



CONFERENCE, PEREGRINE, 2014

BY CECELIA BRADLEY AND A. DIXON

This year six schools from four states were represented at the 2014 ADEC conference including [Kinma](#) and [Currambena](#) from New South Wales, [Hurstbridge Learning Cooperative](#) from Victoria, [Pine Community School](#) from Queensland and [Peregrine](#) from Tasmania.

The conference was held in the breathtaking Nicholls Rivulet area in the Huon Valley in Tasmania. It was hosted by Peregrine School and run incredibly well by Imogen Hunt and the team including Wendy, Chris, Mel and Jason. The conference began on Sunday 28th September 2014. It was opened by Imogen and everyone was warmly welcomed to Peregrine's tranquil school and grounds.

Our first presenter was Jennifer Parsons. Jennifer has extensive experience as a Kindergarten teacher working in the Reggio Emilia framework and currently at The Friend's School in Hobart.

The theme of the presentation was *Using Threads-Making Connections*. Jennifer told stories of her years of valuing children's learning through play. She

articulated many of the key ideas we hold about children;

When children are seen and known to be competent and powerful, capable of constructing ideas, intelligent, with a sense of wonder, living, loving and learning happens.

It is striking the amount of awareness and time this takes. Adults need to resist rushing this process. Jennifer summarised this poignantly "It takes a lot of slow to grow."

She quoted Evangeline Ward - *"If we take away their childhood we can never give it back!"*

Jennifer set us the task of making a web of connections in the double doorway to the dining room. We wove and hooked wire together to form this cool literal web of connections upon which we hung little notes as we made connections to knowledge, one another, memories and experiences. A photos of this experience is at the top of this page.

Jennifer recommended an intriguing book for our perusal entitled ["Mitten Strings for God: Reflections for Mothers in a Hurry"](#) by Katrina Kenison

In her search for a more satisfying balance in her life, the author learned to slow down and become present thus

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opening up space for joy, play and intimacy.

November 2014
Jennifer reiterated that:
"All children are intelligent, not necessarily on an I.Q. scale but through competence in living, loving and learning."

The philosophies of living, loving and learning are inherent in ADEC schools and the students are afforded the opportunity to engage in and enrich these birthrights. The evening concluded with a gourmet dinner prepared by a talented chef and Peregrine family, Roy and his son, Boy.



School Presentations

On Monday 29th we made our way through an intense day of sharing and discussion. All the participants took responsibility for different topics and led each session so there was great participation.

Sharing our schools

The first session was led by Imogen and Wendy from Peregrine School. Each participating School had provided ten or more photos of what the children liked best about their school and this was a visual and effective way of each person talking about their specific community. It gave us insight into the different schools and the views of their students.

What is play?

Grace and Kay from Kinma opened up a dialogue by prompting us to personally consider "What is Play?" We chatted in pairs and scribed our ideas in beautiful pastels. The ideas were provoking and meaningful. Some of the features of play at Kinma include a Tinkering Day, where students freely tinker, deconstruct and reconstruct materials jointly or independently following interests and passions and sharing with others in the community. The examples we saw obviously led to some sustained fun and effective learning.

The role of technology in democratic schools

A dinner discussion resulted in Drew from Pine Community School suggesting we change his topic to "Technology and the Role it Plays in our Schools". This generated much intense discussion and is obviously a topic of keen attention in all the school communities. Concerns are around students having too much screen time in their lives, the place of playing games and how much access the schools



KAY AND HADASSAH allow. Drew presented the participants with the idea of allowing students a day a week to use personal or school technological devices in an unstructured and undirected way. The participants had diverse responses, some of which are indicated below:

- Children today are digital natives and speak the digital language of communication
- Using technology is and can be more than game play
- Technology must only be used for learning activities
- It is not real play
- It is called 'playing games' and we must be careful not to inhibit children's digital development with the imposition of our own ideas about what play is, onto children, because they see it as play.
- There is apprehension about the safety of using personal devices at school, as they can't be monitored or safety netted. The idea of connecting to the school's protected internet connection to prevent unsafe viewing from sites like YouTube, using adblockers or net nanny type software on the server was discussed.

