

Learning and Teaching in the Early Years

Learning and Teaching in the Early Years provides a comprehensive, contemporary and practical introduction to early childhood teaching in Australia. A strong focus on the links between theory, policy and practice firmly aligns this text with the Early Years Learning Framework.

Written for students of early childhood programs, this book covers learning and development, as well as professional practice in teaching children from birth to eight years. In recognition of the evolving role of early childhood teachers, topic areas include learning, teaching, working with families, leading, advocating and researching. Each chapter contains learning objectives, key terms and reflection points. Detailed case studies document the intersection between research, policy and practice, enhancing pre-service and practicing early childhood teachers' appreciation of how a policy-aligned approach reinforces learning and development in the early years.

Learning and Teaching in the Early Years draws on the latest Australian and international research to examine the features of effective practice and to present children's learning as a dynamic and active process requiring specific, intentional teaching behaviours.

Jane Page is Senior Lecturer at the University of Melbourne.

Collette Tayler is Chair of Early Childhood Education and Care at the University of Melbourne.

Learning and Teaching in the Early Years

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For Rod and Pam, Christopher, Laura and Dominic (JP)
For my grandson, Hugo, and all his contemporaries (CT)
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Foreword

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When I was documenting my own thoughts of the 2007 Federal Labor Government and its achievements in early childhood policy, it was Collette Tayler who said to me: ‘we’re involved in a decade-long effort. If we hold our nerve, we’re on track to achieve something fine in this country’. Then, as now, I loved the optimism and ambition of this statement. This publication, guided so ably by Collette, Jane Page and many other academic colleagues, is an important and timely compilation. It explores the *raison d’être* behind Australia’s renewed investment in the early years of a child’s life, and details the policy framework and research ideas that govern learning and development in all care settings – be it pre-school, family or long day care.

As described across these chapters, there is now a national focus on policy goals, and a set of standards and regulations against which we can judge the quality of the services provided for Australian children. There has been fine-tuning, to be sure, but there now exists, across the disparate jurisdictions that make up the Commonwealth of Australia, a recognition that the Australian National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care is a core foundational document.

Within this volume the authors have also considered the many critical issues that are needed to achieve an optimal pedagogical environment. They include the recognition that young children are learners with rights, that *intentional* teaching is the way to help children achieve the skills they need to succeed to life, and importantly an acknowledgement that families are the ‘first’ partners in the learning process.

Readers of this publication will emerge with a finer appreciation of the complexity, hard work and critical thinking that now informs practice by teachers and families. We know that children are born hard-wired to learn and that the major life phase that represents early childhood is a period of astonishing development. That so many of our talented academic thinkers, policy makers and practitioners are working collaboratively is testament to the open spirit and sense of opportunity that is shared across the early childhood education and care sector.

They are inspired by a singular goal – to help nurture a generation of children who are happy, confident life-long learners.

Maxine McKew
Parliamentary Secretary Early
Childhood – Rudd Labor Government

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Contributors

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Editors

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Collette Tayler (PhD) is Chair in Early Childhood Education and Care in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. She is Chief Investigator in the Australian Research Council National Science of Learning Centre, Project Leader of the E4Kids longitudinal study and its related Victorian Advancing Early Learning studies, and leader of the 3a (Abecedarian Approach Australia) group of development projects, at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Collette also served as the Deputy Chair of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority from 2012–2015, and is a board member of the VCAA and the Victorian Children's Council. Collette's teaching, educational research and development work spans 40 years in different parts of Australia, addressing effective early years teaching and learning, with studies conducted in home-, centre- and school-based programs within culturally and linguistically diverse urban, regional and remote communities.

Chapter authors

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Caroline Cohrsen (PhD) is Senior Lecturer in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. She edited the writing of the evidence paper for *Practice Principle 1: Family-centred practice* published by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in 2010 to support the Victorian *Early Years Learning and Development Framework*. Caroline's subsequent research has investigated quality adult-child interactions to support mathematics learning, the influence of the home learning environment on children's numeracy skills, and children's spatial thinking and academic self-concept in the year prior to school entry. Her work is aimed at equipping families, pre-service early years students and teachers to recognise mathematical thinking, plan playful activities and interact purposefully to support and extend children's emerging skills and understanding. She believes that small-group, play-based mathematics activities provide opportunities for adults to support individual children's skills and understanding as they transition into formal school education, and that equipping children with the skills to achieve success contributes to a child's sense of belonging to a community and a broader society.

Jan Deans (PhD) is Director of the Early Learning Centre, the University of Melbourne's research and demonstration pre-school. She is also Senior Lecturer at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, taking the role of Professional Partnership Coordinator for the Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) program. She is a long-time advocate for teaching and learning through the arts, and has worked both locally and internationally in early childhood, primary, tertiary and special education settings. She has broad-based expertise in relation to early childhood education and service delivery, and her recent research interests include learning through dance, social emotional competence and learning through music. In 1997, she established Boorai – The Children's Art Gallery to present the voices of young children as expressed through their art and narratives. Boorai collaborates with educational and community organisations locally, nationally and internationally.

