

EARLY CHILDHOOD

BEST PRACTICE

CONFERENCE



KNOWLEDGE, ACTION
AND EMPOWERMENT

11 & 12 MARCH 2023 | GOLD COAST

8:00am – 8:30am

Registration, Networking & Exhibitors

8:30am – 8:45am

Conference Welcome

8:45am – 10:15am



DELICIOUS, DELIGHTFUL & DARING - EARLY CHILDHOOD PEDAGOGY THAT DAZZLES

Dr Red Ruby Scarlet

Best practice in early childhood education is 'best' when it draws from, and conveys multiple perspectives. Too often, practice is linearly planned rather than creatively crafted to offer the most delicious, delightful and daring curriculum encounters. In this presentation Dr Red Ruby Scarlet will share current stories of practice that illustrate the dazzling richness of working with creative and performing arts as the centre of curriculum that is generated in every other disciplinary area of learning. Through poetry, musical composition, film, recording technologies, encounters with nature, embodying Indigenous cosmologies and multiple cultural expressions – these pedagogical practices raise the bar for educational innovation and they all rely upon a collective perspectival approach. Creativity is the central most important 'thing' educators require in order to enable children to surpass the limitations of ordinary learning experiences.

10:15am – 10:45am

Morning Tea, Networking & Exhibitors

10:45am – 12:00pm



PROVIDING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SLEEP ENVIRONMENTS FOR EVERY CHILD IN YOUR CENTRE

Dr Sally Staton

Good quality sleep is vital for healthy development across the life-span, with impacts on learning, behaviour, and health. In the early years of life, children's sleep impacts not only the child, but also those who care for them. The significance of children's early sleep development is reflected in the NQS, which specifies that services must appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation (QA 2.1.1). Yet, how ECEC services best respond to individual differences in sleep needs is not always clear. Drawing on our findings from over a decade of research into sleep, rest, and relaxation practices, this interactive presentation will examine current knowledge of children's sleep development and provide opportunity to reflect on best practice to meet individual differences in children's sleep, rest, and relaxation needs.

12:00pm – 1:30pm

Lunch, Networking & Exhibitors

1:30pm – 2:30pm



PLAY IS THE WORK OF THE CHILD

Anna Black

There is no doubt that young children learn best through play, this has been demonstrated in study after study. Play-based curriculum and play-based programs are the norm in Australia and often are held up in opposition to Montessori programs, making it seem like a dichotomous choice. The Montessori community itself has contributed to this perception with its devaluing of the word play, focus on 'work' and perhaps a lack of true understanding of the nature of play and the relationship between children's play, learning and teaching. Playful learning and teaching through play is, however, best practice and the Montessori community has much to contribute to the learning-through-play discourse as well as some questions to ask of itself. This workshop covers the nature of play, play-based pedagogies, historical perspectives of play and Montessori's own feelings about play. It will look at what do we in Montessori have to learn from play-based philosophy, truly observing children's preferences and integrating play philosophy into practice. We'll consider what do we really need to teach, specifically, building the skills necessary for true collaborative and imaginative play, and the role of the prepared environment in promoting positive behaviour and fostering learning dispositions.

MONTESSORI MOTIVES FOR ACTIVITY

Cathy Wilson

How do we create an environment where rich oral language is a part of the culture and support the development of concentration in our class environments ensuring that best practice prevails? The Montessori approach is of course the answer! Come along to this workshop and learn easy practical games you can play and skills you can use while having fun with children of all early childhood ages. We'll be learning about ways to teach compassion, instil a sense of community and develop language skills. This workshop is for anyone wanting to learn how to support focus and concentration leading to the 'normalisation' of children in their class while developing skills for life.

2:30pm – 3:30pm



THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF LIFE : OBSERVE MORE, DO LESS. DO LESS, ENJOY MORE.

Barbara Langford

Within each child is their own unique timeline for the unfolding of their development. We cannot 'teach' children of this age -they are innately driven to experience the world through their own 'work'. Our role is to observe and ensure that we offer an environment that supports the unfolding of every new experience that the child seeks. Too often educators believe it is their job to keep children busy, active and entertained, often leading them to go home empty of energy and feeling exhausted. Our role is not to direct the learning, it is to support it. We need to take the time to just 'be' with the children, to witness the miracle of each new achievement and to be fulfilled by the trust each child places in us to be their guide when they need us. In this workshop, Barbara will remind us of the incredible journey each child takes to achieve their independence. We will practice "observing" a child through a different lens and discuss how we can support and nurture this critical stage of human development.

