

Creating positive peer relationships: teaching for social competency

Dr June Slee

Charles Darwin University

Abstract

Although early childhood professionals have an essential role in creating positive peer relationships among the children they teach, this role is often overlooked. Harmonious peer relationships provide the basis for developing social and emotional well-being and augmenting the learning process. Early childhood learning environments should reflect a society which values interdependency and co-operation, and in which children can experience co-operative group activities that introduce and guide the development of social skills. These interactions develop social competencies in children which in turn, serve as lifelong social tools. Strategies to help educators build, maintain and monitor positive peer relationships are outlined with a case study illustrating the process of teaching for social competency.

Introduction

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] agreed to a partnership between the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments to pursue substantial reform in the areas of education, skills and early childhood development. Retrieved August 11, 2008, www.deewr.gov.au/COAGdiscussionpaper

This Australia-wide focus on early childhood education and its recognition of the need for universal, equitable and quality learning and development outcomes in a child's early years is welcome. This paper asks the initiative's working group to pay particular attention to the role of the early childhood professional in creating positive peer relationships which contribute to the development of the socially competent child - a pedagogical role whose value has been neglected in the past.

Early education provides for the most diverse cohort of learners by virtue of the fact that young children are entering a new learning environment and have no knowledge of the nuances of that world. Often it is the first time that children have interacted with large numbers of peers and experienced being accepted or rejected by those peers. It is the complex task of their educators to create positive peer relationships by teaching social skills that lead to the development of socially competent individuals. Recent American research claimed that 46 per cent of kindergarten teachers reported nearly half of the children in their classes had specific problems in transitioning to school, "with many lacking the basic social and emotional skills necessary to adapt to the school environment" (Peth-Pierce, 2008, p.1). Peth-Pierce concludes that "attaining age-appropriate social

and emotional competence is critical for young children entering school” (p. 2). The situation is similar in Australia. The Australian Early Development Index states that the percentage of young children identified as ‘vulnerable’ in the areas of social knowledge and competence (as well as other related areas) ranges from 1.9 per cent to 22.2 per cent (Sims, 2008). Statistics like this suggest that a worrying proportion of very young children are not ready for school and are at risk of failing socially, emotionally and academically.

The socially competent child

Social competence has been described variously as “an ability to establish satisfactory social relationships” (Kerr & Nelson, 1998, p. 432); “the ability to initiate and maintain satisfying relationships, especially with peers” (Knight & Hughes, 1995); and, “a person’s ability to get along with other people” (Illinois 2008). It is however, more complex than these definitions suggest. Socially competent children have the ability to discern social requirements across a variety of settings and to draw from a learned repertoire of appropriate skills which enable them to interact adeptly and sensitively, while at the same time, growing in well-being from each successful exchange. In other words, social competency is the demonstration of appropriate social skills at the right time and place (Slee, 1985). Children who do not discriminate between settings have been described by Goldstein (1999) as “functionally incompetent because competency is the ability to use given skills or knowledge correctly *at the proper time and place*” (p. 175).

Teaching social skills to enhance peer relationships should be a curriculum priority as these are the core components of social competency, and lead to positive and productive interchanges with peers - a most enjoyable aspect of all stages of education. While early years’ curriculum guidelines generally include the promotion of building peer partnerships (Queensland Creche & Kindergarten Association, 2006) evidence gathered from early childhood professionals suggests that the youngest and most vulnerable children are not always taught how to interrelate positively with their peers.

Teacher’s perceptions of challenging behaviours in children

A survey of nearly one thousand Australian early childhood educators’ perceptions of challenging behaviour in early education settings, found that educators would like assistance in building their “skills to foster social competence and deal specifically with challenging behaviour” (Elliott & Slee, 2005, p. 13). The respondents indicated that early intervention specialist support was required in the classroom to provide expertise, to reduce feelings of isolation, and, to bring a level of normalcy to their expectations of appropriate and acceptable behaviours that being at the ‘front’ had gradually eroded. For example, Elliott and Slee (2005) describe how some practitioners found themselves ignoring behaviours they would not have previously accepted, such as swearing, simply so that they could ‘get on with the job’ (p. 13). Respondents commented that even behaviours such as being hit, head butted, bitten and

having chairs and objects thrown at them, were accepted as part of the job, and as such, were rarely reported (p. 13).

