including eye-hand co-ordination and the ability to hold and control a pencil, and use small tools such as scissors. Children need good eyesight and hearing. The ability to see the whiteboard and identify letters and words by sight and sound is important for literacy development and confidence.

Familiarity with the school environment is important. Research suggests that children's adjustment to school is supported when they and their families actively participate in transition to school visits and other opportunities to become familiar with the school and its expectations and demands, as well as develop new friendships.



Entertainment for Educators.....



At the Movies

MARLA and I.

A documentary about the illustrator Miguel Gallardo and his relationship with his teenage daughter. A film about Autism.

THE KID with a BIKE

When we meet him, the kid has no bike. Cyril (Thomas Doret) is in a children's home in Belgium. Clinging to a telephone, he is trying to call his father but the number is disconnected.

THE LADY

Drama about the emergence of Burmese activist Aung San Suu Kyi as a thorn in the side of authorities begins in Rangoon in 1947 and traces the course of her life to the present day.



Books

100 Ways to Happy Children: A guide for Busy Parents.

Packed with anecdotes, this is a perfect guide for parents wanting to re think their way through the roller coaster of raising children. Read it from cover to cover or dip in and out for a dose of inspiration as you deal with the daily trials and joys of the most important job in the world.

Young Children Learning mathematics: A guide for Educators and Families

Published by ACER

What's Pedagogy Anyway?

By Alma fleet, Toby Honig, Janet Robertson, Anthony Semann, Wendy Shepherd.

This book challenges educators to resist the notion of reducing children's learning and consequently the associated pedagogical documentation to the five outcomes as outlined in the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

Phone Apps

- **SUNSMART** (free) lets you know when you most need sun protection.



- **SHOP ETHICAL** (Apple, \$3.99) gives information on the parent companies of more than 2800 products.

- **GOOGLE TRANSLATE** (Apple, Android, free) allows you to translate words and phrases from 50 languages.

Hello = Hola Ciao Halo Ahoj Hujambo Halla



- **GOOGLE SKY MAP** (Android, free) will indentify the stars, planets and constellations.

T.V.

Global Village, SBS two 6pm Wednesdays

What's on Around Us.....

Early Childhood Education Conference 2012: Together We Grow

Caulfield Racecourse June 1st – 2nd www.togetherwegrow.com.au

Debate Topic: Foreign Aid is a waste of money.

We're confronted with communities in need. Should we help and why?
July 4th, Melbourne Town Hall 6.30 – 8.30pm

<http://www.wheelercentre.com.au>

Institute of Family Studies Conference

Family Transitions and Trajectories, July 25 – 27th Melbourne.

<http://conference.aifs.gov.au/program.php>

Creating your next Courageous Steps® is being held at Melbourne Girls College Richmond between September 30th and October 3rd 2012. Australian Association Environment Education 2012 Conference. www.aaee.org.au



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

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

Block Play

"While block play is essential for both boys' and girls' social, cognitive, language, and motor development, girls do not engage in block play as frequently as boys. This situation can be attributed to the socialization process — children learn societal expectations for behaviour and materials for both boys and girls — lack of experience for girls with blocks, and attitudes of peers that cause girls to feel unwelcome in the block centre. There are important differences in the way boys and girls play with blocks; girls use blocks to create an extension of their place in the world, whereas boys are often more intent on the creation of structures and the innovative use of materials. Teachers need to be supportive and encouraging of girls to increase participation in the block centre and to use diverse strategies to insure that girls gain the important skills that are associated with block play." This advice comes from Barb Tokarz, writing in "Block Play: It's Not Just for Boys Anymore,"



Paediatricians Promote Play

"Play is essential to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being of children beginning in early childhood. It is a natural tool for children to develop resiliency as they learn to cooperate, overcome challenges, and negotiate with others. Play also allows children to be creative. It provides time for parents to be fully engaged with their children, to bond with their children, and to see the world from the perspective of their child... it is essential that parents, educators, and paediatricians recognize the importance of lifelong benefits that children gain from play."

