

Capture the moment:
Using digital photography in early childhood settings

Kim Walters



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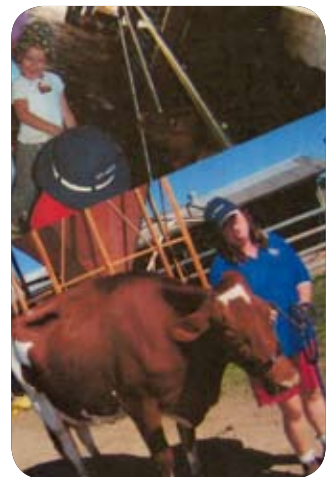
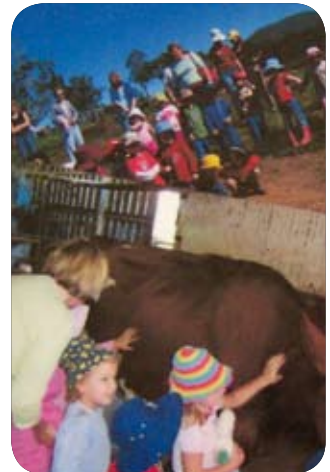
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About the author

Kim Walters is an early childhood practitioner and author, living in Gympie in south-east Queensland. She is a qualified and experienced teacher, having taught three- to five-year-olds attending community-based not-for-profit centres for over 20 years. Over the past five years Kim has established a consultancy/training business Digital Preschool, published a website www.digitalpreschool.com.au and three resource books. Her website and resource books *Step by step – Microsoft Word projects digital picture insertion for beginners*, *Digital documentation – 101 photo ready Word documents* and *Digital power – Interactive portfolios for early childhood and beyond* are designed for early childhood professionals wishing to utilise digital photography in their early childhood settings, to enhance communication and learning. Kim's passion to enthuse other professionals to join the digital revolution has led her to present papers, conferences and training throughout Australia.

Kim is currently working part-time in a preparatory class at Gympie South State School and is the President of the Queensland Early Childhood Teachers Association (ECTA), having previously held the roles of Vice-President and Regional Groups Co-ordinator.



Introduction

Photographs have been used in early childhood settings for a very long time, and now digital photography has made access to photographs immediate. This immediacy is, in turn, creating new opportunities for stimulating healthy communication and learning among children, parents and staff in early childhood programs.

Educators across the world are embracing the new technologies available to them and incorporating them into their pedagogies.

The value of digital photography became evident to me when I discovered how easy it could be to insert photos into Microsoft Word and PowerPoint documents, in order to document learning and create resources that were engaging and motivating for children.

Then I started to use these photo-enhanced documents to communicate with parents about day-to-day happenings. The introduction of digital photos to document children's learning stimulated parents' interest and they became more aware of the play-based learning within our negotiated curriculum. The documentation allowed us to make visible the link between the children's interests and questions, and the curriculum that staff in our centre created to enhance and stimulate their learning. Parents could now see the individual respect given to their child and others within the group, and they developed a new appreciation for the quality of the program. They became more involved, asked questions and thus found they had a role to play in the development of the curriculum.

When we photograph a child or group of children involved in an experience we are saying 'what you are doing is so important to us that we need to record it'. I believe this gives immediate and strong messages to children that we value their work and contributions to the



'When we photograph a child or group of children involved in an experience we are saying "what you are doing is so important to us that we need to record it".'

group. When photos of children involved in learning experiences are displayed around the room, on computers, in storybooks, posters and portfolios, and used in games, we establish within the room a sense of belonging and ownership for those children.

Further information regarding the use of cameras and other multimedia resources, the importance of reciprocity in parent–staff communications and the importance of demonstrating value for children’s work can be found in the references.

I would like to acknowledge the thousands of early childhood professionals who, over the past five years, have generously shared, with myself and others, their digital photo ideas. There is nothing more creative than a group of enthusiastic early childhood professionals networking together.