The situation described by Elliott and Slee (2005) carries a cry for help from early childhood professionals throughout Australia and cannot be ignored.

The role of the early educator

Jones and Jones (2001) argue that teachers' role as effective creators of positive peer relationships is equally as important as their roles in delivering effective instruction, managing positive learning environments and establishing positive relationships with their students. They suggest that guiding positive student interaction is often overlooked because of the time mandated to achieving academic outcomes and recommend that these roles should be on an equal footing. Teachers who focus on creating positive peer relationships find that as their class experiences fewer and fewer disruptions they have in fact more time for achieving academic outcomes (Slee, 2002).

McLeod and Reynolds (2007) point out the interdependency of the domains of social and emotional learning, cognitive learning and physical learning, and the need to address these simultaneously to achieve successful learning outcomes. Eggen and Kauchak (2007) maintain it is through this interdependency that social learning facilitates all learning because it "promotes development by allowing students to share and compare and refine knowledge, beliefs, and perspectives through interactions with others" (p. 30).

During the past few decades the emphasis has moved toward developing the child who demonstrates social competencies as well as academic competencies. In forecasting the role of education in the twenty-first century, the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) claimed it "[would] be about creating a kind of person, with kinds of dispositions and orientations to the world, rather than just commanding a body of knowledge" (ACDE, 2001, p. 2).

Social skills need to be taught

Groundwater-Smith, Ewing, and Le Cornu, (2007) claim that "like other skills, social skills need to be taught" and stress that the educator needs to teach children "the explicit skills of relating positively to one another, working successfully in groups and working collaboratively" (p. 130).

In the curriculum framework provided for young children by the New South Wales Department of Community Services, Office of Child Care, the emphasis is more on what professionals should do to promote and support respectful life-enhancing relationships, than on what the children might experience. Its author defends the prominence of the practitioner's role, stating: "The curriculum is everything professionals do to support children's wellbeing and learning, the intentional provisions and offerings they make in order to create possibilities and opportunities for children to engage with" (Stonehouse, 2002, p.19).

Children learn from observation, from exposure to curriculum-based, age-appropriate social skills, and from guided performance, and performance feedback. The problem is, as Elliott and Slee's (2005) study found, many teachers believe that they lack the skills to use these strategies because they have never been taught to.

Jones and Jones (2001), state that tertiary education programs "seldom provide teachers with specific skills for developing positive, supportive group norms" (p. 122). An Australian study (Elliott & Slee, 2007) arrived at the same conclusion:

Few teachers ... could recall learning any focus on students with challenging or negative behaviours in their initial, generalist teacher education courses and few felt confident in dealing with increasingly challenging behaviours in their classrooms (p. 3).

Further, there is an argument that suggests it is difficult to integrate the reality of the classroom into pre-service teaching and learning courses (Rabalate, 2003). Perhaps this will be addressed by the comparatively recent decision of some teacher registration bodies to communicate professional standards which require (in the case of New South Wales), graduating teachers to "demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specific strategies for teaching students with challenging behaviours" (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2005, p. 5). Likewise, the Victorian Institute of Teaching has developed beginning teacher standards requiring teachers to "establish and maintain clear and consistent expectations for students as learners and for their behaviour in the classroom." http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/438_Standards.pdf (28 April 2007.)

In-service support for practitioners who need to build positive peer relationships in children, is delivered and presented in a number of modes including in-class ancillary teachers, itinerant teachers - behaviour, professional learning programs and specialist services. It is common for this support to be delivered through a dyad model, where the 'expert' works with the child in a room separate from the rest of the class. This delivery model is counter productive, as social behaviours must be built in the ecological settings in which they should occur, such as the centre and the wider learning community (Slee & Elliott, 2004). The important point here is that when early childhood professionals believe that they lack adequate skills in identifying and addressing early signs of anti-social behaviours, these often escalate into developmentally debilitating behaviours. (Jones & Jones, 2001; Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997; Lake, 2004; O'Brien, 1998; Slee, 2003).

