


The Independent Education Union early childhood education magazine

BEDROCK

Vol 21 #2, June 2016



**Time to wake up: Sleep
and its effects on
children's learning** *p12*

NSW accreditation: Don't miss *p6*

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EXECUTIVE EDITORS

JOHN QUESSY

Independent Education Union
of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
and TERRY BURKE

Independent Education Union
of Australia - Queensland and
Northern Territory Branch

EDITOR

Sue Osborne

JOURNALISTS/SUB

EDITORS

Alex Leggett
Sue Osborne
Bronwyn Ridgway

COORDINATOR

Verena Heron

DESIGN

Chris Ruddle

PUBLICATION

MAILING ADDRESS

Independent Education Union
of Australia NSW/ACT Branch
GPO Box 116
Sydney, NSW 2001
Tel: (02) 8202 8900
Fax: (02) 9211 1455
Email: ieu@ieu.asn.au
Website: www.ieu.asn.au

ADVERTISING

AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

BEDROCK is published three
times per year by the NSW
ACT and QLD Independent
Education Unions and has a
circulation of 4000. Intending
subscribers and advertisers
are invited to direct enquiries
to Chris Ruddle at the IEU
on (02) 8202 8900 or email:
chrisr@ieu.asn.au

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This is a joint publication of the
IEUA

Print Post number 100007356
ISSN 1326-7566

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Make early childhood education an election focus



John Quessy
NSW ACT Secretary



Terry Burke
QLD NT Secretary

Early childhood education policy should be given a major focus by all parties in the lead up to the federal election on 2 July.

As advocates for children and the profession teachers can play a role by asking their candidates what their policies are and where they stand in relation to early childhood education. Point out the disparities in funding provision between the states, and call for more investment in early education because it will add to the future prosperity of Australia as a whole.

Constantly highlighting the professionalism of early childhood teachers as we do in this journal will help remind politicians of your importance. In NSW and the ACT, early childhood teachers must now sign up to be accredited. Details of this process are outlined on pages 6 and 7.

Across Queensland, members are continuing to campaign for affordable, quality early childhood education ahead of the election. There are serious concerns following the federal government's announcement to delay additional investment in childcare until 2018 along with uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the future of state government programs. All levels of government must provide clarity when it comes to supporting children with a disability and vulnerable families. A recent conference has proposed ways to boost attendance for the disadvantaged, see pages 14 and 15.

In this issue we also look at the latest research on play based learning on pages 10 and 11, and there's practical advice and up to date research on sleep practices on pages 12 and 13.

We always welcome your feedback and ideas for the journal. Contact us at bedrock@ieu.asn.au



Breaking news



Everyone benefits

A new coalition of early childhood organisations (Early Childhood Australia, Uniting Care, KU, Goodstart, the Benevolent Society and others), researchers and parents is warning all political parties to get their early childhood policies in order for the forthcoming election campaign.

They say investing in early learning directly links to increasing Australia's future prosperity. The Early Start: Everyone Benefits campaign has released the State of Early Learning in Australia Report 2016 which contains new data showing low investment and participation rates in early learning.

"Australia is lagging behind other developed countries in terms of the

number of children participating in quality early learning," Early Childhood Australia CEO Samantha Page said.

The report shows that nationally three year olds participate at a rate of 66% compared to the OECD average of 74%.

"We are now at a critical juncture, where Australia's education results are declining, and we must act to ensure more children attend quality early learning, for long enough to amplify their development," Ms Page said.

For more information visit www.everyonebenefits.org.au



SDN offer doesn't stack up

The NSW/ACT IEU continues to negotiate with Sydney Day Nursery (SDN) over its proposed enterprise agreement. What's being offered by SDN compares unfavourably with the Enterprise Agreement (EA) negotiated

with Goodstart recently. The Goodstart agreement includes a 4.5% pay increase in 2016 and 2017 and a further 4.2% in 2018 to address the pay discrepancy between early childhood teachers and their counterparts in primary schools. The Goodstart EA formally acknowledges that early childhood teachers are underpaid. Other aspects of the Goodstart agreement include \$37.35 per week for mentoring another employee, \$21.25 per week for teachers appointed as educational leaders and \$29.25 a day to mentor practicum placement students.

On the other hand, the SDN offer includes the removal of all incremental steps and will only guarantee a pay increase of 2.5% per year. SDN tries to justify this by saying head office staff only receive one pay increase per year so teachers should not receive a pay increase plus an incremental step increase each year. They refuse to acknowledge teachers are underpaid. There is no allowance for mentoring another employee, taking on the role of educational leader or supervising a student.

There are other ways the SDN proposal offers less than Goodstart. Only one more negotiation meeting is scheduled, and SDN has indicated that if agreement is not reached at this meeting they intend to put their proposal out to the vote.

Queensland
Dear Sherryl



I work as a teacher at a kindergarten. As part of our daily routine at the kindergarten, the children have a 30 minute rest period. As the children are asleep during this time, is it acceptable if I leave my assistant to supervise them while I catch up on some paperwork in my office?

Helena

Dear Helena

It is a requirement under the national law for children in the care of an approved service to be adequately supervised at all times. While part of this requirement entails the maintenance of appropriate the educator to child ratios, other factors also play a part. These include the ages

and abilities of the children, the positioning of educators, the activities being undertaken, and the visibility and accessibility of the area(s) where children are located.

Adequate supervision of young children generally means that educators remain in close proximity to the children, and that they are actively involved and able

to respond immediately to any situations involving them. During a rest period, it may be appropriate for one educator to remain with the children and for the other to be in an adjoining room, provided that the teacher is able to see and hear the children, and remains responsive to their needs.

Sherryl



Bedrock survey

Thank you to all those who participated in the NSW/ACT IEU's survey on *Bedrock* readership. The results show early childhood readers have a wide breadth of interests, with survey participants indicating an interests in virtually all topic areas suggested by the survey, including professional development, political advocacy, sustainability, technology and industrial issues.

About half of all respondents preferred to see the publication in print, with the other half opting for receiving both online and print versions. Most readers, or 89%, said

they shared and discussed *Bedrock* with their colleagues and other associates. We are always interested in hearing more feedback from members. Email bedrock@ieu.asn.au with ideas and suggestions.