All journeys, especially those into the unknown, can be filled with anxiety and struggles. Throughout my journey into the digital age, as I slowly taught myself how to use a computer and later a digital camera—learning by trial and error—I held an unwavering belief that this new technology would be valuable in all pedagogical work.

If you are about to embark on your own digital journey, I hope this book will inspire you to take your first steps and keep you motivated and enthusiastic along the way. For those who are already on their journey, I hope it will provide you with further stimulation and ideas.



Communication through documentation

'Documentation provides an extraordinary opportunity for parents, as it gives them the possibility to know not only what their child is doing but also how and why, to see not only the product but also the process' (Rinaldi, 1993, p. 122).

One of the essential components for quality childhood settings is to provide parents and carers with a steady flow of information (e.g. documentation) that informs them of the evolving experiences of their child and the group. Communication contributes significantly to the success of early childhood programs. It is a prerequisite for high-quality care and education of young children and increases children's educational success (Hughes & MacNaughton, 2001).

Effective communication leads to positive outcomes for children and parents. For a communication system to be effective, however, it must be understood by the recipient. It is vital that parents can comprehend information given by staff in early childhood centres. Differences in staff and parental home language and literacy levels will seriously impact on the quality of communication systems (Mendoza, 2003).

Digital photography can bridge the communication limitations experienced by those who are non-English speaking, have English as a second language, are illiterate, speech or hearing impaired, or those who have limited access to the early childhood settings because of distance or a physical challenge (Walters, 2005).



As an educator I am aware that some young children may not have adequate expressive language to communicate effectively with parents about their experiences. Digital photography can give each child a new way to communicate with parents.

**'Effective
communication leads to
positive outcomes for
children and parents.'**

Field example one: Children using cameras

In our educational setting, we saw children as young as three years successfully using the digital camera to document their own work and group learning experiences, and making meaningful reflections about those photos. The camera was attached to a lanyard for safety.

The group critiqued the photos after the initial shoot and decided a good photo was one that showed the person's face and hand actions. They also decided it shouldn't have fingers and thumbs over the lens or be blurry. To refine their skills, the camera was sent home to document adventures with the class toy (the project mascot). The children then presented their slideshow to the group, giving information for each photo shown. By the end of the year, 95 per cent of the photos taken by the children were used in the daily slideshow and/or the various forms of documentation produced.



Communication with parents and carers can be achieved through a variety of digitally created mediums. The main methods we use are:

- ⇒ slideshows
- ⇒ wall documentation of projects
- ⇒ printed portfolios
- ⇒ digital portfolios (computer stored and displayed)
- ⇒ digital group journals
- ⇒ storybooks of learning experiences.



Family involvement

If we want parents to be involved in our curriculum, to ask questions, make comments and suggestions, to be partners in the educational curriculum we co-construct with the children, then we must provide them with enough information to formulate those questions or comments.

Documentation in its many forms (including digital photography) makes visible the words and actions of young children, allowing families and the community to establish a 'relationship of reciprocity with the school' (Jones & Nimmo, 1994).

It became quite clear to me after the introduction of the digital camera into our early childhood setting that reciprocity became a reality. Once informed, parents readily joined my teaching partner and myself, along with the children, on the many journeys of learning and discovery which developed from the children's discussions and questions.

Slideshows

Digital photos serve as a memory link to a child's experiences (including those that occur over time) and provide tangible prompts for descriptive language (Labbo, Eakle & Montero, 2002).

'... we found that the most effective form of communication we have used is the daily slideshow.'

In our setting we found that the most effective form of communication we have used is the daily slideshow.

When parents arrive they may view the slideshow with other parents or their child. In our experience, it is common to hear parents discussing curriculum as they view the sequence of events that took place during the day.