Social skill deficits

Violations of social norms are referred to as antisocial behaviours throughout much of the literature. For example, Walker, Colvin and Ramsey (1995) state "antisocial behaviour suggests hostility to others, aggression, a willingness to commit rule infractions, defiance of adult authority and violations of the social norms and mores of society" (p. 2).

Rather than label a pre-school beginner as anti-social, it is more functional to look at social behaviours in terms of deficits.

1. Social skills' acquisition deficits – young children simply do not have the appropriate skills in their repertoire
 2. Social skills' performance deficits – young children have the skill and either choose not to use it, or don't realise they need that particular skill in that situation.
 3. Social skills' fluency deficits – young children use the behaviour in the setting in which it is reinforced but fail to use it in other situations.
- (Adapted from Gresham, 2008.)

It is also useful for early educators to consider 'antisocial behaviours' as extremes of normal behaviours, represented on a continuum from excessively aggressive behaviours to excessively withdrawn behaviours. According to Scarlett (1983), "in every group of preschool children at play one can observe considerable individual variation in the amount of interactions with others." He adds however, that "a few children seem to fall outside this range of expected variation" including the social isolate. But those who do, are often children with diverse and often undiagnosed needs, who require a skilled professional to meet their basic needs and integrate them into a stable and caring environment (Slee, 2002).

Children with diverse needs

Children who arrive at early childhood settings with undiagnosed syndromes including school phobia, autistic spectrum disorders, conduct disorders, selective mutism and childhood depression, will exhibit behaviours that will interfere with their learning and the learning of their peers, but these children may be labelled as simply antisocial. These are the children with special learning needs who lack the skills necessary to respond appropriately to social cues (Ashman & Elkins, 2009). Children with diverse learning needs are more likely to be rejected by their peers throughout their schooling and unless they acquire social competence they are at risk of being on the margin of social inclusion throughout their lives. As Meyer and Evans (1989) observe:

Regardless of course or etiology, excess behaviours are socially defined. They do vary in terms of their negative consequences for the individual, such as the effects on health, physical well-being and learning. But the social consequences, and with them the quality of life and opportunity, are largely a function of social judgement and tolerance, so that some behaviors can lead to particularly negative outcomes. (pp. 27-28).

This social categorisation has serious implications for early childhood practitioners. They need to be aware of age-appropriate social interactions and, when they see evidence of developmental delay they should seek help to ascertain whether they are the symptoms of a more serious socio-emotional disorder.

Long-term negative outcomes

There is a common belief that young children with social skills' deficits will 'come right' through immersion in a classroom that values and expects positive interactions. The 'growth hypothesis', that children have a remarkable capacity to outgrow undesirable behaviours and develop into well adjusted adults, is countered by the 'continuity hypothesis' which argues that antisocial children grow into antisocial adults. Growth indicators include increases rather than decreases in antisocial interactions. The most serious aspect of antisocial behaviour is its long-term effect. The single greatest predictor of adolescent and adult antisocial behaviour is the presence of early socialisation problems. Zirpoli and Melloy (1998) advise that children "who fail to make friends when they are young are at risk for future problems including academic deficits, delinquency, problems with mental health, unemployment and alcohol" (p. 245).

The causes of social skills' deficits

Children enter early education settings with social skills' deficits arising from a broad and complex aetiological base. These include constitutional (genetic, neurobiological) and environmental (family, health, community) factors. Dodge (1993) identified three primary types of causal factors in the development of antisocial behaviour: early rearing practice, entry to the early childhood setting, and, resultant social rejection. Early rearing practices may reflect abuse, poverty, drug and alcohol problems, unemployment and general neglect. Porter (2008) states "of all the domains of development, children's social competence is the most impaired by neglect or abuse" (p. 52). Children from a challenging or abusive environment are likely to have negative attitudes toward 'authority' figures, poor cooperative skills and a tendency to use the aggressive behaviours they see modelled in that environment (Slee, 2002).

