# reflections

GOWRIE AUSTRALIA PUBLICATION • SUMMER 2012 • ISSUE 49

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Pedagogical Leadership

Embedding Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Perspectives

Reflection, Adaptation and Change

Pedagogy in OSHC

Promoting Children's Leadership

Researching Depth of Documentation in Integrated Infant-Toddler Programs

reflections
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The opinions expressed in *Reflections* are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of Gowrie Australia. By publishing diverse opinions we aim to encourage critical reflection and motivate practitioners in Children's Services to respond. Gowrie Australia's privacy policy precludes the use of children's names. Fictitious names are substituted.

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# editorial

Dear Colleagues,

In this final edition of *Reflections* for 2012 there is a strong focus on leadership and pedagogy. Articles focusing on Outside School Hours Care and Family Day Care compliment those featuring Centre Based Education and Care as well as Preschool.

Each provides different insights into leadership and pedagogy. The distributed model article is one which may support the recruitment and retention of educators, while the article by Jacqui Canon of, the Murdoch University Child Care Centre, focuses on documentation and reflection. South Australian Family Day Care Educator, Sonia Menzell shares with readers her introduction to a new term, 'pedagogy', and how she has translated its meaning in her own words and practice.

Jani Mitchell describes how an Outside School Hours Care service can adopt a holistic approach of professional practice in respect of relationships with families and children. She shares a wonderful account of how children's voices are very much part of the program. Similarly, the Michelton Pre-Schooling Centre describes how they develop and promote children's leadership with direct links to the National Quality Standard.

Two articles in this edition follow up on those published previously. One describes the continuation of the journey by three Queensland kindergartens as they implement the National Quality Framework, while a second article, by Lynne Rutherford and Victoria Whitington, examines the impact of the Integrated Infant Toddler Program on documentation of children's learning and development.

The article by Sharon "Mirii" Lindh, a proud Gamilaroi Wiradjuri woman, raises key issues faced by many educators as they attempt to embed cultural competency into the curriculum in a meaningful way. The questions posed are real .... *"concern about doing or saying the wrong thing"*, *"not being respectful"* and *"too scared to even try"*. But, as I often state, doing nothing is far worse than doing nothing at all, and Sharon's article describes how embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives leads to new discoveries, increased awareness and further steps towards reconciliation. She feels that if this can be done early in children's lives, then it will become a part of who they are, as they learn and grow. Sharon is extremely generous in sharing her very personal and inspirational journey with readers.

2012 has brought about a great deal of change and challenge with the implementation of the National Quality Framework and, particularly, the first of the assessment and rating process for the National Quality Standard.

By the time this edition of *Reflections* is distributed across the nation, the festive season will be with us. The Education and Care sector can reflect and celebrate achievements and milestones and reinvigorate in readiness for continuing the journey of improvement in 2013.

On behalf of each Gowrie across Australia, wherever you are in this great nation, enjoy the festive season with your families, friends, colleagues and, importantly, the many children with whom you play such a significant role. We look forward to renewing acquaintances in the coming year and welcome further articles to share as we continue on this journey. Stay safe!

Until next time,

Ros Cornish
CEO Lady Gowrie Tasmania

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## CONGRATULATIONS

*Gowrie Australia congratulates colleague Ros Cornish (CEO Lady Gowrie Tasmania) on being elected to the position of National President of Early Childhood Australia.*

*The Gowries and ECA have enjoyed a long history - going back to the establishment of the Gowrie centres in 1939 with ECA appointed, at the time, as the organisation responsible for monitoring the quality of the Gowrie programs. Of course this is no longer the case, however the relationship has continued over the years in so many other ways.*

*Ros is a committed and passionate early childhood professional, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position. On behalf of Gowrie Australia, we wish her all the very best in this role.*

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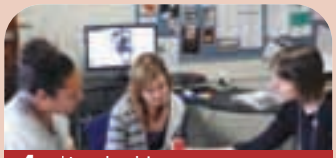
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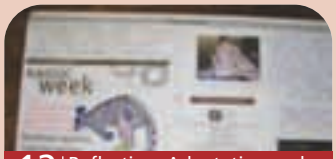
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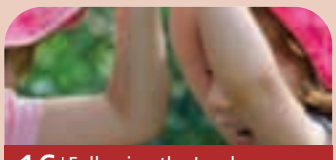
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# PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP – A Distributed Model

**Author:**
**Ros Cornish**
**CEO Gowrie Tasmania**

There are ongoing reports regarding issues of recruitment and retention of educators in the early childhood education and care sector. Such reports raise concerns about sustainable pedagogical leadership and highlight the importance of devolving leadership through the structure of a team.

Hargreaves (Hargreaves and Fink, 2005) claims that sustainable leadership is best supported by long term succession planning, involving a distributed leadership model, whereby deeper and wider pools of leadership talent are developed within a service. Services where there are communities of learners, leaders and educators should be mindful of ways to motivate, challenge, empower and support aspiring leaders and educators to accept and enjoy leadership roles. In order to avoid reliance on one individual, it is advisable for service directors to consider the development of others who are able to support a distributed leadership. Then, should there be changes within the service, there is underpinning leadership to support the ongoing sustainability and continuous improvement of the curriculum.

A significant contributing factor to improving the practice of aspiring leaders and educators, and indeed the program, is the nature of the collaboration in which the leader and educator has participated. Whilst some of this collaboration will occur outside of the service, through participation at workshops and conferences and, importantly, through being part of professional associations, the most substantial collaboration takes place within the service itself. The importance of implementing a system through which aspiring leaders and educators can plan and reflect in collaborative teams cannot be overstated.

