

Capture the moment:  
Using digital photography in early childhood settings

Kim Walters



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# Contents

- ii About the author
- 1 Introduction
- 3 Communication through documentation
- 5 Slideshows
- 7 Wall documentation
- 9 Portfolios
- 11 Digital portfolios
- 13 Digital group journals
- 14 Storybooks
- 16 Legalities of using photos
- 18 DIY resources
- 21 Conclusion
- 22 References and further reading

# Introduction

Photographs have been used in early childhood settings for a very long time, and now digital photography has made access to photographs immediate. This immediacy is, in turn, creating new opportunities for stimulating healthy communication and learning among children, parents and staff in early childhood programs.

Educators across the world are embracing the new technologies available to them and incorporating them into their pedagogies.

The value of digital photography became evident to me when I discovered how easy it could be to insert photos into Microsoft Word and PowerPoint documents, in order to document learning and create resources that were engaging and motivating for children.

Then I started to use these photo-enhanced documents to communicate with parents about day-to-day happenings. The introduction of digital photos to document children's learning stimulated parents' interest and they became more aware of the play-based learning within our negotiated curriculum. The documentation allowed us to make visible the link between the children's interests and questions, and the curriculum that staff in our centre created to enhance and stimulate their learning. Parents could now see the individual respect given to their child and others within the group, and they developed a new appreciation for the quality of the program. They became more involved, asked questions and thus found they had a role to play in the development of the curriculum.

When we photograph a child or group of children involved in an experience we are saying 'what you are doing is so important to us that we need to record it'. I believe this gives immediate and strong messages to children that we value their work and contributions to the



**'When we photograph a child or group of children involved in an experience we are saying "what you are doing is so important to us that we need to record it".'**

group. When photos of children involved in learning experiences are displayed around the room, on computers, in storybooks, posters and portfolios, and used in games, we establish within the room a sense of belonging and ownership for those children.

Further information regarding the use of cameras and other multimedia resources, the importance of reciprocity in parent–staff communications and the importance of demonstrating value for children’s work can be found in the references.

I would like to acknowledge the thousands of early childhood professionals who, over the past five years, have generously shared, with myself and others, their digital photo ideas. There is nothing more creative than a group of enthusiastic early childhood professionals networking together.



All journeys, especially those into the unknown, can be filled with anxiety and struggles. Throughout my journey into the digital age, as I slowly taught myself how to use a computer and later a digital camera—learning by trial and error—I held an unwavering belief that this new technology would be valuable in all pedagogical work.

If you are about to embark on your own digital journey, I hope this book will inspire you to take your first steps and keep you motivated and enthusiastic along the way. For those who are already on their journey, I hope it will provide you with further stimulation and ideas.



## Capture the moment: Using digital photography in early childhood settings

Digital photography opens up a whole new world of communication within early childhood settings, giving scope for devising more effective ways of engaging children, producing resources and encouraging interaction with parents.

Kim Walters shares her journey of discovery in *Capture the moment: Using digital photography in early childhood settings*. Kim outlines how implementing her ideas has led to positive outcomes for children and parents, through the use of such materials as:

- digital portfolios
- storybooks featuring photos of children in the group (a powerful tool for emergent literacy)
- games, puzzles and charts created with input from children
- resources which encourage independence
- resources to enhance communication with families.

The many examples of digital photography show how the creative involvement of children leads to powerful 'teachable moments', stimulating positive participation in learning and motivating sustained interest.

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