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CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS



Supporting children to interact with others via positive strategies for communication and engagement with others assist children to become strong, effective communicators.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF, 2009) asks that educators ‘value children’s linguistic heritage and with family and community members encourage the use of and acquisition of home languages and Standard Australian English’.

An awareness of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children’s home language (which may include the use of Aboriginal English) is needed to provide a ‘literacy rich environment’.

IN THIS FACT SHEET EDUCATORS WILL:

- Read case studies on examples of positive engagement with children
- Find out how to enhance children’s communications skills within a cultural lens
- Discover how a Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Service (MACS) uses books and storytelling to build children’s communication skills
- Discover links to other resources that will enhance your literacy programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



HOW CAN EDUCATORS ENGAGE POSITIVELY WITH CHILDREN?

KOONIBBA IS A MULTIFUNCTIONAL ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICE (MACS) OPERATING IN KOONIBBA IN REMOTE SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

This case study is based on a discussion with Director Laurel Glastonbury.

Koonibba has a strong emphasis on staff engagement with children during all activities. This method strongly relates to the EYLF practice of responsiveness to children. Laurel comments that the effects of staff engagement are obvious, having witnessed that when staff actively engage in an activity with a child the child's focus on and learning from that activity increases dramatically. This also helps children to become effective communicators by encouraging them to describe what they are doing.

Staff also ensure that they engage with children as individuals, paying attention to each child's unique strengths and learning style. As Laurel states, this is premised on the idea that 'not all little kids are the same. They don't all learn at the same pace'.



ARE THERE OTHER APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN THAT I SHOULD CONSIDER?

For information about using the Abecedarian approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

<http://www.supportingcarers.snaicc.org.au/caring-for-kids/deadly-futures/>

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

HOW CAN I USE GROUP DISCUSSIONS TO PROMOTE CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITHIN A CULTURAL FRAMEWORK?

The link below shows how one service in Adelaide promotes children's communication through discussions about the traditional custodians.

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/8-ways-of-learning-since-the-reconciliation-symposium/>

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO TELL STORIES, AND ENCOURAGE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT CONNECTIONS TO FAMILY, NATURE, OR RELATIVES AT THE SERVICE?

ACER's Little J & Big Cuz Episode 5: Goanna Ate my Homework shows Little J sharing his knowledge with the class.

For more educator resources related to this episode:

https://www.littlejandbigcuz.com.au/uploads/files/EP5-Goanna_Ate_My_Homework.pdf

ARE THERE ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER METHODS OF COMMUNICATION THAT WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF?

Listed below are some features of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's communication style preferences:

- It is more usual for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child to touch an adult to communicate a need rather than verbalising what they need;
- Children will be more prepared to co-operate or undertake a task out of desire to please carers rather than respond to carers' authority;
- It is not uncommon for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children to not make direct eye contact. This means eye contact may not be pronounced;
- The word 'yes' may not actually mean 'yes'. It can be used to mean the question was understood.



HOW CAN WE USE BOOKS AND STORYTELLING TO BUILD UPON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S EARLY LITERACY SKILLS?

YAPPERA CHILDREN'S SERVICES A MULTIFUNCTIONAL ABORIGINAL CHILDREN'S SERVICE (MACS) THORNBURY, MELBOURNE.

Based on a discussion with Director Stacey Brown.

Taken from SNAICC publication 'Learning from Good Practice: Implementing the Early Years Learning Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children'.

Children's development as effective communicators is fostered on an ongoing basis. Whilst much of this is through incidental interaction through activities, regular group time also enables more structured communication opportunities between children, and between educators and children. During group time children are encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences, for example about weekend or holiday activities. Storytelling also provides an opportunity for interactive communication, with teachers reading aloud and children encouraged to actively join in and engage. A focus on the Abecedarian approach also supports staff to concentrate on language, listening and communication skills and to think about how to best communicate with children- for example placing themselves at children's eye level to better engage with them.

TIP Make storytelling an interactive process where children are encouraged to engage with the story. Ask the children questions about the story, or have them imagine and create parts of it themselves.

<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/kindergarten/professional-topics/inclusion-diversity/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-children/intentional-teaching-supporting-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-children-learning>

The ACER Little J & Big Cuz Initiative was developed with Aboriginal worldviews and knowledges and the *Early Years Learning Framework (2009)*. In Episode 2: Wombat Rex, Little J shares his knowledge about Country through story telling.

Follow the link for more educator resources based on this episode:

CASE STUDY



HOW CAN WE USE BOOKS AND STORYTELLING TO BUILD UPON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S EARLY LITERACY SKILLS?

TELL STORIES IN LOCAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LANGUAGES- OR INVITE A COMMUNITY MEMBER TO DO THIS. THIS HELPS CHILDREN TO BE CONNECTED TO THEIR LEARNING AND IS A FUN WAY FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN OR MAINTAIN TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES.

See fact sheet 3 - Protocols for non-indigenous organisations to consider before engaging with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.

FORM A PARTNERSHIP WITH A LITERACY ORGANISATION SUCH AS THE LET'S READ PROGRAM RUN BY THE SMITH FAMILY.

Let's Read is a national, evidence-based early literacy initiative that promotes reading with children from birth to five years. Its vision is for all Australian children to share books, stories, songs and nursery rhymes every day from birth with the important people in their lives.

<http://www.letsread.com.au/>

For further information about partnerships:

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/training/training-programs/workforce-development-partnerships/opening-doors-to-genuine-partnerships/>

INCLUDE FAMILIES IN YOUR LITERACY PROGRAMS – FOR EXAMPLE BY HOLDING A FAMILY FUN DAY FOCUSING ON LITERACY.

The early childhood setting could be a part of the Great Book Swap that is run by the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, raising money to raise literacy levels in remote communities.

Children bring in a pre-loved book and swap it for another, for a gold coin donation.

For more information:

<https://www.indigenouseliteracyfoundation.org.au/>

CREATE OWN RESOURCES SUCH AS BOOKS AND GAMES

SNAICC's Aboriginal Children's Self Publishing Workshop- How to Kit

<http://www.snaicc.org.au/product/aboriginal-childrens-self-publishing-workshop-kit/>

USE STORYTELLING AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FOLKLORE AND DREAMTIME STORIES.

A list of recommended Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's books can be found at the link below:

<https://www.readings.com.au/collection/recommended-indigenous-australian-childrens-books>

USE BILINGUAL BOOKS TO RAISE CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF OTHER LANGUAGES.

FKA Children's Services (fkaCS) advocates for children's cultural and linguistic rights and provides support to education and care services in the provision of culturally rich environments that support a civil society. Services can borrow culturally appropriate books and literacy resources. To find out more follow the link below:

<http://fka.org.au/resources/multicultural-resource-centre>

Batchelor press is has a range of culturally appropriate books for early childhood services for purchase.

<http://batchelorpress.com/catalog/early-childhood-education?type=books>

USE TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION- FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN COLLABORATING TO USE THE INTERNET TO FIND OUT INFORMATION, AND THEN MAKING BOOKS OR RESOURCES TO REFLECT ON WHAT THEY'VE LEARNT.

An example of doing this might be to watch dreaming stories online and children can then make their own books retelling the story.

<http://splash.abc.net.au/home#!/media/1976308/guulaangga-the-green-tree-frog>

DOWNLOAD THE APP:

<https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Resource/LandingPage?ObjectId=de87d72f-3cba-4f3d-8e13-1a63aec48883>

A LIST OF ABORIGINAL CULTURE, STORYTELLING AND LANGUAGE APPS:

<https://www.creativespirits.info/resources/apps#axzz4fsoldJ00>

