

Summer 2002

Vol. 1, Issue 4

Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood C.E.I.E.C

CEIEC News

<http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LED/CEIEC/>

INSIDE:

'Critical Learning' in
West Australia p2

Diversity Dolls debut p2

Research with a
difference ... p3

Kookaburra Kindergarten:
some new directions p3

Children's Rights p4

CEIEC speakers on the
road p4

New regular feature:

"Conference Call"

See page 5

CHILDREN SAY TO THE GOVERNMENT: "LET THEM GO! IT'S NOT FAIR!"

Children at Brighton Juniors ("BJ's") Child Care Centre have written 'to the government', asking it to let refugees from Afghanistan stay in Australia.

Their letter resulted from a Centre discussion about refugees from Afghanistan. The children dictated the letter to their teacher. CEIEC News reprints it here with BJ's permission.

"To the Government.

"We are children at BJ's childcare centre; we are 5 & 4 year olds. Today in our meeting we discussed the refugees from Afghanistan. Let them go! It's not fair! In their country there is bombing, bulls and evil people, they want to leave because they don't like it there and they can't go back. It would be fair if they stayed here. It is so mean if they make them go back. In Australia, they only have tents. It's not fair! We could ask some builders to build them houses. They are kept in the country in Australia, instead of the city. Is there lions there?"

"The Government wouldn't like to kill his people, why would you do that to people like that who are poor, very poor? What about the children? That could kill the children, they'll never grow up, they'll never be in school again, they don't even have school."

(Teacher: "What do you want to say to the government?" Several children answer, as follows.)

"Why would he actually want to kill his people?"

"If they make them stay in prison they might die.

"Stop letting your people die!"

"Let the people go in Australia!"

"Why would you leave them in prison forever?"

"Why would you keep them in prison when they're your people and you should take care of them?"

"Because it's not fair, they don't have any money."

"Why are they in prison? Take them to another, better place."

"When they are sleeping, they fall onto a hard ground. They don't even have a lake or trees to pick leaves off."

"Signed from children who care about fairness, equality and freedom."

(9 signatures)

CEIEC ASSISTS A 'CRITICAL LEARNING' PROJECT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The CEIEC is helping a group of staff in Western Australia to establish a 'critical learning project'. Rachael Kitchens, from WA's Ethnic Child Care Resource Unit reports.

Our critical learning project started in August 2002, at the Western Australia State SUPS* Conference. CEIEC Director, A/Prof. Glenda Mac Naughton was the keynote speaker at our conference, and her commitment to making a difference to children's lives and her vision of 'critically knowing early childhood communities' inspired us to establish a SUPS critical learning group. The CEIEC suggested some readings that introduced the key elements of this learning process and indicated how we might use it with SUPS workers.

Critical learning is professional development through active, critically reflexive, participation; and a critical learning comm.-

-unity is a group that meets regularly to reflect critically on issues of professional development. Group members identify an issue or practice of interest, then read relevant literature, do field research, keep journals, and test and evaluating new ideas and strategies. Critical learning can accommodate various individual learning styles and needs, so it is an effective way to meet the diverse professional development needs of SUPS workers, who come from a variety of professional backgrounds.

We hope that our critical learning project will enable and encourage SUPS workers to use different learning styles to pursue issues that they identify as important. In October 2002, we proposed a critical learning project to a professional development forum and were delighted when six SUPS teams agreed to participate. They welcomed the chance to

generate new knowledge and to share ideas but saw lack of time as the major problem.

Further, our six teams include teams from the Kimberly, Goldfields and South West, as well as from Perth, so our biggest challenge will be facilitating long-distance participation. However, our motto is, 'where there's a will there's a way', and at our next professional development day in December, we will meet again to make our project happen early next year.

* SUPS workers support the inclusion in mainstream child care services of children with disabilities, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Indigenous children.

CEIEC DIVERSITY DOLLS' DEBUT A DELIGHT!

CEIEC's range of specially designed and custom-made diversity dolls made their debut at the CEIEC conference in November.

