



Dr Brenda Abbey

## EYLF ENCOUNTERS

Educators – particularly those in exemplar services such as the Norfolk Street Children's Centre in Coorparoo, Queensland featured in this edition of Early Education News – know that the physical environment impacts upon the behaviours and interactions of children and adults. They also know that creating environments that work for children enables them to spend valuable time interacting positively with the children. This is especially so with indoor learning environments.

However, setting up an indoor learning environment is a challenge for any educator even if the design of the room is ideal – which in many cases it is not. Practicalities such as: entrances to the room, the bathrooms and outdoor play spaces; access to electrical sockets; separation of active, messy and quiet activities; a space for group time; and, positioning beds/mattresses for rest time, all need to be considered. Add to this the need for children to be able to move between spaces, explore, experiment, create and express themselves without disturbing other children, and to have access to soothing spaces. Not surprisingly, once an aesthetic and well-functioning arrangement has been found, educators are reluctant to make any changes.

In addition, they often feel overwhelmed when reminded that the National Quality Standard requires educators to provide evidence that the environment is regularly rearranged and that children are involved in the process and also participate in creating and maintaining an aesthetically pleasing environment (NQS 3.1.1, 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). Fortunately, the evidence can be met in a variety of ways. Perhaps introduce a small tent and a little inflatable dingy into the dramatic play area to accommodate children's interest in camping or, say, items to accommodate their interest in hospitals. It could also be as simple as displaying photographs of a family's overseas trip or setting up a science display about a creature like monarch butterflies that the children have seen passing through.

The changes do not have to be earth-shattering to meet the National Quality Standard's requirements. They merely need to evidence that the physical environment reflects the ever changing needs and interests of the children – and the best way to do that is to involve children and their families in the process ... and then, of course, document it.

Brenda is an early childhood consultant with special expertise in the NQS, EYLF and MTOP. Her workshops, NQS Service Profile Reports, and EYLF products are in high demand.

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*An engaging reading corner*

entry level of equipment from the Department which I passed onto Dan Kennard at STE, it was a massive list. Together we added things as we needed and looked at some other good options which were available. Dan came up here and had a look at the centre and made recommendations for the various areas."

"Each room has its own equipment which is age-appropriate and we are able to easily reconfigure the play areas to create fun and interesting activities for the children," said Nick.

The centre is thriving and has a 72 placement capacity for children ranging from 2 months to 5 years old. "We are always getting positive comments from parents about how well equipped we are and the quality of the resources. The older kids like using the educational toys like the puzzles, blocks and books - generally things they can do with their hands. The younger groups tend to like the musical side of things and the large soft-play climbing shapes. Within each of the rooms we have a sleeping area and STE were able to provide fantastic Spacesaver beds in a variety of shapes and sizes. It means we can easily stack the beds away until we need them each day and flow of space throughout the centre is not interrupted."



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