Uncertainty for Queensland as NDIS implemented

Members across the Queensland early childhood education sector remain concerned about the lack of clarity surrounding the planned implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Implementation of the (NDIS) commenced on a trial basis in north Queensland earlier this year and the complete statewide rollout is expected by 2019.

IEUA-QNT Senior Industrial Officer John Spriggs said key among members concerns was the future of a number of state government programs that

currently support inclusion of children with disability; particularly Early Childhood Development Programs (ECDPs) and the Disability Inclusion Support for Queensland Kindergartens (DISQK) Program.

"Of serious concern for members is the State Government's announcement that EDCPs are unlikely to continue past 2020 once the NDIS is in place and that the future of the DISQK Program will be determined by the level of support provided by the NDIS," Spriggs said.

Early Childhood Education Branch Representative Jenny Finlay said the EDCPs were a vital program that allowed skills to be developed in the small setting and practiced intensively with lots of support.

"This then allows those skills to be transferred to the larger setting," Finlay said.

"Skilled staff are already being transferred from ECPD's and finding other jobs. Nothing can replace this expertise," she said.

"For members, many questions are yet to be answered as to how NDIS implementation will affect disability funding in kindergartens: will this be separate to the NDIS (which is capped for the early childhood education sector).

"Issues surrounding the impact of the NDIS implementation on employees is also still unclear with staff wellbeing and retention rates a major concern."



I work five hours per day by five days per week (25 hours per week). I get paid 4.75 hours but I work five hours per day, thereby accruing sufficient hours for an RDO. At this service, the staff member in my position has always had an RDO after working 19 days, long before I came here.

We have just been advised that part timers do not get an RDO because they have not worked 40 hours a week. I can't find anything in our policies or our enterprise agreement which specifies part timers.

Julie

Dear Julie

The Educational Services (Teachers) Award provides for RDO only within the context of a 38 hour week (and thus for full time staff).

The enterprise agreement that covers your long day care centre specifically states that: A full time employee may work under a Rostered Day Off Scheme by agreement with their supervisor. Unfortunately, this means that part

time staff members do not have an automatic entitlement to RDO.

However, there is nothing to preclude an employer from allowing a part time staff member to accrue RDO. We have a couple of enterprise agreements in stand alone services that allow this by providing a formula that is used to calculate the percentage of the wage that needs to be banked each week towards an RDO for part time employees.

I suggest you argue that you have been allowed to accrue RDO for many years and removing your access to an RDO each month would be a change in the contractual terms of your employment. Do you have a contract specifying that you are entitled to an RDO each month as a part time employee? If so, please email this to the IEU.

Lisa

Don't miss out on professional recognition

NSW accreditation deadline:



- Create an account with BOSTES. Log onto their webpage here: <http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/current-teachers/early-childhood-teachers/>
- Send Justice of the Peace certified copies to BOSTES of:
- Your ACECQA approved teaching qualification(s)
- Two forms of ID (driver's license, passport or birth certificate)
- Current Working with Children Check Clearance
- Statement of Service on approved service letterhead. The statement can read: 'Person X was engaged as an early childhood teacher on <DATE> for this service.'

Documents should be mailed to:

BOSTES Early Childhood Teacher Accreditation
PO BOX A976
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235

BOSTES will review your documents and email you to confirm your registration as of 18 July 2016.

Mark this one in your diaries: 18 July 2016 is a date that will change the recognition of early childhood teachers forever in NSW, NSW/ACT IEU Professional Officer Amy Cotton writes.

It's the date that teachers will be accredited alongside their primary and secondary colleagues, and the date that the profession will finally be considered just that – a profession.

Background

The IEU's Teachers are Teachers campaign sought professional recognition of early childhood teachers alongside their primary and secondary colleagues.

In NSW, the IEU worked for years to convince the former Institute of Teachers (now BOSTES) and successive ministers for education that early childhood teachers should have accreditation as teachers. Following a detailed submission outlining how legislation could be

changed to recognise current practice of early childhood teachers, the NSW Government released Great Teaching, Inspired Learning (GTIL). This is a blueprint for action over the next few years.

Section 10.2 of GTIL refers to the future consideration of inclusion of early childhood teachers into the accreditation scheme. The IEU made a submission calling for this change – it was time our state recognised early childhood teachers as professionals.

In 2014 the *Teacher Accreditation Act* was amended to specifically reference early childhood teachers.

In 2015 lengthy stakeholder consultations occurred regarding how accreditation of early childhood teachers would be undertaken. The IEU was a key stakeholder negotiating for the easiest way in for our members: accreditation will be granted to any early childhood teacher who had been engaged in an

approved service in the five years up to 1 October 2016. The due date for registration was set: 18 July 2016.

These negotiations are ongoing, with the IEU at the forefront of making things sensible and beneficial to our teacher members.

Bumps on the road

Although accreditation will occur on 18 July 2016, there are still issues to be negotiated with BOSTES.

Teacher Accreditation Authorities (TAA) in schools are usually the employer represented by a teacher. In primary and secondary schools, this might be the principal or someone at head office (in a system). In systems of early childhood services, it's likely it will be someone at head office. But standalone services don't have the capacity to be a TAA.

The role of a TAA is to oversee the accreditation of teachers in that service. This means monitoring



their progress as they maintain accreditation, as well as mentoring beginning teachers from provisional to Proficient accreditation.

TAA's are unable to accredit themselves, so in a single teacher service, there lies a conflict of interest.

The IEU is seeking that BOSTES act at the TAA in the interim for standalone services. BOSTES has struggled to communicate with early childhood teachers. Early in 2016 they sent a package to all services in NSW with information, a mouse pad and lanyards. The slow take up rate of registration so far means that many teachers have not realised that registration is mandatory.

The IEU ran a series of workshops around NSW and online in late 2015. We are continuing to run Pedagogy in Practice courses on accreditation in 2016. For more information, click here: <http://www.ieu.asn.au/pd-meetings/>

The IEU is emailing its members and their services regularly to try and spread the word.

Early intervention and inclusion support teachers

Recently the IEU negotiated with BOSTES that early intervention (EI) and inclusion support teachers (IS) should be able to seek accreditation on 18 July 2016. To qualify, EI and IS teachers must have been engaged at an approved service in the five years up to 1 October 2016.