Services should choose a model of shared pedagogical leadership that works best for them. It may be straightforward, and include the director of the service and a room or group leader, or it may be a matrix model that will include other educators at the service. Regardless of the model, the team must establish objectives, delineate responsibilities, and articulate these broadly. This transparency will alleviate misunderstandings, clarify communication channels and, importantly, project and promote a common understanding of the standards, practices and culture of the program and service. The pedagogical leadership team is pivotal in shaping and strengthening the service community, a role that is particularly important in times of significant change, such as is currently being experienced in the early childhood education and care sector.

The requirement of the National Quality Framework (NQF), in terms of both philosophy and implementation, entrusts the pedagogical leadership team with an overarching responsibility for ensuring that teaching and learning will be enriched.

Over recent times, the move away from a traditional sole leadership role, to a more collaborative approach, has resulted in specific changes in pedagogical leadership practices. The table below identifies some of these changes:

| INCREASED EMPHASIS ON: | MOVING AWAY FROM: |
|---|---|
| a model of shared leadership that requires collaboration within the leadership team | leadership that is not focused on the program |
| recognising the need for scheduled opportunities for effective collaboration | acceptance of long standing time constraints and on lack of commitment to collaboration |
| strengthening communication between and among all stakeholders so everyone is better informed about the curriculum | infrequent communication between stakeholders about teaching and learning |
| effective use of frequent feedback | feedback not being sought |
| empowering educators to make decisions regarding the development and implementation of the curriculum | centralised decision-making process where the views of all are not considered |
| providing a climate that empowers children to become autonomous learners | children's voices are not heard and children are not active in their own learning |
| supporting long-term continual critical reflections and change | underestimating the long term effort and commitment required to support change and development |
| defining specific, achievable, time framed goals for the curriculum | not setting individual goals that are specific or not following up once goals are set |
| broadening opportunities for ongoing professional development | depending on one professional development resource or little at all |
| developing effective recruitment processes to address the needs of the curriculum | recruitment of educators with little or no experience or commitment to the curriculum |
| providing children with cohesive and coherent learning experiences to support their learning and development | activity based experiences, which do not see the educational experience of the child |
| understanding that the assessment of children's learning and development is the basis to improved learning and embedding these practices into the curriculum | assessment or evaluation that is unrelated to the experience of the child and does not lead to further learning |

During the implementation of the NQF, pedagogical leaders will expend much energy on bringing about changes deemed necessary to achieve the requirements of the framework. It is a time of uneasiness as the first of the assessment and rating systems is undertaken, and there will be expectations and compromises. But, as educators move away from the assessment process as an event that occurs in isolation, it is also a time for further goal setting and planning for ongoing improvement to meet and exceed standards. It is a time when the leadership team will continue to move everyone on in their understanding of the framework and the significance of the curriculum within which they are working, so that educators can make the connection between what children are learning, how they are learning, and why they are learning. Leaders will need to invest in maintaining the energy level required of educators, and commit to mentoring new educators so that ownership of the curriculum is continually being dispersed throughout collaborative teams.

Following the assessment and rating process the pedagogical leadership has a responsibility beyond the assessment process to maintenance and improvement over the long term. The goal is to bring about a deep-seated pervasive understanding, so that practices are implemented confidently and recognised as flourishing.

The changed early childhood education and care environment promises so much for young children. However, without strong distributed leadership, the achievement of the aims will be problematic and spasmodic. The need for pedagogical leaders is now greater than ever, as services implement the reforms and work not only to meet the compliance aspects of the reforms but, importantly, the quality aspects.

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# Embedding Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Perspectives

**Author: Sharron"Mirii" Lindh**

*"Embedding Aboriginal perspectives - how do we incorporate it into our program?"*

*"I'm too scared to even try."*

*"What if I do, or say, the wrong thing?"*

*"I want to be respectful."*

*"I think it's really great, but how do I go about it?"*

Do any of these statements or questions sound familiar? Are you asking yourself and others the same things? These are some of the questions that are continually being asked amongst our early childhood educators.

For me, as an Aboriginal woman, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives is a terrific way to help all Australians understand the history and heritage of our first people, and to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to achieve their full potential. To have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives embedded within our early childhood centres, and in our schools, is a huge step towards reconciliation and closing the gap.

My name is Sharron "Mirii" Lindh and I am a proud Gamilaroi Wiradjuri woman. I am passionately driven by my own life experiences which enable me to share my unique culture, promoting reconciliation and providing better educational outcomes for all.

I've always been brought up to believe in myself and be proud of being Aboriginal. Our people are very spiritual, positive and come from a beautiful place. But, as you get older, sadly, you soon realise that not everyone shares the same views as yourself and your family. This became a huge challenge for me, as I became totally disengaged at high school due to a teacher's own perspective on Aboriginal people and our culture. But, because of this and many more experiences, I have been able to turn that challenge into a positive.

Having worked in the early childhood and primary sectors for 22 years, I have been blessed with the opportunity to walk beside many educators and experience many changes within the education system - both positive and negative. All of these experiences have helped me to create my chosen career as it is today.

As we, the educators, are the guiding light for our children, how we perceive the world influences their perception. We have the power to engage or disengage children and I sometimes wonder if we realise just how much power we really have. If we work to embed Aboriginal perspectives, right from the very start, it will just be a natural part of who they are as they learn and grow, being supported by confident educators.

