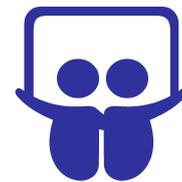


TALKING QUALITY: REFLECTING ON PRACTICE IN EDUCATION AND CARE



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Welcome

Welcome to the 3rd edition of Talking Quality. This publication is aimed at promoting a culture of inquiry and collaboration across the ACT Education and Care sector. It aims to regularly engage stakeholders with the guiding principles of the [National Quality Framework \(NQF\)](#) and connect these with goals for continuous improvement.

Guiding Principles of the NQF

- *The rights and best interests of the child are paramount.*
- *Children are successful, competent and capable learners.*
- *Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework.*
- *Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.*
- *The role of parents and families is respected and supported.*
- *Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.*

In this edition, we are very excited to bring you perspectives from Dr Carmen Huser and Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre and Preschool! We hope that these inspire you and support reflection. These articles also highlight the importance of philosophy in guiding quality practice in education and care. Building a community of practice in education and care is an important aspect of this publication.

Do you have a story to share? This could be details of successes, challenges and questions that align with the guiding principles of the NQF. Alternatively do you have a question you would like answered that we can unpack?

What's Happening

- Upcoming Events

Children's Education and Care Symposium 2018

Date: Wednesday, 24 October 2018 **Time:** 9:30am to 1:00pm

Venue: Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning,
51 Fremantle Drive Stirling ACT



This year Children's Education and Care Assurance are partnering with the ACT Pedagogical Leadership Network to present a symposium focusing on Critical Reflection through Action Research.

Final Education and Care Sector Meeting for 2018

Date: Tuesday 27 November 2018 **Time:** 9:30am to 12:30/1:00pm*

Venue: Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning,
51 Fremantle Drive Stirling ACT



As part of the Agenda, Dr Fay Hadley from Macquarie University will be presenting her work on Partnerships with Families.

* Finish time and full Agenda will be confirmed closer to the date.



- Early Childhood Strategy

Early Childhood Education for Three Year Old Children

The ACT Government recently announced the goal of providing 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year of free, universal quality early childhood education for three year old children.

The ACT Government is commencing a consultation and development stage to establish a model that best meets the needs of the community. Over the coming months conversations will be undertaken with families, the early childhood education sector, schools and the wider community about how, and therefore when, we will be able to provide access to early childhood education for all three year old children in the ACT.

To provide feedback on the initiative you can join the conversation at ACT Government's [YourSay](https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au) website or contact the Early Childhood Policy team via ECPolicy@act.gov.au.



What's Happening

-Northern Territory –News from Brigid

I have now passed the halfway mark of my secondment in the NT and am sadly planning to leave beautiful Darwin. I know I have been here at the best time of year but I have been surprised and delighted at what a great experience it has been. 'The Quality Education and Care NT Team' have been extremely welcoming and generous and I have loved getting to know them and the other teams committed to supporting educators, families and children in the NT.

My most memorable experiences of assessment and rating so far include:

A school age care program where children were planning and completing sewing projects using four sewing machines and a large range of material, two children cooked large baking pans of zucchini slice for next day's afternoon tea with minimum supervision and children cooperated to build on what others had done during their allotted time on electronic devices;

An early learning centre which catered for vulnerable children and families where support workers and educators collaborated to facilitate access by children and where educators wove the Abecedarian approach seamlessly into all aspects of the program and routines. Family culture was very visible in the service and a mural by a local artist depicted the context of the centre beautifully.

A preschool where educators collaborated to deliver a bilingual program, find ways to meaningfully connect with families and use photos to draw attention to elements of the program, philosophy and QIP.

Two authorised officers from NSW also took advantage of the secondment opportunity and this has provided an invaluable opportunity to exchange ideas, engage in professional discussion and consider the processes that different jurisdictions use to monitor compliance and assess services. I look forward to discussing this with colleagues at CECA when I return to the ACT in October. Hopefully it will encourage further interjurisdictional collaboration leading to a greater understanding of the way we can meet the challenges and continue to effectively implement the National Quality Framework.