Fees

The IEU negotiated with BOSTES to have the 2016 fee waived. Teachers will be invoiced by BOSTES in late

November 2016 for the 2017 year. The annual fee is \$100.

“The slow take up rate of registration so far means that many teachers have not realised that registration is mandatory.”

What do I get for \$100?

That's a reasonable question. The true answer is you receive professional accreditation alongside primary and secondary teachers.

In reality, early childhood teachers will be utilising more of their \$100 a year from BOSTES in the initial years as BOSTES will be acting as TAA.

Maintaining accreditation at Proficient

On 18 July 2016, you will be granted accreditation at Proficient level.

To maintain, you need to complete 100 hours of professional development in five years (full time) or seven years (casual or part time).

Fifty hours must be BOSTES Quality Teaching Council Registered, such

as IEU courses and our annual early childhood conference. Fifty hours must be either BOSTES QTC Registered or Teacher Identified PD.

However, the IEU has negotiated an interim ratio of 20 registered hours and 80 teacher identified hours in the first two years of accreditation.

Teacher Identified PD can include researching, workshops that aren't registered, reflection, mentoring activities, and any situation where you are learning as a professional.

You have to address one descriptor each from Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 and all descriptors from Standard 6 with your PD.


You will also need to write one reflection paragraph per Standard (there's only seven of them) towards the end of your maintenance period.

The IEU runs the workshop Pedagogy in Practice: Maintenance of Accreditation at Proficient regularly around NSW and online. Attend to find out how to use this process to your advantage and learn tips and tricks on how to do it easily.

Support from the Union

The IEU employs three accreditation officers – Elizabeth Finlay, Matt Esterman and myself, Amy Cotton. You are able to call or email accreditation@ieu.asn.au to receive help as an IEU member.

We also run an extensive face to face and online professional development program addressing accreditation. These are free as part of your membership. See <http://www.ieu.asn.au/pd-meetings/>



Our day in court:

Equal remuneration for early childhood teachers

In late 2013, the IEUA made application to the Fair Work Commission for an Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) for early childhood teachers (including early childhood teachers appointed as directors) who perform work in a long day care centre or preschool covered by the *Educational Services (Teachers) Awards 2010*, NSW/ACT IEU Industrial Officer Michael Wright writes.

United Voice and AEU made an application in similar terms that also sought equal remuneration for non teaching staff.

What is an ERO?

Part 2-7 of the Fair Work Act, 2009 enables the Fair Work Commission to make an ERO for a group of employees, where they perform work of an equal or comparable value to that performed by another group of workers of the opposite gender, but they do not receive the same remuneration for such work.

In such a case, an ERO can stipulate that the applicant group will receive the same remuneration as the comparator group of the opposite sex. Such an order requires an employer to pay more than the relevant enterprise agreement or modern award so as to meet the required level of equal remuneration with the comparator group.

EROs can be made within a workplace, across workplaces or, as in our application, across an industry.

The Fair Work Commission, in a recent decision, discussed how equal

remuneration orders may practically apply within a workplace:

Assume that a group of process workers in an enterprise apply for an equal remuneration order. The applicants contend that they do not enjoy equal remuneration to that of the storepersons employed in the same enterprise who, it is argued, perform work of equal or comparable value. The storepersons are all male employees. The relevant comparison is between the female process workers and the male storepersons. If on the basis of that comparison the Commission is satisfied that there is not equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value it may make an order in favour of the female process workers.

While this sounds relatively straightforward, there are significant legal hurdles to jump to establish differentials in work value and/or remuneration, particularly across industries.

Have any other workers been covered by an ERO?

There has only been one other ERO application made under the *Fair Work Act, 2009*, which led to significant increases in pay for low paid Social and Community Services (SACS) workers. That application enjoyed federal government and widespread industry support, including significant funding commitments. In that case, there was a commitment by most parties to push for a solution that made the industry more sustainable and attractive for SACS workers.

Unfortunately, in our application, we are faced with an unsupportive (even hostile) federal government and an industry much less supportive of its workforce.

Where is the ERO application up to for early childhood teachers?

Since the applications were lodged, there has been extensive consideration by the unions, employers and the Fair Work Commission as to the principles that should be applied in determining whether an equal remuneration order should be made and in what form it should take.

In late November, 2015 the Full Bench of the Fair Work Commission released a lengthy decision which outlined the legal and conceptual framework for the making of EROs.

What is the next step for the IEUA?

The IEUA and other unions have been asked by the Full Bench to consider its November 2015 decision.

The IEUA and other Unions are currently commissioning and/or undertaking research with a view to providing the Fair Work Commission with sufficient evidence to persuade them of the need for an equal remuneration order for early childhood teachers and other early childhood employees. It is anticipated that the next phase of the case will be timetabled for the second half of 2016.

Given the legal and research complexities of the case, it is unlikely to be determined quickly.

My role on the Quality Teaching Council



The Quality Teaching Council (QTC) was established under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* to provide advice to the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) in relation its functions under that Act, IEU NSW/ACT Early Childhood Sector Vice President and QTC Rep Gabe Connell writes.

This is the first time there has been an elected early childhood representative. This has come about because of the accreditation of early childhood teachers with BOSTES. Early childhood has in the past been represented on the QTC and BOSTES by Professor Sue Dockett who is a Ministerial nominee – ‘a person who, in the opinion of the Minister, has knowledge and expertise in early childhood education’. Professor Dockett continues to sit on the QTC and BOSTES and is a strong advocate for early childhood.

The functions of the BOSTES under the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* include the following:

- to provide advice to the minister on the development, content and application of the professional teaching standards
- to provide advice to the minister on any of the minister’s other functions under the Act (including the function of approving persons or bodies as teacher accreditation authorities in relation to non government schools or the suspension or revocation of any such approval)
- to advise and assist teacher accreditation authorities in accrediting persons under the Act

- to monitor the accreditation process across all schools
- to ensure that the professional teaching standards are applied fairly and consistently
- to monitor, evaluate and report on the quality of initial and continuing teacher education courses and programs approved by the minister under the professional teaching standards
- to provide advice to the minister on the approval by the Minister teacher education courses or programs that are relevant for the purposes of accreditation under the Act, and
- to provide advice to the minister on the approval by the Minister of persons or bodies who may provide professional development in accordance with the requirements of the professional teaching standards.

