

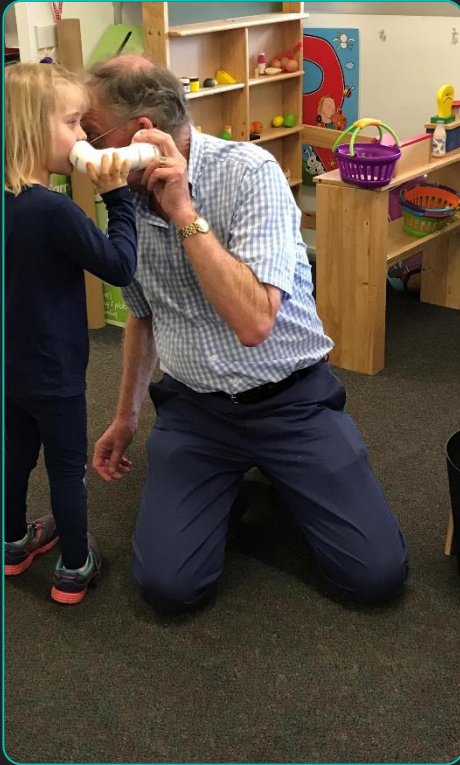
Listening to young children: Rights and respect

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Overview



- Why listen?
- What do we mean by listening to young children?
- What do we listen to?
 - Children's experiences
 - Children's views on broad issues
 - Children's imaginaries
- Listening as social justice
- Listening and belonging
- The ethics of listening to children: rights and respect

Background

- Modern paradox: we are both connected and disconnected
- Children: what contributions do we expect and/or value?
- The early childhood years shape each individual's sense of who they are and their place in the world around them
- Listening to young children reflects a commitment to social justice and affords opportunities for children to build a sense of belonging within their local and global communities

Education...

- A fundamental purpose of any education system is to develop students who are deeply capable of engaging in the world that they find themselves in, while working with others to help change this very world for the better - and to do so on an ongoing basis. (Andy Hargreaves)
- This engagement begins with in the early years.

Why listen to children?

- Changing views of children: recognition of their **competence and their rights** (not just their needs and vulnerabilities)
- Broad perspectives promote **informed decision-making** – such as the allocation of resources
- Listening is the basis of ethical and respectful **relationships**
- Children are **citizens** of the present as well as the future. Their views matter



United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

- Article 12: right to express their views freely in all matters affecting the child and that these views be given 'due weight'
- Article 13: the right to freedom of expression
- Article 17: the right to access information
- Article 5: the right to appropriate direction and guidance to support the exercise of their rights
- Article 36: the right to be protected from exploitation

UN General Comments

- General Comment 7: 'early childhood is a critical period for the realization of these rights' (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006, p. 1) and
- General Comment 12 (UN 2009) affirms not only the right for children's view to be heard and taken seriously, but also for appropriate support and guidance as children form their views.

Why listen?

- Sustainable Development Goals:
 - Goal 13 – improving education, awareness-raising on a range of issues
 - Goal 16 – ensure responsive, inclusive participation...
- From this Congress:
 - 'To build trust and create a civil society'
 - 'Meaningfulness and a sense of participation is critical for sustainable communities'

What do we mean by listening?



- Listening is a sensitivity to everything that connects us to the others
- Listening means being open to differences, recognizing the value of another's point of view and interpretation
- Listening is an active verb that involves giving meaning and value to the perspective of others
- Real listening requires the suspension of judgement and prejudice

(Carla Rinaldi, 2001)