The American Academy of Paediatrics published in the January issue of Paediatrics



Time In or Time Out

"An example may help to make the difference between the two approaches concrete. Suppose a child is acting up and disturbing the other children. If we take the punishment perspective, we might use the *time out* technique and put the child in another room or in an area away from the other children. Presumably this removal will teach the child to be less disruptive in the future. If, on the other hand, we take an instructive position, we might have a *time in*. That is, we might sit with the child and try to find out why she is upset. It might be the case that the child had a right to be angry, that he was excluded from a playgroup, was called a name, or was pushed. Once we have an idea of why the child was troubled, we have a much better chance of helping him to calm down and to rejoin the group. In the *time out*, a child learns that her feelings are ignored, and therefore of no value. A child given a *time in*, on the other hand, learns that his feelings are important and will be attended to. Which child is more likely to act out again?"

Helping Angry Children

"Opportunities for children to play out life's experiences allow them to replay their feelings and to analyse these so that they can come to understand and make sense of what is happening to them. Early childhood professionals, as a means of enabling children to practice and understand adult roles and relationships, have traditionally provided dramatic play through home corners, etc. However, the usual dress-ups, dolls, and tea sets can be intimidating for children with frightening or negative emotional experiences to deal with. A far safer option is to provide a small tray with doll house furniture and small figures that are representative of the child's immediate family. These could include grandparents, siblings, significant family friends, etc. depending on the child's circumstances. The play space should be in a quiet area that affords some privacy from the hustle and bustle of the main playroom area. The child is then able to engage in re-enactment of troubling situations at arm's length, without needing to be the main player — a situation that can be too threatening or scary. The child's need for some privacy must also be protected, as well as protecting other children in the group from observing situations that they may find strange or disturbing."



Rough and Tumble Play

Through the (very) physical interactions required in rough and tumble play, children are learning the give-and-take of appropriate social interactions. Successful participation in this play requires children to become adept at both signalling and detecting signals — a social skill they will need and use throughout their lives. When detecting these signals, they are learning to read and understand the body language signifying the play should come to an

end. The play also requires children to alternate and change roles. Sometimes one child chases; at another time the child is chased. Because this give-and-take mimics successful social conversations and interactions, the social roles practiced and learned in rough and tumble play provides children with the social knowledge needed for future relationships.

When children use this big-body play, the intense physical exertion of rough and tumble play also supports cardiovascular health. Through their involvement, young children get the moderate-to-vigorous physical activity needed for optimum physical health. And, because rough and tumble play is so physical, children get many of their vital touch needs met through the play. Because the preschool period is a critical period for children to develop both physically and emotionally, rough and tumble play for preschoolers is invaluable.



● **TV linked to Children's unhealthy eating**

A survey of more than 12000 students in grades 5 to 10 in the US has found that television viewing is associated not only with unhealthy snacking while watching, but also with unhealthy eating at all times.

Researchers asked the children how much TV they watched: how often they snacked while watching: how often they ate fruit, vegetables and confectionery, and drank soft drinks: how often they skipped breakfast. Viewing time among the children was associated with lower odds of eating fruit and vegetables daily and higher odds of skipping breakfast, consuming confectionery and sugar sweetened drinks and eating in fast food restaurants. Adjusting for snacking while watching TV did not change the associations, leading researchers to suggest that broadcast advertising influences eating choices even when children are away from the television.

New York Times

• **Inspire magazine (DEECD March 2012)**

Benefits of early language learning

Research shows that:

exposure to as little as one hour per week of a second language in the earliest years of primary school advances the age of readiness in English what we learn to do in one language helps us with any other language

- our first language and other languages work in partnership to strengthen and enrich our repertoire of literacy practices
- learning another language enhances the academic skills of students by increasing their abilities in writing and maths
- cognitive development can be greatly enhanced by learning several languages simultaneously
- learning other languages alters grey matter, the area of the brain which processes information, in the same way exercise builds muscles – and people who learn a second language at a younger age are more likely to have more advanced grey matter
- children in languages programs tend to demonstrate greater cognitive development and more creative thinking skills

ESPAÑOL

MOST STUDENTS at Mariemont Preschool transition to feeder school Regency Park Primary, which boasts a strong Spanish language program. Many of these primary students then go on to Wantirna Secondary College, where Spanish is also offered. The two schools have consequently developed strong language links. The result is a clear pathway for students to continue with the same language throughout their schooling, a pathway that it is hoped can be further reinforced through the introduction of language in the formative early years. With this in mind, Eastern Metropolitan region and the Education office of the Embassy of Spain developed a six-week pilot program to introduce Spanish language learning to Mariemont Preschool.

