

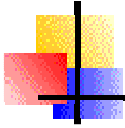
early childhood education council of nsw inc

Vol 25 No. 2 June 2007

This is the second newsletter of 2007 for the Early Childhood Education Council of NSW. Please refer any comments to the Editor, c/- PO Box 418 Leichhardt NSW 2040 editor@ecec.asn.au

Our Vision

The Early Childhood Education Council of NSW Inc. is a professional association promoting child centred practices through advocacy and professional development, informing on current trends in early childhood education and ensuring a high profile for early childhood issues.



Transition to School

Working towards successful transitions

On Thursday 29 March we held our first professional development workshop for 2007. The topic looked at working towards successful transition from preschool to school. We had three presentations in the course of the afternoon – the first from Professor Sue Dockett from Charles Sturt University, Albury campus. The next from the kindergarten staff at Wiley Park Public School and the third from the Principal and staff at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Waterloo.

Each speaker brought with them their own experiences in dealing with transition to school programs:

- Sue's from her research into building strong, effective relationships with school, families and communities,
- the team from Wiley Park PS and their experience with the school's Leap Frog Program that encourage their students and families that come from culturally diverse backgrounds to be more active in the school community, and
- the Principal and staff from Our Lady of Mount Carmel that looked at developing partnerships with local businesses to gain funds for its transitions program for its Aboriginal students and students from socially diverse backgrounds.

Sue Dockett has been involved in a longitudinal study about transition to school conducted through the Starting School Research Project, based at the University of Western Sydney. Over the past 10 years she has spent a lot of time talking to children, families, educators and communities about what matters when children start school. Sue has gained insight from parents, educators and children about concerns around starting school, what school might be like and what they can do to support and help children as they move into the complex world of school.

Some of the most recurrent themes that go across the groups that Sue has looked at are

- forming relationships
- building relationships
- communication with family
- communication with community

Sue found that when children were asked what was important they said:

- having friends
- buddies
- family members
- educators, community members.

When asked the educators what they thought was important, their listed

- social respect
- power and regard
- perceived competency
- perceived integrity.

Sue's research found that there was a need to build strong relationships and respect for each other. Families need to connect with other families, the school and the staff and we can see this clearly in the transition programs from both the schools.

The conclusion is that

Relationships build bridges and form a buffer for children.

and

Relationships take time to build- it takes commitment.

Sue has developed a set of guidelines for good transition programs, but they need to be sustainable, people need to be committed to it, well developed and constantly revised. The success to school is linked to academic engagement but children also need a good engaging curriculum.

Guidelines for effective transition to school:

1. establish positive relationships between children, parents and educators.
2. Facilitate each child's development as a capable learner
3. Differentiate between 'orientation to school' and 'transition to school' programs

4. Draw upon dedicated funding and resources
5. Involve a range of stakeholders
6. Are well planned and effectively evaluated
7. Are flexible and responsive
8. Are based on mutual trust and respect
9. Rely on reciprocal communication among participants
10. Take into account contextual aspects of community and of individual families and children within that community. (Dockett, S & Perry, B (2006) Starting School: A handbook for early childhood educators. Castle Hill: Pademelon Press. p 16)

Effie Gorgas and Irene Gargoulo are kindergarten teachers from Wiley Park Public School. They spoke about their transition to school program called 'Leap Frogs'. The program included many of the principles that Sue spoke of from her research. The Leap Frogs program involves establishing relationships with parents and the school. The community as culturally diverse as Effie's and Irene's where there were many parents that were unsure how to get involved in their child's schooling. The Leap Frogs program allowed parents to become participants in the learning community at the school that helped break down barriers between school, staff and parents. Parents were up at the school 2-3 times a week and were able to get comfortable with the school and its environs. The program was organised through the local SACPS (School As Community Program Centre) where the parents were involved in sessions such as health and nutrition, parenting skills, reading, playgroup, English class, and Computer classes. The school saw benefits from having the program running on its premises as it got to know the incoming kindergarten intake and their parents/ families, the staff were able to identify students with learning needs before the student started school and the school presented a strong message of acceptance.

