



Welcome

Welcome to our first issue for 2016. This issue is the forerunner to our 2016 conference “Learning for Life – Intentional, Visible, & Personalized” on September 3 at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre. Read more about our conference on page two.

We are very excited to be welcoming to our Early Life Foundations team early childhood expert Melinda Vander Reest – read more about Melinda on our website. At this time we are also saying farewell to Kathy Murray who is returning to her family in QLD. Kathy Murray has worked with many of you across the country and I am sure you will join us in wishing her well in this next phase of her life.

Our work with parents is resonating with many in the community and as a result of the enormous amount of requests for parent support we have increased the parent consultation team to four consultants. Please don't hesitate to contact the office to discuss the options we provide for supporting parents.

Walker Learning is now being widely implemented across Australia and internationally due to its success in engaging children with a teaching and learning approach that is personalized and developmentally and culturally appropriate. The publication of our new book, *Early Childhood Play Matters* has provided the resource to support educators in their implementation of Walker Learning from babies through to year 8. Page 4 provides some of the Walker Learning highlights so far this year.

Kathy Walker >



Shona Bass >



Check out thousands of photos of learning centres on our Facebook pages!



We are now on Pinterest! Check out our boards!

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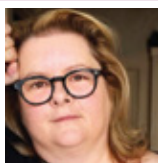


Comment:

Getting a handle on “screen time”: We are contacted regularly by parents who are concerned about screen time, about gaming, and about social media. Parents are faced with many challenges related to screen time – what is safe, what is appropriate, how to deal with peer group and societal pressure to conform, as well as dealing with new apps, new games and smart advertising. Once parents make their own informed decisions they then have to manage putting limits and boundaries in place. This has led to the two part feature piece on screen time; in this edition we present the facts and figures around screen time and in our next newsletter we will provide parents with strategies to manage limits and set boundaries for their children.



Keynote Speakers



Magda Szubanski

Magda Szubanski is one of Australia's most versatile, critically acclaimed and popular comedy performers. She is a talented writer and actor. Magda was named the Most Popular Person on Television and won multi awards including Logies, Australian Writers Guild Awards, People's Choice Awards and Australian Film Institute (AFI) Award for Best Actress.



Kathy Walker OAM Founding Director Early Life Foundations

Kathy Walker OAM is one of Australia's leading parenting and education expert and author. She is a Fellow of the Australian Educational Leaders. Kathy is the co designer of the personalised play and project based curriculum, Walker Learning which is implemented across Australia and internationally, and one of the country's leading curriculum and pedagogy experts in personalised learning.



Dr June Factor

Dr June Factor is a writer, social historian and folklorist, currently an Honorary Senior Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne. She is recognised internationally as a leading scholar in the study of children's lore and language. She has produced many publications which includes the six books of Australian children's verbal lore, known collectively as the Far Out series (Brolly Books 1983-2005).



Prof Jennifer McIntosh

Jennifer McIntosh is a clinical and developmental psychologist, family therapist, and researcher and founding director of Family Transitions. Jennifer has specialised in the development of interventions for separated families in high conflict. In 2011, she was the recipient of the AFCC Stanley Cohen Distinguished Research Award. She is currently the Professor of Psychology at Deakin University, where she leads the perinatal science stream of the Centre for Social and Early Emotional Development.

Program at a glance

Keynote 1. Magda Szubanski
Learning a life long process

Keynote 2. Dr June Factor
Play is universal and imperative

Morning Tea

Keynote 3 Kathy Walker – Personalising learning in everyday practice

Breakout Sessions 1

Neuroscience Evidence based knowledge to inform practice (ECE to Yr 6)	Walker Learning F-2 Introduction to play & personalizing learning. (F to Y2)	Setting up the learning environment for engagement and personalized learning. (ECE to Yr 2)	Creative and open ended art experiences (ECE to Yr 6)
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Lunch

Keynote Professor Jenny McIntosh – Families separated, and in conflict – through the eyes of a child

Breakout Sessions 2

I wonder why? Understanding children, relationships, and whole child (ECE to Yr 6)	Walker Learning 3-6 Introduction to personalizing learning. (Yr 3 to Yr 6)	Want your life back? Effective documentation in ECE. (ECE)	Master Class with Kathy Walker (ECE to Yr 6)
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Breakout Sessions 3

