



**Early Childhood
Australia**
A voice for young children

Newsletter

Dear ECA Members and Friends,

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2012. I hope you have all managed to have some time to relax and reflect on 2011.

The ECA year has started with the announcement by our CEO Pam Cahir that she will be retiring in the middle of July this year. Pam has been instrumental in leading ECA for 20 years, her energy, passion and commitment is something that has been widely admired among professionals. ECA National office is working towards the recruitment of a new CEO – more details will be provided as they become available. We wish Pam every success.

2012 has started with many changes in Early Childhood Settings with the introduction of the National Quality Standard. Included in this newsletter is an update from the ACT Regulatory body. It is a time of change for early childhood settings and ECA is committed to supporting the local community. Please don't hesitate to contact the branch if there is any way we can support your service.

I suggest if you haven't already you look at the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website for updates and you can register for their newsletter at www.acecqa.gov.au.

Other resources are also available on the ECA website www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Included in the mail out of this newsletter is our second article in our Belong, Being, Becoming article series. This article is written by Miriam Giugni titled 'Rethinking everyday 'becoming' in early childhood'. I encourage you to share this article with other early childhood educators and to unpack the ideas Miriam shares with us.

As we move through a change process the ACT Branch is committed to supporting our members, other branches and the goals and vision on ECA. This year the ACT branch will continue to advocate for young children and support members through

- Working towards developing our RAP plan and we encourage anyone who is interested to contribute to this process to contact the branch.
- Providing affordable and relevant professional

learning for all early childhood educators.

- Ensuring we have regular communication with our members through newsletter and emails.
- Updating our constitution.
- Providing student sponsorship to the ECA conference which will be held in Perth.

Members are welcome and encouraged to attend local meetings. It is a great way to be involved in the branch and provides a fantastic opportunity to meet other early childhood educators and is your opportunity to bring issues to the table. Meetings are held every 4-6 weeks at various locations across town. Please email the branch to find out the next meeting date and location. New members are most welcome at any time.

Katie

ACT Branch President

Save the Date

ECA Biannual
conference is on this
year in Perth 3-6
October

Unbuttoning a Rich Experience

A Learning Journey that was born from an everyday occurrence.....

Blue Gum Community School
Pre-School Campus
Dickson, ACT



It all began with staff observing children's joy and desire for celebration as they were mastering the often tricky job of buttoning up and unbuttoning their winter clothes. Educators decided to extend this joy to a new provocation and set up a table with baskets hosting a variety of buttons in our Art Studio one morning. It was soon evident that we all had something to share about these haberdashery items. Our investigations and conversations lent themselves to sharing our button experiences and using the buttons to express ideas and theories; particularly around patterns and colour shades. The following weeks saw our button desires and interest move from clothing rituals and Art Studio explorations to all over pre-school. We were playing Bingo with them in the garden, adding them to our built masterpieces in the Construction Area, painting

their various characteristics at the easels, hunting for them in beloved stories, all the time questioning their usage and individualism – are any two buttons ever really the same?? As we continued investigating and finding new uses for our buttons, we soon discovered a problem; we did not have enough buttons at pre-school. After several group meetings and debate it was decided that a letter home to our families, neighbours and grandparents was the answer, as we needed to seek out new and interesting buttons to explore!! Children devised a letter, wrote it out, made copies and addressed envelopes ready for families to receive. As always when a contextual note is brought home, communication takes on a whole new meaning, we were soon flooded with buttons at pre-school, a fabulous celebration of the generosity we can engage with when learning is a process acknowledging partnerships. We decided to give our investigations a new life and we presented the children with a canvas for their button ideas to be worked upon. Two old doors had been removed from one of our buildings during a revamp when it was repainted earlier in the year. One door we had used during our Mosaic studies earlier in the year and the other remained plain – now was the perfect time to give it new life!! And so the door was laid down in our Art Studio and soon we began using the buttons to re-vamp it, to re-invent it, to re-inspire it!! Soon we were using this sustainable canvas to sort our buttons into various colour shades of warm and cool, yet this time our sorting needed to be

