

# **Early Education Notes**

Series 347: Where I Belong

# **Background**

In the heart-warming series 'Where I Belong', we learn about the value of intergenerational friendship and the importance of strengthening community connections. We meet a Banksia family and are introduced to their world – grandparents, friends, teachers and special places.

Young children feel they belong because of the relationships they have with their family, neighbourhood, community and culture. The Play School 'Family Book' explores heirloom recipes, family photos and memories of favourite places visited. We go 'Through the Windows' and meet treasured pets, grandparents, people having fun working in a community garden and friendships from across Australia.

Join the Play School family as we celebrate 'belonging' by exploring the capacity of resilient and dynamic relationships and communities, and the contributions we can make at any age!



Abi contributes to the Play School 'Family Book'. An heirloom book of recipes, photos and other memories.

# Follow-up

A child's sense of belonging develops through feeling they are part of a family or group. Reflect on the Banksia family featured in Where I Belong. Ask children: What is a family? Who is part of the Banksia family? Who part of your family? Discus immediate and extended relatives - parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunties, uncles, and pets too. Some children might include close friends in their family too. Ask children to share their thoughts on why their family is important to them.



Teo and Karen with the Banksia family and community.

In addition to the circular symbolism of Banksy the banksia's community, Play School uses a 'Family Book' to bring together some of the things that may build a child's sense of belonging. It includes recipes, photos, drawings stories, maps and even some jokes!

There are many ways to visualise belonging in early education and care settings (family trees, scrapbooks, project walls etc). However, it is important to remember that no matter how beautiful the documentation around it, belonging is a feeling and strong relationships are at the heart of it all!

# Where I Belong, Through the Windows

Play School is very excited to offer this beautiful series of films made together with our audience. We received hundreds of homevideo submissions showing children and families from all over Australia; caring for pets, tending community gardens, spending time with grandparents and learning with inspiring teachers. We thank everyone who contributed. Your videos helped to make Where I Belong extra special!

## Where I Belong: Through the Windows topics

#### 1. Pets

We meet treasured pets across Australia and talk about why we love them. Whether it's your dog, rabbit, chicken or sheep, our pets are always beloved members of the family!

## 2. Grandparents

We meet grandparents across Australia and hear about why they are special to us. Come and celebrate Nonnas, Pas, Abuelitas & Pops and the very important role our grandparents can play in our lives!

## 3. Community Garden

We visit community gardens across Australia and see how they can help us strengthen our community connections. Watch as families and friends work in the garden and enjoy a fresh strawberry or ripe tomato along the way!



#### 4. Special Friends

We meet all kinds of special friends from across Australia and discover some of the wonderful ways they spend time together. Whether it's laughing, cooking, swimming or playing, there's always lots of fun to be had!

#### 5. Teachers

We meet teachers across Australia and celebrate the great work that they do! Watch how teachers help us to learn new skills like music, dancing and language, and discover their important role within the community.

Watch the films again by visiting ABC Kids Early Education: Family Community and Culture.



Thank you to all the children and families who contributed to this series. Your videos are amazing!

Use the experiences shared in each film to spark discussion about the important role grandparents and friends of all ages play in our lives.

Film 4 shows some of the wonderful ways friends spend time together. Extend by creating small models of much-loved friends and family members using upcycled loose parts and natural materials. Children can use their handmade 'people props' to tell stories about family and friendship. For more on this idea, check out episode 3, series 2 of Play School Art Time: 3D Portraits (or go to page 7 of the Art Time series 2 Inspiration Pack).

Invite grandparents and other family members to share a favourite recipe. 'Make and do' with technology by using a book creator app to compile and share your group's recipes in an eBook. This could make the perfect (cost free) end of year gift for families. The process of making this DIY resource could also be a meaningful way to acknowledge an annual event such as Harmony Day or Grandparents Day at your setting.



These planning ideas can help strengthen intergenerational friendships and link to EYLF Principles and Practices including:

- 'Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships'
- 'Partnerships with families'

Learning Outcome 2.1 'Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation'.

#### Build a 3D home

Throughout this series we discover that members of the Play School Banksia family live in a house and unit block, while others may live in a caravan, houseboat or even two different homes. Support children's developing sense of belonging by researching different types of homes and then encourage children to share information about their family home e.g. 'How many people live in your house?'.

Provide open-ended craft and recycled materials for children to design and construct a 3D model. Children can first create a 2D technical drawing plan for reference while building. This learning experience helps develop spatial awareness and promotes many other engineering and mathematical skills. Link to EYLF Learning Outcome 4 *'Children are confident and involved learners'*.



The Play School Banksia family and their little world.

# Create neighbourhood maps

Create a large map of the neighbourhood surrounding your early learning setting. Look at satellite maps of the local area online and print photos of key landmarks to add to your joint map creation. Include playgrounds, shops and library etc. Encourage children to talk about where they've been and who they've visited in the community to support the developing sense of belonging. Exploring how maps work can also build essential early numeracy concepts such as directionality and spatial awareness.



Plan a walking excursion to visit a place or person in your local area (a community garden or parents' place of work). Involve children in the planning process by choosing a safe walking route and drawing a map of the excursion path. This will support their developing sense of agency (NQS Element 1.2.3 'Child directed learning').