“We thought the program was especially beneficial for those transitioning to Regency Park Primary,” says Dominic Heyen, co-director of Mariemont Preschool, who taught one of the three groups that went through the pilot.

“It was a great introduction to Spanish and provided the children with an extra aspect of school they were familiar with, before they even began.”

Joanne Trusler was the teacher in charge of the other two pilot groups.

“Many of our children were so excited to be able to go home and show their

siblings as well as parents that they now knew Spanish ‘too’,” she says. “We saw the program as another link between preschool and school and thought it strengthened our transition program overall.”



The Victorian Government’s Vision for Languages Education outlines a long-term commitment to revolutionising languages education in Victorian schools and includes an objective to create the world’s most diverse and effective languages program.

In keeping with this objective the pilot addressed the need for children to start learning a language as early as possible, in the first few years of life.

. “Research is showing that this is a prime time of brain development and the more input from learning a second language at this age, the greater the connections within the brain will be and the better the outcome for lifelong learning and development.”

“Research indicates that when a child is bilingual it becomes much easier for them to learn a third or fourth language too. We certainly had children who were all very keen to learn new words and learn to speak a different language.”

Experienced educators who were native Spanish speakers conducted weekly half-hour sessions with the three Mariemont groups, introducing the students to basic Spanish vocabulary and cultural elements through storytelling, drama, singing, art, games and dance. The program also

incorporated parental involvement, with regular information and new language and online resources sent home.

“The preschool teachers would also use Spanish greetings and numbers outside the weekly Spanish session, which further strengthened the program,” says Ms Trusler. “Many of the children even began using Spanish spontaneously.”

Along with instilling language skills and strengthening the Spanish program in this cluster, key project aims were to develop global awareness in preschool-aged children, stimulate children’s creativity and imagination, help instil lifelong love of language learning, create positive and confident learners and promote language learning to the wider community.

“The program was very beneficial to the children,” says Ms Heyen. “When interviewed at the end of the program the children talked enthusiastically about the activities they enjoyed the most, such as role playing with puppets, songs and dancing. The children clearly understood the importance of knowing another language to communicate with native speakers and to use when travelling.”

The program was also found to have assisted children to develop awareness of different languages and of the Spanish sound system. It assisted with concentration skills and helped students learn to focus by participating in group and individual games.

DEECD is currently assessing the program in the hope that it can continue in this cluster. Its suitability for potential rollout into other areas, using a variety of languages, is also under consideration.



• The Pyramid Model of Teaching

The **Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)** is focused on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children birth to age 5. CSEFEL is a national resource center funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the country.

The **Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children**. We have developed extensive, user-friendly training materials, videos, and print resources which are available directly from this website to help early care, health and education providers implement this model.



Pyramid Model

Promoting Social and Emotional Competence
in Infants and Young Children

In 2011, Melbourne hosted a 3 day workshop on the Pyramid Model.

There were many educators, managers, preschool field officers and DEECD people attending to hear how the Model works in the early years environments. The Vanderbilt University supports the research and there are tools, vignettes and loads of information on their web site.

Well worth a look.



www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

• The Age Newspaper

Researchers point to a yawning gap in explaining child behaviour

Kate Murphy

April 23, 2012



DIAGNOSES of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) among children have increased dramatically in recent years, but experts believe that this may not be the epidemic it appears to be. Many children are given a diagnosis of ADHD, researchers say, when in fact they have another problem: a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnoea. The confusion may account for a significant number of ADHD cases in children, and the drugs used to treat them may only be exacerbating the problem. 'No one is saying ADHD does not exist, but there's a strong feeling now that we need to rule out sleep issues first,' said Dr Merrill Wise, a paediatric neurologist and sleep medicine specialist at the Methodist Healthcare Sleep Disorders Centre in Memphis.

The symptoms of sleep deprivation in children resemble those of ADHD. While adults experience sleep deprivation as drowsiness and sluggishness, sleepless children become wired, moody and obstinate; they may have trouble focusing, sitting still and getting along with peers. The latest study suggesting a link between inadequate sleep and ADHD symptoms appeared last month in the journal *Pediatrics*. Researchers followed 11,000 British children for six years, starting when they were six months old. The children whose sleep was affected by breathing problems such as snoring or apnoea

were 40 to 100 per cent more likely than normal breathers to develop behavioural problems resembling ADHD. Children at highest risk of developing ADHD-like behaviours had sleep-disordered breathing that persisted throughout the study but was most severe at age 2½.