IT and social media age: a tool not a master in teaching and learning. (F to Yr 6)	Early Childhood Play Matters (Walker Learning birth to 6 years) Introduction (ECE)	Learning for life: building children's resilience, self concept and intrinsic motivation (ECE to Yr 6)
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Traders Raffle Draw - Conference Close - Shona Bass and Kathy Walker



Getting a “Handle” on Devices Part 1

Shona Bass and Kathy Walker

It's amazing how in just one generation the technological world has changed everything so much. Technology has transformed our society in great ways, demonstrated by astounding progress in medicine, communication and health, as well as connecting us with people locally and globally. However with every great achievement there are also challenges. Parents are faced with many issues to consider related to screen time – what is safe or appropriate, how to deal with peer group and societal pressure to conform as well as dealing with new apps, new games and smart advertising. In Part 1 we provide answers to the questions parents often ask us. Part 2, in our next newsletter, we provide parents with strategies to work with their children to make technology a valuable and balanced part of their life.

“Our children need computer skills for their future working life”

There is no doubt that technology will be a significant part of our children's working life. However our children's working future will hold more than we can ever imagine – it is predicted that they will have at least 6 different careers and 20 different jobs. The top five skills for success are: a strong self-concept, resilience, healthy relationships, effective communication, and creative lateral thinking (problem solving.)

While literacy and numeracy are not negotiable, success in life requires so much more. Many parents often comment “Well they are using iPads and computers in the classroom all day, so it can't be too bad”. This type of analogy is contradicted in a landmark OECD report, which found that Australia is one of the highest users of technology in schools, however the frequent use of computers in schools was often associated with lower results. Technology should be viewed as a tool for learning not as an actual teaching and learning approach.

“Children develop creativity, lateral thinking, problem solving and persistence on devices.”

Many parents believe that their children are learning skills while on devices; while some skill development may be associated with the use of devices, these fall significantly short of the opportunity free play provides for the development across all domains (social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical). Advertising of educational apps lull parents into a false sense of security in that even though their children are on devices they are playing educational games. Research has found that digital play, such as iPad apps, can actually limit a child's learning experience by not engaging all the senses. Children need ‘concrete hands on experiences’, they need to explore the physical world, to makes sense of the world around them, they need to be able to role play (pretend and imagine), engage in conversation and respond and react to real people – not a virtual world of virtual people.

Research into the extensive use of screen time with adolescents show there is an increased risk of living their life within virtual relationships. The consequences of living life through a screen are already being seen in heavy users, who have diminished attention spans, impaired learning and difficulty forming relationships in the real world.

“I have a single child. Children can no longer play in the street and my child is socialising and working as a team when he/she is gaming online with friends”

Recently a parent said, “I have a single child who does not have siblings to play with and cannot go out in the street and play footy like we did as children. He plays online games with his friends where they converse, problem solve, work as a team and are creative. So what is wrong with that?” This is very typical of many homes – particularly with boys. In small doses there is nothing wrong with this, the danger is when this type of entertainment dominates all else. There is debate amongst clinicians about whether extensive and addictive screen time actually leads to structural changes in the brain. However research has shown that extensive time spent gaming and engaging in social media has been associated with

- Isolation
- Addiction – “digital crack”
- Excessive & obsessive behaviour
- Lack of physical activity (Just 7 per cent of adolescent girls, and one in five teenage boys, are meeting minimum standards of physical activity)
- Increased time indoors rather than outdoors
- Anxiety
- Nomophobia – the fear of being out of mobile phone contact
- Depression
- Limited perspectives
- Bullying
- Delayed and / or compromised development – oral language, social skills, empathy

“My get children bored without electronic devices.”

The more screen time children have, the more they want!! The more you give, the more they want!!! Sometimes parents themselves have forgotten what to do with their children without using screens or devices. Some parents say children get bored without devices. This is a sign that they need less device time because children are naturally good at self entertaining, finding something to play with, pretending and imagining when they are given the opportunity. Children just get used to being plugged in. If we stop plugging them in, they will relearn how to play and to self entertain. The mantra for parents is: “Screen time perpetuates more screen time” and “Children need time to be bored so they can create!”