It's a Fruity Friends Festival! Emma and Hunter gather in the community garden to eat and celebrate what they've grown.

Extend by creating a symmetrical 'mandala' like Karen and Teo in *Episode 4*, to help remind us that we're all connected in either big or little ways. Use natural materials to create geometric shapes and patterns. Share information and stories about how people are connected to one another, to culture, to place and to nature. It's important for early childhood educators to scaffold children's understandings about how they are 'connected with and contribute to their world' (EYLF Learning Outcome 2.1).

# Recipes from the Play School 'Family Book'

Children are born *belonging* to their culture and the EYLF requires early childhood educators to respect and recognise that diversity contributes to the richness of our society. This series shares family heirloom recipes from around the world and showcases diverse cultures through cooking. Play School loves the idea of encouraging children to try new flavours! Make some of these simple recipes at your early learning setting – 'Dried fruit salad', 'Vietnamese noodles' or 'Humpty's birthday cake'.

## Dried fruit salad

- 1 cup of pitted prunes
- 1 cup of dried apricots
- ½ cup of soft dried figs
- 2/3 cup of raisins
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- · Juice and zest of 1 orange
- 1 tablespoon of rose water
- · Greek yoghurt to serve

Chop everything into small pieces and gently mix with the rose water and orange juice. Dollop with yoghurt and enjoy!

#### Vietnamese noodles

- · Vermicelli noodles
- · Grated carrot
- Bean sprouts
- Shallots
- Cucumber
- · Coriander and / or mint

#### Dressing

- · Lime juice
- Dash of fish sauce
- · Soy sauce

Combine the noodles and vegies. Gently mix through dressing to taste. Garnish with extra coriander or mint.



Hunter and Andrew make a delicious Vietnamese Noodle Salad

#### Humpty's birthday cake

- 1 cup of sugar
- · ½ cup of butter
- ½ cup of milk
- 2 cups of sifted flour
- · 3 eggs
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence

Preheat oven to 180 °c. Gently fold together ingredients until batter is smooth. Pour into a well-greased cake tin. Bake for 25mins to 30mins. Dust with a little icing sugar to serve. For a healthy icing alternative, add a little orange zest to some ricotta cheese and spread over the top. YUM!



Humpty celebrates his birthday with friends. They all enjoy the yummy "wall" birthday cake!



## **Doggy Treats**

- 1 large egg
- ¼ cup of water
- 3 table spoons olive oil
- 2½ cups of rolled oats (blended till fine)
- Chopped parsley
- · Chopped mint

Preheat oven to 180° c. Knead the mixture till combined. Press into little sausage shapes and place onto a well-greased baking tray. Bake for 30mins.

# Respect for diversity

The storybooks from this series represent cultural and social diversity to help children develop their sense of belonging and inclusion, by authentically demonstrating that everyone is an equally important member of our Australian society. The 'Family' storybook shared in Episode 1 can support educators in promoting a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island ways of knowing and being (EYLF, Principle 4).

#### Picture book titles from this series

- 'Family' (2020) by Aunty Fay Muir, Sue Lawson and Jasmine Seymour
- 'Grandma's Treasured Shoes' (2020) by Coral Vass and Christina Huynh
- 'Two Homes' (2003) by Claire Masurel and Kady MacDonald Denton

## Related reading and other resources

- Developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, <u>Building Belonging</u> is a toolkit for early childhood educators on cultural diversity and responding to prejudice.
- Visit <u>Be You</u> an education initiative delivered by Beyond Blue, in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace. Early learning services can be supported in developing a positive, inclusive and resilient learning community.
- A timely article from the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL) Why representation matters and accompanying recommended booklist about the importance of family diversity in Australian children's picture books.
- To learn more about embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in your ongoing early childhood curriculum visit <u>Koori Curriculum</u> or <u>The</u> Aboriginal Early Childhood Collective.

- Inform your reflective practice by reading an article by ACECQA about <u>Belonging</u>, <u>being and becoming</u> <u>for educators</u> (February 2018) to help foster your own personal sense of growing and connectedness as an early childhood professional.
- Visit <u>Sustainable Gardening Australia</u> and discover how your early childhood setting can get involved in community gardening across Australia.
- Download the free feature article from Connect Ability
   Australia about the many benefits of inter-generational
   learning through mixed playgroups, child care centres
   and nursing home visits The benefits of mixing aged care
   with child care. Educators may be interested in watching
   the ABC's Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds (series 2
   premieres in April 2021).

## **ABC Kids Early Education**

- <u>Family. Community and Culture</u> and <u>extension ideas</u>. We cover topics ranging from varied family structures to diverse abilities and friendships.
- <u>Creativity and Self-Expression</u> and <u>extension ideas</u>.
  Exploring ways to engage and appreciate diversity through the arts.
- An article discussing the <u>Pathways to inclusive transitions</u> to big school from a parent's first-hand experiences.

### **ABC Kids listen**

- Related News Time podcasts <u>NAIDOC</u> week in <u>Australia</u> and <u>International Friendship Day</u>
- <u>Little Yarns</u> shares stories about belonging through the diverse languages, and countries of Indigenous Australia.

## Credits

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