

Shaping the Next Generation with a Holistic Approach

Galina Zenin > Bonkers Beat

In early childhood education, each day we watch children building, playing, painting and singing joyously. We watch and guide them as they learn to wash their hands, use cutlery and master basic life skills.

What we don't always take the time to consider is that these children are the future. Our role working in early childhood education is of the utmost importance – helping to shape the next generation.

Research continues to shed light on just how crucial those first five years of a child's life are, and early childhood educators are entrusted with so much of this time. What a great privilege – one that undoubtedly comes with many challenges and responsibilities.

Earlier this year, during the 2015 National Excellence in Teaching Award (NEiTA) presentation by the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG), I was asked, along with 11 other recipients of the award, what the most challenging aspect of being a teacher is.

I'm sure many of us would agree that each day presents a series of challenges for early childhood educators. The challenge of creating a stimulating, caring environment for the children, along with getting to know and understand each and every child in our care. This takes time, but it is our job to find out about a child's interests, concerns and dreams and to introduce them to a variety of experiences. We can help them discover the world and, therefore, discover their passions and strengths.

A challenge that many services face is creating an environment conducive to passionate and enthusiastic educators. An environment where

our educators feel they can openly discuss their feelings, emotions, their problems and their views. It can also be a challenge to involve parents, but their participation is crucial for a sense of belonging. That is a reason why Bonkers Beat programs provide many opportunities for families to contribute and participate in a wide range of activities and support the programs at home.

The early childhood industry presents us with a number of challenges, but they can be overcome. Graduates and experienced educators alike should be open to continuing to learn. There are many different approaches to early childhood education, so it is important to discover various approaches, like Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Steiner, Vygotsky and many others.

We need to be committed, lifelong learners and be open to different educational philosophies that may make you think about things in a completely different way.

It's an exciting time in education in Australia where we are seeing great emphasis being placed on children's wellbeing. Subjects like mindfulness, resilience, meditation, yoga, and multiple intelligences are better understood and more appreciated than ever before, along with their power to impact children's lives and education in an incredibly positive way. A holistic approach to early childhood education is essential – we need to see each child as unique and different.

Children, just like adults, have multiple intelligences and learn in different ways through listening, drawing, music, movement, building, making, creating and so on. But providing this approach doesn't have to be a challenge – through ongoing professional development training and support, any educational setting can begin to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

As we continue along this path towards increased educational engagement and fostering the areas that promote children's wellbeing, educators need to be given the opportunity to learn a wide variety of skills, so they can pass these on to children. Their training should include compulsory units in how to introduce music, musical games, wellbeing practices, art and craft experiences. We need to be equipping parents with the tools to further the learning experience at home too.

The future of early childhood education in Australia is exciting! We must continue to be inspired and work on teaching children differently, offering more learning opportunities to enhance their multiple intelligences and nurture the wellbeing of the next generation. After all, the children of today will shape the future.

You can find more information by visiting our website

EarlyChildhoodEducationalPrograms.com.au