Teaching Social skills

Social skills are best described as learned sequences of individual behaviours that combine to form satisfactory and satisfying interactions. Essential social skills focus on the central importance of positive peer relationships and include developing self-control, learning to reflect empathy, interacting positively with others and expressing feelings sensitively. They are the building blocks of social competence and are taught informally (particularly through modelling) and formally.

Social skills are primarily acquired through learning, comprise specific and discrete verbal and non-verbal behaviors, entail effective and appropriate initiations and responses, maximise social reinforcement, are interactive by nature, are influenced by the characteristics of the participant and environment in which they occur, and can be specified and targeted for intervention (Michelson & Mannarina, 1986, p. 376).

Understanding and teaching social skills to enhance peer relationships

Social behaviours, the elements of social competence, are measurable in the dimensions of frequency, duration, intensity, topography and latency.

i) Frequency counts the number observable complete actions such as hitting, biting, punching and leaving the room. For example, Brenda threw water on Charlie four times.

ii) Duration measures the period of time on-going behaviours such as tantrums, rocking, crying and head-banging last. For example, Eugene rocked in the corner for thirty minutes.

iii) Intensity reflects the severity of the action. For example, John hit his head against the brick wall and then cried. (The implication would be that it was of such intensity it hurt.)

iv) Topography describes body image such as the red face, the trembling hands, the puffed out chest and the failure to make eye contact. For example, when Roger asked Missy to eat Ruby’s play lunch, Missy looked away and blushed.

v) Latency measures the time that elapses between the child being asked to do something by a peer or the educator, and actually engaging in that task. For example George was asked to sit on the mat but he made a complete tour of the room before he sat down.

Early childhood practitioners often ask how they can they tell if a social skills’ intervention is required. This can be done by comparing the measured dimensions of frequency, duration, intensity, topography and latency of the actions of the child who is causing concern, and then comparing them with the measured actions of a child who demonstrates socially competence. This comparison of baseline data is illustrated below:

Intervention required	No intervention required
<i>Frequency</i> Siddie pinches peers twice a day	Cameron slapped Luke for taking his food – once
<i>Duration</i> Aaron cries for up to two hours after he is dropped at pre-school	Felix stamped his foot once when told he could not have the rabbit down his shirt
<i>Intensity</i> Morgan screams very loudly when redirected	Cass screws her nose up when told to finish a game, but finishes
<i>Topography</i> Anna holds her breath until she becomes red in the face when told she must sit on the mat	Keaton clenches his hands momentarily when asked to help tidy the play corner
<i>Latency</i> Jacob takes at least five minutes to follow any direction	Taylor follows any request within 15 seconds of being asked

Persistence of socially incompetent behaviours such as the failure to take turns, refusing to share, aggressive actions including biting, hitting and kicking, failing to follow directions, failing to listen, and not knowing how to join in group activities, games and conversations, are linked to poor academic performance. They are also possible antecedents to socio-emotional problems that remain entrenched throughout the individual's life. There is therefore, a need following the identification of socially deficit behaviours with an immediate and appropriate intervention.

Intervention

Intervention strategies include first establishing an effective and on-going partnership with parents or other significant carers to support the development of social skills. This not only adds consistency to the intervention, but it may act as a means of raising parents' awareness to a problem they do not recognise in the home setting. Social skills need to be taught directly in a group setting, and monitored to support and maintain the newly acquired skills across a variety of settings.

Early childhood professionals must ask whether their setting for teaching and learning social skills is one that reflects a society that values interdependency and cooperation. Such a setting is one in which the practitioner models social competence in all interactions with children. The teaching and learning environment stimulates positive interactions and avoids stimuli that reinforce antisocial behaviour. In this setting, teaching and learning social skills will thrive. The following case study illustrates the process of teaching social skills to enhance peer relationships and ensure social competence in young children.