Parents can readily follow the development of project work and group interests using the photo information supplied. Through teacher modelling, they learn how to use the photos as a tangible memory prompt for their child. Selecting one photo and asking a specific question will elicit a fountain of information from their child. The child and parent may then have a conversation about curriculum with the child leading the discussion. This, in turn, will give the parents more information about how learning is promoted in the curriculum we create.

Slideshow tips:

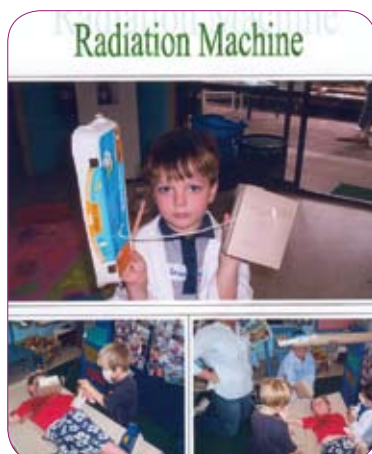
As preparation time is limited, I recommend no text be added to these slideshows. It only takes seconds to download photos and set the computer to 'View slideshow' using either the software that accompanies the computer or the camera. Ideally the slideshow should be displayed on either a computer near the children's collection point or on the computer the children access in the room.

In settings with multiple rooms but limited computers, a computer slideshow could be set up in the foyer for parents to view as they arrive. If all children are not departing at the same time, a specific time can be set for the download of photos and the slideshow creation. Any photos taken after this point would then be included in the show for the following session. Slideshows may be repeated during the morning arrival of the following session, as parents may not always have time or access to the slideshow during afternoon collection.

Other uses of slideshows:

Children can view the slideshow during lunch and rest times each day. Discussions often arise over lunch about the learning experiences captured photographically during the day. The children also use the slideshow as a reflective tool when planning the day's experiences. Absent staff or children can 'catch up' on group plans or project development via a group viewing. Children who were involved in the different experiences captured can use the photos as a memory prompt to provide detailed information to the group, which can then be used by staff and children to plan the 'next step'.

Slideshows used during parent interviews provide evidence for reflections made about the specific development of a child. They are invaluable at open days and marketing events to give outsiders a 'picture' of life in your early childhood setting. Slideshows can also be used as a staff meeting stimulus to brainstorm possible extensions or learning experiences for the projects and explorations pictured.



Wall documentation

'Photographic documentation boosts memory and helps guide children's thinking, particularly with young children.' (Mendoza, 2003)



Wall documentation is like a story unfolding before your eyes. Documentation is added progressively over the life of a project or learning focus. There is a variety of ways to display wall documentation. It can be printed on A4 pages or photos and text can be attached to large murals or posters. At the conclusion of the project, the documentation, if on similar-sized paper, can be removed from the wall and compiled into a storybook, allowing the children to revisit the experience and share their story with others throughout the months that follow. Books created in this way can also be introduced to future groups working on projects with a similar focus.

Field example two: The Gingerbread Man project

During our 'Mystery of the missing Gingerbread Man' project, small photos and printed text were attached to a giant laminated poster of the Gingerbread Man himself. The children, staff, parents and visitors to the room referred to this documentation to track the progress of the project. Information gained allowed parents and others to make suggestions and offers of resources to extend the children's thinking. The children used the photographic documentation to reflect on previous work and formulate future plans. During the Gingerbread Man project, my teaching partner and I read the documentation with the children at group discussions. The group reflections on the documentation provided the basis for the day's ongoing plan and possible future extensions. The continued stimulus of the photographic documentation sustained interest within the group and allowed us to refocus the children, drawing them back to the project when necessary. This is especially important when children do not attend every day and may miss specific developments and plans made by others. Children were encouraged to share the documentation with parents and other visitors to the room. Using the photos as a memory prompt, they gave detailed explanations of the project to others.



Field example three: Photos guiding planning

When projects involve the replication of a vehicle, building or animal, children can also refer to photos when planning what they will make or contribute. They may replicate specific parts by studying the details visible in the documentation or use photos to reproduce text and symbols found on the vehicles.