- There is some philosophical opposition to social networking, thus seeing some schools and teachers declining to participate.
- The idea to scale down the technology day to an hour a week was presented.
- The use of technology across the schools represented varied from minimal to moderate.
- Some schools have a very strong use of social media and technology and strong internet presence.
- There is a sense of hesitation with some forms of technology because it is unknown, uncontrollable and unfamiliar.

STATE AND NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

TAGS: NAPLAN, Accountability, National Curriculum, Australian Curriculum, Assessment Reporting Authority, Teacher Registration and Accreditation, Professional Development Mandates, Standardisation.

Government pressure

Chris, with assistance from Wendy and Sue from Currumbena, led us in a discussion about the experiences of the schools with regard to various state and national requirements. Discussion ensued about the implementation of the National Curriculum and other Federal Government expectations such as NAPLAN. It was undisputed that schools are experiencing increased paper work and accountability processes.

One of the key ideas to come out of the discussion was that it would be valuable to share experiences with each other and to have access to documentation. One of the practical ways this may be possible is to set up an ADEC Dropbox and people can post their documentation, submissions etc. and invite others to see these and have access to them.

Jo and Kimba from Hurstbridge Co-operative led us in a session based on some of the issues that they are currently facing. Co-op has been very much based on; student-initiated activities, play as the core business of children and parent participation as teachers and mentors.

As parents struggle more to fulfil this very intense commitment, as well as the increase in accountability from the registration and bureaucratic requirements, there seems to be developing a need to find different ways.

Playing and learning are being seen as binaries rather than integrated. One of the solutions being tried is to engage two teacher mentors to relieve some of the expectations on the parents. This is being carefully monitored by the community.

Student well-being

Hadassah and Fiona from Koonwarra Village School presented their philosophy and practices of addressing the social and emotional needs of students at their school.



KAY, HADASSAH, FIONA, KIMBA, JASON

Fiona introduced us to Kimochi Toys – the toys with feelings inside. Fiona and Hadassah gave examples of how the toys can teach children about their emotions, how to be comfortable and sit with the range and strength of emotions children experience, and how to move forward after experiencing strong emotions or feelings.

Fiona introduced a book she has found useful for implementing democratic principles at Koonwarra Village School- [Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves:](#)

Transforming parent-child relationships from reaction and struggle to freedom, power and joy.

The principles are appropriate for democratic relationships and are easily applicable to the school environment.

STUDENT WELL-BEING

Fiona from Koonwarra displays student constructed learning contracts and introduced Kimochi Dolls as a means of enhancing student well-being.

Koonwarra Village School

Other literature drawn upon by Koonwarra Village School includes the work of John Hattie and Mary Haskell.

An idea presented by Haddasah and Fiona was:

In the freedom, kids can miss some important skills.

In finishing their presentation, they put forth the question of how to manage this without compromising the integral structure of the school.

Quote shared by Fiona

"Nothing you become will disappoint me. I have no preconception that I'd like to see you be or do. I have no desire to force you, only to discover you. You cannot disappoint me."

Special needs

Chris from Peregrine led us to consider how we meet the individual needs of children who have disabilities and the effect this has on the school community.

It was a delight to hear about the variety of strategies that Chris has used for individual children and her openness to self-reflection and listening to the needs of the students and searching for effective ways to communicate.



SUE, IMOGEN, CHRIS, DREW

Respecting difference and different expectations are very important for all in the community. The ABC is a strategy that may be of help in specific situations.

A is the Antecedent, what has gone before?

B is the Behaviour itself

C is the Consequence of the behaviour.

This is a complex issue in our school communities and one for which we will continue to share ideas, resources and support one another.

This concluded the presentations from the represented schools.

AGM

Before dinner we held the 2014 ADEC AGM. The election of the committee resulted in Cecelia Bradley as President, Sue Goode as Secretary, and Keith Goode as Treasurer. Committee members are Adrienne Huber, Juli Gassner, Karen O'Brien, Chris Price and Wendy Pettit. Reports are available for ADEC members.



WENDY, CECELIA, CHRIS, SUE

DESIGN A LOGO FOR ADEC

We need a logo for ADEC!