I feel so very blessed to have the opportunity to visit many early childhood services and share culture, to be part of children's lives (and big people's lives too!), creating positive energy and feeling towards our people. This is a special time in children's lives when they are establishing relationships, developing their values and their connection to others and to the environment. What better way than to connect them to their own country, to people and to our first history.

History belongs to all of us, but since invasion, we have all been led to believe that we need to divide our history..... that there's the 'black fella' stuff and the 'white fella' stuff. Which is true in some cases, but we are all here together, and there is not just the one way. Aboriginal culture is the oldest living culture in the world and that's something I believe all Australians should be proud of, I know that I definitely am.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives will lead you to new discoveries of your people ... yes, your people, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders of this unique and beautiful country, your brothers and your sisters. This is a time for change, and hopefully a change for the better.

Change … it is the only constant thing in our lives. Some people go with it, while some people continually fight it, but no matter what you say or do, it will still be here. So, instead of wasting all of our wonderful energy on fighting a new way, try and embrace it. Sometimes when we do the 'same old, same old', things become stagnant and lifeless. Change brings newness and helps our brains to function and stay active. To keep moving forward and to stay healthy in our lives, we must continue to learn new things and to get our bodies moving. If everything stayed the same in life we would never learn anything new.

I have had a huge change in my life … cancer. It was something I obviously did not want, but I was forced to deal with it. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me. It has opened my mind

to new experiences and a new way of living, and I mean really living, not just existing. It has made me realise what is truly important in my life. The old saying "life is too short" becomes a reality and then you wonder, what am I doing with my life? Change happens for a reason, I believe it is an opportunity for us all to learn and grow and to move forward. You have the choice to fight and fight, until you become tired and bitter and never learn the lesson which you were gifted with in the first place. Having shared my views on perception and change, I would like to share with you a beautiful story about my gorgeous daughter:

***A long time ago, when my daughter was just three years old, we were out shopping and she said "Look, there's a doll that looks like Jemma." This was her friend Jemma who was a beautiful, dark skinned Aboriginal girl. There were two dolls, a fair skinned one and a darker skinned doll. And I thought to myself: "Gee, that doesn't look like Jemma at all!" She pointed out the fair skinned doll and said, "See, she's got the same eyes and hair as Jemma". Tears fell from my eyes when an older woman, who I didn't even know, came up and asked me if I was alright. I shared with her what had happened and there we were, complete strangers, holding hands and crying. I just thought, "How beautiful is that". Young children hold no judgment and are completely accepting of others, we can learn so much from them.***

Most people have the perception that all Aboriginal people are dark skinned, but we come in all beautiful colours, shapes and sizes, just as non-Aboriginal people do. Black is my culture not my colour. It is not the colour of my skin that matters but what comes from within.

I truly believe that embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives will not only create a better awareness of our people, but a better way of life for all. When you become gifted with knowledge you are then able to be healed and share that gift with others. How good would it be to have an Australia that has a better understanding of the first people, to stand beside one another and walk together on this magical journey of life.

Aboriginal Culture, Song, Story, Art and Spirit is not what I do, it is who I am. As I walk my journey, I wish to honour my ancestors and walk the path they have created for me. It is a responsibility that has been gifted to me and which I will continue to nurture.

If you would like any more information about Indigenous Insights and any of the many workshops on offer please contact:
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# Reflecting Practice: Pedagogical Leadership

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## Pedagogical Leadership and Documentation

For me, the role of pedagogical leader is primarily about documentation, discussion and reflection. It involves helping your team to view their work, from a different angle or through a different lens. Sharing a 'bird's eye view' – 'up high', helps the team see the program in its entirety, revealing patterns, rituals, assumptions and cultural processes. Recently, I used the process of making a video, to create a 'text' which the team could discuss and reflect on – or a way of getting a 'bird's eye view'. Although, initially my intention was to document or create a 'text' about our Morning Meetings to share with families, the outcome of the process was much bigger than I could have imagined.

## 'Texts'

'Texts' refer to a plethora of media and modes of communication. These include but are not limited to: written texts on paper or screen; performances such as dance or mime; play scripts enacted by children; visual communication such as signs, paintings and sculptures; the relationship between graphic design, image, sound and text in advertising; web sites; hyperlinks; video; digital games and so on (Campbell and Green, 2008:43).

## Morning Meetings

For a couple of years, our educational team has been reflecting on and experimenting with the Reggio Emilia practice of the 'Morning Meeting' (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998: 463). We decided to develop a daily ritual of morning meetings as an expression of our philosophy, which clearly states that:

- 'We believe that relationships are at the heart of all learning' and
- … 'children… feel empowered to plan, reflect and make choices'.

Making this decision was nerve wracking for many on the team. My role as a pedagogical leader involved documenting our journey (without knowing where we were going) and providing space and time to discuss and reflect on the process. Our experimentations required faith in ourselves and our children, a lot of experimentation, and copious amounts of reflection.

Although the morning meetings have provided opportunities to develop language, memory and social and cognitive skills, we have become aware that they have provided many opportunities for our children to develop 'multi-literacies' in all age groups. Amazingly, our children showed us that they are readers, speakers and creators of 'texts'. This could be seen in their reading of photos, their art work, their dancing to music, their dramatic play, their engagement with video, websites and animation, and in their creations of stories with their own image making, including early writing in our older kindergarten children.