The ambulance project involved the construction of a bone hospital and ambulance. Laminated photos of vehicle parts and role-play scenes were displayed as part of the wall documentation. Children removed the photos and took them to work areas for closer reference during the design process. A planning discussion followed the reading of our wall documentation which recorded the visit to the ambulance station and included photos of the ambulance. The transcript below demonstrates how the photos guide children's planning.

Cameron M said, *My plan is the lights.*

Cameron E said, *They're blue and red. They flash blue and red.*

Cameron E adds, *We need it to say Queensland Ambulance and it needs 000 on the side like this and this too,* pointing to the text captured in the photo.

Kim (teacher) poses a question: *There are two different numbers on the side. Why is that?*

Jack replies, *000, you ring it.*

A discussion follows, with Kim reading the text in full: *In emergency 000, non-emergency 131 233.*

Cameron E states, *I can write that,* adding, *Strips on each side. Down the bottom and up the top and I'll be in charge of the cross as well.*

Jack adds, *Stick out things. We need two 'cause around there there's one on the other side.*

Cameron referred to the photos of the text when writing the emergency phone numbers and text on the side of our ambulance. During the same project Jack followed up on his plan to make the side mirrors. He found boxes which he felt were an appropriate size and positioned them after referring to the photo of the real ambulance.



Portfolios

Portfolios have been used in early childhood settings for a very long time. In years gone by, we would store artifacts, such as work samples and observational notes, in boxes and filing cabinets. Digital cameras and other electronic equipment have simply changed what and how we collect and save the artifacts (Barrett, 2004). A portfolio is a collection of a child's stories of learning. Portfolios can be digital (that is compiled and viewed on a computer) or they can be printed in book form.

Determine the best means of creating the portfolio, based on your familiarity or access to software and equipment and the audience's availability to view the portfolio. This will determine whether you make digital or printed portfolios.



'If the main purpose of the portfolio is to tell the child's story of learning and discovery, then ... the children themselves should play a major role in deciding its contents.'

The portfolio—known in New Zealand as 'Learning Stories' (Carr, 2001)—should showcase the child's development, interests and achievements during the year. It should include individual, small group and whole group experiences in which the child has participated. (See the New Zealand Ministry of Education website in references.)

I believe portfolios should be seen as a work in progress and be available for viewing by all stakeholders at all times. Portfolios made available to parents and children daily allow them to be used as a communication tool between early childhood professionals, children and parents. At the same time they become a tool enabling the children to share, reflect on and revisit their learning experiences during the year, as well as an assessment tool for the early childhood professional.

Portfolios may also be presented in a more formal setting, such as at a parent interview or information night.

If the main purpose of the portfolio is to tell the child's story of learning and discovery, then it follows that the children themselves should play a major role in deciding its contents (Moore, 2006). Children, parents, peers and staff can make reflections on artifacts. It is by adding these reflections that artifacts become evidence.



Portfolio tips

- Store digital photographs of artworks in the child's artifact folder on the computer.
- Take photos of large 3D artwork such as collage, clay, dough, block buildings, manipulative equipment, designs, etc.
- Capture photos of experiences that reflect a child's focused involvement.
- Capture a vast array of creative experiences—dance, drama and dramatic play.
- Capture the process, not just the final product.
- Display reflective statements from early childhood professionals or the child.
- Record reflections as soon as possible after the photo is taken.
- General explanations of curriculum areas inform parents.
- Documentation told in story form is easy to read and engaging for parents and children.
- Include a reference to the curriculum guidelines in use and the date created.

A word of advice: When storing artifacts in a digital form it is essential that you regularly back up your files to an external hard drive, USB mass storage device or disk. Storage of photos gives you the option of burning the digital portfolio and/or photo collections to a CD for distribution at the end of the year, or for archival purposes.