THE PLAYFUL POETICS OF DOCUMENTATION

Dr Red Ruby Scarlet

Documentation is the best beautiful tenement to our professional practice. It can feel like a struggle inside frameworks that constrain and streamline. To twinkle the magic back into the practice of documentation, Dr Red Ruby Scarlet will engage a playful way to bring the poetics back into crafting the beauty of documentation as professional expression. Wordplay through poetry helps us bellyflop into the tenderness and intensity of the relationships we engage with children in their learning encounters. Using gorgeously expressive language helps bring those encounters alive in ways that we enjoy, children can enjoy and families can enjoy as we invite a new and different kind of relational connection. Words are images, pictures, sculptures, songs, movements that we can craft playfully and poetically in our pedagogical practices.

3:30pm – 4:00pm

Afternoon Tea, Networking & Exhibitors

4:00pm – 5:30pm



EDUCATOR WELLBEING: THE PHOENIX CUPS APPROACH

Chris Phoenix

Chris brings the stage to life in a perfect combination of education and entertainment, which we like to call "EDU"TAINMENT". You can expect laughs, games, psychology and philosophy, as well as a proven formula for wellbeing. Introducing educators to the Phoenix Cups framework, Chris helps educators and leaders determine their own needs, the needs of others, what we can do to have them met, and how to challenge our unhelpful thinking. The Phoenix Cups Framework will help you understand how to meet your most important life needs, and the needs of those around you, by discovering what Cups you need to keep full, how they influence behaviours, and how you can use them to build relationships in all aspects of life.

.....and now for the evening program





SATURDAY 5:45pm – 7:15pm

Join us as Dr Red Ruby Scarlet and Louise Dorrat present their production of The National Quality Framework – The Musical!

In an all singing all dancing extravaganza, dynamic dramaturgical early childhood thespians, Red and Louise present a splendiferous, spectacular, salubrious engagement with the NQF.

Grounded in Theories, Practice and Embodied Pedagogies, this piece of professional development is based on the following questions:

- What counts as valid knowledge?
- Who decides?
- And in whose interest are they enacted?

...followed by the After Party

SATURDAY 7:30pm – 10:30pm

Continue the good times with colleagues and friends at the After Party. Dance the night away with a live DJ, with party food included (cash bar).




OPTIONAL: BREAKFAST SESSION

7:15am – 8:30am **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE TOOLS FOR MONTESSORI EDUCATORS**
Mark Powell


An introduction to the Positive Discipline for Montessori Educators course on classroom management tools to support student mental health and foster respect, kindness and responsibility.

8:15am – 8:30am Arrival, Networking & Exhibitors

8:30am – 10:00am 

A RADICAL RE-IMAGINATION OF POSSIBILITIES: USING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS TO TRANSFORM PRACTICE
Anthony Semann


Consider the early childhood program, why is it the way it is and more importantly what would it take for educators and teachers to radically re-imagine our practices. Whilst this does not herald a radical departure from any philosophical underpinnings, it is an invitation to engage critical thinking skills as an act of transformation. To think critically is to never take practices for granted but rather to ask questions, to investigate possibilities and imagine and dream of future possibilities. In this keynote address we will explore the role of critical thinking, and how this might serve as a catalyst for pedagogical and personal transformation.

10:00am – 11:00am 

GENERATIVE ATTENTION TO CULTIVATE INDEPENDENT THINKING
Cathy Duvel

Cathy Duvel is a member on the Faculty of Time To Think, specialising in the process called The Thinking Environment: what it takes to create environments where independent thinking can be cultivated and flourish. This will be an experiential session with the audience participating in activities to practice Generative Attention and also experience the liberation when you are on the receiving end of Generative Attention. Cathy will also discuss how Generative Attention can be used in the classroom and the benefits for the developing child, as well as in the relationships between teachers and families.

11:00am – 11:30am Morning Tea, Networking & Exhibitors

11:30am – 12:30pm 

HOW TO GET EXCEEDING RATING WITHOUT SELLING YOUR SOUL
Lucette van Someren Boyd

Are you sick of knowing you are exceeding and finding the assessor doesn't view things the same way as you? What can you do to change their perception and what paperwork is required to meet the criteria? How can you explain Montessori in plain English in discussions and in print? We will go through the basic area needs, documentation required, and how to present this to an assessor. Moreover we will also look at how to implement this into your daily practice as an educator without taking more time away from the children for whom you care.