“The very nature of our sector has led to a myriad of problems and difficulties – we are community based, not for profit, stand alone, school based, private for profit, preschool, long day care, family day care, auspiced by larger organisations, mobile, underfunded, underpaid, overworked, undervalued – the list goes on!”

Why is it so important to have an early childhood representative on the QTC?

In the past early childhood teachers have struggled to be recognised as professionals within the teaching profession and within the community. Accreditation will recognise the professional standing of early childhood teachers within the community and will see all early childhood teachers recognised as teaching professionals alongside NSW school teachers.

The very nature of our sector has led to a myriad of problems and difficulties – we are community based, not for profit, stand alone, school based, private for profit, preschool, long day care, family day care, auspiced by larger organisations, mobile, underfunded, underpaid, overworked, undervalued – the list goes on! We are often isolated and struggling to make sense of the changes we have lived through – particularly over the last decade.

I aim to bring to the QTC first hand, as someone ‘on the ground’, the issues that affect our sector – particularly in regards to accreditation and the maintenance of our accreditation and the mentoring of beginning teachers.

These are exciting times for our sector and should be viewed as a really positive step forward. The IEU has lobbied hard for this and for our representation on the QTC over the years and will continue to support us with advice, mentoring and PD as we work through the process.

This is a step towards pay parity!



The science behind play based learning

Based at the University of Wollongong, Early Start, made up of the Early Start Discovery Space and Research Institute, is an Australian first for studying best practice in children's development and play based learning, Bedrock Journalist Alex Leggett writes.

Although it has been open for just under a year, Early Start's CEO Michelle Kellaway said the Discovery Space has already drawn attention from overseas with more than 90,000 visitors since May 2015.

"It's had a great start and has been a wonderful way to engage the local community in the broader Early Start initiative focused on helping children flourish and reach their potential," Ms Kellaway said.

"Although many parents understand that their child's earliest years shape later development and learning, they are often unsure about what they should be doing to promote healthy emotional, social and intellectual development.

"As a destination dedicated to playful learning, this is where the Discovery Space acts as a partner for families, early childhood centres

and schools by enhancing the value that children gain through play based experiences."

Ms Kellaway said it is the first of its kind in the world to be opened on a university campus and next to a research facility that studies the behaviours and cognitive development in babies to 12 year olds.

The fundamental philosophy behind the Discovery Space is that children do not need to be taught how to play but they need an environment where they feel safe and free to express themselves.

"This type of play is really what helps children succeed at later stages in school. It is as natural as smiling, crawling or giving someone a hug," she said.

"It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them."

She said the concept that is quite common in the US, although none are partnered with university or college campuses.

"We initially looked at which models worked best in other countries before creating one at the university," Ms Kellaway said.

"There are about 400 children's museums in the world; however, the Discovery Space is the only dedicated children's museum in Australia."

She said that playful experiences such as those at the Discovery Space help children be creative, curious and collaborative.

These include crawling through a giant tube called the Tummy Tour that shows how the human digestive system works to learning about building and team work at the centre's 'Construction Site'.

"At the moment our focus is on the Discovery Space, ensuring it is both dynamic and evolving," she said.

"However, we are also piloting a Virtual Visitation Program with Early Start's partner early childhood education and care centres in 41 regional, rural and remote regions of NSW and the ACT.

She said the program is in its pilot phase and they are looking forward to seeing the benefits of play more broadly experienced.

"It entails providing virtual access to reach children in remote and rural areas with virtual excursions of the Discovery Space, so they can



experience our Cave Tour or Shipyard online, even if they are geographically dispersed,” she said.

“Our technological infrastructure allows our researchers to connect directly with any one of the engagement centres and to facilitate teaching and research opportunities between them.

“In this way, academics can understand first-hand the challenges of growing up in disadvantage and for innovation to be pioneered where it is needed most.”

Leading innovative research next to the Discovery Space is the Research Institute, where a team of around 135 world leading researchers and research students are studying the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of children.

Professor of Child Development and academic director of Early Start, Marc de Rosnay, specialises in social and emotional development in the early years.

He said both the Discovery Space and Research Institute reflect the needs of the early childhood sector.

“Part of the centre’s role is to help fill the large gap between research and practice,” he said.

“Research shows that the effect of high quality early education, particularly when coupled with support services and family inclusion, can dramatically turn around the cycle of under-achievement educationally, socially and emotionally.

“This type of play is really what helps children succeed at later stages in school. It is as natural as smiling, crawling or giving someone a hug.”

“Our research aims to inform professional practice, influence policy development and have a real impact on the lives of children, young people and families.”

Some of the Institute’s achievements include developing the Physical Literacy Continuum for the NSW Department of Education and leading

research into updating the National Physical Activity Recommendations for children between the ages of zero to five.

Another project the Institute’s researchers are conducting is the Standing Preschools Project, investigating the short term effects of a ‘reduced sitting preschool day’ on energy expenditure, musculoskeletal health, and cognitive development in preschoolers.

“During the study, children will visit the university and mimic a ‘normal preschool day’ and a ‘reduced sitting preschool day’ in a whole-room calorimeter to measure how much energy they expend,” Professor de Rosnay said.

“From screen time to junk food advertising, educational inequity to learning through play, our research is focused on finding answers to questions that are vital to improving knowledge, practices and outcomes for children in their early years.”

For more information on Early Start, visit www.earlystart.uow.edu.au/index.html

A close-up photograph of a young girl with long, light brown hair, sleeping peacefully. She is lying down, and her face is partially covered by a blue and white striped pillow. A large, brown and white stuffed animal is visible behind her head. The background is softly blurred, showing a dimly lit room with a blue light source. The overall mood is calm and serene.

Time to wake up: Sleep and its effects on children's learning

“A complexity for early education teachers in meeting these needs is that across early childhood, between zero to five years, sleep patterns are in transition.”



Sleep is a crucial part of health and wellbeing, and it is especially important for growth during childhood. Karen Thorpe and Cassandra Pattinson of the Sleep in Early Childhood Research Group (SECRG) from the Centre for Children's Health Research at the Queensland University of Technology discuss the effects of children unnecessarily day napping in early childhood centres, which can lead to poor sleeping patterns at night.