Printed photographic portfolios

- Avoid manually cutting and gluing photos as it takes too much time.
- Use a software program such as Microsoft Word, as this not only makes layouts look professional but saves time (Walters, 2005).
- Save layouts to be re-used or adapted to create new page layouts.
- Storage of photos rather than actual artwork requires minimal space.
- Portfolio storage in the room is a tool for communication.
- A4 display books with a transparent cover and photo in the front allow identification by a child.
- Place artwork, A4 size or smaller, directly into the portfolio.

Digital portfolios

One of the main advantages of digitally based portfolios is that, after the initial cost of equipment and software, there are no ongoing costs. Digital portfolios are also much more interactive, dynamic and engaging. PowerPoint is an excellent program for the creation of portfolios, as it is familiar to many people and allows you to link many multimedia artifacts to each child's portfolio (Walters, 2006).

Artifacts may include:

- Photos of children's artwork, interactions or work samples.
- Scans of work samples or artwork.
- Captured audio recordings of children, using PowerPoint or a digital sound recorder, e.g. MP3 recorder.
- Movies taken from a DVD recorder or using the movie feature on your digital camera.
- Microsoft Word or Excel documents.
- Use PDF creation software (Acrobat) to print web-quality PDF documents from Microsoft Office documents.

The Sleeping Princesses



Written and Illustrated
By: The Teachers' Centre
First and Published in 2000 & re-edited after copies in a primary school in 2007
June 2007



Planning & collaboration



During the construction phase of the Plane project Jack used his previous knowledge to contribute to the planning and construction of the plane.

[CLICK HERE](#) on the photo to see the Full Documentation of the project.

Click the speaker to hear Jack's thoughts about his drawing from observation
7 April 2006



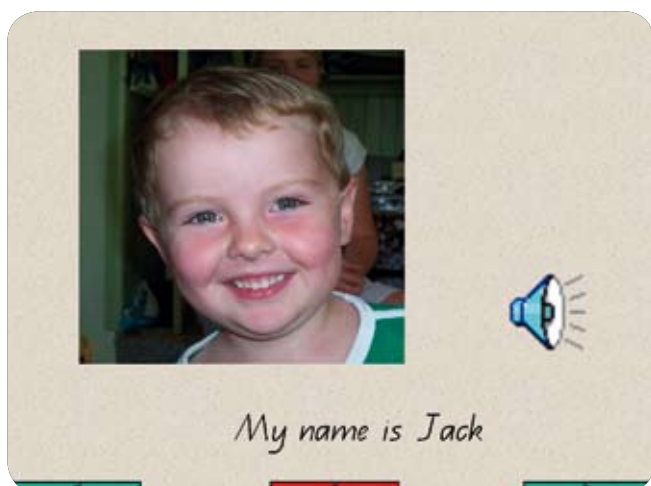
Field example four: Model plane project

Jack was heavily involved in the group plane project. A PDF file was created from a Word document which detailed all of Jack's involvement in the project. An audio recorder was used to capture Jack's reflections and explanation of his thinking, while drawing an airplane from observation (a model plane sat in the centre of the table and children were encouraged to draw what they saw). In Jack's portfolio an assessment was made of his social learning skills and a hyperlink was added to the PowerPoint slide which, when clicked, opened the PDF file for viewing.

The same PDF was used later in another slide as evidence of Jack's language learning and communication. The audio recording was hyperlinked to a photo of Jack's drawing on the slide. When clicked, the audio played, allowing the viewer to hear Jack talking about his drawing. The PDF and audio recording are stored in Jack's artifacts folder, along with the original photos of his involvement in the project. Some of these photos were also included in the PowerPoint slide.



'One artifact can be used in a variety of ways and/or for a variety of children' (Barrett, 2004).



In the same way documentation about a group project can be linked to the portfolios of each child involved. It can be copied to each child's folder or stored in the general group folder.