Maisie's Case

Maisie is four years old and new to the XYZ Early Years Academy. She has attended several centres and has lived in four states in her short life. She will not take turns, listen or follow instructions or wait to be called on. She pushes her peers out of her way, snatches their belongings, often hurting them and making them cry. She is becoming increasingly rejected by her peers. The academy director contacts the previous setting and learns that Maisie arrived there with similar behaviours and it was assumed that she had always exhibited them. Since she was there for such a short period, they did not get around to trying 'to change' them. Instead they let her 'get her own way' although they knew that this was reinforcing antisocial behaviour. When contacted by XYZ, Maisie's mother said that she was a much loved child and was bright enough to sort out what was important in her life in her own good time.

Guiding Maisie to more appropriate peer interactions involves the creation of an environment that sustains positive interactions through the practitioner's example and management of stimuli. As it has been established, it is essential that practitioners model appropriate responses in all interchanges within the learning environment. Young children learn so much from example at this early stage and teacher actions/reactions should help and not hinder development. It is helpful to

develop a degree of self-examination to ensure that undesirable behaviours are not being reinforced inadvertently. When confronted with recurring behaviours the professional should reflect on what is it that is not working, and what might work instead.

Changing stimuli (cues) is a short-term measure that prevents escalation of anti-social behaviour. Maisie should play in a space with ample equipment and easily accessed materials which promoting positive interactions. Peers whom she taunts or teases should be in a different place in the room. Guidelines and routines should be displayed graphically to remind her of social expectations. For example, footprint templates painted on the floor would serve to indicate where she (along with all the other children) must queue while waiting for her turn at the sink.

It is very important to reinforce positive social interactions in the setting in which they occur. Maisie has unacceptable mat behaviour. She is directed to begin a mat activity at the front by the teacher's feet but slowly moves to the back, poking and annoying her peers all the way. Change the stimulus of having to view the teacher's feet by helping Maisie construct a circle on the mat with masking tape, and have her put a large 'M' in the centre, so that it is her own space. Reinforce her both verbally and non-verbally for sitting in the circle, combining this with praise for the rest of the group for respecting her space and each other's.

Teaching for social competence

Goldstein (1999) identifies four core strategies for teaching social skills: modelling; role-playing; performance feedback; and, generalisation training. In monitoring the acquisition and performance of these skills the practitioner should use problem solving techniques to redirect the child to the core competencies. Here the four strategies identified by Goldstein (1999), and a further strategy, problem-solving, will be discussed and applied to Maisie's study.

i) Modelling is the technique of identifying the desired social interaction demonstrated by a child in the presence of the child who lacks social skills in this domain, and praising the desired behaviour in the peer unambiguously. Modelling is a powerful means of teaching specific social skills, and even more powerful if the model is a peer of the same age, gender and ethnicity as the target child, in this case, Maisie, might wish to emulate. So, in an effort to encourage turn-taking, praise examples of this in Maisie's peers. Use specific terms such as "Thank you Jude for waiting your turn to use the paint". Maisie will soon learn that in order to get the same quality attention as Jude, she will need to use the same skill of taking turns.

Modelling should be accompanied by *shaping* which is the technique of praising approximations of desired behaviour. For example, Maisie might be standing in the queue but calling out 'it's my turn, it's my turn'. She needs to be reminded that although she is standing in the queue 'nicely', taking turns means waiting quietly. So instead of being reprimanded for calling out, Maisie is being praised for her demonstration of a positive skill and reminded of how that can be

improved upon. Shaping is an essential technique for building social competence in young children.

ii) Small group role playing allows children to practise the sequences of a social skill in groups acting out a scenario that represents real-life situations they encounter. Each child should be given the opportunity to play each role. The dynamics of the group are important. For example, Maisie should be part of a group that comprises four good role models who have already learned supportive and goal-directed behaviours. At the acquisition stage, it is not wise to have two children who display social skill deficits in the same group. If early childhood education is to prepare children for a society characterised by interdependence and cooperative effort, practitioners must provide children with frequent and meaningful experiences in functioning cooperatively in groups (Jones & Jones, 2001). There are many useful commercial resources to guide teachers in the process of role playing, but for those who lack experience in this area, the following is an excellent text: *Skillstreaming in early childhood: Teaching prosocial skills for pre-school and kindergarten children* (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1990).