Sleep is important. Our experience as adults tells us that when we lack sleep we are less alert, slower to learn and less able to cope with everyday problems and annoyances. For young children, sleep is vital. Sleep plays a crucial role in brain development and is associated with growth, memory, and emotional regulation in both the short and long term.

A key issue for teachers working with young children in the management of sleep needs is to ensure they optimise children's opportunity for learning and their emotional wellbeing to promote positive learning experiences.

In the early education sector, daytime sleep is a key consideration that is recognised in legislation. The National Quality Framework (NQF) requires that education services "make appropriate provision for each child's sleep, rest and relaxation needs" (Quality Area 2) within a context where learning opportunities are optimised (Quality Area 1).

Naps for learning

A complexity for early education teachers in meeting these needs is that across early childhood, between zero to five years, sleep patterns are in transition. Over time, children's need for daytime sleep diminishes and they eventually become night only sleepers. During this time, research has shown that there is a relationship between daytime sleep and learning. In preschool children, evidence indicates that for those who still need regular naps, day sleeping supports learning. After being given a daytime sleep period, children who were regular nappers remembered their learning from the morning learning session better than if they were required to stay awake.

However, providing children who no longer needed a nap with a daytime sleep period did not have any benefit for their learning. This suggests a changing relationship between sleep and learning. In fact, for children who have reached the developmental milestone of giving up daytime sleep, having a sleep during the day can have an adverse effect, by reducing the length of night sleep.

The management of sleep to optimise learning is complex for early childhood teachers. The normal age when napping ceases is anywhere between one and five. This means that in any early childhood classroom there will be children who need sleep to support their emotional regulation and learning, whilst for others, scheduling of a sleep time may not be optimal. Scheduling of standard sleep periods is unlikely to meet individual needs, therefore alternatives for sleepers and non sleepers are essential.

Rest and relaxation

In order to optimise learning, this not only requires providing opportunities for children to sleep but also a restful and relaxing activity away from cots or beds for non sleepers. Examples of successful strategies we have viewed in our research include using different rooms for sleep and rest or trialing meditation instead for non-sleeping children. Ultimately, guiding children to monitor their need for sleep and teaching them to establish positive sleep and rest habits will sustain learning beyond the preschool years.

To support the development of healthy lifetime sleep practices, teachers need to work with children and families to provide appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.

To access a fact sheet on children's sleep with the SERCG group's research, visit www.deta.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/sleep-factsheet-sleep-practices.pdf

Reference

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Breaking down barriers for the disadvantaged

At a recent conference run by the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS), various issues and solutions were proposed in order to boost the number of families from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds participating in early learning programs. Here QCOSS Program Leader Cherie Lamb, discusses the focus of the Embracing Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Conference on helping vulnerable social groups by creating safe, accessible and inclusive learning environments.

The first five years of a child's life are the most important and can set them up for a life filled with opportunity, social and economic wellbeing and good health. Sadly, as research shows, this is not the future waiting for many children who enter Australia as migrants or refugees from Language Backgrounds Other Than English (LBOTE).

The Embracing Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Conference brought together a diverse range of workers and keynote speakers from more than 60 early childhood and family support services, to identify gaps and barriers in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector.

There were a number of recurring themes identified including:

- the high cost of ECEC due to fees, transport, clothing and other supplies
 - the lack of transport in many rural, remote and outer urban areas limiting access to ECEC, and
 - the lack of subsidies available for refugees and asylum seekers to mitigate the high cost of ECEC attendance amidst the competing priorities of resettlement.
- Speakers and delegates reiterated the urgent need to remove these structural barriers to ensure children can actually afford to attend ECEC programs. Proposed reform would include:
- universal access to free kindergarten programs and/or high quality early learning environments
 - extending the Kindy Plus subsidy to refugees and asylum seekers, and
 - working with the Federal Government before the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs and Families Child Care Package) is passed by parliament as there are currently aspects of the Bill which are likely to act as a disincentive to ECEC participation.
- Conference attendees also discussed the importance of employing more workers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and bilingual/bicultural workers from refugee backgrounds who reflect the ethnic profile of an area.

These workers are able to work

both within and across services and have been invaluable assets to many of the services represented at the conference because of their ability to engage with families, build a link between communities and ECEC services, and to provide a sustainable ongoing model of inclusion.

Culturally inclusive programs

The recently released Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) National Report states that in 2015, 94% of children with a LBOTE and not proficient in English were developmentally vulnerable. Research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIWH) in 2015 shows a range of developmental advantages for bilingual children. However, bilingual children with poorly developed English show poorer outcomes across broad health and psychosocial domains.

Many families, due to significant language and cultural barriers, are unable to enrol their children into ECEC programs and they often do not have the literacy skills required to fill in complex enrolment forms without assistance. Many parents also lack understanding of the importance of kindergarten and its connection to lifelong educational and employment opportunities.

Research tells us that "children living in households where English



“It is critical to provide opportunities for bilingual children to develop English language skills before they enter school. The best way to do this is through their active participation in a quality early childhood program.”



is not the main language benefit significantly from attending formal child care”, but these children are less likely to participate in ECEC compared to the rest of the population.

It is therefore critical to provide opportunities for bilingual children to develop English language skills before they enter school. The best way to do this is through their active participation in a quality early childhood program such as a government approved kindergarten program. For kindergarten participation to occur, it needs to be affordable, accessible and of high quality. Kindergarten is currently not universally accessible to all children, particularly those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, so firstly the cost barriers must be removed.

While the government has implemented some measures to increase program quality, more could be achieved through increasing the cultural competence of all early childhood teachers, committing to the employment of bilingual educators, and increasing the use of interpreters.

QCROSS has been involved in a number of other programs and research projects identifying the barriers facing many at risk and disadvantaged children. Our work has sought to break down some of the barriers – by educating and empowering educators – and providing evidence-based feedback and recommendations to government on where to direct funding and provide best-practice support and assistance.

We urge early all childhood educators to reflect on inclusiveness, respect and belonging for all Australians and make a commitment to building a better future for all children.

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QCROSS Early Childhood Education and Care, Access and equity for children and their families. <https://www.qcross.org.au>



Let's get physical

Research from the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition at Deakin University has shown children who spend more than one hour per day on screens are at risk of obesity, poor cognitive development and future cardiovascular risks. Senior Research Fellow and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Early Career Fellow, Dr Trina Hinkley, discusses the recommendations and solutions for healthy development in children from birth through to five years of age.