WEAVING & CONNECTING TO YOUR COMMUNITY
Jackie Bennett

This session will introduce educators to the idea of Weaving & Connecting to their community, asking key questions on:

- How you can weave in and out of your community?
- Who is in your local community?
- Where can you go to connect with the people or organisations within your community?
- Where can you locate resources that will support you along the way?

12:30pm – 1:30pm Lunch, Networking & Exhibitors

1:30pm – 2:30pm 


MONTESSORI LONG DAY CARE: DO WE REALLY DO WHAT WE SAY WE DO?
Susan Chahwan

Montessori Long Day Care in Australia is the fastest growing sector on the Australian Montessori scene – and it is still growing. How have centres flourished under government initiatives? Can we claim this as the grassroots of a much bigger movement and how do we ensure an ever-better world? This interactive session will give us an opportunity to share experiences and open discussion on staying true to core Montessori principles, and what those principles and practices look like in this sector of Montessori education in 2023 and beyond.



A SAFER SLEEP GUIDELINE
Professor Jeanine Young AM

Safe sleep messaging varies considerably in clinical practice and guidelines within and between Australian states and territories. Many families encounter difficulties in implementing safe sleep advice; these challenges negatively impact infant care practices. Risk elimination approaches which attempt to enforce idealistic expectations of where and how a baby sleeps have been demonstrated to alienate parents. Risk minimisation approaches which support 'safer sleep' offer flexibility and practical strategies that are more likely to engage families in risk reduction and infant health promoting behaviours. In this session, Prof Young shares safe sleep messages that parents identified as most challenging to implement and introduce the Safer Infant Sleep clinical guideline designed to address the common barriers encountered. The anatomy and physiology of infants will be discussed together with a practical tool – Through the Tubes – which can be applied to a variety of situations in which babies may be placed to sleep to promote airway protection. Understanding airway protection and breathing assists carers to create a safer environment, whether the baby is placed alone in a cot or other environment for sleep (e.g. floor bed), or if the baby shares a sleep surface with a caregiver. The Safer Sleep guideline provides families with a voice for collaborative and informed decision-making and professionals with a tiered approach to manage risk and promote safety through practical strategies that can be applied to a range of infant sleep environments.

2:30pm – 3:30pm 

PANEL DISCUSSION: SLEEP PRACTICES
Prof Jeanine Young, Dr Pam Staton, Vicki McKinnon and Susan Chahwan

The "Bedtime Battle" is a well-known parent challenge. For Montessori families, however, giving autonomy to children over their sleep from the earliest ages can prevent a negative association with sleep. At the same time, the scientific approach of Montessori ensures that we are taking note of research outcomes to check against our practices.



PANEL DISCUSSION: ASSESSMENT AND RATING
Anthony Semann, Dr Red Ruby Scarlet, Lucette van Someren Boyd and Cathy Wilson

The Assessment and Rating process inspires stress and fear in educators almost universally, even those who are confident in their practices. Having an external person viewing and marking performance is always confronting. This panel session is an opportunity to ask questions around the process, the best preparation and the outcomes of an A&R process.

3:30pm Conference Concludes

SPEAKERS



JACKIE BENNETT

Jackie Bennett is a proud Kamilaroi/Bigambul woman with over 25 years experience working in all levels of education systems. She is the Director and Cultural Consultant of her Cultural Consultancy business, Connecting 2 Culture. She was Cultural Diversity Advisor at C&K in North Brisbane, advising early childhood educators on how to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) perspectives within their everyday practice. She is World Forum Foundation Global Leader for Young Children and National Representative and a member of the Indigenous Peoples Action Group (IPAG), educating people about the challenges and barriers facing ATSI people today. She is also currently a Director on the Koobara Kindergarten and Pre-Prep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Board.



ANNA BLACK

Anna Black's first Montessori experience was at a small Casa in Birmingham, England which she attended as a four-year-old. She remembers cutting apples with the push-down apple cutter, writing with the Moveable Alphabet and the excitement of choosing what colour paper she would use for her metal inset work. Those fond memories led to a life long love of Montessori. In 2002, she qualified as an AMI 3-6 Directress and spent the next two decades working in various Montessori settings, at times alongside her mother, a Montessori principal and teacher. Since May 2020, she has been working for Inspire Early Learning Journey, a multi-centre Montessori early childhood provider, firstly as a Montessori directress and now as a guide and mentor teacher for all teaching staff across several campuses.