done within the framework of a set canvas, we needed to take into account the mathematics of the space we were now working with. To date, adorned with gloves, we have completely covered one side of our door, securing our precious buttons with heavy duty outdoor tiling glue and we have the other side in our sights!! The idea of finding a home in our garden for our door, along with our initial mosaiced door, is now being discussed as we work. We hope to have this amazing installation incorporated into our garden as an end of year celebration. This Learning Journey was born simply from educators listening, with all our senses, to children. The listening was then revisited to lead to a provocation. Little did we know 6 months ago that those baskets of buttons were going to lead to such a rich experience for us all. On reflection it should have been more obvious as we have all had an experience with a button, it is an item in life that we have all encountered and can share not only the experience but a piece of who we are as we communicate our encounters, our knowledge and our understandings. Children's natural inclination for wonder in life led to their relationships that formed with this medium, creating numerous languages along the way. Children's desire for the care and protection of our world shone through as we encouraged them to look deeper at the ordinary and through looking deeper we discover the extraordinary. Our sustainable journey has seen many "old" things develop a whole new meaning, a whole new

life, with respect to their past and hope in their future.

The future is our installed doors, which are a piece of our 2011 history becoming an interactive member of our garden. It will lend itself to new questions, new listening and new research, it will also cause us to reflect on the absolute privilege and necessity it is to work in a way that views children as competent, capable, creative, resourceful, resilient and responsible. When we view children through this lens, anything is possible.....



Children's Policy and Regulation Unit Update

The ACT Government is continuing to partner closely with the education and care profession to implement the National Quality Framework.

The ACT Government has made it a priority to maintain an ongoing consultative position with our local sector. In the lead up to implementation, the ACT Government has arranged a number of key events such as the Children's Services Roundtable, Children's Services Forums, Education and Care Meetings and Information sessions which have all been well received and well attended.

In 2011, the ACT Minister for Community Services, Ms Joy Burch MLA, hosted two Children's Services Roundtable community discussions with the sector. These discussions provided a forum for

open dialogue in regard to the way in which the ACT would implement the new regulatory system and how the ACT Government may support the sector with implementing the National Quality Framework.

We were also excited to introduce a new style of Education and Care Meetings in which we invited key note speakers who provided academic perspectives on the new framework and then participated in a panel discussion with questions from the audience. Sector members who attended found it extremely informative and we will be continuing these meetings in 2012.

With the passing of the *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011* within the ACT, we conducted a number of information sessions on the new law and regulations. This gave the sector an early opportunity to engage with the new legislative framework and have individual questions answered. We were also more than happy to accommodate educators from over our border in NSW.

The Legislative Assembly has also passed amendments to the *Education Act 2004* which requires ACT public school preschool unit to note the *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011*. This will bring ACT public school preschool units under the *National Law* for the first time.

The National Quality Framework will see a number of new reforms for both the education and care sector and the ACT Government. We will continue to work in partnership with the ACT sector

to implement these necessary reforms and recognise the valuable contribution this new framework will provide to the children of Australia.

Finally, we would like to take this opportunity to recognise the valuable and important work that is undertaken by educators both in the ACT and across the country every day. The sector is rarely publically acknowledged and we wish to take this opportunity to say a big thank you. It is clear to see the sector is welcoming the new reforms and are ready to implement from 1 January 2012.

The new national body, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has been established and provides comprehensive resources for the education and care sector in relation to the National Quality Framework, early childhood research and additional research resources. These resources can be found on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority website at the following web address – www.acecqa.gov.au

Contact Us

Children's Policy and Regulation Unit

Community Services Directorate
Australian Capital Territory
Government

Website: www.dhcs.act.gov.au

E-mail:

ocyfsChildrensServices@act.gov.au

GPO Box 158
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601
Phone: (02) 6207 1114
Fax: (02) 6207 1128

ACT Children's Forum

The ACT branch of ECA has been invited for a number of years to be a representative on the *ACT Children's Services Forum*.