iii) Performance feedback is an essential component in teaching social skills. Not only should the child receive constructive feedback from the professional and from peers during role play, but opportunities should be made for real life performance of the skill. Unless social skills are reinforced in real life, they fail to internalise. There are many opportunities for real life performances of newly taught social skills in both the room and the yard. Join Maisie and her group in outdoor play and take the opportunity to reinforce unrehearsed as well as rehearsed demonstrations of socially competent behaviours or, accurate approximations of these behaviours.

iv) Teaching for generalisation. Very often skills that are taught in the classroom stay in the classroom, much to the practitioner's disappointment. A major problem with social skills' teaching is that newly acquired skills tend to be situation specific. To avoid this, social skill acquisition should be taught to generalise across settings and personnel. Generalisation, the capacity to apply newly acquired skills in settings other than the one in which they were learned, will not be gained unless it is taught. In other words, Maisie's skill of waiting for her turn must be taught to generalise across to the playground, to the after school care community, and to home.

To ensure that the social skills generalise it is important to teach at first, those skills that are common to a number of settings. Taking turns is one such social skill. Interchange cues so that Maisie learns to respond to a number of stimuli and enlist the support of adults and peers to encourage her to interact with them as positively as she has with her primary educator/carer. Before sending her off to another setting, identify important skills that are specific to that situation and teach her these through modelling, shaping and role play, otherwise there may be serious outcomes. For example, if Maisie waits for turns at the sink, but does not wait for her cue at the controlled school pedestrian-crossing, she may suffer

lasting and serious consequences, as would her parents, the traffic controllers and any drivers involved.

Generalisation is likely to occur more quickly and to be more effective if social reinforcers are used (Rosenberg, O'Shea & O'Shea, 2002). Social reinforcers are naturally occurring reinforcers in a child's environment and can be used without disruption or creating a reliance on artificial reinforcers such as stickers. They include verbal comments on specific achievements such as "Maisie, you have made Nikki very happy by sharing your toy with her". Social reinforcers also include non-verbal gestures such as smiles and eye contact.

v) *Problem-solving* techniques should be taught, particularly when it obvious that the child is encountering difficulties in learning to apply social skills to a wider learning environment than the one in which they were taught. One of the reasons children have difficulties in gaining social competence is that they do not have the capacity to solve problems. Although they have acquired social skills, they lack the capacity to discern when and where they should be used. The following matrix works with very young children and forms a template for use throughout their life.

Maisie's problem solving matrix

1. What happened, Maisie? *Wally pushed me over so I hit him.*
2. What did you want to happen? *I wanted a turn [on the slide].*
3. Did hitting help? (Did your response help?) *No.*
4. What should you have done? *Asked if I could have a turn.*
5. What will you do next time? *Ask*
6. Is there something you do after you ask? *Ask and wait quietly.*

Monitoring and evaluating social skill programs

Monitoring and evaluating skill acquisition while teaching the class can be fraught with difficulties but there is a simple way to do this. Use the dimensions of frequency, duration, intensity, topography and latency to compare skills exhibited during the intervention with those exhibited prior to the intervention. As the child gains fluency in the skill usage, reduce the number of reinforcers but don't eliminate them. Monitor again. If the behaviour begins to increase in any of the observable dimensions mentioned earlier, increase the rate of reinforcement, and/or change the reinforcers.

As the aim is to create positive peer relationships through teaching social skills it is important to monitor and evaluate by asking if it is the deficit skill that is being addressed; if its social alternative is being taught explicitly as well as implicitly through modelling; if the skills are generalising across settings; and, if social competence is being achieved. In other words, is Maisie demonstrating that she knows what to do and how to do it in the right place at the right time?