SUSAN CHAHWAN

Susan Chahwan, a trained music teacher (Diploma in Music Education from the Sydney Conservatorium), discovered her a passion for Montessori education after becoming a parent. In 1984 Susan bought a long day care centre to establish a Montessori preschool in Maroubra for her 3 year old son. Susan holds a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood), AMI 3-6 Diploma and Montessori Society Diploma. Susan has had over 38 years in a leadership capacity in Montessori Long Day Care experience and has spoken at Montessori national conferences and participated in international Montessori presentations. She is a Montessori Early Childhood trainer with the Australian Montessori Training Institute and Director of Early Childhood Education Services for Montessori Australia.



LOUISE DORRAT

Louise Dorrat, MEd, BTeach, Dip SSc, has extensive experience in managing early year's services – from Inclusion Support to Family Day Care and assisted in the set up of the first Victorian Bush Kinder. She has taught the Bachelor of Education at a number of Universities, including the Institute of Koorie Education (IKE) at Deakin University and Dramatic Arts at Victoria University. She is contracted by organisations such as Federal and State Governments, Children's Ground, ELAA, Child Australia and Gowrie to deliver training across Australia. Louise's background in theatre led her to co-write and perform 'NQF The Musical' with Dr Red Ruby Scarlet. Together they combine their experience and expertise in early childhood curriculum, systems, social justice and the creative and performing arts to create innovative and inclusive approaches to professional learning.



CATHY DUVEL

Cathy Duvel is passionate about enabling organisations to cultivate environments that support individuals and teams to become their best; and do their best for themselves, their businesses and communities. Incorporating the latest research from neuroscience with leading edge models and processes, Cathy designs and delivers programs tailored to the clients' needs. Cathy's role as Consultant, Facilitator and Coach with About Learning is to enable each client to develop their capacity to lead, through cultivating environments that foster independent thinking, teamwork and the achievement of goals. Together with her clients, she creates relationships built on trust and safety, integrity and mutual respect, which enable clients to confidently explore their strengths and challenges as leaders.



BARBARA LANGFORD

Barbara Langford has been a Montessori teacher for over 30 years during which time she has established seven highly regarded Montessori ECEC centres in Adelaide. Barbara is a passionate advocate for raising the quality of education and care for young children. She spent many years as the President of both Childcare SA and also Childcare Associations Australia enabling her to champion at both a State and Federal Government level for the benefits of high quality early education for children. Barbara also runs a consultancy business called Montessori Management and Mentoring (MMM) through which she offers her expertise to assist others in the establishment of new centres and the training of staff and was Manager of Montessori Early Childhood Australia (MECA), a division of the Montessori Australia Foundation.



CHRIS PHOENIX

Christopher Phoenix is an author, keynote speaker, researcher, and the wellbeing specialist for the Phoenix Cups and Phoenix Support for Educators. With Sandi Phoenix, he is the co-author 'The Phoenix Cups: A Cup Filling Story' book, and tours Australia and beyond delivering the Phoenix Cups framework through a highly entertaining Workplace Wellbeing workshop and keynote presentation. Chris' workshops and presentations have been dubbed as "edutainment"; the perfect blend of education and fun. He has been featured on morning television's Sunrise and interviews on national radio and media. As someone who continues to learn, Chris is currently undertaking his Ph.D. in Philosophy to pursue his theories on authenticity as a virtue, and how we can creating meaningful lives, and attempt to meet our human needs.

SPEAKERS



MARK POWELL

Mark Powell first read Positive Discipline for his Montessori training in New York in 1994. This foundation helped him successfully manage 6-9 and 9-12 classrooms in the US and Australia for 27 years. Mark trained with Jane Nelson herself and also has a M.Ed. specialising in Conflict Resolution. He has published widely on Montessori education and designed many classroom materials now sold around the world. As a Montessori trainer he has delivered many workshops at international conferences and consulted for dozens of Montessori schools. In 2021 Mark joined Montessori Australia as Director of Education Services. He gives regular workshops on a variety of topics, although bringing this unique approach to relationship building to Australian parents and educators is a mission dear to his heart.