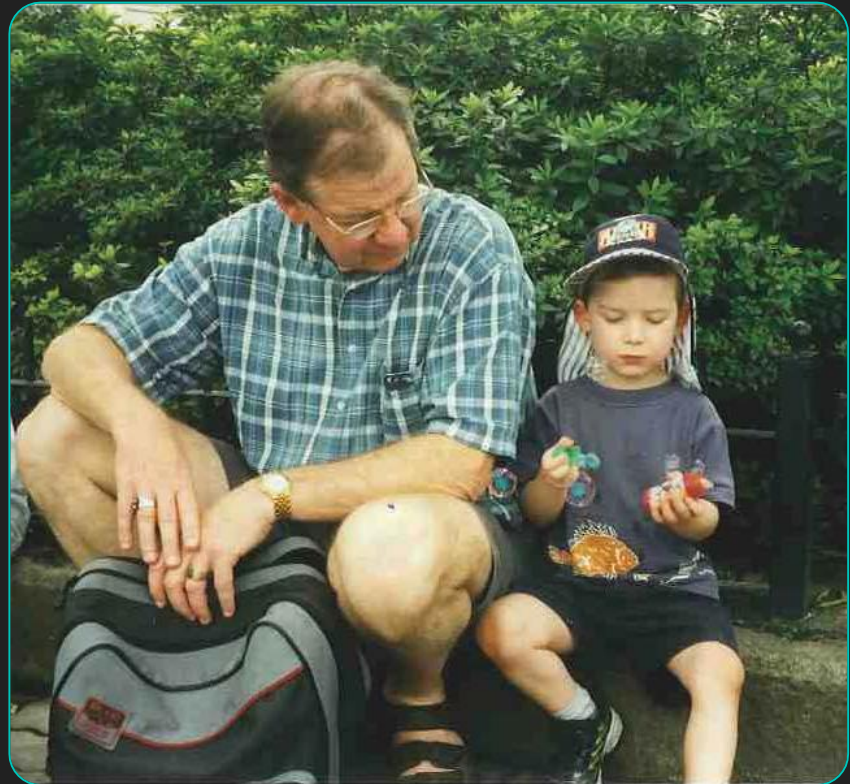


What opportunities do we provide for children to form views and opinions, as well as share these?

How do we support the education of young children?

What do we listen to?

- Children's perspectives of their own experiences
- Children's views on broader issues
- Children's imaginaries...



Children's experiences: How do you feel about going to big school?

A little bit scared... 'cause I
didn't know what was going to
happen

I feel happy about going to big
school next year, doing some
words. I can do good words! I'm
sad about leaving preschool,
'cause it's fun.



How did you feel when you started school?

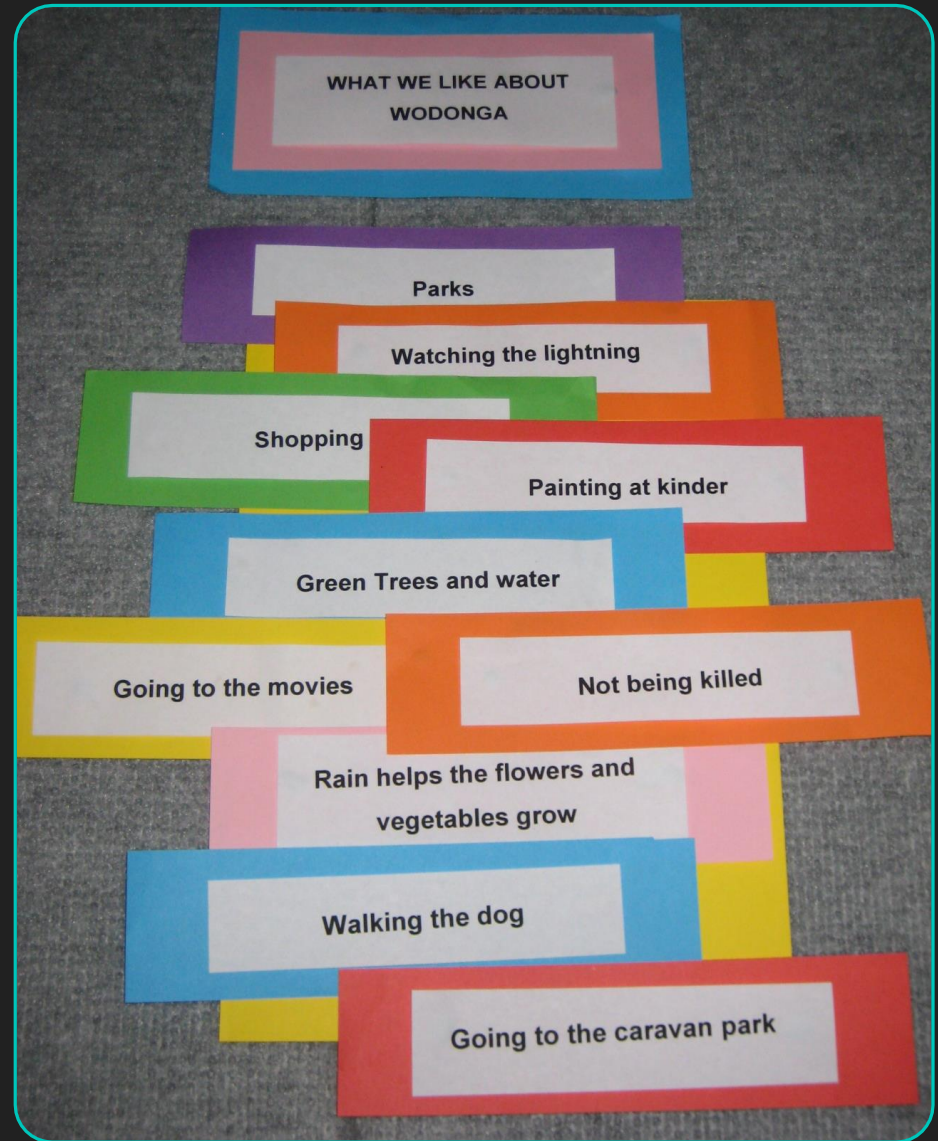
I felt a bit embarrassed. Because [there were] too many people standing around looking [at me].