Outside of work we have been able to explore the NT on weekends. Swimming in crystal clear pools beneath waterfalls in Litchfield National Park has been wonderful. Locals won't swim at Wangi Falls as saltwater crocodiles inhabit it in the wet and they don't trust that the rangers really can clear them. We happily joined the other tourists to swim across the large waterhole and climb up the rocks beside the falls. Florence creek and falls were also magical. The tourist highlight for me was a weekend on my own in Kakadu walking through the rock art galleries and watching the sunset across the floodplain at Ubirr, going to see the rock art at Burrungkuy next morning and then the wetlands at Cooiinda. It was an amazing experience and I was filled with wonder at how Aboriginal people so generously share their cultural heritage. Work colleagues also warned me against driving out of Ubirr at sunset because of wildlife on the road but I actually saw less roadkill (small wallabies) on the three hour drive from Darwin than I do on my daily commute between Queanbeyan and Canberra and none at all between Ubirr and Jabiru where I stayed overnight in a comfy bush bungalow.

Our lovely apartment on the Esplanade has made it very easy to attend events at the Darwin festival. A viewing of the winners of the NT Aboriginal Art Awards was a standout experience and my next favourite was the performance of a Queanbeyan man, Omar Musa.

I will be sad to leave Darwin. Life feels more relaxed here, I love flying to remote communities in little planes, just the right height off the ground to marvel at the Rainbow Serpent landscape spread out below me. I have even become fond of the 'cheeky dogs' who roam the communities and are very keen to attend preschool, although not their night time symphonies. I am forever grateful to all who have made this adventure possible.



Brigid Donchoe

Featuring Dr Carmen Huser

Critical Conversations

-Conversation starter #3 - Being challenged by children's play, or co-constructing play curriculum with children?!

Children engage in play throughout their day at early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, as well as, at home. While observing children at play, you may notice different types, contents, and ways of playing. Play is diverse, reflecting the children's diversity of their social and cultural life contexts and experiences (Dockett & Fler, 1999). It is also influenced by societal factors, emerging technologies and contemporary popular culture and media (Edwards, 2014). While children absorb and reproduce content from what they observe in their parents' everyday lives, in their favourite television program, or in stories they hear and that have been read out to them by their parents or educators, they also re-interpret these and create their own play stories. In and through play, children construct new meaning with their peers and a culture of playing and being together (Corsaro, 2012).

Besides children's play culture, play is also at the centre of pedagogies and educational practices in ECEC in Australia. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) offers a play-based learning approach which defines play as the appropriate space for children to learn about their social, material and imaginative worlds (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009). The use of pedagogical play can enhance children's learning through adult-led play where the educator gives impulse, models and aims for a particular purpose (Edwards & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2011). It can meet curricular goals and educational outcomes.



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ How is play conceptualised and communicated in your service? When you watch children play, what assumptions do you make? What comes to your mind?
- ⇒ What observations do you make in children's play? What is your first reaction? What grabs your attention and interest? Is there anything which makes you feel challenged?
- ⇒ How much and how often are you tempted to interrupt children's play? Is this because you find it purposeless through your adult educational lens; because it does not meet your expectations of quality play; because you perceive children's behaviour uncontrolled, or disruptive for other children? Are you fascinated by your observations of their play, but have questions?
- ⇒ Do you explore with the children their understandings of play? What conversations do you have with them about their play?



Critical Conversations Cont.

Pedagogical play may be driven by adults' educational agendas, but it can – and should not – forget about the powerful child-led play where children explore under their own conditions and with their own ideas in mind. Children have their own play agendas, and they know a great deal about their play and what is important to them. They know what they like about playing and to play with, whom they like to play with, as well as, where and when to play (Huser, 2010). Sometimes, however, adult agendas dominate children's play.

Further, our adult views of play that serves a pedagogical purpose may lead us to judge children's play and categorize it as 'good' or 'bad'. Imagine a situation where a group of children playing with Mobilo® construction material: First, they sit quietly at a table and construct different objects with high concentration. The play continues with the players showing each other their constructions and the different transformations that these constructs are possible to do. After a while, the children run around, each holding their "transformer". Two players start a game of throwing the transformers as far as they can. What is your view? What is your reaction?

Maybe you feel that this game is too boisterous and can harm other children whom might be hit with one of the flying objects; or that the children are not handling the equipment with care and might break it. Maybe you wonder if this is getting out of control. Maybe you notice the fun they have. Maybe you are interested what this play is all about. Maybe you recognize the complexity of the children's play, their creative use of the material and their knowledge about the original Transformers™, their imagination to construct and play with their own Transformers, their inventiveness of games, and their peer scaffolding during constructing. No matter what your views are, your reaction matters the most. How about finding out what the children are playing, and what they can tell you about their play?



Suggested Links

[Podcast: Children's rights in play research \(open with Google Chrome as your browser to ensure you can listen to it\)](#)

[Agency in practice](#)

[Educational Program and Practice: An Analysis of Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Standard](#)

[Children speaking about the importance of play](#)

[What do children say about play? Insights into play from children's perspectives in a prior-to-school setting](#)

[Play-based learning and intentional teaching: The Pedagogical Play-framework](#)

[Supporting agency: Involving children in decision making](#)



Critical Conversations Cont.

Listening to children is a great starting point to re-think, reflect and improve play provision and educational play practices. Conversations with children about play can highlight different ideas between adults and children, as well as, among adults or children. What children think and know about play can assist and inform curricular decisions (Huser, 2018). The EYLF and the National Quality Framework (NQF) see children as active social agents. This means that children are and should be able to choose and participate in decisions. So, when we take children's perspectives of play into account and respond pedagogically to them, we are not only co-constructing a play curriculum with the children. We also fulfil our responsibilities and meet the National Quality Standards, such as Quality Area 1 (ACECQA, 2018). Children experience themselves as effective communicators and gain confidence. Their understandings, knowledge and ideas are respected and build the basis of the educational program and practice.



About the author

Carmen Huser is a Research Associate at Charles Sturt University, School of Education where she recently completed her Doctor of Philosophy in Education. Her doctoral study is titled *Children's perspectives of play and their research participation*. The core drive for her research is acknowledging children's rights to participation. While Carmen has been interested in children's understandings and ideas of their play in the ECE context, she also aims to gain knowledge from the children how they experience their research participation, how they act as agents and rights holders. Prior to moving to Australia, Carmen worked several years as an educator in ECEC services for children aged 2-6 years old; as a research assistant for a research centre with a focus on early childhood education and development, and as a casual lecturer.

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Bruce Ridge Early Childhood
Centre and Preschool

Stories from the Sector

- Mud Play at Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre and Preschool



"Children have a right to play in an outdoor environment that provides them with experiences where they gain knowledge, understanding of and respect for nature and the environment. Children have a right to explore the natural world regardless of the weather conditions."

Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre and Preschool –
Philosophy extract.

At Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre and Preschool, we highly value opportunities to explore our environments, irrespective of the weather. In fact, it is far more exciting and appealing to play in the rain and water, than our usual day-to-day play.

We make it known from the beginning of a child's time with us that we have every intention of getting out in the rain, after the rain and in all weather. During a family's orientation, we discuss allowing each child to explore all weather types and let families know they can provide their child with all-weather clothing.

As a plan B, we are well resourced with gumboots and rain jackets in all rooms and full water-proof suits for our infant room. The all-weather experience is not limited to our older groups.

Our view has always been that appropriate clothing is the key!

Routines and transitions within the centre have always been progressive, at the child's pace and in consultation with the child. Our view of children as active participants and decision makers, showing them respect and involving them in what happens to them means that our transition from wet to dry is typically smooth.

We regularly participate in events such as International Mud Day, World Earth Day and we attend 'Bush School' a few times a week, across all age groups, enabling us to be consistently engaged in nature play.

The children will have an opportunity to learn about the wider natural environment which they are a part of, and to develop richer understandings of the intricate relationships between plants, land, people and animals through observation, exploration, inference, hypothesis and prediction.



Bruce Ridge Early Childhood
Centre and Preschool

Stories from the Sector Cont.



We believe that through this type of play, all outcomes can be achieved for children regarding the Early Years Learning Framework.

“One of the most significant responsibilities that [early childhood] professionals have is to support children to retain the sense of awe and wonder that they are born with, to add to that a desire to nurture and protect what is beautiful, and to encourage them to appreciate that there are many possibilities for honouring life and wonders that the world holds.”

-Anne Stonehouse

I love jumping in puddles! – Eva and Evie

I make mud pies when it is all rainy. – Winnie

When there are puddles, I jump and splash. – Chloe

When it is all wet and there are big puddles, I like to drive through them with my wheel barrow. – Ewan

I like to do construction work with the mud and rocks after the rain. – Jordan and Jaxon



Suggested Links

[Learning Outdoors: Benefits-Risks](#)

[Rethinking outdoor learning environments – Part A](#)

[20 Ideas to Encourage Outdoor Rainy Day Play](#)

[ExN Campfire Conversations Ep 21 – Claire Warden – Nature Pedagogy](#)

[Nature Pedagogy - inside, outside and beyond](#)

[The Nature School - Facebook](#)

[Talking about practice: Adventurous play— Developing a culture of risky play](#)

[Early Childhood Resource Hub newsletter - The great outdoors](#)

[The Natural Environment as a Playground for Children: The Impact of Outdoor Play Activities in Pre-Primary School Children](#)

[Muddlarks – Wet weather gear](#)

[MK Nordika – Wet weather gear](#)

Written by Kara Bromley, Educational Leader at Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre and Preschool.

Credit for photographs: Bruce Ridge Early Childhood Centre and Preschool.

If you'd like to know more, please contact Kara at educational.leader@brecc.com.au or info@brecc.com.au



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ How does the weather currently impact on opportunities for outdoor play in our setting?
- ⇒ How do I feel about wet weather play? Does this impact on opportunities for children?
- ⇒ How could we engage families in a discussion about the benefits of these types of play?
- ⇒ Are there barriers to these types of play that currently exist in our setting? How could we overcome these?

Embedding Practice

-When to challenge embedded practices

"A consistent approach to practice does not mean that practice is rigid, unchanging, unreflective, or habit-based. Rather, practice is of high quality, thoughtful and intentional, but is also responsive to the everyday flow of events. Understanding what is expected and why provides a basis for ongoing discussions about practice, and for ensuring systems are in place to re-think and refine practice, contributing to continuous quality improvement over time." (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2018, p. 332)*.

When thinking about this quote from the 'Guide to the NQF' what questions do you have about practices embedded in your service? Are you confronted by this quote or does it make you curious? Are there aspects you are challenged by or does it leave you inspired to question your practices further? How do we know when to challenge practices that have become embedded? Are there some practices that we take for granted? Are any practices based on underlying assumptions about what education and care should look like or what we think children should learn?

*Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority. (2018). *Guide to the National Quality Framework*. [online] Available at: https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-03/Guide-to-the-NQF_0.pdf



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ How do we choose which practices become embedded and which ones do not?
- ⇒ Do we currently have any practices that have become embedded unintentionally? What impact do they have on children's daily experiences and learning?
- ⇒ Do these practices reflect our service philosophy?
- ⇒ Are they aligned with current recognised approaches in education and care? How do they fit with the principles and practices of the EYLF?

FAQ

-Frequently asked questions



Do you have a question for Children's Education and Care Assurance?



Suggested Links

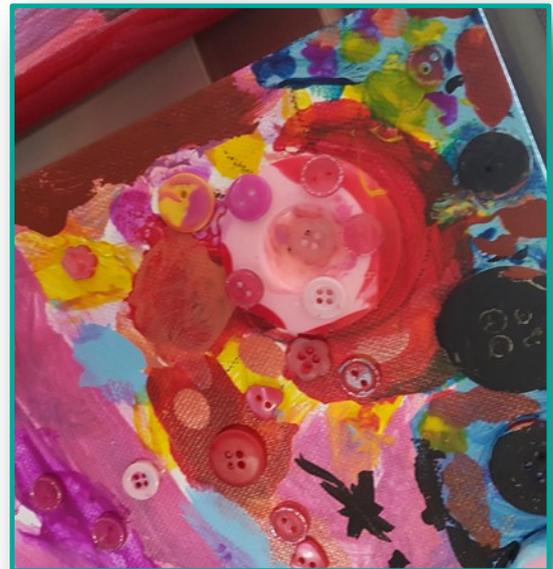
[THINKING ABOUT PRACTICE: Working with the Early Years Learning Framework](#)

[Early Years Learning Framework: perspectives on pedagogy](#)

[Learning Strengths-Based Practice: Challenging our Personal and Professional Frames.](#)

[Innovative pedagogical approaches in early childhood care and education \(ECCE\) in the Asia-Pacific region](#)

[Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework - Evidence Paper - Practice Principle 8: Reflective Practice](#)



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