This realisation, and the amazing capacities of our children and educators, prompted me to make the video to document the children's emerging literacy experiences, from babyhood all the way through to pre-school age.

## 'Multi-literacies'

'Multi-literacy' encapsulates a range of media and modes of communication. It also acknowledges that we live in a complex, cultural environment in which we need a range of strategies to 'read' mutli-media/modal digital texts. This involves understanding how words, images, layout, sound, hyperlinks and movement all interrelate and convey meaning. When we viewed the children's engagement with texts through this expansive lens, our eyes were opened to the sophisticated skills that young children bring to their literacy development (Campbell and Green, 2008:6-8).

Kindergarten children draw images (create multi-literate texts) about their plans for the day after their morning meeting.

## An Example of Morning Meetings with 2 year olds

Our Amici group (2 to 3 year olds) provides a good example of the ways in which the team has adapted the idea of the morning meeting to encompass the skills of two year olds. Initially I joined the team in reflecting on the developmental capacity of this age group to participate in group meetings, to make choices, develop an awareness of the choices of others, and to document their choices. We decided that this group DID have the capacity to engage fully with this process, but they would need some props to scaffold their emerging thinking, memory and language skills. The children in this group were still developing mastery over language. As many of the children were bilingual, we decided to use photos as props. The team developed a process where, one by one, the children placed their photograph next to a photograph of the play experiences they would like to do. Children who were able to, verbalised their choices as well. This increased the participation of children who had not mastered English. We found that this increased each child's participation and, over time, the children's verbal language developed. By manipulating, the children were 'reading' what they depicted, and by placing them alongside a chosen experience they were creating texts which could be read by others (Campbell and Green 2006). The educators narrated the process and photographed the finished planning board using this to document the choices of the children on that day.

Interestingly, the children's manipulation of the photographs illuminated experiences which were highly important to them. The children often moved their own and the photos of others together, to represent their friendships. This allowed the team to document and reflect on the children's relationships with each other and the significance they held for other children. Sharing this information with families offered something concrete for them to discuss with their children at home.

## Discussion and Reflection in Response to the Video

The project of making the video became a journey of documenting, reflecting, analysing and evaluating a tremendously strong pedagogy, based on relationship development and multi-literacy development. The repetitive nature of viewing and editing the video footage gave me a unique opportunity to become intimate with each child's engagement at their meetings. Selecting which video records to include and which to discard helped me to develop a narrative (organised way of thinking and speaking) about our approach to supporting children's emerging multi-literacies. During the process, I shared my thoughts about morning meetings – gleaned from my unique vantage point, behind the video camera. I made suggestions to each group about refining their processes. Discussions and reflection emerged from these informal exchanges.

In hindsight, I was performing the role of pedagogical leader like an eagle soaring over the educator's practices and children's experiences, seeing the patterns and threads of their work. The process of creating and refining the video helped me to digest what I saw, reflect on it and make meaning from it. Sharing it with the team and with families provided a rare glimpse of the consistency and commitment the team showed to our original vision.

By the time I played the video to the educational team, I was puffed up with pride. The high quality and integrated nature of this multi-literate relationship-based pedagogy was impressive.

Younger Kindergarten children view a favourite story on the Ipad (animated).

It gave the team important feedback valuing all aspects of their long journey in experimenting with the morning meetings. Importantly, it allowed the whole team to see the approaches used in other groups, provoking discussion and reflection. Time spent reflecting on the development, dispositions and experiences of each group affected the way they facilitated their meetings. For the first time, the team got to have a 'bird's eye view' of the whole program.

Showing the video to interested families provided another vantage point for the team. Many family members were touched by the care and intimate understanding the team had of their children.

As a community, all the adults and children responded to the work in the morning meetings video with a resounding 'Yes!'

As a team we have had an amazing pedagogical journey, reflecting on the multi-literacy experiences of the children and adults in the centre. We plan to make a video document each year to provoke discussion and to reflect on the uniqueness of each group and what that uniqueness brings to the ritual of the morning meeting. The video has also provided us with a strong text which clearly articulates our philosophy and pedagogy, and which we can now share with new staff and with students.


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# LEADING PEDAGOGY AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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**'Reflections'**

In the last issue of *Reflections* (48:6) Lyndsay Healy interviewed the directors of three Queensland Kindergarten services with regard to their preparation for assessment under the National Quality Framework. In this article, Lyndsay continues that conversation.

The National Quality Framework has set nationally consistent expectations of what high quality care and education should look like in early childhood services. The early childhood sector is in the midst of a revolutionary change process that will not only see the unification of what has traditionally been a sector divided into distinct silos, but also the professionalisation of educators, their practices, and their accountability. Last issue we followed the journey of three community kindergartens in Queensland preparing to undergo the assessment and rating process. This article follows on from their journey, exploring two key challenges that have emerged from their experiences; continuous improvement and managing change.

For many services, this is the first time they have participated in a formalised self-assessment process and developed a Quality Improvement Plan. This has meant developing new ways for educators to reconceptualise their sense of belonging (professional identity), being (professional practice) and becoming (professional reflection and learning together). Educators in services will all be at a different place in their journey towards developing their professional sense of belonging, being and becoming. It is now more important than ever to have strong, supportive leaders who can actively nurture the development of these concepts. These concepts are the roots that feed pedagogical decision-making and practices and thus the quality of outcomes for children. If we have a poorly developed 'root system', the 'fruit' will never be as good as it could be.