Frank Niklas (PhD) is a researcher and Lecturer at the University of Würzburg, Germany and Senior Research Fellow in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. He is a developmental and educational psychologist with research interests in how children learn in the context of families (Home Learning Environment). In 2010, Frank completed his PhD at the University of Würzburg, where he investigated precursors of reading, writing, and mathematical abilities as well as school readiness in children. He was granted a two-year post-doctoral fellowship by the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD) in August 2013. In his honorary appointment at the University of Melbourne he works on projects such as 'Effective Early Educational Experiences for Kids' (E4Kids study) and 'Enriching the home learning environment'. In August 2015 he returned to the University of Würzburg.

Tim Gilley (PhD) lectures in the Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) and the Master of Teaching (Early Years) courses in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. He is also Partner Investigator for the Victorian Department of Education and Training on a major Australian longitudinal study on the impact on children's outcomes of their participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs in the years before school – the E4Kids study. He has a PhD in early childhood education and a Master of Social Work. Tim has worked in a wide range of government organisations (local, State and Commonwealth) and non-government agencies, and has broad experience and expertise in the areas of public administration, social work, social research and social policy. A key element across all roles has been as an advocate for social justice, particularly for families and children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Karen Weston is Director of Early Learning and Development Reform Branch at the Department of Education in Victoria. Karen has over 25 years experience in early childhood policy and sector development. Her recent work has included leading, in collaboration with many others, the development of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and its Regulations, and the 2014 Review of the National Quality Framework (NQF), which has established new benchmarks for quality in the provision of education and care in Australia.

Susan Wright (PhD) is Chair of Arts Education and Director of the UNESCO Observatory of Arts Education in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. Prior to this, she was Professor and Head of Early Childhood and Special Needs Education at the National Institute of Education in Singapore, and the Director of the Centre of Applied Studies in Early Childhood at the Queensland University of Technology. Susan's research interests include semiotics within artistic domains, including narrative genres, and non-verbal modalities, such as gesture, dance, graphic representation and music. A common thread running through much of this work is temporal-spatial-embodied knowing, meaning making and communication. Her books include *Children, Meaning-Making and the*

Arts (2012), *Understanding Creativity in Early Childhood* (2010) and *The Arts, Young Children and Learning* (2003). She has published numerous chapters in research handbooks and books, and journal articles on various topics related to arts education.

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Isabel Brookes is Research Fellow in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. Her recent work includes the implementation of a targeted intervention to support Indigenous children's English language learning, leading an early years improvement strategy at a remote early childhood site and the development of online resources to support pre-service teacher education. Isabel is a PhD candidate with the Science of Learning Research Centre, investigating the effect of adult prompts and feedback on children's learning.

Tamera Clancy is Senior Clinical Psychologist with postgraduate training in perinatal psychiatry and infant mental health. Tamera joined the EYERP in 2012, bringing specialised training in developmental assessment and significant experience with families experiencing stress and adversity. Tamera's clinical and research interests include infant-parent relationships, child development and early intervention.

Louise Cooke is the Family Educator for the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) Program at Gunbalanya School and has worked in a number of leadership roles in the FaFT program since 2009. Louise has worked in remote Indigenous early childhood setting since 2004. Prior to her current role, she was Abecedarian Manager (Indigenous Early Learning Programs) in the Department of Education, Northern Territory Government for two years.

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Kate Cotter is Chair of the Working Group and a former Children's Protection Society (CPS) board member. Kate has worked as a strategy consultant on major reform programs for public sector organisations and brings extensive experience in project management, service delivery reform in social welfare and public policy development to the research team.

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Alice Hill (PhD) founded the Early Years Education Program (EYEP) and the EYERP (on which she continues to serve) during her time as Chair of the Board of the Children's Protection Society. A Director of the Antipodean Family Foundation, she is a former World Bank economist and McKinsey and Frontier Economics consultant.

Natalie Jones is Senior Kindergarten Teacher and Team Leader at the University of Melbourne's Early Learning Centre. Natalie's experience in the early childhood field spans 20 years and has seen her work in long day care, tutoring in Indigenous Australian Studies at the University of Melbourne and guest lecturing on a range of topics including the Reggio Emilia approach to education, Indigenous perspectives in early childhood and anti-bias curriculum.

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Anne Kennedy (PhD) has extensive experience in early childhood education as an academic, advocate, writer, teacher, trainer and consultant and is an honorary fellow of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. She is the Chairperson of Community Child Care Association, Victoria, a member of the EYEP research group and is the Curriculum Consultant for the CPS EYEP. Anne was a member of the Charles Sturt University writing team that developed the EYLF.

Gerry Mulhearn (PhD) is a member of the Research Institute for Professional Practice Learning and Education at Charles Sturt University, and an independent consultant. Previously, as Director in the South Australian Department of Education and Child Development, she played a lead role in the development of the EYLF, the National Early Childhood Development Strategy and the NQF assessment and rating process.

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Nicole Pilsworth holds a Master of Educational Leadership and Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood). She has experience in a variety of ECEC settings over the last 25 years in New South Wales and Victoria including supporting the implementation of the EYLF and the National Reform Agenda. Nicole is the Albert Felton Early Childhood Education Fellow in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne in research focusing on the impact of professional learning on teachers' interactions and young children's learning outcomes.

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