

The Parenting Imperatives II Conference

The South Australian branch of ECA offered sponsorship to help early childhood professionals to attend this conference on Saturday the 27th of May. Here is some feedback from 3 child care professionals who took advantage of this sponsorship.

This was the first conference that we had attended as child care professionals. It was a valuable opportunity for us to listen and talk to people from diverse child oriented professions, and share ideas and opinions with others.

The keynote speakers captured our interest on many levels, as we were able to relate their focus to the community we work with at CaFE Enfield. Keynote speakers Dr Gary Robinson and Yomei Jones presented their early intervention program, *Let's Start*, based in the Tiwi islands. We felt this related strongly to our work. Although the program is run in a different cultural context, staff are faced with similar challenges in getting families involved and supporting their cultural backgrounds. We were lucky enough to talk with Yomei after her presentation, and we were able to recognise many similarities between our programs.

The second keynote speaker of the day, Rosemary Roberts from the UK, presented some of the findings from her work related to children's and families' wellbeing. Rosemary pointed out that the child's home is the most powerful influence on their wellbeing, and that early relationships between 0-3 years are vital. As we care for children in this age group this highlighted the importance of developing and fostering children's wellbeing.

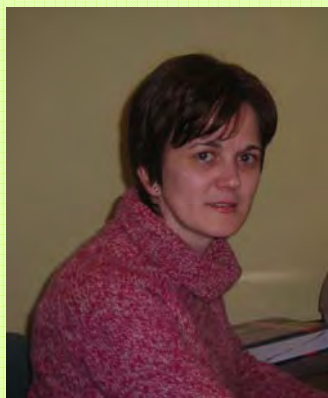
Thank you ECA for the opportunity to attend this conference. As recent graduates, it highlighted the importance of keeping our professional knowledge up-to-date, as well as the value of talking to people from other related fields.

Sonia Marks and Jane Robinson
CaFE Enfield Child Care Centre



The Parenting Imperatives II Conference was a great opportunity to hear national and international speakers present current research findings.

Listening to Professor James McKenna, from the US, talk about babies and sleep and Rosemary Roberts from the UK, talk about the importance of children's wellbeing has helped me to reflect on my practice as a child care educator in the baby room.



It was such a privilege to listen to the presentation of Dr. Gary Robinson and Yomei Jones, from Northern Territory, about the innovative programs with Aboriginal parents and children on the Tiwi Islands. The focus is on building and encouraging parent interactions with their children while they attend the program. I found this interesting especially now that there is a lot happening in their community. I was so inspired by the presenters' care and approach to working with Aboriginal communities and the importance placed on building relationships between parents, children and families.

Many thanks ECA.

Hiba Mulaibrahimovic
QEH Community Child Care Centre

Who knew there was so much to a nappy change...?!

One centre's experience of participating in the Childcare Practitioners Inquiry

The Childcare Practitioners Inquiry is a DECS funded project, aimed at improving outcomes for children in our care by creating a more skilled and professional workforce. The sites involved take an aspect of their practice, which is of interest or concern to them and place it 'under a microscope' to see how or where it can be improved.

At North East Community Child Care Centre we decided to take a closer look at how our relationships with children at routine times can help them to develop; trust in infants, autonomy in toddlers and initiative in kindy-age children. As Team Leader in the baby room, it has been my task to guide our team whilst we look at nappy-changes as more 'experience' than 'routine'.

We started by putting out a questionnaire to parents to find out things like how the number of changes compared (if we do more, does more quantity = less quality?) and whether our parents place importance on interacting during changes (they do). We photographed the change area and immediately brainstormed lots of possible changes (strange what you notice in a photo but not in the day to day).

We made a chart of what a 'good' change; looks like, feels like and sounds like to identify a common ideal for ourselves.

After some training with Jenny Zada (TAFE) and Sue Coad (DECS) in using *Ferre Laevers* scales for well-being and involvement, we devised an observational tool to suit our purpose and used it with mixed success (Hey, we're just learning!). We also designed a *12 Steps to a Nappy Change* chart and a tool based on the *We Can Make A Difference* book and used these for

observation too. Collating and graphing these results has been interesting, particularly for me, a somewhat mathematically challenged individual! We have almost finished our data collection now and are at the exciting point of actually MAKING the changes. Obviously both attitudinal and environmental changes will be needed and once the changes have 'settled', we'll re-observe and (hopefully) notice improvements!!

Throughout the project we have been privileged to share in the wisdom of some exceptional people. From DECS we have Dr. Pam Winter, as well as Sue Coad and Jose Thompson. Jenny Zada from Gilles Plains TAFE has been an invaluable support and sounding board. I think every one has enjoyed the knowledge and passion of Dr. Alma Fleet, Associate Professor Early Childhood, Macquarie University, who flies in full of enthusiasm for our regular meetings.