Evidence clearly shows that physical activity is beneficial, and screen time detrimental, to young children's health and development. The amount of activity and screen time they experience has a direct impact on their weight, movement skills, wellbeing and cognitive functioning.

Many of us labour under the assumption that young children are naturally physically active and can't sit still long enough to engage in any amount of screen time that might be detrimental. With around half of Australian preschoolers failing to meet the national physical activity recommendation, and about three quarters failing to meet the screen time recommendation, this assumption clearly needs updating.

The Australian recommendations are that:

- preschoolers should be physically active every day for at least three hours, spread throughout the day, and
- for children between the ages of two to five, sitting and watching television and the use of other electronic media (DVDs, computers, tablets and other electronic games) should be limited to less than one hour per day.

“Young children’s physical activity is intermittent and sporadic in nature. This makes it quite difficult to determine exactly how much physical activity they are getting.”



Young children’s physical activity is intermittent and sporadic in nature. This means that they have short bursts of higher intensity activity followed by a less intense recovery period. This makes it quite difficult to determine exactly how much physical activity they are getting. For early childhood settings, a good rule of thumb is to ensure children are outside for at least 15 minutes of every hour they are at the centre. Research consistently shows that children are more active when they are outside compared to when they are inside, so time outdoors is a great start.

Early childhood education settings are an ideal location for children to increase their physical activity and decrease their screen time. A number of studies internationally have trialled different strategies to support these changes.

Many show promise in supporting healthy behaviours in our children. Here are a number of suggested activities to include in your everyday program that have been shown to be effective:

- cut one large outdoor play session into two or three smaller ones, allowing for more frequent active opportunities throughout the day
- have active breaks while indoors – if children are inside for more than 30 minutes at a time, break up indoor time with one to two minutes of activity at the children’s locations such as pretending to wade through a bowl of jelly or a quick iteration of an active song like the Hokey Pokey
- remove all screens from the setting, ensuring any that cannot be removed are turned off
- If screens must be used, aim for quality, slow paced educational programming for as little time as possible
- put portable outdoor equipment, such as climbing frames, as far apart as possible. Research shows that children are more active when they have to run between pieces of equipment
- include structured skills development sessions to cover fundamental movement skills such as running, catching

and kicking. Children who have better skills are usually more active as well

- make an obstacle course out of outdoor equipment, and
- girls are typically less active than boys, so be sure to include activities that girls might enjoy – adding a coloured scarf to a running activity might make a world of difference.

There are lots of ways to help our children lead more active lives and minimise the amount of screen time they have. Early childhood teachers play a really important role in helping to shape healthy lifestyle behaviours during a crucial developmental period. This can be done by instilling healthy habits in children during their time in early childhood centres and by informing and supporting parents about the necessity and benefits of children being active and minimising their screen time.

For more information, visit <http://www.deakin.edu.au/research/ipan/our-research> or contact Dr Trina Hinkley at trina.hinkley@deakin.edu.au

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Reflecting on transition to school

Our ongoing work with children, families and teachers defines transition as a process involving both continuity and change, Professors Sue Dockett and Bob Perry, Charles Sturt University School of Education, write.

Transition to school involves more than a set of activities – it is a process of children becoming school students; parents becoming parents of a school student; where some teachers farewell a group of children and other teachers get to know those children and their families.

A critical element of the transition to school is the relationships that are formed and maintained to support all involved. Effective transitions are characterised by positive relationships between and among all involved – children, families, teachers and communities.

Transitions start well before the first day of school. For some children and families, transitions can also extend well into the school year. While they

may start school as a group, children's individual experiences, expectations and approaches will vary considerably – as will those of their family. Recognising and responding to this variation – rather than assuming that all children have the same experiences – is a critical if teachers are to develop and implement appropriate strategies to support transition.

In the next few months, many schools will be encouraging families to make decisions about enrolments for the following school year. This means that families may well be seeking information and talking with children about starting school; children will start to see and hear information about school; and teachers will be reflecting on the transition practices, people involved and the preparation required to implement these.

There is much that teachers can do to support children, families and their professional colleagues.

Striking a balance between providing information and overwhelming parents and children is important – while starting school is a time of excitement and challenge, there will be other things happening for children and families as well.

In a recent project we talked with and visited early childhood settings and schools around the country to identify effective transition practices. Eight general practices were identified:

- connecting with children
- connecting with families
- connecting with professionals
- connecting with communities
- flexible and responsive transition programs
- recognising strengths, and
- reflective practice and building relationships.

Many teachers support the transition to school using strategies that reflect these practices. These strategies differ in different contexts

and with different people involved. The core feature of having flexible and responsive transition programs is that these can be individualised – there is no sense that one set of practices will suit every context, every time.

These general practices reflect the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in transition. In other words, transition is not something that only involves children. The transition to school involves transitions for families and teachers, and is important within both the school and broader communities. When considering strategies to support transition, it is important for teachers to consider how they engage with the broad range of stakeholders involved in, and affected by, the transition to school.

Some strategies that have been identified as effective across a range of settings include:

Connecting with children

Have conversations with children. Conversations can be promoted in many ways – including adding some topical books to the reading area, school uniforms to the family corner, school equipment – such as rulers, notebooks, lead pencils – to drawing/ writing areas.

Develop a plan with children about how to find out about school – who might be asked; could a visit be planned; are there books to read, websites to access? Encourage new school students to return to visit their prior to school settings. These visits can help children retain connections with children and educators, but also locate the children as ‘experts’ able to give advice and answer questions from those who have not yet started school. In preparation, preschool children can think of some questions to ask, or school children can think of information other children would like to know.