"You get the best efforts from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within them." (Nelson, n.d.)

What the National Quality Agenda is asking us to do is to become a sector that is open to continually learning and evolving as a community. For many leaders, this presents its own challenges at a service level, in needing to take an active role in leading teaching and learning. This role can be experienced as a challenge, balancing it with the other responsibilities of being a leader and manager. This struggle for balance is reflected in comments made by directors at the Queensland community kindergartens previously interviewed "…time is an issue, making sure we have frequent enough staff meetings to cover curriculum discussions, as well as the normal housekeeping." and also, "The educational leader role is a new role for us. I now have a responsibility to know what is happening with documentation and programming as well, even with a teacher who has ten years experience."

Working within a model of continuous improvement means leaders are managing continuous change. Leaders in the early childhood sector come from a diverse range of personal and professional journeys in belonging, being and becoming, as well as diverse experience within the traditional silos of early childhood education and care. Leaders themselves are each at very different stages in their own learning about being a leader.

National Quality Area 7: Leadership and service management, Standard 7.1 requires that: "Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community" (Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, 2011: 169).

Leaders need to become co-learners and researchers with their fellow educators. By letting go of being the knowledge holder, and thus the power holder within a service, leaders can make space for others to share their perspectives, engage in robust debates and create knowledge that is owned by the whole team. Leaders can move from transmitting their knowledge to the team, to developing shared knowledge, understandings and practices with the team, through a 'community of learners' approach.

Working as a community of learners enables a ground-up approach as opposed to top-down in creating the building blocks of a service. Working in this way means the team has a deeper understanding and investment in the unified approaches developed together, as well as the pedagogical decisions behind them. Teams can make a change in practice because they are told to and know about that change in their mind, but this will most likely create short lived, surface level change. It is not until teams hold changes not only in their minds, but also their hearts, that the level of change becomes more deeply embedded and sustainable long term. It builds the fire within.

Through a community of professional learners, leaders are able to support the team to delve deeply into professional practices and the 'why' behind what we do; our pedagogical choices. It is incredibly important to make time for professional inquiry and conversations about pedagogy and questioning 'why' we have always automatically done things a certain way. Conversations where stories of everyday situations are shared and reflections about what happened, why it might have happened that way, and what it means for future practice are how people begin to see the possibilities in change and improving practices. As the team develops shared understandings and professional ways of belonging, being and becoming, practice is no longer static but pedagogical decision-making becomes responsive to the individual needs of children, families and in the wider context. Pulling out and examining the individual threads of our practices enables us to reweave an ever-evolving tapestry that provides rich outcomes for children.

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# Reflection, Adaptation & CHANGE

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Now a few years ago I will admit that the word 'pedagogy' wasn't in my vocabulary. I hadn't felt any connection to it and didn't really need to think about it. The words 'my practice', 'my intentions', 'my expectations' and 'my business' probably meant more to me. Like many others, I have expanded my vocabulary to now include 'pedagogy' as I have learned about the Early Years Learning Framework. But I have to admit that from conversations I have had with others in the early childhood education and care sector, some of us are still a little perplexed by the word. I still hear phrases like, "I don't understand what it means". So, I simply explain, "It's how you believe children learn best, your practice and what you do as an educator". "Oh!" is the response.

Family Day Care (FDC) has, together with the rest of the early childhood education and care sector, had to make changes, to adapt and evolve with the new National Quality Framework, National Quality Standard, Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care. Over 13,000 Family Day Care educators across Australia have had to develop individual plans of implementation with the support of Co-ordination Units and staff.

Working some three years ago with the Gowrie Training Centre on a twelve-month project, our research group decided to use, "*REFLECTION - How do you use reflection in practices and what tools have we got or what do we need?*" as our research question. It became evident during our discussions that, unless you have a clear understanding of the expectations of yourself and what you do, reflection may, or may not, be easily recognised, especially where changes need to be made.

Being on this project led me to a crossroad. What to do next with the research outcomes? Presenting my research findings back to both the Department of Education and Child Development, and the Family Day Care Educators Association of South Australia resulted in future planning that has been the basis for a new tool to record what we do in South Australian FDC. After hundreds of hours of planning and many consultations, drafts and meetings, January 2011 saw the birth of a new reflective tool, *The South Australian Family Day Care Business Planner,* produced by the FDC Educators Association of South Australia.

This tool is not just about reflection. With space for individual service input in a spacious A3 format, it provides a record of what is shared with families, staff and other educators. Children become involved in the sticking and pasting of information, photos and articles. It allows services to record simple information on a day-to-day basis and serves as a communication tool with families about current happenings and emerging ideas. Each educator determines the content of their planner, what and how they want to share with families and others. Confidential information is not contained in this document. What is contained is a profile of what FDC educators do, what they feel is important and a reflection of their pedagogy, practices and teaching.

It may contain cuttings about childcare, visits to others, community information and events, equipment purchased, topics of interest that are being shared with children, projects children have started, short reflections, or stories that allow others to look into the FDC world. This window of opportunity enables educators, staff, families and Assessors to link together and to share in a productive, holistic manner.

We, who assist educators in reflection, are amazed at the diversity and ingenuity of thinking when viewing these planners. No two pages are the same, no two weeks are the same. The planners reflect the diversity of what children are doing, what they are learning and what experiences are being offered to stimulate learning. This is pedagogy in action. This is evidence of reflective processes. Many educators have used the planners now for twelve months and are saying, "WOW I did all this last year!" Someone recently said, "Oh it's a scrapbook". Well, yes, I guess it is, but what a scrapbook!