Digital group journals

Digital group journals showcase the various projects or focused areas each group of children is involved in throughout the year. They are progressively added to and accessed by all children and parents via a computer in the room. The children enjoy reflecting with a friend or adult on the group's past experiences, remembering the sequence of events and the adventures that took place. This can be a powerful learning tool for children as they revisit and consolidate prior learning.

Digital stories can contain audio recordings from children and adults, or children can 'read the pictures' while viewing the presentations. Text can be scribed from recorded audio, making the story a virtual talking book.

The facility to insert audio enables the presentations to contain multiple recordings on a single page. Our *Five little mice* presentation included recordings from the children, along with recordings from a parent speaking Tagalog. Adding home language audio recordings to a digital group journal validates each child's culture and exposes the other children to the diversity of the languages used by others in their community.

To create an interactive presentation using PowerPoint, a home page is created with AutoShapes inserted onto the slide with hyperlinks to the various PowerPoint presentations that showcase the individual stories. Each presentation and any artifacts used are saved within the group folder, or a subfolder created specifically for their storage.



Simple digital portfolios can be incorporated into a group journal system and accessed by children and parents in the room. Their ability to operate the system will determine what type of artifacts and information is used in a system. As well, confidentiality requirements need to be taken into consideration for any documentation placed on general view.



Storybooks

When we use photos, verbatim quotes or the ideas of children in literature, their engagement is optimal. As well as providing instant ownership to the children who identify themselves and their thoughts in the text and photos, this is also an extremely powerful tool for emergent literacy. The children involved in the experience can 'read' the photos and explore the link between photo and text. This allows children to see the fundamental purpose of print, which is to provide a link between the spoken word and text, while recording information that we can revisit. The books become favourites throughout the year.

'As well as providing instant ownership to the children ... this is also an extremely powerful tool for emergent literacy.'



Tips for high-quality books:

When publishing storybooks, use plastic or wire combs for spines, laminated covers and well-designed pages. High-quality publications send clear messages to children and parents that we value the child's work.

Digital cameras allow books to be made available to children following an event or experience, and they immediately reinforce the experiences and extend the thinking of the children.

Tips:

Verbatim quotes can be added to text and/or children can add illustrations directly to pages or embellish photos with their own artwork, using software such as Kidz Pix Deluxe 3 or Microsoft Paint.

Stories may be produced from:

excursions, 'incursions', spontaneous play, favourite books, finger plays and songs, project work, group focuses, special events and collections of thoughts.

Field example five: Real concrete

The story *Real concrete* was based on photos and the entire transcript of the conversation taken during sandpit play that focused on covering a plank with wet sand (concrete). The group was extremely focused and the play continued over several weeks. During the initial group reading of the book, when I read the following section Thomas commented *I said that*, recognising his own words in the text.

Thomas said, *It's real concrete, we're making real concrete.* Renee said, *I made real, real, concrete at my home.* Real, real concrete. Nick said, *Pat down here.* Thomas said, *Let me feel it. Oh real concrete. Feel it Kim. This is real, real, real, real concrete.*



Thomas said, 'It's real concrete we're making real concrete.'
Renee said, 'I made real, real concrete at home real, real concrete.'
Nick said, 'Pat down here,'
Thomas said, 'Let me feel it. Oh Real concrete. Feel it Kim. This is real, real, real, real concrete.'

Field example six: Sleeping princess play

After a visit to *Disney on ice*, two of the children introduced sleeping princess play to the group. Over the months that followed, the play continued with a core of interested children and several occasional participants. Using photos and verbatim quotes from the play, I suggested we might make our own *Sleeping Beauty* story. The idea was met with great enthusiasm from the whole group. It was decided at our group discussion that our story characters would be five sleeping princesses with accompanying partners, a team of horse riders, two good fairies and the wizard. Further group discussions put the finishing touches to the plot, and a few staged photos were required to add the children who were not part of the spontaneous play. The children read and re-read their novel to friends, family and whoever would listen.



