Learning together for best practice

Why do you choose to work with young children? Or support those who have direct responsibility for the care and education of babies and young children?

Is it because of the joy of observing children grow and develop? Seeing them learn a new word? Or showing signs of developing friendships and empathy?

Is it due to a sense of social justice? Being able to support the learning and meaningful participation of all children? Sharing in the excitement of a child’s achievement of a new skill?

Is it due to a strong desire to support the rights of all infants and young children, or to create an environment where children feel safe, secure, nourished and nurtured?

Whatever the reason for our engagement in the life-worlds of children, we must see ourselves as members of a community of learners who maintain and progress good practice to support the enactment of children’s rights. This professional learning community includes the children, parents and families, and the broader community of educators and early childhood professionals—managers, directors and policy-makers. The UNESCO (1996) definition of the four pillars of learning—to know, to do, to live together, to be—is reflected in the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) that guides our practice (DEEWR, 2009).

In our practice, we learn and grow in many ways. We observe others at work, and are mentored, supported, guided or resourced by colleagues. We can attend and participate in professional learning programs or major conferences such as Early Childhood Australia’s National Conference. Reading is also a valuable resource for learning.

With each issue of Every Child, Early Childhood Australia offers interesting and inspiring professional learning articles that provoke critical reflection and support ethical practice and social justice.

In this issue, Dr Wendy Roberts writes about her research that confirms the transformative nature of building respectful, empathetic and collaborative relationships, especially for families and children who have experienced trauma, vulnerability or disadvantage. Pam Linke emphasises the foundational steps to respond to children’s behaviour, ensuring babies and children feel safe and cared for. She also writes about planning environments and programs that will prevent stress. In taking a practical approach to children’s preschool orientations, Kathy Hatcher describes how her service changed its orientation process by partnering ‘resident’ parents and families with new families to make the experience more supportive and inclusive.

This issue also features an article on leadership from Catharine Hydon and includes a profile on Judy Radich, Every Child Co-Editor. After reading about Judy’s extensive contribution to children, families and the early childhood sector, it is obvious that we have all benefited from her leadership, significant commitment and dedication. Thank you, Judy.

As always, we trust that this issue will bring you much to reflect on and enjoy.

Jackie Brien
Co-Editor

References

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