**Children's
experiences:**

***What we like
about our
community***

**3-4 year old
children's views**



What we don't like about our community

3-4 year old children's views



Children's views of broader issues



"I wonder why they killed a cockatoo?
You're not allowed to kill birds are you?"

I wonder why they killed the cockatoo? You're not allowed to kill birds, are you? (Hamish, aged 4, visiting the museum)

Imagine if ...
*we could only
eat food that we
found in the
bush [Ellen]*

we could only eat food that we find in the bush.



Listening as social justice

Involves:

- Working to promote the involvement of all individuals in decision-making
- Removing obstacles to such involvement through
 - redistribution - directing resources to the least advantaged
 - recognition of marginalised groups – such as children
 - representation – involvement in decision-making

Fraser (2005, 2008)

Redistribution: discussions of fairness



Fairness:

What do you need to know about school?

Sarah: The rule is you don't run. Rules is rules.

Beth: You're not allowed to run, or hit each other, and you're not allowed to be silly.

Because that's one of the rules and you are not allowed to be silly.

Who makes up the rules?

Sarah: Teachers

Redistribution: assisting others





Recognition

Listen, let them shape their future

THE opinions of those who will live in and guide our cities in the future count for plenty, if a summit held in Wodonga yesterday is any guide.



Wodonga Council, together with Charles Sturt University and local schools, has taken the opportunity to ask the city's young people what they do and don't like about their hometown and what they would wish to see in the future.

There are plenty of ideas, ranging from a mega-fun park through to a zoo, cinema, more pathways and trees.

But more significantly, the young people involved recognised the importance of being asked their opinions in the first place, when often they might feel that adults are not listening to what they say.

The summit also proved it is never too early to encourage youngsters to have their say about their city, with preschoolers providing important opinions about steps that might be taken to make them feel safer.

The real question now will be whether or not some of the children's ideas are put to the test in planning for Wodonga's future:

Representation: acknowledging input

- *I put my name on it and I felt a lot better when I put my name on it ... just so people know that little girl actually had a say and she was proud to do it.*
- *I was confident to put my name on it 'cause I want people to know I did it and so no one can copyright it.*

(Girls, aged 11 years)



Listening for belonging

- Children's growing sense of themselves and the world around them is shaped in the early childhood years
- Their sense of belonging reflects understandings of their rights and their connections to the people and places around them

Belonging

- Belonging is a multi-dimensional notion that encompasses:
 - Emotional
 - Social
 - Spatial
 - Cultural
 - Temporal
 - Physical
 - Spiritual
 - Moral/ethical
 - Political
 - Legal

(Sumsion & Wong, 2011)

Emotional belonging

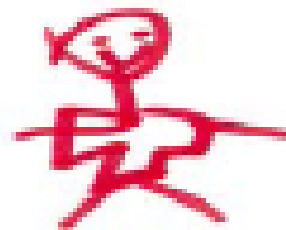
on the first Day of
school was scary



on the second Day of school
it wasint that scary



on the third Day i
wasint scary at all



Social belonging

When I started
school I...

feeled sad.
(felt)



Now I
have got friends.