Legalities of using photos

To distribute photos you must have prior written consent from parents or guardians of children. Permission forms might contain the following details:

- various modes of capture to be used—still images, video recordings and/or audio recordings
- methods of distribution—printing, burning to CD or DVD, email or website postings
- what will be created, such as child resources for the room, promotional materials
- who will receive or access the materials
- time-frame for usage.

When seeking permission, detail the benefits gained from photo usage, e.g. the enhancement of communication and learning. If a parent or guardian refuses permission, the child should be excluded from all group photos. Individual photos may be taken to produce various forms of documentation for the excluded child. Early childhood settings should develop policies concerning the appropriateness of subject matter and usage. The Privacy Victoria website has useful information on photo usage and privacy laws.



When establishing digital camera usage in your setting, I recommend the following for digital/photographic documentation and resource creation:

- ➔ Prior written permission to use photographs of children.
- ➔ Digital camera, one for each room if possible.
- ➔ Computer in room if possible.
- ➔ Laminator.
- ➔ Book binder (plastic or wire comb).
- ➔ State school font, e.g. Queensland cursive.
- ➔ Time for skill development and production.

'A powerful "teachable moment" occurs when children are actively involved in the creation of these resources.'

Field example seven: Friendly hands

As we searched for opportunities to photograph friendly hands for our *Friendly hands* book, the children's behaviour improved immediately. Everyone wanted to be in the book. It was later read to anyone who needed reminding of what friendly hands are. Other successful book topics were *Good listening is*, *Keeping safe*, *Sharing* and *Being a friend*.



Tips:

I have made many games similar to those produced commercially that require the children to match, sort or identify photos of objects or people.

To make the games, collect photos from the immediate environment with the children. Insert text and photos into a fixed table created in Microsoft Word. A fixed table will keep the actual dimensions of the cells consistent. Crop the photo where necessary and resize the image to zoom into specific areas. Insert photos into the tables, print and cut. A laminator is recommended as an essential piece of equipment to make these games durable.

DIY resources



DIY resources, created using photos and other multimedia resources, prompt maximum engagement when children interact with them (Thelning & Lawes, 2001).

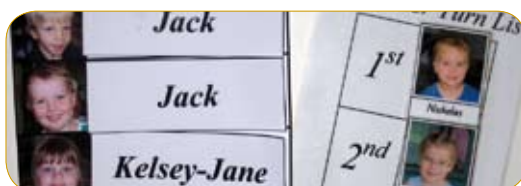
I have found that a powerful teachable moment occurs when children are actively involved in the creation of these resources. Created resources can enhance a child's sense of belonging, communication, independence and learning.

Sense of belonging resources

- 'Welcome to room' poster or photo gallery of staff and children.
- Photos of families help children connect with home.
- Orientation booklets or initial letter of welcome mailed to the child with photos of the staff, environment, routines and required items.
- Photos for identification on communication pockets, lockers, hat pockets and beds.
- Check-in pockets or sticks—on arrival each child places a photo in 'I am here' position.
- Certificates of attendance with memorable moments in the background.

Communication resources

- Photographic newsletters: for children, non-English-speaking parents or those with low literacy skills.
- Family tree: photos of children and their family.
- Today we ... : photographic journal displayed in an album or sent home.
- Rewritable CD of daily or weekly photo collections in lending library.
- Allergy chart with a photo of the child and medication bottle with action plan.



Field example eight: Read-along books

Make your own read-along book and CD resources. Record adults or children with an MP3 sound recorder, reading simple books. Ring a bell at the conclusion of each page reading. Download sounds to the computer and make an audio CD which can be played while the children read the book. Place the CD inside the front cover of the book and add it to the lending library.

DIY resources and games prompt maximum engagement, and I have been impressed with the learning that occurs when children interact with digitally-created resources. A powerful 'teachable moment' occurs when children are actively involved in the creation of these resources.