As well as storing information, we encourage links from the National Quality Standard, the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care to articles, stories and information written in the planner. We believe that with ongoing practice, by adapting to change in day-to-day experiences, and by linking it all together, we will achieve what our Federal Government planned for us as a Nation. The implementation of a cohesive framework that is nationally compliant, no matter what service you work in, providing strong foundations for future planning and teaching.

Teaching comes in all sorts of forms, education is continual and so is reflection. The amount of reflection that is happening in our sector is truly amazing and a credit to the professional dialogue in our community. When I go to community workshops and read information and online support sites, I have never in my twenty-five years of service seen so much information supporting us to change. We wade through it, we take from it and we incorporate what we believe we need in our practice.

Life for us is about BEING adaptable to change, BECOMING competent in changing our methodology, and BELONGING to a national vision.

# Pedagogy in Out of School Hours Care

**Author:**
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**Acting Director**
**Southern Fleurieu Out of School Hours Care**

The person who is responsible for the entire organisation, the staff and the program is the person who will be in the most prominent position as a role model (Sciarra & Dorsey, 2001).

With the commencement of the national Framework for School Age Care (FSAC) in Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) in 2012, educators working in OSHC settings have a strong foundation to build their pedagogical leadership. If we were to take a step into educators' professional practice at Southern Fleurieu OSHC, what insights would we gain into their thinking processes and decision-making?

The Framework for School Age Care refers to pedagogy as the holistic nature of educators' professional practice - essentially relationships, program decision making, and teaching and learning.

It is very evident in our practice that relationships come first and are the key to any successful partnership. Educators meet every family on arrival and departure, in order to greet them and discuss the day's events. Children are comfortable seeking out educators for comfort, advice and support.

By establishing respectful, reciprocal relationships with families and children, educators are able to build on learning experiences relevant to each child's context.

Southern Fleurieu OSHC has a very strong culture around individuals as lifelong learners, valuing the rich potential in everyone. Our behaviour guidance approach strongly supports individual choices, and educators support children's skills to self regulate. We work together to have clear and defined expectations. Educators have an optimistic view that every day is another opportunity to build on previous learning.

To provide effective educational leadership, leaders must be aware of how they are perceived by others and ask themselves often, 'What is my team going to learn by the way I interact with the children, families and stakeholders within the community?'

Southern Fleurieu OSHC supports and maintains a collaborative and democratic environment which enables educators and children to be supported to reach their own personal potential. We scaffold our learning and build on each other's skills, knowledge and interests to reach outcomes as individuals, as well as groups of learners. This happens in our weekly programs, daily experiences, spontaneously, or during programmed holiday excursions.

Leadership in OSHC involves the application of professional judgment to facilitate meaningful and intentional experiences that are relevant and enhance children's growth and development. Such leadership draws on educational leaders' professional knowledge and skills, as well as their relationships with, and knowledge of, their children and families. Leaders need to have strong connections to their local and wider community, as well as being able to be reflective of their own personal care philosophy and pedagogical influences. Leadership is a process of guiding, directing and motivating the movements and actions of others to accomplish a certain set of goals or tasks.

Risk taking is a big part of our culture at Southern Fleurieu with a child-driven OSHC Committee. We enable and support the children to join together and build on their strong sense of belonging through contributing to the program and group norms. This then leads to co-founding citizenship and promotes a strong confident child voice. Our OSHC program, through strong pedagogical leadership, challenges children to make choices as they participate in their environment. These experiences gradually expand children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

Risky as it might be, it empowers the children to take ownership of their learning in OSHC settings. Essentially, the pedagogical leader is challenged to try new ideas. From programming, purchasing, interviewing new staff, to orientation for new families in our service, our Children's OSHC Committee leads the way!

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# FOLLOWING THE LEADER – PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LEADERSHIP

**Author:**
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**Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre/Consultants at Play**

Every day, educators take a key leadership role with children. Our own confidence, self-esteem and previous experiences influence our leadership decisions and styles and may, in turn, influence how we afford leadership opportunities to children.

An emerging co-constructed curriculum allows infinite possibilities for children and adults to share leading and following. Leading is relational to following: a leader needs followers, while followers benefit from being led by gaining access to information, resources and details of expectations required of them.