Early childhood staff can use each doll in the range to help children to experience diversity in class, gender and 'race'; to think about and enjoy cultural and social diversity; and to advocate diversity with other people.



(Above) Dolls with a difference ... making a difference.

"Talking with children about difficult issues": an update

CEIEC Members' Issue Briefing 1 was "Talking with children about difficult issues: seeking safety, building curriculum", by Dr. Jonathon Silin.

CEIEC Members who have to discuss difficult or traumatic issues with children may like to add this item (which includes extensive resources) to the Briefing's resources:

Alat, K. (2002) "Traumatic events and children: how early childhood educators can help." Childhood Education. 79.1 2-8.

Research with a difference ... to make a difference



*“Unless we draw the picture of what we want for Indigenous Australians, we will have another generation of young Indigenous people who will be disenfranchised.”
(Wyatt, 2000)*

Each edition of “CEIEC News” introduces the work of one of the Centre’s postgraduate research students. This edition’s research student is Sue Lopez (Atkinson).

Sue began her PhD (p/t) in 2002. She is an Indigenous Victorian from the Yorta Yorta clan and was the first Indigenous Victorian to graduate as a Kindergarten teacher in 1975. In the last 27 years, Sue has taught Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the pre-school and tertiary sectors. Her involvement with the Yappera Multifunction Aboriginal children’s service inspired her research question: “What are the theoretical, practical and political issues in constructing an Early Childhood curriculum that contributes to self-determination of Indigenous people in Melbourne?”. Yappera started in Fitzroy in 1980 to promote the right of the Indigenous child to a positive, culturally-informed Indigenous identity – something that wasn’t or couldn’t be

supported in ‘mainstream’ centres. Over 20 years later, Indigenous pre-schoolers, their families and communities still struggle for inclusive, Indigenous education in non-Indigenous specific early childhood centres.

Sue will explore what factors help or hinder the Melbourne early childhood community to build an Indigenous early childhood curriculum expressing and contributing to Melbourne’s Indigenous community. In Melbourne, most Indigenous pre-schoolers attend non-Indigenous specific centres and Sue hopes that her research will show the broader early childhood community that it needs deeper understanding of Indigenous early childhood curriculum, race, power and knowledge. She sees this as central to the broader community’s engagement with Indigenous self-determination and to Indigenous empowerment through early childhood education.

CEIEC CONFERENCE OFFERS KOOKABURRA SOME NEW DIRECTIONS

The CEIEC conference prompted many people to ‘make a difference’. Here, Anne Houghton (Director, Kookaburra Kindergarten in Melbourne) tells her story.

Six Japanese teachers visited Kookaburra Kindergarten through the Suzuki Institution’s cultural exchange program. They learnt about our Kookaburra Learning Stories project, in which children borrow soft toy kookaburras. Each kookaburra has a travel bag and a diary where families describe (sometimes through photos) what happened when s/he came to stay, so that all the children learn from the journeys. One kookaburra went to England and Singapore and - via the Suzuki program – another to Japan.

At the CEIEC conference, Merlyne

Cruz and I gave a paper (also sent to Japan) about the project. It attracted several overseas participants, who subsequently visited our kindergarten. We also established a programs and regulations network at the conference.

Kookaburra is writing its own Learning Stories. For example, a kookaburra accompanied children to their school orientation; and we will document our kookaburras’ visits to the local community. I successfully suggested that our local library should buy Margaret Carr’s “Assessment in early childhood settings: learning stories.”; and “Persona Dolls: anti-bias in action” (Kerryn Jones & Ruth Mules), as I was inspired by hearing about these ‘dolls with a difference’ at the conference I was the first to borrow each book! Anne is at wombats@alphalink.com.au



Serious networking @ the CEIEC conference, (Top) The dinner; (below) Kerry Jones (L), Sally Barnes.



Web site impresses!

CEIEC supporters can use the Centre's web site to impress colleagues! One of the conference presenters from overseas tells this tale – anonymously, for obvious reasons.