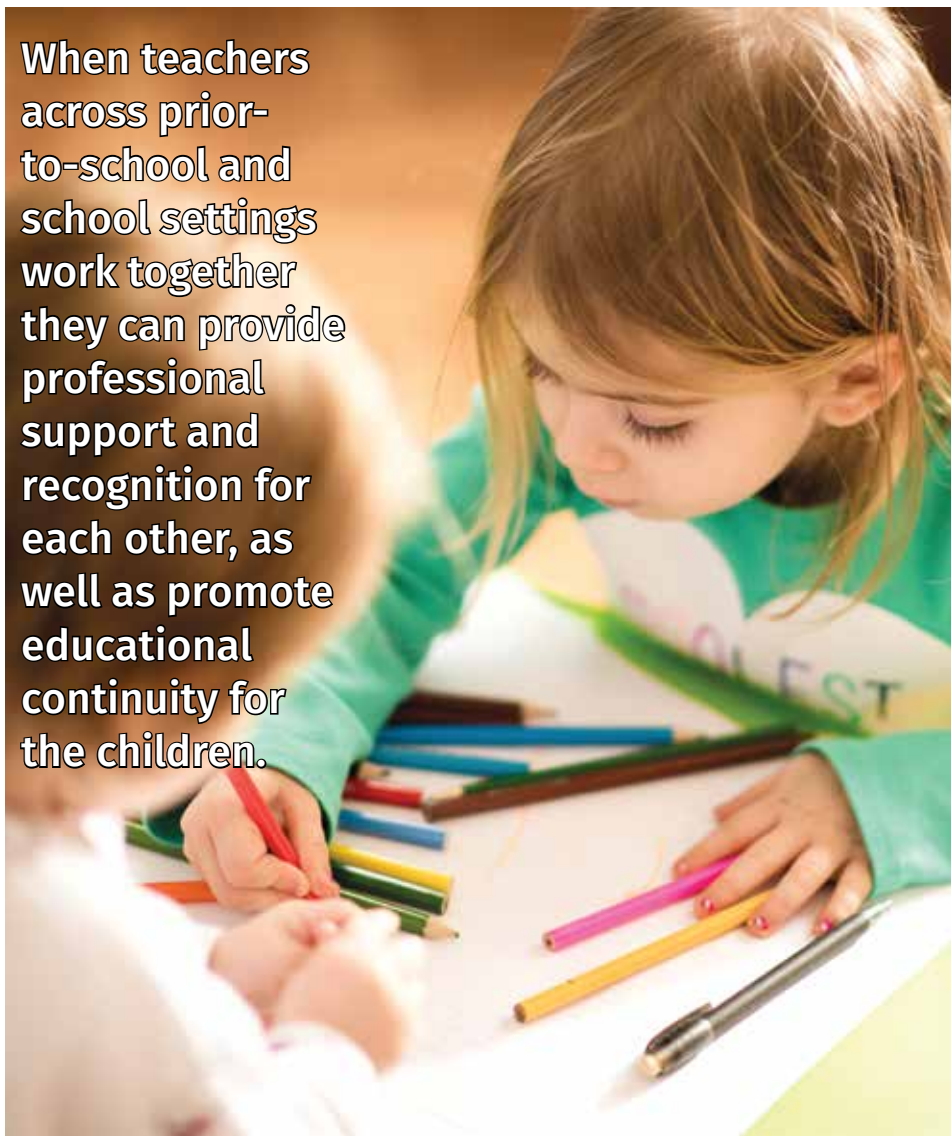
Where these are easily accessible, visits to different parts of the school, or for different events, can help children become familiar with what schools look like, sound like and even smell like.

Connecting with families

Plan sessions for families to find out about local school options, including school age care. Some sites hold a ‘school expo’ where different schools are invited to share information; others invite individual schools to visit the setting at a specific time.

Provide opportunities for families whose children will attend the

When teachers across prior-to-school and school settings work together they can provide professional support and recognition for each other, as well as promote educational continuity for the children.



same school to get together. It may be possible to hold a morning tea for parents whose children will be attending the same school.

Invite school staff to visit prior to school settings and meet with families. Respond to the questions families have and planning to seek appropriate input to address those that require some additional information.

Connecting with professionals

Work collaboratively with other teachers. When teachers across prior to school and school settings work together they can provide professional support and recognition for each other, as well as promote educational continuity for the children. In some settings, shared professional development opportunities support collaboration.

Invite school staff to visit early childhood settings and develop an effective communication strategy.

Connecting with communities

Share information with communities. This might information about transition events for children as

well as families, inviting community members to take part in events, or to share their expertise as part of these events. Work with communities to recognise the importance of the transition to school.

The transition to school can be both an exciting and challenging time for everyone. Strong, positive relationships among all involved – teachers in prior to school and school settings, families, children and communities – are the basis for effective transitions. When all feel a sense of belonging and connection with school, all kinds of positive educational outcomes are achievable.

Reference

A range of examples of practices to support positive transitions to school can be found in:

Dockett S & Perry B 2014 *Continuity of learning: A resource to support effective transition to school and school age care*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Department of Education. https://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/1101093/continuity.pdf

Like a patchwork quilt: The theorists and us



“I am thinking about all those wonderful false theories we have created in our lifetime and how, gradually with experience and time we have changed our ideas.”

Few of us completely follow any one of our glorious early childhood theorists. Each one of us (I suspect) pick a little of this colour (idea) and a little of that and over time we fit them together into something beautiful to us, that makes us feel safe, valued, competent and fulfilled, Early Childhood Consultant Joy Lubawy writes.

We also have selected ideas (and patterns) to suit the environment in which we are working. We are each our own theorist, learning (I hope) from the children we encounter. If we really want to know children and how they grow, learn and develop, then we need to watch and listen to them. They are the ones with the real instruction manual, and every theorist we have ever read about has begun with their own study of children.

I am going to select a few on my own favourites that have sustained, enlightened, challenged and informed my practice and advocacy from 1974 (when I first began studies) until today. It is not possible to discover and discuss every single important early childhood philosopher and theorist there has ever been.

Jerome Bruner, wasn't a favourite of mine for a long time, perhaps I didn't really understand him, but today his ideas sit well with what I now know. He has devoted his life (and is now 100 years old) to trying to discover how children learn, and here are a couple of his ideas:

The absolute beginning of learning is a series of 'yes' and 'no' decisions, seeing how something is alike or different, working through patterns and concepts to find a match/non-match.

- Yes, that is a human face, no its' not.
- Yes that is Mum, no, that person is not.
- All men are Dad, well no only this one is Dad, and
- I hate avocado, I love avocado.

This makes me reflect that richness in an early childhood environment is essential. Children require

many different materials, equipment and experiences made available for them to make choices from. Far too often we have seen environments which are too stark, too controlled by adults who are making all the choices, and too limiting.