Social belonging

Spatial belonging





Cultural belonging



How do we support listening?

- Focus on relationships
- Create spaces for listening
- Acknowledge expectations
- Recognise citizenship, rights
- Reflect on dispositions
- Engage in active listening
- Recognise children's many languages – including silence
- Promote inclusivity





Look who's talking: Eliciting the voices of children from birth to seven.

Kate Wall, University of Strathclyde: <http://www.voicebirthtoseven.co.uk/>

SKILLS AND TOOLS

- MULTIPLE APPROACHES**
 - Visual Learning
 - Auditory Learning
 - Kinesthetic Learning
 - Reading/Writing Learning
 - Interpersonal Learning
 - Intrapersonal Learning
- MULTIPLE SENSORY LEARNING**
 - Visual
 - Auditory
 - Kinesthetic
 - Reading/Writing
 - Interpersonal
 - Intrapersonal
- THINKING SKILLS**
 - Critical Thinking
 - Problem Solving
 - Decision Making
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Evaluation
 - Application
 - Understanding
 - Knowledge
- PROBLEM SOLVING**
 - Identifying the Problem
 - Generating Solutions
 - Evaluating Solutions
 - Implementing Solutions
 - Reflecting on the Process
- CREATIVITY**
 - Brainstorming
 - Sketching
 - Modeling
 - Prototyping
 - Testing
 - Iterating
- COOPERATION**
 - Teamwork
 - Collaboration
 - Communication
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Leadership
 - Followership
- COMMUNICATION**
 - Verbal Communication
 - Written Communication
 - Nonverbal Communication
 - Visual Communication
 - Audio Communication
 - Digital Communication
- CRITICAL THINKING**
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Evaluation
 - Application
 - Understanding
 - Knowledge
- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**
 - Self-awareness
 - Self-regulation
 - Empathy
 - Relationship management
- SOCIAL SKILLS**
 - Communication
 - Teamwork
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Leadership
 - Followership
- LEADERSHIP**
 - Vision
 - Inspiration
 - Empowerment
 - Accountability
 - Collaboration
- TEAMWORK**
 - Communication
 - Collaboration
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Leadership
 - Followership

BUILD CAPACITY

The diagram illustrates a cyclical process for building capacity across four levels:

- Individual Level:** "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE INDIVIDUAL" (represented by a chef and a palette).
- Team Level:** "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE TEAM" (represented by a group of people).
- Organization Level:** "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE ORGANIZATION" (represented by a book and a box).
- Community Level:** "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE COMMUNITY" (represented by a group of people).

Central themes include "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE INDIVIDUAL", "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE TEAM", "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE ORGANIZATION", and "BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE COMMUNITY".

[illegible]

Ethical relationships



“I learned in that process that if you listen hard enough, everybody’s got a sacred story,” he said. “An organising story, of who they are and what their place in the world is. And they’re willing to share it with you if they feel as if you actually care about it. And that ends up being the glue around which relationships are formed, and trust is formed, and communities are formed. And ultimately – my theory was, at least – that’s the glue around which democracies work.”



But what this form of story sharing and empathy and listening does is it creates the conditions around which we can then have a meaningful conversation and sort through our differences and our challenges, and arrive at better decisions because we've been able to hear everybody. Everybody feels heard so that even if a decision's made that they don't completely agree with, then at least they feel like: 'OK, I was part of this. This wasn't just dumped on me.'

Barak Obama, quoted by Jeanne Marie Laskas, (2018). *To Obama with love, joy, hate and despair*. Bloomsbury.