Please forward suggestions and designs to president@adec.edu.au
Why not involve your students and tap their creativity?

IDEC2015

After dinner Cecelia gave a brief overview of her participation in IDEC2014 in South Korea including a slideshow of the photos of many aspects of IDEC. This led to a SKYPE session with two of the main organisers of IDEC2015 Verena and Tania from Nelson, New Zealand.

IDEC2015 9th - 12th April 2015

One of the main aims is to hold a bicultural event so that Maori Culture will be a significant part of the event and we would like to encourage as many in Australia to support this event.

One of the decisions we took at the AGM was not to have a separate ADEC conference in 2015 but to add an extra day to IDEC and hold an APDEC meeting and an ADEC meeting including the 2015 AGM. We hope this will reduce the need for more travel next year.



Art workshop

On Tuesday 30th September Rosie McKeand took the conference on an artistic journey. Conference participants made ink prints of native birds, sketched stories and maps, played with pastels, water, charcoal and art liners. Pure joy infiltrated the room as adults played with childlike abandon, laughing, appreciating and creating.

Rosie's art lessons inspired a discussion about refraining from appraising children's artwork. This restraint allows children to feel the same joy we had experienced while exploring the materials and making connections to our own experience.



GRACE, KAY, ROSIE



CHRIS, IMOGEN, CHRIS (PEREGRINE)

Rainbow Kids Yoga

Our final session together was a wonderful experience of joyful and playful yoga that was a perfect way to bring our time to a reluctant close. Gopal and Angel Yaffa are parents at Peregrine School and they also run Rainbow Kids Yoga classes and training all around the world.

One of the key differences for me was the physical closeness of the circular formation in which we did all the movements, the contact and closeness with those in the group and the awareness of your own body and those of your neighbours. The sense of fun and gentle, quirky humour, rhythm and music all created a magic moment.

President's final note

I want to add my thanks to those already expressed to Imogen Hunt and all at Peregrine Community School for

welcoming us to their very special part of the world, their wonderful hospitality and for enabling us to have a great gathering.

Facebook

Thanks to John Kay and Adrienne Huber ADEC now has a presence on Facebook. The page is called

[ADEC Australasian Democratic Education Community.](https://www.facebook.com/ADECers)

www.facebook.com/ADECers

John has also set up a forum for discussion so if you are a financial member of ADEC you can join this forum and have your say.

ADEC Forum

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/283327468468971/>



Thank you to Bryn Morgan who continues to keep our website running. Bryn has also changed the name of our elist. It is now known as [adeclist](mailto:adeclist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). Those already subscribed do not have to make any changes but new subscribers have to send a blank email to: adeclist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Contact us

Please consider becoming a financial member of ADEC or renewing your membership. The form can be accessed via <http://adec.edu.au/about/membership/>

To be informed of the latest updates please send a blank email to the ADEC List (formerly Ausschools Elist) adeclist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au

ADEC web site www.adec.edu.au

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Report from IDEC2014

By Cecelia Bradley

IDEC2014 was held in Gwangmyeong City in Seoul in South Korea. It was a great experience. There were many Koreans from around the country led by Tae Wook Ha, his band of wonderful student organizers, their mentors and volunteers and participants from 18 countries attending.

To give you a flavour of the diversity, there were:

Four different groups from Nepal including Rishi, who many of you will remember was a young boy at the Sydney IDEC.

Jim Connor with a group of monks and members of the

Kachin from Myanmar,

Marko from Finland,

Ann from Germany,

Ann from China,

Jennifer and others from Taiwan,

Justo & Anna from Puerto Rico,

Karen from Brazil

Chloe and Henry from the UK,

Verena and Tanya from New Zealand,

Old friends Moe, Iku and Jerry from United States,

Chris Mercogliano, Scott and Jonah also from United States,

Kageki and Keiko and Takeshi Nagai with a large group from

Japan, and two from the Congo.

Yaacov could not attend due to the situation in Israel and he did some Skype sessions.

Gwangmyeong City was a sponsor of the conference, gave the use of the Gymnasium as the venue, and paid for students and teachers to attend from Nepal and Myanmar, among other places.



