



Imagining the possible...

The new national early childhood learning framework promises

"innovative models" (Maxine McKew) and offers us opportunities to rethink early childhood pedagogies* (teaching and learning). We need to see curriculum approaches that listen to children, document children's learning, recognise the social nature of learning by providing children with opportunities to revisit or 're-launch' their learning via discussion with their caregivers, educators and parents.

Ultimately teachers, artists and educational experts need to collaborate within the environment for the benefit of children.

Take the example of the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children that puts the natural development of children as well as the close relationships that they share with their environment at the centre of its philosophy. The Reggio approach shows a respect for the child, believing that the central reason that a child must have control over his or her day-to-day activity is that learning must make sense from the child's point of view.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reggio_Emilia_approach

Reggio Children (Italy) offers us a particular understanding of the **environment as another teacher**, a place for children in which work and play, reality and fantasy, science and imagination, sky and earth, reason and dream are things that do belong together. While we cannot take Reggio out of Italy, we can use what happens there as a starting point for reflecting on the way we value children, families, teachers, experts and the environment.

When we imagine the environment is another teacher, it is possible to see

- a pedagogy (teaching and learning) where play and learning are integrated
- a place that informs and engages the viewer
- varied spaces designed to encourage playful encounters
- children given room to take the initiative and contribute to activities within their own experiences
- a play climate in the early years of school
- teachers organising their teaching around play
- meaningful relationships between children, teachers and communities

Reggio gives us cause to reflect on how we understand our use of environment, our attention to the aesthetic, photographic documentation of projects and pedagogy, the prominence of visual art and science alongside the language and ideas of the children and teachers. The Reggio approach reinforces the **importance of listening to children's feelings and thoughts**, the power of teachers collaboration, the power of including parents and the need for support from the wider community.

** PEDAGOGY is both the behaviour of teaching and being able to talk about and reflect on teaching. Pedagogy encompasses both what practitioners actually DO and THINK and the principles, theories, perceptions and challenges that inform and shape it. It connects being an early years educator with personal, cultural and community values (including care), curriculum structures and external influences.*

National Early Years Learning Framework

The Australian Government has committed to developing a national Early Years Learning Framework which will have a specific emphasis on play-based learning, early literacy and numeracy skills and social development. The Framework will be linked to the National Quality Standards for Child Care and Preschool to ensure they encompass a nationally consistent and quality early childhood education component. The Framework will be developed in consultation with State and Territory Governments and early childhood experts and educators. An expert panel has been established as a reference group to guide the development of the Early Years Learning Framework... The consortium is developing a paper which will include: principles, the core components of a high quality learning framework; current research, practices and strategies on how children best learn and develop; and the facilitation of a symposium to provide comment and refinement for the paper.

Excerpt from email sent by Kindergarten Parents Victoria, PO BOX 1246, Collingwood, Australia.

A challenge for the National Early Childhood Consortium will be to define pathways for Queensland childcare workers to become highly qualified.

Currently, Queensland's childcare workers are the nation's most inexperienced.

Fewer than one in 10 of the primary contact staff in the state's centres have worked for three years or more in the profession. The Australian government figures from 2006, which were released last month, show South Australia has more than double Queensland's proportion of experienced childcare workers, with almost one in five staffers notching up three or more years in the job. Statistics show Queensland also lags behind NSW and Victoria, where about 15 per cent of the workforce has been in place for three years or longer.

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,23842775-3102,00.html>