'When CEIEC accepted my proposed paper for its 2002 Conference, my colleagues were skeptical about my topic and the Conference theme and wanted to know more about "this Centre". I directed them to CEIEC's web site. They went there and were they impressed! Suddenly, my topic and the conference were credible! So I want to thank you for the work the Centre does and for the presentation of that work on your web site. Inadvertently, you have elevated my research in the eyes of my colleagues! May this blessing be returned to you many-fold.

'I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the conference. All the sessions I attended were gratifying and edifying, as was the response to my paper. I came home re-energized and I look forward to more collaboration.'



CEIEC Director A/Prof. Glenda MacNaughton at the CEIEC conference.

CEIEC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING INSTITUTE PUTS CHILDREN'S RIGHTS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

"Child abuse, children's rights and the early childhood professional: confronting roles and responsibilities" is the title of one of next year's CEIEC Professional Learning Institute (PLI) on 3-4 October 2003.

Speakers will include senior lawyers, policy-makers in the areas of child maltreatment and child protection and early childhood professionals with extensive experience in these areas. They will consider family support, indigenous and regional/rural perspectives and will present the latest research on the issues.

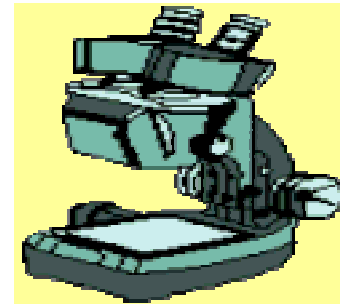
The PLI is designed for early childhood professionals, for

CEIEC meets mental health professionals

CEIEC Director A/Prof. Glenda MacNaughton addressed a meeting of Mental Health for the Young and their Families (MHYF) in Melbourne on 13 November.

Under the title, "Doing gender differently: risky business", Glenda talked about some of her research work with children who 'do' gender in different ways. She argued that gender is socially constructed and, as such, can be 'performed' by children differently.

Other speakers were Dr. Tim Moore, of the Royal Children's Hospital and Prof. Isaac Prilietensky, of Victoria University.



children's services advisors, and for others working with children and families. It will be an exciting chance to discuss and understand issues and concerns of child abuse, children's rights and professional responsibilities.

Contact CEIEC's Dr. Sharne Rolfe:
s.rolfe@unimelb.edu.au

CEIEC meets CSRDOs!

The CEIEC's Glenda MacNaughton and Heather Lawrence ran a training day (27 November) for Children's Services Resource Development Officers (CSRDOs) in Whittlesea (Melbourne).

CEIEC custom-built the day - "*Postmodern perspectives on children's rights*" - to meet CSRDO interests and needs. Concerning new approaches to children's rights. Organizer Faye Sakaris said "Trying to do things differently has been a challenge, and so I can strongly relate to the issues that you raised regarding obstacles and finding like minded people to continue the journey."



CONFERENCE CALL 1/1

"Conference Call" is a new feature that will appear in each edition of CEIEC News. It keeps you up-to-date with the outcomes & developments from the last CEIEC conference and the events leading up to the next.

This first "Conference Call" (1/1) reports on CEIEC's second conference, (Melbourne 7-9 Nov. 2002) and announces the third.

"Conference Call" is a forum where conference participants – both past and future – can share their views about issues linked with the conference. A "Conference Call" can:

- continue discussions that started in a workshop*
- call for action around issues raised in a keynote*
- suggest Special Interest Groups & Learning Circles.*

The content of each "Conference Call" will depend on you. If the CEIEC conference inspired you to act – from reading a book to changing a regime – tell us. If you think the CEIEC conference can help your work, tell us.

A "Conference Call" puts you in touch with CEIEC's constituency. Contact Patrick Hughes: patrickh@deakin.edu.au

"Moving & motivating": "Honouring the child, honouring equity 2"

CEIEC's second annual conference in Melbourne ran 7 - 9 November 2002. and was previewed in "CEIEC News 3". Between sessions, the CEIEC's Jane Page asked participants what they thought of it all.

Sharon Hogben (Noarlunga Health Services) has been to both conferences:

"Last year, my colleague and I were very inspired by looking at children from strength-based models and not always from deficit models. So we came again this year, hoping it would provide us with more impetus and information to keep walking that journey.

This year, we've been particularly excited by the use of the hero stories and the learning stories. So, we've taken things from each conference that changed not just how we think but how we work with children and families. It is really exciting!"



At the Conference Opening: a special; appearance by the Multicultural Rap Band



Elizabeth Dau (featured Workshop presenter)

Elizabeth Dau (Early Childhood Consultant, featured workshop presenter) enjoyed the unplanned moments: "We have this group of wonderful indigenous people who were prepared to share stories and those stories were really so powerful and I think that we probably need to more time for that to happen. We need more time to share experiences with people who have stories. To sit outside and do that is extraordinarily special – a real learning experience. The conference provided the space for people to feel part of the broader endeavor of creating equity for the children and families with whom we work and live. Thanks to all who shared their thoughts with us.

Kerryn Jones, from Pennington Kindergarten said, "I have enjoyed it very much. You know it is a good conference when you have four fantastic keynote speakers and everyone is great. I liked the balance of things that we talked about. It wasn't all one side or the other."

"Moving & motivating"
(from previous page)

Sue Dockett (University of Western Sydney): "I've appreciated the chance to hear about the exciting things that are happening and people's different journeys and to share our own journey - or at least part of it - and to see people's vigour, interest and passion in their research."



Theressa Lennear (L) (Learning Circle presenter) and Judy Atkinson (Keynote speaker)

Patricia Ramsey, Holyoke College, USA: "The conference was an eye-opener and inspiration in many ways: the critical reviews of current assumptions underlying early childhood teaching & research; the creative and courageous work in response to those critiques; and the passion and commitment of people from Australia, Europe, New Zealand & the Americas!"



CEIEC Conference Organiser Heather Lawrence (L) with Theressa Lennear (C) and Patricia Ramsey (R), both from the Equity Alliance, USA.

Kathryn MacIntyre (Final Year early childhood student, University of Melbourne): "I have had all these ideas about bringing social justice into the primary classroom, but not known how to. I wondered if I was just being idealistic, not realistic. As a result of coming to this conference, I now know that there are so many other people I can talk to about social justice issues."

Sarah Main (The Children's Museum in Sydney): "I'm trying to provide programmes, activities and places for the young visitors to the Museum and, in time, resource materials to travel out from the Museum. I am very aware that the Museum has Aboriginal collections and staff and I'm not sure where I go with that. I feel like I am beginning this journey and I appreciate the conference's supportive atmosphere."



NZ Human Rights Commissioner Roz Noonan (Keynote speaker)

Natalie Jones (Brighton Juniors Children's Centre): "Last year I think something that really moved and motivated me was the keynotes. Also, it was challenging to us as white educators to see things from indigenous perspectives and include that in our work. I have tried to do that this year. I have borrowed Cherie (a CFIFC

'Diversity Doll')* and used her story. At first, the children didn't know what 'Aboriginal' meant and I was pleased to bring to their lives something I think was missing. We have been to Geelong to Morona and we took Cherie with us and we met an indigenous man called Norm who has had a bit of an influence on the children. They want to invite him to their parties and they now draw goaties on their figures and so it has been really special."

* See p2 for more on CEIEC Diversity Dolls.

CEIEC CONFERENCE
6-9 November 2003
(Melbourne)

Honouring the child,
honouring equity 3:
"Acting together to make
a difference"

The conference theme is "Alliances to make a difference in research, theory, policy and practice".

The conference will feature the mix of keynotes, workshops, Learning Circles Special Interest Groups and posters that was successful in the first two conferences. However, since it aims to initiate actions for change, this conference features an action planning day,

The official invitation to propose sessions, Learning Circles, Special Interest Groups, etc. will be issued early in 2003, but you can start to plan them now! If you want collaborators, use "Conference Call"!