



Amanda Hayes and Michelle Tregoning

AMANDA HAYES AND MICHELLE TREGONING share insights about what our Kindy students bring to the classroom ...

At the beginning of every year, a new group of Kindy kids nervously arrive. So small, they seem, in comparison to the students who know the school environment well and have etched out their own spaces to play. “They’re so little” we say as we gently care for them, protect them and guide them through the curriculum. When we see them all wearing their brand new uniforms and shiny new shoes, we somehow forget just how capable, competent and creative they are when they are outside of the school gates.

Learning about the “MeE” Framework through the Fair Go Bridges to Higher Education Project at UWS made us realise that we wanted to be mindful about how we viewed their capabilities, making conscious decisions not to consider them “little” in a way that diminished them or led us to back off, even ever so slightly.

Rather we needed to view them as “little learners”, small in size perhaps but big in potential. We wanted to challenge their learning and push their thinking. More than anything, we wanted to focus on what they can do now, what they can learn to do in the future and to be mindful of sending them powerful, positive messages about their place in this school. We also had to fathom the skills and abilities they had, and those they could acquire, in order to belong and contribute to the school community.

And so changes in pedagogy were made. What we were learning about, why it mattered and how to be successful became public knowledge. We talked about how new learning feels and embraced challenge and frustration as a necessary part of new learning. Our learning tree was formed where every new leaf represented a new piece of learning we shared as a community of learners and each flower symbolised students blossoming with every new learning pathway created in their brains.

Embedded formative assessment and visible learning strategies started filling our teachers’ toolkits as decisions were made based on research about pedagogy and learning. Conversation between learners dominated the classroom soundscape and no question or intake was left unexamined for the learning potential it might bring.

What we learnt about changed too - we found out what the students were interested in and we used their curiosities to drive curriculum learning. These practices assisted in the focus on learning over behaviour management as we reminded students of the powerful message of, “Remember why we’re here”.

We were in a fortunate position with the Kindy team as half of us were part of the project and the other teachers joined in as “accidental Fair Go-ers”. Together, we explored the role of play in building skills in language, negotiation and social skills so that students could participate effectively in a classroom based upon community, challenge, interest, inclusive conversations, feedback and reflection.



Small changes in our pedagogy and learning design led to students viewing themselves as capable learners and referring to the classroom, the learning and the achievements as “ours”. With the guidance of Amy McGinnes, who also instilled the belief that they too are competent, knowledgeable and owners of their learning, they became researchers, authors and illustrators.

The Kindy kids created a text with a common goal and purpose and used their Year 5 buddy class as the target audience. This feeling of empowerment gave them the confidence to show senior students of the school that they have something to offer as they discussed with them the writing process so they too could also write a text.

So yes, they still look little and nervous... but don't be fooled, for underneath the shiny shoes and brand new uniform are capable, competent and creative thinkers and learners who are capable, who belong, and who have knowledge and skills that can be shared across the school. Trust in the knowledge that they bring and their thirsty brains that are waiting to soak up the exciting and engaging learning opportunities that school creates.

Amanda Hayes is in her seventh year of teaching at Fairfield PS. She has been a part of the FairGo Project and is currently engaged in the Aspiring Leaders Program.

Michelle Tregoning is an AP at Fairfield PS where she has worked as a team leader, ESL Support Teacher, classroom teacher and teaching and learning mentor. Within the role of mentor Michelle has worked with large numbers of teachers using action research examining engagement using the MeE Framework.