Demystifying Special Interest Groups (SIGS)

Water play is essential play

Biodiversity the essence of life

Energy Matters

For children to truly learn to conserve water, they must first experience it’s wonder.

“Take your shoes off and connect with Country”.

Everything in the universe is made of energy

ECA Victorian Branch Open Meeting – August 2015
Tracy Young Environmental Sustainability SIG Convenor
What is a SIG?

A Special Interest Group (SIG) is a community of people formed within the framework of a larger organisation, with a shared interest in **advancing a specific area of knowledge or learning**. Members meet to share ideas and to produce solutions within their particular field so each group is different and is led from the members.

The purpose of a SIG is to **create a forum for differing interests to have a voice in the association**. SIGs facilitate communication on topics of interest to members and offer additional opportunities for participation within the organisation. Each group has its own organisation that comes from the SIG members. Sometimes they produce a newsletter, discussion forums, publications, or convene conference streams on topics of its special interest.
Exploring SIGs in other organisations

National Dance Education Organisation (USA)

- Advocacy – 1155 members
- Dance and disability – 802 members
- Early childhood – 792 members
- K-12 – 1715 members
- Higher education – 1334 members
- Private sector – 1016 members
- Research – 1135 members
- Students – 755 members
- Performing arts – 1048
- Men in Dance - 432
Exploring SIGs in other organisations

- Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Research
- Arts Education Practice
- Assessment Measurement
- Doctoral Education research
- Early Childhood – Convened by Andrea Nolan and Joce Nuttal
- Educational Leadership
- Educational Theory and Philosophy
- Gender, Sexualities and Cultural Studies
- Global contexts for K-12 Education
- Health and Physical Education
- History and Education
- Inclusive Education
- Language and Literacy
- Middle years of schooling
- Motivation and Learning
- Narrative Research
- Politics and Policy in Education
- Poststructural Theory
- Professional and Higher Education
- Rural Education
- Social Justice
- Sociocultural Activity Theory
- Sociology of Education
- Teacher Education and Research Innovation
- Teachers work and Lives
- Technology and Learning

Members of AARE can join up to three SIGs.

SIGs can apply to the organisation for grant funding for events, speakers or conference days.

Each SIG has a convenor and co-convenor.
Exploring SIGs in other organisations

National Association American Environmental Educators (USA)

PURPOSE OF THE SIGs
SIGs fulfill a variety of roles within NAAEE, among them:

• Provide a forum for sharing knowledge about common community interests.
• Provide an alternative mechanism for communicating and disseminating professional information.
• Nurture new members and help them feel connected to the organization. Generate and try innovative ideas.
• Provide an organized means of raising issues to the leadership of the association. Facilitate opportunities for collaborative work.
• Create opportunities for mentoring, interest-related training and enhancement of member services.
• Cultivate, grow, and develop leaders for the Association.
• Provide members for various Association service roles such as committees and task forces.
What was absolutely clear to us was that ECA needed to take our commitment to Reconciliation into the public domain. To invite others to think with us and a collection of wise thinkers about how we, along with the children and families we work with engage with, one of Australia’s most important challenges.

Susan Werner
Environmental Sustainability SIG

The ECA VIC Branch environmental sustainability special interest group has been operating since 2006. The group is a varied mix of early childhood professionals from TAFE, Universities, local government, child care, OSHC, kindergartens and higher education sectors. The group’s inaugural meeting made decisions about what the group was hoping to achieve.

AIMS OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

• ADVOCACY
  Advocate for children and families in relation to environmental issues.

• EDUCATION
  Increase awareness and knowledge of environmental education and sustainability.

• NETWORKING
  Take action to enact projects that raise awareness and understanding of sustainable education with key organisations and early childhood education settings.
Networking and Education

The group communicates mostly through email where we share ideas and information. The group originally met four times each year on a Saturday. Each meeting took place in a children’s service or environment that promotes sustainable education.

This is an opportunity to network, plan and share ideas. We have a no-guilt policy. We are a busy group of professionals and the aim of this group is to support our work and extend our thinking without becoming something else we have to do, but rather what inspires and guides us.
Environmental Sustainability SIG Advocacy Projects

Each year the group chooses a project to advocate for sustainable education in early childhood.

- 2007 – Why your child needs to know about climate change
- 2008 – Water play fact sheet and poster
- 2009 – The 2009 ECA SIG compacting challenge
- 2010 – Biodiversity fact sheet and poster and 2010 compacting challenge
- 2011 - Energy poster and fact sheet
- 2012 – Energy poster and fact sheet – submission to NHRMC “Staying Healthy in Child Care”
- 2013 –Environmental sub-committee for the 2014 ECA conference in Melbourne
- 2015 – 2016 currently on hiatus
- 2017 – Hoping to reform and regroup
Members of the SIG have designed and created a series of posters and fact sheets to support early childhood educators that explore pedagogy and practice around water, biodiversity and energy.

The posters are available from the ECA Victorian office and the fact sheets can be downloaded from the ECA VIC website.
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed its the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead