



FAR NORTH QLD

LOOP

AUGUST 2009

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

It's regional loop time again!

The Far North Queensland Region Emergent Curriculum three-part series has begun with workshops available to all specific sectors. Sue Inglis and Carrie Rose will be taking these groups on a learning journey which will culminate in a showcase with all of the groups joining together to celebrate their shared learning.

For anyone who may have missed the excitement over the past few months we would like to officially declare that the Health & Community Services Workforce Council Townsville office has moved! After many months of false starts at the end of June, Peter, Bernadine, Sandy and Jasmine packed up their digs on Thuringowa Drive, Kirwan, and prepared for the culture shock of moving into the 'big city'.

Our new address is: Unit 1 Level 2 , 390 Flinders St Townsville.

Action research (Building a positive and motivated team):

At the recent Far North Qld PSN meeting, the Action Research Project was high on the agenda. It was decided that the Action Research Project will roll out in the Far North Queensland region early in 2010. This will be a first for the sector and the region! The topic will be '**Building a positive and motivated team**' and this was chosen after a number of consultation processes including a recent information session (linking and learning) and the information gathering survey earlier this year where all sectors were involved in sharing their current issues and concerns. The Far North Queensland Action Research Project is limited to 30 participants so keep your eye out for an invitation coming your way soon with some more details on the process around this amazing opportunity to go on a 12-month supported, reflective journey with your staff, to create permanent positive change in practice.

The Far North Qld PSN will be '**Looking to the future!**' at an event on **28th October 2009** where you are all invited to share your ideas about the professional development calendar for the region for 2010. Invites out soon!

Last, but by no means least, the Northern Regions Professional Development Calendar for 2009 has been updated and is available for you on the website at www.pscq.org.au

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Regional Roundup
- Australia Wide Conferences
- Frequently asked questions
- Heather Barnes Article
- Carrie Rose Article
- Exchange Program
- Noah's Ark Resources
- FNQ Childcare Forums

NEED TO CONTACT PSCQ?

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Your *Far North Queensland*
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Peter Demopoulos

For more information,
check out the website at
www.pscq.org.au
or give us a call on the PSCQ
freecall number —
1800 112 585.



WHATS NEW AND EXCITING IN THE FAR NTH REGION...

Services have connected recently to engage in some local childcare forums hosted by the staff at Smithfield Childcare. Here is some more information on the forums, and don't forget to have a look at the enclosed flyer for their next event!

Providing a Voice for Professionals in the Field

In a positive move to encourage all contact staff in childcare services to discuss and share their knowledge and abilities, staff at Smithfield Childcare have established forums held every 6 weeks in the Cairns region. Sessions currently operate at the centre after hours and they enable like-minded staff the opportunity to converse and share their ideas and experiences in a supportive environment which is conducive to extension of skills, and the gaining of facts and understanding that specifically relate to the chosen topic.

The third session, "**Environments & Learning Experiences**", is occurring soon (18th August at 6.30pm) and follows on from previous topics relating to Emergent Curriculum. All persons are welcome, there is no cost, and refreshments are provided. We believe childcare staff have an abundance of information that we can all learn from and this knowledge combined together will ensure every child will reap many benefits. The forums were established specifically for staff who work 'hands-on' with young children on a daily basis to acknowledge the high level of expertise they already have and to give them many opportunities to share and grow together.

Come along and join us at the next session and keep your eyes open for future forum dates. Minutes can be emailed to you and a certificate will be provided after attendance.



AUSTRALIA WIDE CONFERENCES 2009

* CHECK THE WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

2009 ARACY Conference: Transforming Australia for our children's future: Making prevention work

2-4 September 2009, Melbourne

<http://www.aracyconference.org.au/index.php> (Call for abstracts open until 30 April)

Third Australasian Early Childhood Education for Sustainability Conference

Engage Empower Enact: Sustainability and the Early Years

22-24 October, 2009, Melbourne

<http://www.cccvic.org.au/images/EESEY%20Conference%202009.pdf>

Asia Pacific Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

15-18 November, 2009, Perth

<http://www.napcan.org.au/index.htm>

Inaugural National Playgroup Australia Conference

5-7 November 2009, Gold Coast

http://www.corporatecommunique.com.au/playgroup/Registration_Brochure.pdf



Children's Services Professionals Exchange Program

News from the Exchange Desk

Would you like to discover some fresh ideas?

Would you like to develop networks with other Children's Services professionals?

Then the Exchange Program is for you!

The Children's Services Exchange Program offers participants and host services the opportunity to share ideas and develop links with staff in other services to provide support even after the exchange has finished. Participants and Host Services that have been involved in the program have raved about what a valuable and inspiring professional development opportunity it is.

"It renewed my enthusiasm for working in childcare I collected heaps of new ideas and brought heaps of great stuff back with me ... The staff at my host service were so helpful and friendly, it was great."

Trish from Karumba Children's Service

"It was great to network with other centres and directors and I gained lots of ideas to incorporate into our program"

Carmen, Director form Dysart Daycare

Participants in the program have traveled far and wide or stayed close to home to visit their host services. How long they visited for, where they went to and what they wanted to discover while they are away has varied greatly depending on the individual. The Exchange Program Coordinator spends time talking with each participant to discuss these things and where possible offer a selection of services for you to choose from that will meet your needs.

Consider being involved in this rewarding professional development opportunity today!

Exchange Program Frequently Asked Questions

Who can participate in the program and how many visits can I go on?

The exchange program is open to services and individuals who are members of PSCQ. To be eligible you must be working in the industry, have a current Blue Card, be over 17 and be qualified or training. Any staff member who is employed in the service is eligible (Director, Group Leader, assistant, cook and administrator). Participants must have the approval of their Director/Coordinator/Management. You will have the opportunity to participate in one visit per year.

Can participants in the program be counted as a staff member for child: adult ratios?

No. The idea of the program is for participants to explore their new environment, increasing their knowledge, gaining an awareness of other services, experiencing different childcare practices, checking out resources etc. While the expectation is that they would interact with the children and join in with the program, they should be an extra set of hands in the service.

Do participants have to go to the same type of service they are working in?

No. Participants are able to freely select the types of service they wish to visit. For example a family daycare provider may wish to visit a long day care service or an outside school hours participant may wish to visit an occasional care service

Who organises and pays for travel and accommodation for participants?

If it is required travel and accommodation will be organised by the Exchange Program Coordinator. Cost of this travel and accommodation may be fully covered by PSCQ, depending on the destination.

Will it cost me anything?

Participants will need to be members of PSCQ and may need to pay a fee of up to \$40.00 to be involved in the program (if traveling from rural/remote areas). This will need to be paid to PSCQ when you return your expression of interest if applicable.

Who will cover the cost of replacement staff?

The cost of replacement staff will be covered by PSCQ. The participant's employer will arrange for replacement staff and complete a claim form for their service to be reimbursed the cost of the replacement staff once the visit is finished and evaluation forms have been provided.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN -

READY FOR THE CHALLENGE?

ARTICLE BY CARRIE ROSE

As more early childhood educators are moving away from the 'boxed style' programs and into more child-centered and sometimes called Emergent Curriculums there is one very important factor that will decide whether the program will be successful or not. Thought, planning and collaboration is needed when we consider how the environment is going to support the type of curriculum implemented.

When we consider how children feel about the space that they play in, then just like adults, it will guide the way they behave and the success of learning. In many cases early childhood environments have very similar materials to play with and familiar play spaces to play in. Sometimes this can be many small, boxy spaces where perhaps only a few children can play without getting in each other's way, or spaces that are meant for specific games and materials only. We would argue that the environment should clearly show what the children of that group are exploring, games they are playing and reflect their varying levels of skill.

To do this we must consider that learning spaces should promote a variety of options and choices for children and not just the ones that we think are 'developmentally appropriate'. Children cannot show their skills if we do not give them the opportunities through environments that provide challenges, aesthetic appeal and ignites the senses. The way in which the room provokes wonder and curiosity will assist in firing up the senses and imagination.

As educators we should base the decisions in the environment not on what we think we should have, according to history or developmental milestones, rather base it on inspiration, intrigue and function.

To be able to inspire and intrigue children to explore their environment we should consider what materials we are offering. Although there are many materials we can purchase through relevant catalogues, it can be argued that many of these materials have one main play purpose or function. Purchasing recycled or second hand furniture and materials starts to give the learning space a closer connection to the 'home like feel'. Providing environments that engage the children in long lasting play, with a more creative and open ended purpose, with materials of interest, will create a context that will minimise children's challenging behaviour and only enhance their learning opportunities.

Dr Pam Schiller, in *Turning Research into Practice*, writes about how we can start to consider and reflect on how the environment is sustaining the learning. Her findings indicated that 'over-stimulating classrooms inhibit cognitive functioning and children do not make thoughtful choices when given more than three options'. She continued by indicating that classroom practices needed specific thought in:

- Classroom decor reflects thoughtful choices.
- Environmental print is limited and is rotated.
- Artwork is rotated.
- Wall space provides a place for the eyes to rest.
- Toys and games are rotated.
- Choices for children are limited.

She continued by indicating that there are environmental influences that also must be considered. Many times educators work off what we know or have done before. It is time for all teachers to start to consider the environment in much more importance as it provides the foundation for the children's learning. These influences were far more than just where the furniture is placed but included areas of the senses such as sight (colours, choices), smell (aroma in the space), touch (learning by doing) and characteristics of personality such as humour and novelty. Where are these learnings in your space?

I have developed (and use in my training) the below structure of steps to assist educators to reflect on the effectiveness of their current environments and where improvements can be made:

- Step 1:** Decide on the learning spaces and functions
- Step 2:** Draw a plan with materials needed—If you have older children you could involve them in the design and ideas
- Step 3:** Check you have everything you need
- Step 4:** Start the change
- Step 5:** Discuss and decide the rules with the children

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ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN - READY FOR THE CHALLENGE?

Investing time in steps 1 & 2 is critical for success. Deciding on learning spaces could be assumed as what we already do but how does the environment differ from any other similar service? When I consider learning spaces I start by :

- Thinking about the challenges the room or an area has and ideas to solve them – plan spaces that will work in these spaces
- Considering the learning spaces you are wanting to develop and skills the children will engage in
- Identifying what the children are really interested in playing with and the current size of these spaces compared to others
- Deciding on how many children the space will accommodate for
- Reflecting on where the children can play in groups, and by themselves
- Reflecting on how can spaces be used in different ways of learning
- Reflecting on how the space can be more aesthetic and inviting

Learning spaces indoors and outdoors can have a variety of functions and materials to provide children opportunity to develop skills over a range of areas no matter where they are playing. These are some of the spaces I have developed in my current centre:

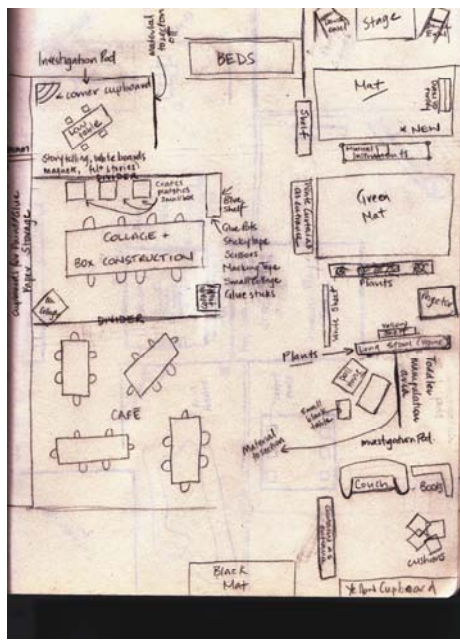
Indoors & Outdoors:

Thinking/problem solving/mathematical
 Science and discovery of natural materials
 Project investigation and space for displays
 Literacy and Language
 Family life — role play and equipment
 Manipulation and skill building of motor skills
 Cultural exploration/difference and similarities
 Gardening & Conservation

Construction and building (small and large)
 Discovery through light/shadow
 Chill out zone
 Meals
 Drama/music/movement
 Design studio/expressive arts
 Games



Planning this in detail will assist in areas working more successfully than if random decisions are made. These are the sketches of two of the indoor studios that my team and I put together prior to starting any change:



Detail includes where specific furniture will go, the props that will be used and the functions of the areas.

So what's the challenge?

The challenge is to honestly think about what you are trying to achieve with the children and how effective have you been with your environment. **Be inspired and dream!**

TALKING WITH FAMILIES ABOUT TRICKY ISSUES

ARTICLE BY HEATHER BARNES

There are times in every child care service when sensitive issues need to be raised with families. **How** you do this, may affect the on-going relationship that you have with the family.

It is important to start from the position that families want to hear good things about their child. Many of them are working hard to give their child the best possible start in life and are trying to be 'good' parents while juggling all the stresses that work and parenting bring. They are hoping that you are providing a level of care that is as good, if not better than they could provide themselves for their children. If there is unpleasant news about their child they may become defensive. They may worry about how you are viewing their child and whether that means your level of care will be affected. They may also worry about how you are viewing their parenting skills.

Kay Albrecht (in *Parent Relations*) says that, "A good rule of thumb in exchanging information with parents is to give parents information only if they can do something about it or they can use the information."

If you have concerns about a child's behaviour during the day, it may be useful to ask yourself whether sharing the information with the family will help them to further understand their child, to understand your interactions with their child, or to help them with further strategies to manage the child's behaviour at home. If all or part of these apply, then it is still important that you commence any conversations by sharing something about the child that demonstrates that you *like* him/her.

Raise the issue by referring to 'normal' development. For example, "Often children in the toddler age range bite other children and there are several reasons why it may happen. Here is some information about biting for you to take away and perhaps we could meet to talk about it again. Let's see if we can find a time that's good for both of us."

If you are concerned about the possibility that a child has an additional need or delayed development, be very gentle about how you raise it. Inviting them to spend time in the service so they can see how their child compares with other children of a similar age may be a possibility. Sometimes it is better to wait until the parents raise the concern themselves, as often they are not ready to face that there may be a problem. On the other hand early intervention is highly important in improving outcomes for children. This is a difficult situation and you may need to seek advice from your Inclusion Support Facilitator.

If parents raise a concern about their child at drop-off or pick-up time, it is important not to make a hasty response but to allow yourself time to consider the issue carefully. Use reflective listening to ensure that you have accurately heard their concerns. Ask questions so that you are sure that you understand the issue. Say, "I'd love to have a chat with you about this, but I need to be with the children right now. When would be a good time for you?" This gives both you and the parent time to get your thoughts together before the discussion. Try to bring to the meeting any written observations, learning stories, photos or other information that will assist the parent.



Sometimes a family may request that you do something that would be against your beliefs and understanding about quality practice. For example, they may request that you use a 'naughty chair'. Acknowledge the parents' wishes by showing empathy and being sensitive to their experience and perspectives. You could say that perhaps that is something that works for them at home and you would like to be able to accommodate their requests but that Regulations, Accreditation Principles, Code of Ethics, Philosophy and Policies of the service give you guidelines about how to guide children's behaviour, and that a 'naughty chair' isn't regarded as appropriate practice in a child care service. Share with them the current way you manage inappropriate behaviour instead. This way you are not putting the parent down but are clearly stating why it isn't possible.

When communicating with a family, try to understand and empathise with their point of view. Put yourself in their place if you can. Reflect on your own attitudes to children, families, values and child-rearing methods. Try not to be led by your subconscious needs, likes and dislikes.

Developing an effective approach to communicating tricky issues with families takes time and effort, but the result is a better relationship between the family and the service, and positive outcomes for children.

Albrecht, K et al, (1994), Parent Relations: Building an Active Partnership, Best of Exchange INC. Reprint Collection 9#, USA

Stonehouse, Anne and Gonzalesz-Mena, Janet. (2004) Making Links, Pademelon Press, NSW, Australia

Waters, Joan, Making the Connection, Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Melbourne.

Noah's Ark Children's Services Resource Unit



Two by Two into the Ark — Resource Library And Advisory Service for PSCQ

Music is a wonderful tool to share with young children. As children develop difference skills at different ages it is important that the music program reflects these differences in an environment where children can learn to enjoy and love music. Music experiences does wonderful things. It:

- ✦ Improves problem solving skills
- ✦ Improves reasoning skills
- ✦ Creates a long term enhancement of spatial and temporal reasoning ability
- ✦ Improves language skills
- ✦ Improves outcomes of mathematical abilities
- ✦ Support memory development
- ✦ Provides opportunities to increase social skills and social awareness
- ✦ Stimulates creative intelligence
- ✦ Increases the ability to think, comprehend and understand

However for many children's services staff providing musical experiences within the program can be a daunting aspect. How do we use music throughout the whole program?

Noah's Ark Resource Library have just received new music resources that will inspire, encourage and motivate staff to use music more within their program. The resources have been developed and produced by Rhonda Davidson-Irwin. Rhonda was the musical director, composer and live musician for the Network Ten children's show "In the Box" as well as a part time lecturer in Early Childhood and Music Department at QUT. She has created over 30 music CDs using her own string quartet and the beautiful voices of her children's choir.

The following new music resources are now available for loan.

Music Spotlight "Language Literacy and Communication: A practical guide to music and integrated learning"

Music Spotlight "Maths, Science and Technology: A practical guide to music and integrated learning"

Music Spotlight "Art: A practical guide to music and integrated learning"



These three music kits contain, learning experiences and ideas, copies of songs and games plus a CD of related songs/ instrumentals. Each one identifies areas of children's development with practical suggestions and extensions on ideas which support children's emerging interests. An easy to read and use resource reflects a sound knowledge and understanding of children's services.

Whether you are wanting to create a time to learn new songs, remember old ones, encourage social development or calm those babies off to sleep, the library now has a large range of music CDs developed, and performed by Rhonda Davidson-Irwin and her Viva La Musica String Quartet. The collections also includes CDs from "In the Box" and "Fun Songs for Kids" Volumes 1-4.



Remember that you can order your resources on line or call the staff at the library on 1800 112 585.





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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where can I find a registration form?

Flyers for events will be sent to your service at your designated mailing address and if available email address. Flyers can also be found on the website at www.pscq.org or call PSCQ on 1800 112 585

How do I register for professional development?

Please fill in all fields of the application table, making sure all names are written clearly and spelt correctly, as these names will be used for attendance certificates. If paying by credit card complete details and fax the application to 07 4799 7986. Do not post the original or a duplication of payment may occur. If paying by cheque or money order, fax your completed application to 07 4799 7986 then post the application form with payment to **H & CS WORKFORCE COUNCIL , Ground Floor, 303 Adelaide St BRISBANE 4000**

Please book early to avoid session cancellation due to lack of numbers or missing out on a place for a session. Many presenters have strict limitations on numbers attending and or cancellation policies.

Late registrations (Sent after the close date indicated on the flyer) may be accepted to fill sessions, please confirm registration with PSCQ prior to sending any details.

Note: Please check your service's eligibility for PSC training. If you are unsure, please contact PSCQ to confirm. Training may still be accessed, but a different fee will apply.

Do I need to send payment with registration?

Yes. Send your registration form with cheque, money order or credit card payment. **Certificates will not be issued without payment.** No payments can be accepted at the event.

My service requires an invoice before we can pay. What do I do?

The registration form is also a Tax Invoice.

My service requires a receipt. What do I do?

The registration form is also a Tax Invoice. A receipt will only be sent to you if requested at time of registration. The receipt can only be issued in the name of the person/service making the payment.

Will I receive confirmation?

Please consider that your application has been accepted unless we contact you upon receipt of your application to advise otherwise.

What are the fees?

All professional development is GST inclusive. Fees vary according to the length of the presentation and will be clearly identified on the event flyer.

Will sessions be cancelled?

PSCQ reserves the right to cancel or alter training arrangements, where necessary. Although every effort is made to ensure that sessions proceed as scheduled if required you will be advised of any cancellation or alteration.

I have not received my certificate?

PSCQ will not issue certificates until payment has been made and signed attendance sheets have been sighted from presenters. **Always remember to sign in when attending an event.**

Can I get a refund?

If you are sick or unable to be released from your service, you can nominate another person to attend in your place but you will need to advise PSCQ of their details so certificates of attendance can be altered. If you wish to cancel completely, you must tell us by phone, email, fax or mail no later than seven (7) working days in advance, indicating whether you wish to receive a refund or credit for use at a future session. **If you cancel with less than 7 working days notice or simply do not attend, refunds will not be given.**

Is food provided at training?

In the Far Nth Qld region the following will apply.

Full day courses have lunch and morning tea available. Half day courses receive morning or afternoon tea. Evening workshops will have a light supper available. Please notify PSCQ on your registration form if you have any special dietary-related needs.

How do I find the venue?

The name and address of the venue will be indicated on the flyer. Those registered to attend will be notified of any changes that may occur.

Is parking available?

Venue parking capacity is subject to each venue, day and time. If you are concerned you may like to contact the venue prior or always leave plenty of time before start time to ensure you can arrive on time.