Field example nine: Games

Children were asked to search their lunch boxes for healthy foods to photograph for our new 'Healthy foods' matching game. Each day new foods were photographed as they were discovered. It soon became obvious that the quality of the foods being brought into the setting had improved as children began to ask parents for foods that would be selected. Decisions were made each day by the group as to the validity of each nominated food. Each day the children refined their knowledge. Playing the game weeks later, the children could recall not only the name of the food pictured but who brought it in.



Independence resources

- Resource inventories, storage aids: equipment identifiers on shelving, baskets, etc.
- Laminated photos of children adhered with Velcro to food and milk containers to help with identification.
- Photos of the hand-washing procedures and 'flush the toilet' signs.
- Laminated name cards (use Velcro dots) with photo and name on storage chart.
- Computer turn lists.
- Children can be self sufficient in the borrowing of library books or other equipment if a pictorial card system is used.

Learning resources

- Stimulus photos (laminated photos of objects, people and/or animals) are studied by children during the design process as they make replications using their medium of choice.
- Stimulus photos are also used to broaden knowledge and stimulate interest during socio-dramatic play: e.g. photos of a mechanic at work added to garage play, photos of an ambulance officer taken on an excursion.
- Attaching a photo of the subject matter (e.g. a real flower or a stimulus photo) to artwork increases the viewer's appreciation of a child's work.
- Children with special needs: photos to prepare for changes and make choices.
- Life-cycle chart created from metamorphosis studies.
- Puzzles from photos of children.
- Wooden figurines made from full length photos of a child adhered to wood and mounted on a pedestal. These may be used for general block corner play or focused learning experiences: e.g. role modelling, numeracy exploration, sorting and grouping or musical games.
- Storybooks for class rules, routines or fire evacuation, behaviour guidance.



'Created resources can enhance a child's sense of belonging, communication, independence and learning.'



- ➔ Block building design books created from a photo of a block building structure, the designers drawing of the building (pictorial instructions) and a verbatim transcript of the verbal instructions given by the designer. Children may choose to copy another child's design from the book.
- ➔ Read-along book and CD sets.
- ➔ Healthy food charts.
- ➔ Laminated photos of children's houses mounted for block play.
- ➔ Computer-based talking books.

Games

- ➔ Settling-in games to help children become familiar with group members: such as match-a-face, dominoes, sort-a-face.
- ➔ Games based on mathematical concepts: such as number-numeral match, number snap, same and different, colour match, opposites, and positional concepts.
- ➔ Games based on problem solving: such as what's missing?, sequence cards.
- ➔ Games that develop awareness of feelings: such as feelings bingo, feelings face match, and Kim is sad.
- ➔ Interactive games created in PowerPoint with animations and audio.



Engagement and learning

When children, early childhood professionals or equipment in the immediate environment are used as the subject matter, children's engagement and thus learning will be at its peak.

Conclusion

When engagement is high, the impact of the 'teachable moment' is increased (Thelning & Lawes, 2001). When using all their senses children's minds are fully engaged. Digital photos, movies and verbatim quotes from children (transcriptions or actual recordings) allow us to create literature, games and other forms of documentation that are rich and alive, motivating positive engagement of children in the learning process, and providing a storehouse of resources with undeniable value.

References and further reading

For more information and ideas on using digital photography in early childhood settings, consult the list below. (Note all links current as of October 2006.)

Communicating with parents

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Walters, K. (2006). *Digital power digital portfolios for early childhood and beyond* Gympie: Digital Preschool.

Walters, K. (2003). *Step by step Microsoft Word projects: Digital picture insertion for beginners*. Gympie: Digital Preschool.

Walters, K. www.digitalpreschool.com.au

See also the early childhood sections of the following websites:

New Zealand Ministry of Education www.minedu.govt.nz

Education Network Australia EdNA <http://ictresearch.edna.edu.au/index.html>

Learning and Teaching Scotland <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears/index.asp>

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- storybooks featuring photos of children in the group (a powerful tool for emergent literacy)
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