"Lack of sleep is an insult to a child's developing body and mind that can have a huge impact," said Karen Bonuck, the study's lead author and a professor of family and social medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. "It's incredible that we don't screen for sleep problems the way we screen for vision and hearing problems." Her research builds on earlier studies showing children with night-time breathing problems did better with cognitive and attention-directed tasks and had fewer behavioural issues after their adenoids and tonsils were removed. The children were significantly less likely, than untreated children with sleep-disordered breathing, to be given an ADHD diagnosis afterwards. Most important, those found to have ADHD before surgery behaved so much better in many cases that they no longer fit the criteria. America's National Institutes of Health has begun a study to understand the effect of surgically removing adenoids and tonsils on the health and behaviour of 400 children.

"We're getting closer and closer to a causal claim" between breathing problems during sleep and ADHD symptoms in children, said Dr Ronald Chervin, a neurologist and director of University of Michigan Sleep Disorders Centre. In his view, behavioural problems linked to night-time breathing difficulties are likely a result of inadequate sleep than possible oxygen deprivation. "We see the same types of behavioural symptoms in children with other kinds of sleep disruptions," he said. Sleep experts note that children who lose as little as half an hour of needed sleep per night can exhibit behaviours typical of ADHD. Not only is a misdiagnosis stigmatising, but treatment of ADHD can exacerbate sleeplessness, the real problem. The drugs used to treat ADHD - Ritalin, Adderall or Concerta - can cause insomnia.

Sleep deprivation is difficult to spot in children and parents often are uninformed about healthy sleep habits. A study conducted last year by researchers at Penn State University-Harrisburg and published in The Journal of Sleep Research showed that of 170 participating parents, less than 10 per cent could correctly answer basic questions such as the number of hours of sleep a child needs.

Bearing the burden of brilliance

Elisabeth Tarica

April 23, 2012

Anne Grant's PhD thesis followed bright children.

EVEN as a four-year-old Michael's mind worked at a cracking pace. By the time he started kindergarten he would devour books, reading any material that he could lay his hands on and was easily solving grade 2 maths puzzles. But living with such an active mind produced its own trauma for the bright youngster.

His much-anticipated preschool experience quickly soured, leaving Michael in tears, frustrated and miserable. His teacher, who was kind and caring, put the crying and tantrums down to separation anxiety and worked hard to help him feel more settled and secure. Michael, however, continued to cry. He would often retreat to the library corner of the room where he found comfort in reading books. "His teacher would be worried that he wasn't socialising with the other children, so would haul him out to come and play with the others," says Melbourne University's Anne Grant, who for her PhD thesis followed Michael and six other bright children for an academic year.

"The teacher was trying to respond to his emotional and social needs but it was the fact that there was nothing really interesting at preschool for him that was upsetting him." In hindsight, Michael fitted the profile of a gifted child. He could already read and write and loved mathematics. On the first day of kindergarten, he announced: "I don't play with these sorts of toys, I'm not a child." The kindergarten's play-based environment was at odds with how he had been treated at home, leaving him struggling to find satisfying intellectual stimulation. His distress was misunderstood; the signs of brightness missed and like so many advanced children he was thought to be a problem child.

Dr Grant found this was not an isolated experience. Michael's story had elements similar to those of the other advanced preschoolers she had followed through kindergarten and into prep. They would cry, misbehave, become bored, angry and sometimes hostile because they could not

articulate their frustration at not having their educational needs met. "This seemingly immature behaviour confused early childhood teachers and made it less likely that new and interesting learning would be offered to them," she says. "With Michael, the teacher was trying to respond to his emotional and social needs but what he really needed was a learning environment that was similar to a one-on-one learning-style home," she says.

While teachers can readily identify the slow learners, the top cluster can be harder to spot. Dr Grant says a general lack of knowledge on gifted education can leave teachers struggling to recognise and properly teach advanced preschoolers.