Conclusion

The role of the early educator in the development of social competence in children cannot be underestimated, although as this paper has shown, it has been in the past in both pre-service and in-service teaching and learning opportunities. It is to be hoped that the current COAG initiative to pursue substantial reform in the area of education, skills and early childhood development, recognises that social competence is the precursor for competencies in all other learning domains, and deserves to be recognised as such. It is commonly accepted that if children fail to learn how to interact positively when they are young they are at certain risk of a number of negative outcomes in the long term. The early identification and treatment of social skill deficits is perhaps the most promising strategy in preventing children from developing into antisocial adolescents and adults. An essential pedagogical role is the guidance of young children to a domain from which they can initiate and maintain positive peer relationships. Social skills, the building blocks of social competence must be taught and should provide the child with skill alternatives to skill deficits. Social competence is reached when children interact confidently and positively across the variety of settings they encounter during the day.

References

- Ashman A, & Elkins, J. (eds.). (2009). *Education for inclusion and diversity* (3rd ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
- Australian Council of Deans of Education (2001). *New learning: A charter for education in Australia*. Canberra: ACDE.
- Dodge, K. (1993) The future research on conduct disorders. *Development and psychopathology*. 5 (1/2), 311-320.
- Edgen, P. & Kauchak, D. (2007). *Educational Psychology: Windows on classrooms* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education International.
- Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2004). *Building social competencies*. Sydney: ACER.
- Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2005). *Educators' perceptions of young children's challenging behaviours*, Paper presented at the Biennial Early Childhood Conference, Brisbane, Sept 28-Oct 1.
- Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2006). Optimising learning and building social competence. *Workshops 2006*. Sydney, NSW: Australian Council of Educational Research.
- Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2007). *Meeting the challenge: Embedding competence building and behaviour management perspectives in initial teacher education programs*. Paper presented at the June, 2007 College Teaching and Learning Conference Venice (Padova), Italy.
- Goldstein, A. (1999). *The prepare curriculum: Teaching prosocial competencies* (Rev.ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Gresham, F. (2008). Social skills assessment and instruction for students with emotional and behavioural disorders. In P. Foreman (ed.), *Inclusion in Action* (2nd ed.), South Melbourne, VIC: Cengage Learning.
- Groundwater-Smith, S., Ewing, R., & Le Cornu, R. (2007). *Teaching: Challenges and dilemmas*. South Melbourne, VIC: Thomson.
- Illinois Early Learning Project (2008). *What is the best way to assess young children's social competence?* Retrieved 12 August 2008, www.illinoisearlylearning.org/faqs/socialcomp.htm
- Jones, V. & Jones, L. (2001). *Comprehensive classroom management: Creating communities of support and solving problems* (6th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Pearson.
- Knight, B. & Hughes, D. (1995) 'Developing social competence in the preschool years', *Australian Journal of Early Childhood: Collected titles in early childhood*, 20 (2), 13-20.
- Kontos, S. & Wilcox-Herzog, A. (1997). Teachers' interactions with children: Why are they so important? *Young Children*, 52(2), 4-12.
- Lake, V.E. (2004). Ante up: Reconsidering classroom management philosophies so every child is a winner. *Early Child Development and Care*, 174(6), 567-574.
- Michelson, L. & Mannarina, A. (1986). Social skill training in children: Research and clinical application. In P. Strain, M. Guralnick & H. Walker (Eds.)

Children's social behaviour, development, assessment and modification (pp. 373-406). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

McLeod, J. & Reynolds, R. (2007). *Quality teaching for quality learning: Planning through reflection*. South Melbourne, VIC: Thomson.

O'Brien, T. (1998). *Promoting positive behavior*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Peth-Pierce, R. (2008). *A good beginning. Sending America's children to school with the social and emotional competence they need to succeed*. Retrieved 12 August 2008, www.casel.org/downloads/goodbeginning.pdf

Porter, L. (2008). *Young children's behaviour: Practical approaches for caregivers and teachers* (3rd ed.). Marrickville, NSW: MacLennan & Petty.