Personally, I have learnt an enormous amount already from the project, everything from GANTT charts to how to interpret data. I've been challenged and invigorated by our group sessions and learnt a lot about my own capabilities too. I'm looking forward to seeing what happens next!!

Vicki Randell

Team Leader, Joey Room
N.E.C.C.C.C.



We would love to hear from you!

We want to acknowledge the work of South Australian early childhood practitioners, so if you are involved in an interesting project, innovative practice or action research please share it with us. Email your story, with a photograph if possible, to

italia.parletta@tafesa.edu.au

or post it to the address on the front of the newsletter.

Teachers Registration

The Teachers Registration Board of South Australia, in collaboration with a Professional Standards Working Party, consisting of representatives from the Government and non-Government sectors, professional associations, unions and the tertiary sector, is developing professional teaching standards and a Code of Ethics for teacher registration purposes. Standards are being established within a wider context of the MCEETYA National Framework for Professional Standards and legislation.

If you would like to contribute to the development of professional teaching standards and a Code of Ethics for registration come along to the next ECA meeting 17th July, 6- 6.45pm, EDC Milner St. Our guest speaker will be Dr Susanne Owen, Project Officer from the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia.

Meeting with Sherry Thompson

ECA - SA Branch were pleased to be able to discuss a number of current issues in the early childhood sector with Sherry Thompson, Executive Director, Office of Early Childhood Services, who was the guest speaker at our executive meeting on Monday 15th May.

Her responses to our questions gave us a comprehensive account of the current status of qualified staff exemptions in children's services, progress with the new Early Childhood Development Centres and the work being undertaken by Licensing and Standards in DECS.

Sherry contributed to a lively discussion about ways of addressing staff shortages and the implications for education and training. This generated ideas for future actions which our branch intends to pursue.

We look forward to working with Sherry Thompson in the future and to strengthening our partnership with DECS.

Italia Parletta

EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA INVITES YOU TO:

AN INTRODUCTION TO MULTILITERACIES

With Dr Maureen O'Rourke and Kaye Fletcher

Saturday July 29th 9.00 – 12.30

Education Development Centre Hindmarsh

Room G11 A&B

The morning will provide participants with an overview of multiliteracies, the different modes of communication and implications for teaching young learners. It will include demonstration and analysis of work.

Certificates for time will be provided

Cost \$20 for ECA members /\$25 non-members/\$5 students

To register ecdc.staff@enfieldecdc.sa.edu.au by 24-7-2006

Strengths-Based Practice made easy

Wayne McCashen's work in counseling and social work in rural Victoria has led to the production of a number of useful resources that are available via the St Luke's website (details below) - you may be familiar with their *strength-based* and *angel with attitude* cards, or their bear stickers. Wayne's latest book, *The Strengths Approach*, works from the premise that individuals or groups construct meaning from their own experiences, that they know what their key issues are and can tailor-make their own solutions using their own resources.

Beginning with the strengths-based values base, the book describes a flexible five column framework that enables facilitators to work with, rather than on, people's issues. Using this framework, the facilitator asks questions to evoke concrete descriptions of situations, of what is working, available resources and strengths and, importantly, a desired future state. Attention is shifted from perceived issues towards achievable solutions that draw from the knowledge, the skills and resourcefulness of the client rather than the worker. The aim is transformation through self-determination.

In keeping with the philosophy, the processes are seen as simply a means and not placed above the basic principles of accountability and user-ownership. The book has ample examples of how users can adapt the techniques and remain in control of information and activity.

The philosophy of building on strengths is very familiar to those of us with experience of early childhood education and care. It endears me to this successful model that can make it work for all. It fits well with the constructivist perspective of the South Australian Curriculum and Standards Accountability Framework, the *appreciative enquiry* model and the work of Virtual Village enabling committees. Most importantly, it is dependent on the identification and diffusion of power imbalances, both within organisations and between them and those they work with.

DECS Family Day Care has been working with Wayne McCashen over the last two years to improve its ability to work through day-to-day and long-term planning at a local and organisational level. We are now working with partners to encourage and develop the use of strengths-based practice by both staff and careproviders. I recommend this very practical book to all.

For more information have a look at <http://www.innovativeresources.org/>

John Buckell
FDC Policy Officer



Early Childhood Code of Ethics Revision

The current revision of the ECA early childhood Code of Ethics has significance for us all. It reflects the need for a contemporary guide and framework for educators and citizens in our society, when individuals are making more decisions on a wider range of issues in their lives, and those of children, than ever before. Our professional and personal responses to the consequences of this environment are not to be underestimated.

It is important that all members of ECA have the chance to reflect on our revised Code of Ethics. Of particular note are the inclusion of sections about employers and our attitudes towards research. Both reflect areas that have seen great change over the last few years.

For copies of the draft Code of Ethics and to send comments, questions or ideas for the ECA working party contact John Buckell at buckellj@picknowl.com.au no later than Friday 11 August.