Often, preschool teachers found out only by chance or by recognising small signs of a gifted child's abilities. Parents, usually the early spotters of brightness, are often reluctant to say anything. Her research also highlighted a broader problem: teachers don't have the resources to provide special attention to these children. "The teachers want to do their best and they all tried to meet their children's needs but they just couldn't see the needs for what they were because they didn't know much about the characteristics, so they tended to look for explanations in age-typical behaviours and they often came to the wrong conclusion."

Dr Grant, who worked as a preschool teacher for more than 20 years, had experienced similar scenarios. "I had a number of parents over the years who found their children had been very bright, happy learners at home and they'd come to preschool and things seemed to go really wrong and they were bewildered," she says. "Some of them would say to me 'We don't think you teachers know what to do with bright children' and I bristled and thought 'Yes, I do' and then realised 'Well, maybe I don't'."

It is estimated that there is a gifted child in every classroom, which equates to 5 per cent of the student population. The term gifted applies to those with an IQ above 130, but giftedness is not limited to academic achievement. Students may be gifted in areas relating to art, music, sport or interpersonal skills. Educators agree that highly intelligent children not challenged academically at an early age find the work too easy, become bored and often don't want to go to school.

Dr Grant cites a case of another boy, Peter, who was looking forward to starting school with his older brother. When he got there, the classroom was set up like a kindergarten. "Within a couple of days he no longer wanted to go because all they did was play and he was fed up," she says. "His parents had to drag him to school for several weeks and he cried for most of the term."

Research shows that gifted and talented children can excel if they receive appropriate education in childhood and adolescence. Dr Grant says a lack of recognition and support for intellectual potential during the early school years is a primary factor in underachievement. A recent parliamentary inquiry into the teaching of gifted and talented students highlighted issues teachers and schools face in recognising giftedness.

The inquiry heard that Victoria's state school system is failing to properly identify and teach its most gifted students, particularly those from poor, migrant or disadvantaged backgrounds. Students who hide their abilities to be accepted and those who have become disengaged with learning also tend to go unrecognised.

The Australian Catholic University argued in its submission that insufficient training of teachers meant they could not effectively spot gifted students. Every university should have a compulsory course in gifted education in their teaching degrees, says Carmel Meehan, president of the Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children and a former primary school principal with 20 years' experience.

"It is something that teachers are asked to come back and do after they've graduated," she says. "As a school principal, I've seen time and time again lovely young teachers with children who are really acting up and they can't work out why they are so naughty. And of course, when you look, you find out that that curriculum is not engaging them because they are way ahead of it. Boredom sets in and they're disillusioned." She says that even at the age of seven gifted children are "dumbing down" to mask their talents to achieve peer acceptance and class conformity

. Some of the most revealing conversations she has had with her bright students happened after they were sent out of the classroom for disruptive behaviour. "It was obvious that they were disengaged on a personal and academic level," she says. Ms Meehan says advanced children need an enhanced curriculum and teachers who have the passion and dedication to understand their needs and to help fulfil them.

While the state government has given some secondary schools considerable support for gifted children through its SEAL (select entry accelerated learning) program, primary schools are not as well equipped. Ms Meehan says the best gifted education models were SEAL and others at independent schools that had dedicated, full-time gifted education teachers.

The findings of the parliamentary inquiry in gifted education are expected to be released next month.



VICTORIAN EDUCATION EXCELLENCE AWARDS -2011.

Follow up.....

Victoria Teachers Credit Union Outstanding Early Childhood Award winner was **Gisella Benetti** (Knoxfield Preschool). Gisella Benetti won \$10000 to use to further her study in implementing the internationally recognised 'Roots of Empathy' program in Victoria.

Roots of Empathy's mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.

www.rootsofempathy

Gisella has left Australia for New York where she is currently attending conferences and visiting schools that are using the Program. Gisella is accompanied by her husband and will return in May.



THE EARLY YEARS AWARDS- 2011

Follow up.....

Deb Moore, who was instrumental in Knox City Council in winning the Early Years Award for Sustainability in October 2011, has relocated from Knox to Australian Catholic University to undertake further research in her PhD in the area of Early Years. Deb is one of many 'kindergarten teachers' who have taken their passion on to further enhancing the educational experiences of our young children in their formative years. We wish her well in her research.