DR RED RUBY SCARLET

Dr Red Ruby Scarlet is an activist, early childhood teacher-researcher, consultant, artist and academic, working in early childhood for over 30 years. Red has developed curriculum and learning frameworks nationally and internationally, winning numerous awards for her teaching and advocacy. Red has published widely foregrounding the stories of the numerous 'teacher-research' projects. Red is currently the Creative Director of MultiVerse - an organisation devoted to consultancy, creating professional development and resourcing for early childhood that is committed to inclusive and innovative pedagogical approaches to curriculum. Red is the Founding Chair of the Social Justice In Early Childhood Foundation. Red is the co-writer and performer of wildly popular "The National Quality Framework - The Musical!"



ANTHONY SEMANN

Anthony Semann is an agent of change. After qualifying as an early childhood teacher, Anthony spent his early career working in long day care. Eager to learn as much as he could about practice and people, he built his pedagogical knowledge and developed his skills in fostering relationships. Early on, Anthony also discovered the importance of equity and social justice as a driving force in social change. His desire for learning remains apparent, so too does his commitment to naming inequity, shifting practice towards justice and living a life that embodies all that he preaches. Anthony is a founding director of Semann & Slattery, a boutique consultancy with over 25 years work in the education sector as researchers, facilitators of professional learning and thought leaders.



DR SALLY STATON

Dr Sally Staton is a Senior Research Fellow in the Science of Learning Research Centre at the Queensland Brain Institute, at The University of Queensland. Dr Staton has a strong commitment to research that can inform and ensure positive early life experience for all children. Her research focuses on the role of early education and care settings in supporting young children's immediate and on-going social-emotional, cognitive and physical development. Dr Staton has a strong track record in research translation and community engagement. In 2016, she was named among Queensland's Young Tall Poppy Scientists for her contribution to science translation and engagement. In 2019 her successful research partnerships with industry and government was acknowledged in a Partners in Research Excellence Award from UQ.



LUCETTE VAN SOMEREN BOYD

Lucette van Someren Boyd is an AMI 3-6 diploma holder with a great passion for Inclusive education. She has degrees in early childhood education, post graduate diplomas in child and family health, nursing and bereavement counselling and a Masters degree in Special Education with particular interests in ASD and literacy. Lucette has had extensive experience working with children who have Special Needs in inclusive environments advocating the use of Montessori therapy as well as the integration of multi-sensory synthetic phonics techniques. Lucette is a Brain Gym consultant and practitioner and uses these and other movement based modalities such as yoga and Extra Lesson with many children. Lucette is on the board of Montessori Medical Partnership for Inclusion (MMPI) where she continues to promote Inclusive education.



CATHY WILSON

Cathy commenced working for Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ) as the Chief Executive officer in 2015 having been on the MANZ Council from 2011 to 2015 and the treasurer since 2013. She is from a teaching background, having worked at Upper Valley Montessori and Mana Montessori before joining Wā Ora Montessori School in Lower Hutt in 1998, where she was the deputy principal. Cathy is both State and Associated Montessori Internationale (AMI) teacher trained from 0-18 years. She has worked as a tutor for Aperfield Montessori, delivered numerous workshops for the Early Childhood Council, Victoria University and MANZ and presented at Early Childhood Council and MANZ conferences. Cathy represents MANZ on many Ministry of Education, Teaching Council, Education Review Office and NZQA governance and advisory groups as well as two global boards.



PROFESSOR JEANINE YOUNG AM

Professor Jeanine Young is a registered nurse, midwife, and neonatal nurse with over 30 years of experience in neonatal, paediatric, maternal and child health care. Jeanine has a special interest in how infant care practices impact infant mortality, and in particular breastfeeding, parent-infant bed-sharing and shared sleeping practices. Jeanine's research has a particular focus on developing innovative, evidence-based, culturally appropriate and practical strategies and educational resources to assist health professionals and community workers in supporting families with young infants to incorporate Safe Sleep recommendations into the care of their baby. Jeanine was awarded Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2020 for her significant contributions to medical research, tertiary education and nursing.

VENUE

Mantra on View Surfers Paradise



Positioned right in the heart of Surfers Paradise just 160m from the beach, Mantra on View Hotel is an ideal choice when visiting Queensland's famous Gold Coast. Relax on your own private balcony as you take in the sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean and stunning Gold Coast skyline. While staying at Mantra on View Hotel, dine onsite at NOSH Pan Asian Restaurant, or wander into the nearby heart of Surfers Paradise for a great choice of Gold Coast bars and eateries. With excellent shopping, famous beaches, the natural wonders of the hinterland and Gold Coast theme parks nearby, Mantra on View Hotel is the ideal Surfers Paradise accommodation.

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