In summary

The pattern we set up early in our children's lives and the pattern we model will be what they end up living and doing! Anything in excess, anything that distracts children from learning how to function in the real world, how to deal with real friendships and relationships, rather than virtual ones, anything that causes children to lock themselves away in a room all night on a game with people they don't know, or anything that means young people are being bullied or intimidated via social media is unhealthy and dangerous. Technology is a wonderful tool and it can help us in life to learn, to communicate and to play. However, for children, just as in all things in life, limits, boundaries and balance are extremely important, and of course you as parents setting the model. We need to be very careful that we don't underestimate how quickly children become totally obsessed with screens and it is our role to monitor and set the limits around what is appropriate.

Indigenous Advancement Strategy – Quality Early Years

Australian Independent Schools WA & Walker Learning

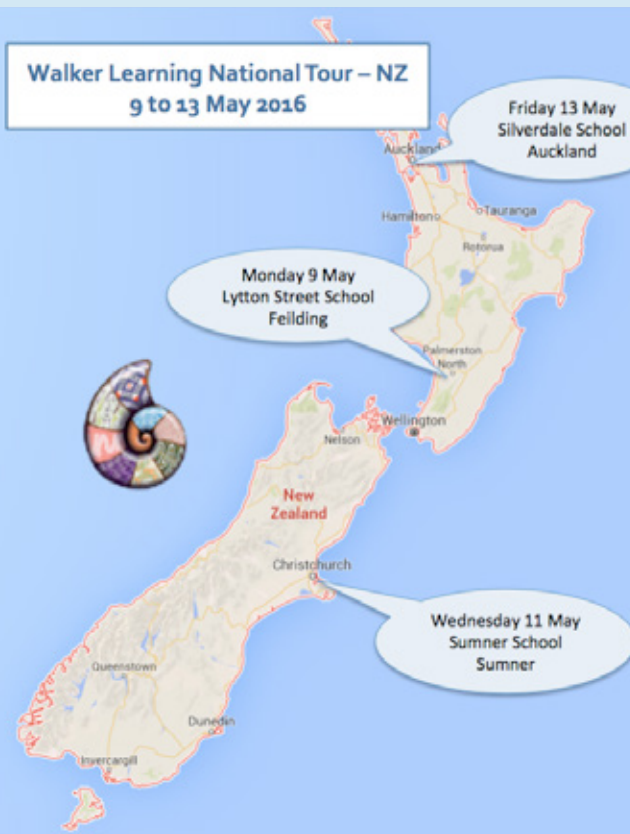
In 2015 AISWA and Walker Learning were awarded funding from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy - quality early childhood education. The centerpiece of this project is the engagement of Early Life Foundations and Walker Learning to provide Professional Learning and ongoing (not hyphenated) mentoring support to educators and Aboriginal Education Workers in Independent schools in two cluster groups; Kimberley and Pilbara.

Educators and AEWs attended two-days of professional development at the beginning of the year in Broome. Term 1 has been inspirational with so many educators and AEW's working enthusiastically to begin the implementation of Walker Learning. Later in April they will be attending another two day PD in Broome followed by a Study Tour at Anula Primary School in May. We look forward to keeping our readers posted with their progress.

Walker Learning

DEVELOPMENTALLY & CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

Walker Learning National Tour – NZ WALKER LEARNING STUDY TOURS TERM 2



We are very excited to be responding to the widespread interest in NZ about Walker Learning by conducting our first National Study Tour for preschool to year 3. This builds on the support our team has been providing to Longburn School and Lytton Street School in the Palmerston North area. Both schools are implementing Walker Learning from reception to year 6.

New Zealanders' don't miss out on this opportunity to learn about a play based pedagogy that enhances oral language, embraces intrinsic motivation, relationships, positive self-concept, resilience, and creativity while covering NZ curriculum content & outcomes.

A Walker Learning Study Tour will be conducted in NZ 2017 – we will keep you posted.

Study Tour	Date	City	State
Early Childhood Education	3 June 18 August	Melbourne	VIC
Preschool – Year 2	15 & 16 August	Darwin	NT
Foundation to Year 2	29 August	Burnie	TAS
	10 June	Hobart	TAS
	23 May	Mandurah	WA
	19 August	Sunshine Coast	QLD
	17 May	Morphett Vale	SA
	1 September	Salisbury Downs	SA
	5 & 6 May 4 & 5 August	Melbourne	VIC
Foundation – Year 6	22 August	Bendigo	VIC
Preschool – Year 6	14 & 15 July	Melbourne	VIC
Years 3 to Year 6	17 August	Melbourne	VIC