The *ACT Children's Services Forum* was established in 2007 and has been providing an avenue to share information, inform and consult with key representatives of ACT children's services on issues within the early childhood education and care sectors. The *ACT Children's Services Forum* is the peak representative for the ACT's education and care profession. The Forum is comprised of members from across long day care, family day care, preschools and outside of school hours care. The *ACT Children's Services Forum* is chaired by Minister Joy Burch.

In 2011 the Forum has had a particular focus on the National Quality Framework. The membership has an important role in discussing and developing initiatives to contribute to the ongoing implementation of the Framework in the ACT.

An invitation in March and September this year was extended by Minister Birth to a wide representation from Education and Care, to attend a round table discussion. The first ACT Children's Services Roundtable was held in April 2011. The Roundtable was

well attended by approximately 70 educators, directors, coordinators and managers from the education and care sector. The Roundtable elicited a significant amount of responses and innovative ideas.

To address the innovative ideas from the round table a subcommittee of the ACT Children's Services Forum has been established.

This sub-committee has responsibility for developing responses to:-

Promotion of the Education and Care sector and Workforce issues

- Promotion of the positives of the sector;
- Promote the flexibility of employment opportunities;
- Careers promotion;
- Advertisement opportunities;

Training

- Identified needs for the training and education sector
- Establishment of an RTO network
- Addressing issues around quality of training

Education and Care Network

At the ACT Children's Services Directors Meeting held on 9 August 2011 a session was facilitated by Carol Lymbery to progress the sectors ideas for a network. A number of key questions were asked of the sector including expression of interest for a steering committee for the

development and establishment of the Education and Care network. The first meeting of the steering committee to establish the Education and Care network was held on Thursday 29 September 2011 facilitated by Wendy McDuff (CPRU), Julie Rutups (ECA) and Sarah Kirk (CPRU) to establish terms of reference for the network.

The central theme for the goals for the Education and care network were identified as:

I. Advocacy and lobbying.

Providing a voice for the education and care profession.

II. Lift the professionalism of the sector.

- Create respect for educators currently in the sector.
- Challenge and raise the views of families and community.
- Encourage educators to view themselves as professionals.

III. Networking and sharing.

- The sector need to own the agenda
- Capacity for sharing resources
- Collaboration between all the sectors
- Creating a sense of belonging and building relationships
- Creating a sense of social justice and equity

- Recognising the collective voice
- IV. Celebrating achievements.**
- V. Evaluating professional practises.**

The second meeting for the Education and care Network was held on the 20th October, 2011 which progressed the definition and advertisement of Board positions for the network. Nominations for the positions of the board closed Monday 14th October.

If you would like further information about the ACT Children's Services Forum, the RTO Network and or the Education and Care Network please don't hesitate to contact the ACT ECA Branch on ECAACT@earlychildhood.org.au or Julie Rutups on 620 73569.



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Keynote speakers

Colin Pidd (Aus) a Director of an international consulting company BTLi, works all over the world with some of the world's most iconic companies and organisations. He specialises in communication, leadership conversations and influencing strategies.

Ferre Laevers (Belgium) is Director of the Research Centre for Experiential Education based at Leuven University (Belgium). The Experiential Education project has generated a framework for quality assessment and quality improvement, suitable for a wide range of settings.

Gunilla Dahlberg (Sweden) Professor of Early Childhood Education, Stockholm Institute of Education. Dr. Dahlberg is a leading international scholar in the area of social welfare policy for young children and their families, and in the area of identifying the theoretical and policy implications of a 'postmodern' view of children's development.

Helen Milroy (Aus) is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Helen works as a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist at the Bentley Family Clinic and Families At Work residential programme, and as a Professor and Director for the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health at the University of Western Australia.

Iram Siraj-Blatchford (London) is Professor of Early Childhood Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. Iram is interested in early childhood education, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and

the impact of learning in school and home. She is an expert in mixed method and qualitative research analysis and case study work and is currently working on longitudinal studies as a principal investigator in a number of countries including the UK, Australia and Ireland.

Pauline Harris (Aus) is a world-renowned early childhood academic with particular expertise in children's language and literacy. Pauline has an outstanding international record in early childhood research, strongly underpinned by social justice principles.

More information about our keynote speakers coming soon.