The Leap Frogs program rides on the back of Tadpoles, the playgroup program, that attracts up to 50 pre-school ages children (from birth – 4yrs) and their mother and or father every week. This program is vibrant and highly active where

parents from predominantly Arabic backgrounds (98%) form friendships, develop support networks and knowledge of how the school operates.

Our third presenters were Susan Clifton, principal and Mary Weaver, Assistant Principal from Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Waterloo. Their 'Head Start Program' catered for their Aboriginal and socially diverse community and was in need a funds. The school had no history with any preschools in the area and started from scratch a few years ago to build strong community. This was done by the principal building a partnership from a local business group so the school could purchase a bus to get the children from the preschool to school and to use the older students in the school to assist in the transition program with the preschools. Older students in the school went to the preschool working collaboratively with the preschoolers on activities in mathematics, ICT, literacy and gross motor for a period of 12 weeks in Terms 3 and 4. At the end of the 12 weeks the 'Buddies' worked only with those children that were going onto the school for 4 weeks. For these 4 weeks sessions on attendance and literacy were run. The program built on bridging and building relationships with families and the community. Students with special needs were identified so they could be catered for when they entered the school. Staff and parents had notice that there had been a change in the community where the older students have more empathy for the younger ones where before there was apathy.

If you would like to view each the presentations from this professional development session you can find them on our website. www.ecec.asn.au

Sue Dockett is the patron of ECEC. She currently has a few publications that have been referred to by the reviewer of this article.

Dockett, S & Perry, B (2006) Starting School: A handbook for early childhood educators. Castle Hill: Pademelon Press.

Dockett, S & Perry, B (2006) *Our family is starting school: A handbook for parents and carers*. Castle Hill: Pademelon Press.

Arthur, L, Beecher, B, Death, E, Dockett, S & Farmer, S (2005) *Programming and planning in early childhood settings*. (3rd Ed) Melbourne: Thomson.



Report from the Board of Studies Curriculum Committee

Review of K-6 Science and Technology Syllabus

The committee met for the first time on 4 May to be briefed about the process for the writing of the new Science and Technology syllabus. Janet Chan, principal of Plumpton Public School, as chairperson, outlined the timeline which begins with a literature review of current research and developments in the areas of Science education and Technology education from Australia and overseas and a consultation review of the current syllabus.

At the next Board Curriculum Committee (BCC) meeting on 21 November the writing brief will be presented. The writing brief is developed from the literature review recommendations and feedback received from the consultation process. The BCC will be asked to recommend that the Board accept the brief. Following approval a writing team will begin the development of the revised syllabus.

ECEC has been invited to make a formal written submission and any comments from members

would be appreciated. These can be sent to the president's email natjane@bigpond.com

ECEC members are encouraged to respond to this review by attending a consultation meeting and completing a Board of Studies (BOS) questionnaire:

<http://k6.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/scitech/#scitech-invite>

Diana Eqbal
ECEC representative for the Professional Teachers Council on the BOS Science and Technology K – 6 Curriculum Committee.

Professional Development Topics

We held two successful afternoon workshops in Term 2

Share some secrets of success from K-3 classrooms
Maureen Hallahan and Jenny Ralph who each contributed a chapter to our recent Current Topics.

Pre-school Programming

An afternoon at John Brothie Nursery School

This was a follow up to Rebecca Andrews' presentation for pre-school teachers in 2006.

A brief write up of these two workshops will be included in the next newsletter.

Did you miss the 2006 ECEC Conference?

If you were unable to attend the 2006 *Innovative strategies for K-3 Classrooms* conference and would like a copy of the papers and workshop materials presented at the conference please send an email requesting a copy of the CD to natjane@bigpond.com Please ensure you include postal address. Alternatively fax the request below to the President ECEC on 9816 1003. Requests will be processed up to the 30 June 2007

To: President ECEC
Fax: 9816 1003

I would like to receive a copy of the ECEC 2007 conference papers *Innovative strategies for K-3 Classrooms*.

Name: _____

Mailing address:

Contact number: _____

ECEC Turns 25!

We are planning to hold celebration dinner towards the end of Term 3. If you know other colleagues who have belonged to the ECEC family over the past 25 years please let them know. Any contact details can be sent to the president at natjane@bigpond.com or sent to ECEC PO Box 418 Leichhardt. 2040