M e d i a R e l e a s e

JENNY MACKLIN MP
Minister for Families, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
Minister for Disability Reform

JULIE COLLINS MP
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development
Minister for the Status of Women

\$5 million boost for services supporting vulnerable families

(Apply from April 23rd)

Grassroots support services for vulnerable children and their families will benefit from access to a \$5 million funding boost from the Australian Government.

Organisations working in the community across Australia will be able to apply for a one-off grant of up to \$200,000 to help them better manage the impact of child abuse and neglect and deliver more targeted services for children.

The protection and safeguarding of children is our number one priority and is the responsibility of all governments. All children deserve a safe, healthy and happy childhood and this one-off investment will help strengthen local partnerships between organisations, services and the community to deliver local solutions.

Importantly, the funding will also improve community understanding of child abuse and neglect. At today's meeting, federal, state and territory Ministers praised the success of the First Action Plan of the *National Framework for*

Protecting Australia's Children in building firm foundations for future actions to protect families at risk.

On the back of the success of the First Action Plan, Ministers today also agreed the Second Action Plan of the National Framework will now focus on working together, including strengthening partnerships between government and the community sector to improve access to services for vulnerable children and their families.

Under the plan, governments will also develop and implement strategies to reduce risk factors for child abuse and neglect, particularly for Indigenous children.

The one-off funding grants will be available under the *Child Aware Approaches* initiative, part of the Commonwealth's commitment to the second three-year action plan under the National Framework. The funding will help build the evidence base through research and evaluation of existing services and to assist existing services to promote, adopt or enhance good practice.

This could include existing women's safety, mental health, substance abuse and family and children's support organisations.

By supporting these organisations, we are giving these services opportunities to develop the tools and know-how to better able to respond to the risks and issues affecting the safety and wellbeing of children.

The Gillard Government, together with the state and territory governments, and these organisations, is putting the interests of children first and foremost.

Today's announcement also builds on work already undertaken under the National Framework on Building Capacity, Building Bridges and the Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support.

The *Child Aware Approaches* initiative is part of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, and is also linked to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* and *National Mental Health Reform*.

For more information, please visit www.fahcsia.gov.au.

Media Contacts: Joe Scavo 0409679924 (Collins) Gerard Richardson 0417066818 (Macklin)

Bienvenido



Introducing and welcoming our new Council member

Maree Wiggins

Maree is currently working as a Preschool Field Officer in Brimbank City Council.

Maree's first teaching position was in Dunkeld then onto St Josephs Kindergarten from 1980 -1992. St Josephs' ran an extended hour's program working closely with family services, protective services, aboriginal community and refugees.

Maree then changed jobs to work as a research assistant with the Education Department on a longitudinal study following secondary school leavers from two Frankston Secondary colleges. Ex students were interviewed about their current positions of employment or study.

Maree underwent further studies specialising in Social Emotional Development in Early Childhood and graduated with a Diploma in Special Education from Melbourne State College. When doing this course it became apparent that her qualifications gave her an advantage against other primary/secondary teachers. Her Early Childhood training gave Maree a strong understanding and connection about how children learn and develop. To this day she believes that to be effective educators of children, training in early childhood development and special education are a good marriage and provide excellent teaching strategies to support children's growth.

Maree went on to further studies at La Trobe University, studying theories of girls/women in Education and social emotional development. Maree followed on from here in 1987 to do research coursework at La Trobe on 'The role of Teacher Intervention on Children's Resolutions'.

Maree then worked as a kindergarten teacher at Yappera Thornbury from 1993 – 97. She was the only non-aboriginal person teaching and forged a deep appreciation of the indigenous community which she will always be eternally grateful for the opportunity. Her respect for the indigenous community was nurtured through their support and acceptance.

In 1996, Maree worked part time as a research assistant at La Trobe University in an Intergenerational Literacy study with two groups or participants.

In 1997, Maree began working as a Preschool Field Officer. In this role she has strived to strengthen the child's place in their community. Resourcing Kindergarten Teachers to promote their relationships with the children, their families and the community. To establish strong rapport with families so that they will make the demands to access the services and resources that will assist their child's participation in the community.

Maree enjoys the networking and building bridges between services to better support families and children.



OBITUARIES



Shirley Lander

Canterbury, Victoria



Rest In Peace

2012 AUDAX

We are planning to offer 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 2012.

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.

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