To learn, we must select and transform information, experiences and perceptions so they make sense to us, and so we can form theories and make decisions.

There is a man in the moon, I can see his face.

- No, I saw a film and astronauts walked on the Moon; it's a giant rock in space.
- Oh, now I am wondering where it came from and what makes it shine.
- Look at that, it keeps changing how it looks. Why is that?

I am thinking about all those wonderful false theories we have created in our lifetime and how, gradually with experience and time we have changed our ideas, and keep changing them. Let's not always supply the answer, but instead encourage the wondering. We are active in the learning process – it's not something done to or for us.

For me, the ideas of Loris Malaguzzi and Howard Gardner sit well with Jerome Bruner. Malaguzzi tells us that the child is a theorist, wondering, observing, experimenting, exploring and proposing ideas in an environment which encourages and allows them to express their ideas in many different ways with art materials, with language, drama, music, in building or what they do with some sand or water for instance.

Gardner builds on these ideas in his Theory of Multiple Intelligence, encouraging us to see that each child has individual gifts and challenges, in many different combinations. Gardner challenges us to think in eight different ways about the environments, experiences and materials we present. He asks us if we are engaging children in learning.



Professional development around the globe

The OECD has produced a number of reports examining and comparing the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector around the world, Bedrock Journalist Sue Osborne writes.

Just Google 'OECD encouraging quality in early childhood education and care' and they come up.

One in particular, Strategies to tackle challenges in improving workforce development and working conditions, compares professional development opportunities in different countries.

The report says:

"Many countries offer some form of professional development opportunities for ECEC staff. However, the take up rates are often found to be low. First and foremost, information about training opportunities may not be well known, or the benefits of participating may not be clearly articulated, especially among low-qualified ECEC workers.

"Second, continuous training and professional development might be disconnected from what they wish to learn, and, therefore, they may not be motivated to take training.

Even when staff are informed of such opportunities and are motivated to take up training, their manager may be

reluctant to send them to professional development courses. It is often argued that, when the training leads to the possibility of a higher level of qualification, staff may subsequently wish for a pay raise or leave for a higher paying job elsewhere.

Many countries offer some form of professional development opportunities for ECEC staff. However, the take-up rates are often found to be low."

"Another challenge is observed in aligning the contents of professional development, those of initial education and the implementation of a curriculum."

The report then goes on to look at what's on offer in various OECD countries, such as Japan, Germany, Canada, UK, New Zealand and others.

It says that Norway, Belgium, Japan, the Netherlands, and Germany have programs that focus on professional

development for quality enhancement.

Making continuous training a job requirement in the case in the UK and Finland.

Raising awareness of the importance of continuous training among staff and their employees has active projects in the UK and Germany.

Designing demand driven training is happening in Norway, Finland, Mexico, Portugal, Sweden and Korea.

Offering diversity training is listed for Belgium, Finland, Korea and Australia, where it says the Inclusion and Professional Support Program, funds professional support coordinators and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional support units in each state and territory.

Offering training for curriculum implementation is available in New Zealand, parts of Canada, Mexico, UK, Sweden, Korea and Finland.

Supporting employers for staff replacement during training happens in parts of Canada and Japan.

Government financing for training costs is available in Sweden, Slovenia, Finland, UK, parts of Canada and Spain.

Funding institutions that provide continuous training is available in parts of Canada, Japan, and New Zealand.

To read the report in full see <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/48422014.pdf>.

Getting little bodies mindful

"I started doing mindfulness to cope with the stress of being a teaching director and being pulled in so many different directions. I needed to feel more centred."



Yoga and mindfulness practitioner Radha Babicci has had great success with children and parents alike since introducing her techniques to Emmerick Street Community Preschool, Sydney about a year ago, Bedrock Journalist Sue Osborne writes.

Radha has been an early childhood teacher for about nine years and Director at Emmerick Street for more than four years. She has been practicing yoga all her life and more recently mindfulness.

She is leaving Emmerick Street to set up her own consultancy, hoping to help both children and teachers in early childhood settings practice yoga and mindfulness.

"I'm passionate about teacher stress and I think mindfulness is a key to helping teachers cope with the stresses of working in education. I'd love to bring programs into centres for staff," Radha said.

"I started doing mindfulness myself to cope with the stress of being a teaching director and being pulled in so many different directions. I needed to feel more centred."

At Emmerick Street she practices with the children twice a day. In the morning all the rooms come together and do belly breathing, or 'bubble breathing'.

"They put their hands on their tummies and breathe in through their nose and own into their bellies and out through their mouths," she said.

"Sometimes we make it like a game and they have to blow a feather or bubbles across the room.

"They do that really slowly three or four times and it really calms them down.

"I do a meditation after that when they have to focus on one thing or a sound. They might clap and focus on the sensation on their hands of that clap.

"It helps them practice how to focus the mind. Sometimes I tell a story and they imagine being in that story."

Radha also plays a game with Tibetan singing bowls – the children have to put their hand up when the noise stops.

"At first this was quite hard for some because you have to wait for the sound to stop. They're used to putting their hand up when a sound starts. It's a way of getting their bodies ready to be mindful."

On Wednesdays Radha does a yoga session with the children, but it's not yoga as adults understand it, quiet and serious.

"It's fun and loud. We have music and dancing – it's not too controlled. It's a creative, energetic process.

"I might say 'we're going on a journey to the jungle' and get them

involved in how we get there.

"I play happy and sad music and get them to move their bodies to express the emotion. It's about making a connection with their bodies.

"At the end there's relaxation and we all lie down and I always tell a story. Often I use props.

"For instance, I might say we climbed a tree and put a frangipani flower on their foreheads. They can smell it and take it home."

Radha said parents have been supportive of the program and the children had shown a great capacity to self calm since starting it.

Children have been going home and sharing techniques with their families. Writing about it in the newsletter has been an important part of the program, and Radha said families want the practice to continue at the preschool after she leaves.

"It's made parents realise social and emotional learning is important. There are less questions like 'will my child be able to read before school' and more like 'will she be able to cope emotionally' with school.

Radha can be contacted at radha@radhababici.com. Her Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/Super-Kids-Yoga-566895120155634/>

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Author: Dani Cooper

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Illustrator: Maggie Prewett

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