

Using picture books to build the foundations of global citizenship

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So many policies – so little time!

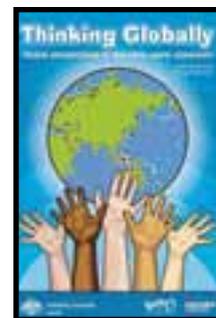
With the recent introduction of the National Quality Framework (DWEER, 2011) and the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2012), it is little wonder that educators in the early years are feeling overwhelmed as they try to bring these new policy obligations together with their existing work around the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF). In times like these, it is important to step back, take a breath and remind ourselves of the overall intention of education irrespective of whether that education is first words or first steps or coming to grips with year three science. There is a strong relationship between what students experience in school and the kind of human beings they will become. It is here they learn their first and most important lessons about who they are and how they are connected to others (Sapon-Shevin, 2010).

Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child remind us that every child has a right to an education that develops *their personality and talents to the full* (UNICEF, 2006). In the Australian context, this is highlighted through the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the second of which is that *all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens* (MCEETYA, 2008, 8). In particular, the Declaration acknowledges *the need to nurture*

an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship (MCEETYA, 2008, 4). As all early years educators know, the foundations for this begin in the long day care centres and the first years of schooling.

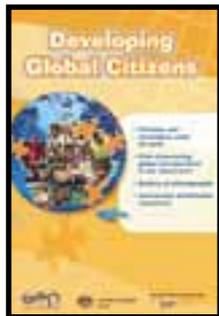
So where do we start?

As with all aspects of quality education, we start with the child. We start with items that are familiar to them and the stories that they love. Children's literature, and pictures books in particular, *captivate young children, and invite them to explore their own and other worlds* (Browett & Ashman, 2011, 18) as well as providing positive and effective ways of exploring controversial issues (Myhill, 2007). By carefully selecting the books that we read and the way that we encourage children to engage with those texts, we can stimulate their critical and creative thinking, promote intercultural understanding and build the foundations for ethical behaviour. Those of you working in schools will have already recognized three of ACARA's General Capabilities while the educators in long day care and Kindergarten settings will see the elements of cultural competence which resonate throughout Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Framework and the EYLF.



Below are just three examples of how to use picture books in this way.

A world of clothes



Mem Fox's *Shoes from Grandpa* and the Global Education Project's resource *Developing Global Citizens* can be used to explore the ways in which clothes are an expression of who we are and where we come from. Questions to explore can include:

- What are your favourite clothes?
- Why do you like these clothes?
- What other clothes do you wear?
- When do you wear these clothes and why?
- What kinds of activities, events or celebrations require special clothing?
- What kind of special clothing?



Developing vocabulary to express feelings and emotions

Renee Fogorty's *Fair skin black fella* can be used to explore the concept of discrimination and how it makes people feel. Read the first few pages then show an enlarged version of



the page where Neli and Lana tell Mary they don't want to play. Talk about how the children would feel if this happened to them. Then finish reading the rest of the story to see how Aboriginal Elder Old Ned resolves the conflict.

Recognising similarities and celebrating differences

Start with *Our Grandparents: A Global Album* by Ajmera, Kinkade and Pon. Explore the pictures and activities described. Then invite children to either bring in photos or draw pictures of themselves with their grandparents (or any

older relation or friend). Create a class collage of the pictures then compare the similarities whilst acknowledging differences, for example in clothing, settings, climate.



As these activities show, a simple book can be the starting point for not only addressing key aspects of the curriculum but also building the foundations for global citizenship. With so many wonderful books available in both hard copy and through sites like <http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>, the world is quite literally at an educator's fingertips.

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