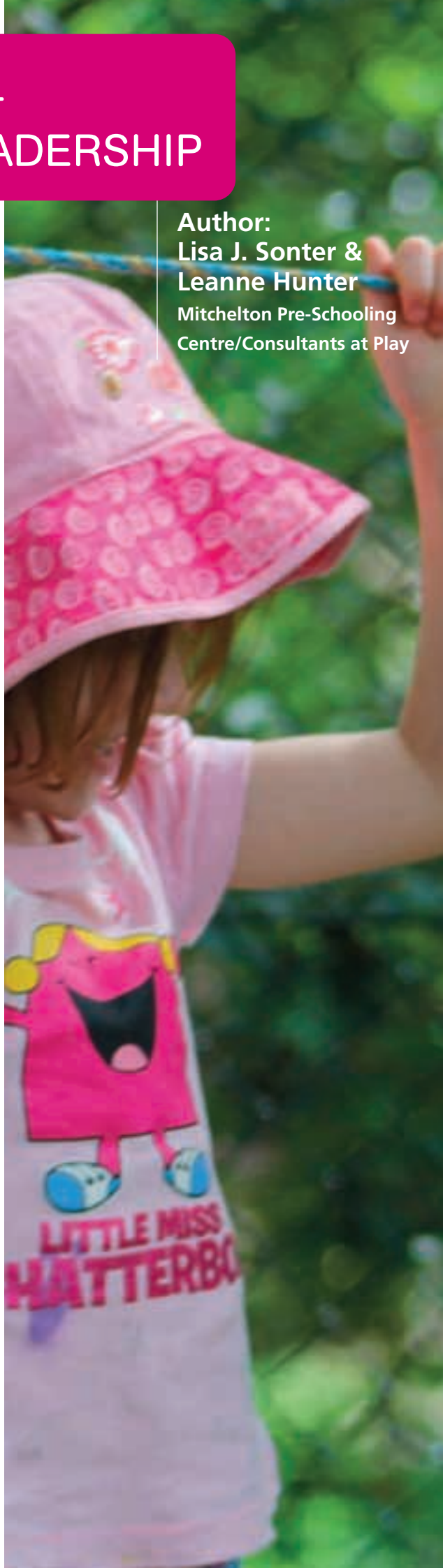
If adults or children as followers have invested considerable time in a project, only to find that the idea has been rejected without consideration, they may subsequently be hesitant to re-commit to new opportunities. They may feel their work has been sabotaged. However, when followers are treated respectfully and given opportunities to manage and develop their thinking, they may bring new insights and strengths to the task.

As educators, we can empower children to develop leadership traits and take on leadership roles. Equally, we can discourage and inhibit this learning. If we consider children to be active participants in their learning and co-creators of the curriculum, we have an obligation to promote, not destroy, their leadership experiences.

Empowering children to make choices by offering them support, resources, information and clear expectations is vital. As educators this may mean letting go of perceptions of how something might look. It may also mean re-examining what truths or assumptions are held about children.

Each day presents many opportunities for children to lead. Making the most of incidental and planned opportunities for children to make choices can be a useful place to expand children's experiences as leaders. Children may make decisions about accessing resources and equipment, about being involved in setting up obstacle courses, they may lead by taking on a task such as meal time preparations, turning off lights, organising resources such as library books, choosing stories for others at rest time - the possibilities are endless.

When children are playing, educators can gain insights into leadership strengths such as problem solving, perseverance, resilience and creativity. Looking at the questions in the following boxes may be useful to prompt further thinking about promoting children's leadership.



**Think of a child:**
What are his/her preferred play styles?
When does he/she lead? Who follows?
When does he/she follow? Who leads?
What leadership traits are exhibited?
How can you support this child?
Does your documentation celebrate the child's leadership capacity?

**Choose a play style (construction, make-believe, sensory etc) and describe it:**
What potential leadership opportunities does this play style offer?
Which children lead?
What leadership traits are exhibited?
Which children follow?
What followership traits are exhibited?
How do/can you support this play style?
How do/can you provoke children's sustained explorations through this play style?
How do/can you use documentation to promote the value of this learning?

Looking for opportunities to support children when they exhibit good leadership and follower traits is important. Acknowledging to children that their efforts in leading and following are appreciated helps build respectful relationships and a learning atmosphere.

The decisions we make about leading children's learning inform our practice. Importantly, the National Quality Standard acknowledges leadership as a distinct Quality Area (QA). When considering leadership styles with children and affordances for children to be leaders, educators need to look carefully at QA 1: *Educational Program and Practice* and QA 5: *Relationships with children*. Capitalising on opportunities to see and promote children as leaders gives clear messages that children are viewed as competent and capable learners and thinkers. The following questions may help support educators' critical reflections about their personal leadership styles and the ramifications this has for their everyday practice.

**Some questions regarding Standard 5.1 (ACECQA 2011:126)**
How do we engage in children's play?
What roles do we play?
How do we interact with children to engage them in learning?
What strategies and techniques do we use to extend and build on children's comments and conversations?

**Some questions regarding Standard 1.1 (ACECQA 2011:24)**
How do we get to know about each child's strengths, abilities and interests?
How do we make decisions about children's daily experiences and routines and who is involved in making these decisions?
How do we support every child's participation in the program?
How do we demonstrate in the program that we value children's ideas, thinking and interests?
How can we improve the ways in which we engage children in making decisions about their own learning?

**Some questions regarding Standard 5.2 (ACECQA 2011:133-4)**
How do we enable children to form and maintain positive relationships with others?
How is a culture of respect, equity and fairness encouraged in the service?
How are the program and routines arranged to ensure adequate time for children to engage in projects and play experiences of their own choosing, with a variety of peers and adults?
How do we model positive, respectful relationships with others?
What opportunities do children have to make decisions about rules, expectations and outcomes in relation to their own and other's behaviour?

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# Integrated Infant-Toddler Programs: Researching Depth of Documentation (Part 2)

*Following on from the previous edition of* ***Reflections*** *(48:18), in the following article we take a closer look at the impact of integrated infant-toddler programs on documentation.*

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In January 2011 Gowrie SA completed the process of changing the groupings of children in its programs from age segregated (babies, younger toddlers, toddlers), to age integrated (infants-toddlers together). While this change was the culmination of 18 months of research, investigation into the program change continues. Gowrie SA's educators now each have a small group of infants and toddlers who stay with them until the children enter the preschool room, after their third birthday. There are six groups with children under three years of age. Each educator and their primary care group shares a room with two other educators and their children. The daily maximum number of children per room is 13. This article looks at one aspect of our research, the documentation of children's learning.