Productivity Agenda Working Group – Education, Skills, Training and Early Childhood Development (August 2008). *A national quality framework for early childhood education and care: A discussion paper*. Retrieved August 11, 2008, from www.deewr.gov.au/COAGdiscussionpaper

Queensland Creche & Kindergarten Association. (2006). *Building waterfalls: A living and learning curriculum framework*. Newmarket, QLD: C&K.

Rabalate, P. (2003). Meeting those special needs. *NEA Today*, 50(3), 275-92.

Scarlett, W. (1983). *Social isolation from age mates among nursery children*. In M. Donaldson, R. Grieve, & C. Pratt (Eds.), *Early childhood development and education: Readings in psychology* (pp 34-45). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Sims, M. (2008). *The A good beginning report: Implications for Australia*. *Every Child*, 14 (3) 8-9.

Slee, J. (1985). *Social Skill Training*. Unpublished action research master's paper. Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

Slee, J. (2002). *Life support: A mentoring program*. Hornsby, NSW: Department of Education and Training.

Slee, J. (2003). *Managing difficult behaviour in young children*. Watson, ACT: Early Childhood Australia.

Stonehouse, A. (2002). *The practice of relationships: Essential provisions for children's services*. Sydney, NSW: NSW Department of Community Services, Office of Child Care,

Walker, H., Colvin, G. & Ramsey, E. (1995). *Antisocial behaviour in school: Strategies and best practices*. California: Brookes/Cole.

Victorian Institute of Teaching, (2007). *Professional standards: Standards for graduating teachers*. Retrieved April 28, 2007, from http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/438_Standards.pdf

Zirpoli, T. & Melloy, K. (1998). *Behavior management applications for teachers and parents*. OH: Merrill.

Dr June Slee

Dr June Slee teaches in the School of Education, Charles Darwin University, Darwin. She has worked with early childhood professionals for many years and learned a great deal from these hardworking and talented people.

Selected and recent publications include

Slee, J. (2008). Book review: 'Young children's behaviour: Practical approaches for caregivers and teachers'. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, 33 (2) 58.

Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2007, June). *Meeting the challenge: Embedding competence building and behaviour management perspectives in initial teacher education programs*. Paper presented at the 2007 College Teaching & Learning Conference – Venice (Padova), Italy.

Slee, J. (2006). *A wolf in a fine merino coat: A study of corporate social responsibility*. Paper, Massey University, NZ.

Slee, J. (2006). *Assessing Peters & Waterman's view of business and society relationship, and the managerial implications of this relationship*. Paper, Massey University, NZ.

Slee, J. (2005). *The theoretical and actual relationship between governance and organisational performance expectations of shareholders and stakeholders*. Paper, Massey University, NZ.

Slee, J. (2005). *Managing the governors or governing the managers? Two case studies of governance in action*. Paper, Massey University, NZ.

Slee, J. (2005). *The role and responsibility for governance in organisations*. Paper, Massey University.

Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2005, September-October). *Educators' perceptions of young children's challenging behaviours*. Paper presented at the Early Childhood Australia Conference Brisbane, Australia.

Elliott, A. & Slee, J. (2004). *Building social competencies*. Sydney: ACER.

Slee, J. & Tuffin, R. (2004). *Point Puer: a fortress girded by the whip*. Conference proceedings of International Centre for Convict Studies with University of Tasmania, Strachan, Tasmania.

Slee, J. (2004). *18th and 19th century international contexts for juvenile incarceration at Point Puer, 1833-1849*. A management report commissioned by Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority [PAHMSA]. Port Arthur: PAHMSA.

Slee, J. (2003). *Guide children's behaviour: Education support*. Sydney, NSW: BCA National Training group.

Slee, J. (2003). *Managing difficult behaviour in young children*. Special Issue of the Research in Practice Series. Watson, ACT: Early Childhood Australia Inc.

Slee, J. (2003). Transition experiences of students who are the first in their immediate family to enrol in university. *Pacific Rim 7th Annual Conference Proceedings*, Auckland NZ.

Slee, J. (2002). *Life support: A mentoring program*. Hornsby, NSW: Department of Education and Training.