Educators show that they value children's learning when they record it. Such recording also enables learning to be shared. In our research we wanted to find out about the depth of the documentation used to assess children's learning, as evident in learning stories. Educators' documentation through learning stories was chosen because the quality of these stories reveals much about the capacity of educators (Carter 2010).

Developed in New Zealand, learning stories improve outcomes for children by strengthening the relationship between educator and child. They do this by building in educators '…better observation skills, critical thinking, and self-reflection' (Carter, 2010: 40). Learning stories highlight children's dispositions for learning (Carr 2001), and learning through relationships (Reisman 2001) from a credit, rather than a deficit based perspective (Cooper 2009). As Carter (2010) asserts, the documenting of children's learning is best when it engenders educator excitement and curiosity. Learning stories locate children's learning in its context, and are valued by children, their parents and educators, making them a powerful way of recording learning.

Effective educators have a comprehensive knowledge of children's abilities, so they can understand their learning and extend it (Hatherly & Sands 2002). When educators record the learning of a large group of children, often in part-time care arrangements, this goal can be difficult to achieve. In our research we found that the move to integrated groupings has supported educators' capacity to assess children's learning in a meaningful way because it has reduced the number of children that each educator has to think about. Previously the number of children in each room averaged 16 to 20 children per day (in contrast to 13 currently).

In our study, each participating educator in the infant and toddler rooms provided two learning stories for one child in their primary care group. One of these learning stories was written when the programs were segregated, with the second story written after the groups were integrated. This data was analysed using the elements that make a high quality learning story as suggested by Wendy Lee* (personal communication, 9 May 2011). Two additional categories were added - one was the inclusion of children's habitual learning strategies and motivations, called dispositions (Carr 2001), and a second was educators' inclusion of an analysis of the learning in the story.

**The criteria used to analyse the learning stories were:**

- context – the scene was set;
- significance – the story focused on learning that was significant;
- audience – the story was written with an audience or reader in mind (parents, educators and children);
- title – the title captured the reader's attention;
- flow – the story flowed with a beginning, middle and end, and was not interrupted by bullet points;
- emotional response – the story provoked an emotional response in the reader;
- building of relationships – the story contributed to developing relationships;
- disposition – the disposition exhibited by the children in their learning was implied or directly named;
- analysis – an analysis of the learning in the story was included.

All learning stories were individually rated on each criteria using a rating scale of one, two or three, depending on its degree of presence in the story. A score of one indicated that the criteria was not evident, a score of two indicated it was present to a moderate degree, while a score of three indicated the criteria was strongly evident. We read and rated each learning story individually, and then shared our ratings. Any differences were resolved by mutual agreement. We then employed a test to determine any statistical significances between the criteria of the stories written before and after the program was integrated.

Results showed the quality of the learning stories was significantly higher in the integrated program. The criteria where statistically significant differences were found were 'significance', 'audience', 'flow' and 'emotional response'. A likely explanation for the differences found was that educators working with integrated groups were better placed to know the children and understand them as learners. As a result educators were more able than previously to communicate the children's learning to an audience in story style, and to capture the emotional significance of that learning. According to Carter (2010: 40), 'the writing conventions for learning stories call forth the teacher's curiosity, voice, and identity as a passionate educator'. These findings demonstrate that within an integrated program, educators may have more opportunity to bring reflection and responsiveness to their recording of children's learning (Carter 2010). Any other possible reasons for the difference beyond change of program type were not established in this research.

'Documenting children's learning…has long been part of quality practice in early childhood education' (Russell, 2010: 1). Our findings showed that integrating infants and toddlers in small groups may provide the conditions under which educators can document children's learning at greater depth. Russell (2010) observed that it is the responsibility of educators to show that children's learning is valued through the recording and sharing of information. If the overall quality of documentation is increased, then this process becomes more robust.

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* New Zealand educator Wendy Lee co-authored the seminal work on Learning Stories with Margaret Carr in 2001.

Autumn 2012

Winter 2012

Spring 2012

# National and International CONFERENCE UPDATE

**The Sixth World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights**
*Building Bridges – From Principle to Reality*
17-20 March 2013
Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Sydney, NSW
**W:** www.wcflcr2013.com/

**Philosophy at Play**
*Keeping the infant in mind: cherishing, connecting and containing*
9-10 April 2013
University of Gloucestershire, Oxstalls Campus, Gloucester, UK
**E:** philosophyatplay@glos.ac.uk

**World Congress of Families**
*Happy Families, Healthy Economy*
15-18 May 2013
Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh, NSW
**W:** http://wcfsydney2013.org.au

**SNAICC National Conference**
*For Our Children: Living and Learning Together*
3-6 June 2013
Cairns Convention Centre, Cairns, QLD
**W:** http://www.snaicc.asn.au/index.cfm

**NAEYC Annual Conference 2013**
9-12 June 2013
San Francisco, California, USA
**W:** http://www.naeyc.org/conference/

**The Fifth International Community, Work and Family Conference**
*Changes and Challenges in a Globalising World*
17-19 July 2013
University of Sydney, NSW
**W:** http://www.aomevents.com/CWFC2013/

## Gowrie Australia

Promoting and supporting quality services for all children.

## Our Mission

Nationally committed to optimal outcomes for children and families.