Edupolitical

It took time to understand where democratic schools and education sit in the Korean education scene. The ferry tragedy was in everyone's consciousness and we had some very moving and emotional memorials during the conference. Much is being made of the need for Korean education to change from its adult dominated 'stay put' thinking. The widespread belief is that the children drowned because the captain made announcements to stay in their cabins and they did not question this adult authority.

The Former Superintendent of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education Kwak, No Hyuin in his comprehensive keynote helped me to understand what the students and schools are experiencing. It was amazing to see a bureaucrat with such a passion for progressive and democratic principles in education and a desire to reform the whole system. Alas he has been maneuvered out of his role. Chris Mecogliano also emphasized and developed this theme.

Tae Wook Ha is the Director of the Institute for Democratic Education and Alternative at Daejeon University and is doing some great work in developing a university level learning group. They were the core of the organising group along with Byeoppsi School. There are an estimated 200-300 democratic schools in Korea, but most of them are considered illegal and are not registered. They have been largely allowed to exist without too much interference. There are about 50 schools that are registered and approved. Now the government wants them all to register, the education bureaucracy trying the control and change them with no assurance that they will be able to continue being freedom-based democratic schools.

A legislator has put forth a proposed law to control or close the schools. In the last days of the conference word came that there was to be an audit of the safety of all the schools and if they did not measure up they would be closed. A clever tactic! As Jerry Mintz from AERO noted, often IDEC plays a role in the specific problems that the schools of a country are facing and this was so in South Korea.

In the middle of the week a rally and protest meeting and press conference about the proposed legislation was held at the forecourt of the Deoksugung Palace opposite City Hall. It is significant place for political events through Korean History. Students, parents and teachers attended. The students performed a rap about the politics as they saw it, and together with their traditional drumming, really began to draw the crowd in. As part of the speeches Jerry (US) Kageki, (Japan) Chloe (UK) and myself were invited to say brief words to indicate the international support. Apparently we made the papers and TV. The participants from 18 countries attending on IDEC 2014 issued a statement in a press conference on 31 July, 2014, in Seoul.

"We, the global democratic education community are against Korean government policy of trying to control democratic schools."

Along with Henry Readhead of Summerhill School in England, grandson of Summerhill founder A.S. Neill, Kageki Asakura of Tokyo Shure Heechang Yang, ex-principal of the democratic Gandhi School in Korea, and chaired By Tae Wook Ha, I participated in a panel on legislation and government regulation. We all talked about the ways that governments and bureaucracies affect democratic education in our countries giving some indications of positives that South Korea might take and pitfalls to avoid. Among other things, Henry talked about the fight that Summerhill School won against the English education bureaucracy in the late 90s. The IDEC met at Summerhill School in 1999. Again as Jerry commented *"We hope this IDEC will have a similarly supporting effect for Korean democratic schools."*



Every day, except for the tour day, there were three keynotes. The days were full of diverse and active workshops with many cultural experiences such as daily *dado* - the traditional tea ceremony and yoga to start the morning. There was Korean, music and dance, Nepalese dance, visits to schools such as Byeoppsi, San, the Gwangmyeong Life Long Learning Centre and Antero Environmental Centre.

Just a short walk from the venue where they also have an endangered golden frog which lives only in this small wet land in the middle of Gwangmyeong City. Children were front and centre in the open space sessions with many activities for and with them. One of the most enjoyable sessions was an evening of traditional Korean Games. If you have any sense of Korean stereotype of reserve then forget it. Up close and

personal all ages, altogether! One of the amazing games involved all the adults in a conga line clasping each other around the waist and heads lying on the back of the person in front. In the next moment a child was walking along our backs.

It was incredibly hot and humid and the intensity of the activities brought us all out in a sweat, but the laughter and smiles and sheer fun was so infectious. Every evening there were also cultural events either by the students or groups attached to the city programs. Impromptu music sessions happened sitting on the pavement outside the gymnasium led by our old friends Silbi and Moe and many of the talented Korean students.

The organization was outstanding. Korean and English were the official languages; while simultaneous translation happened, we used receivers to listen. Other languages could be translated on a different

channel. In all open spaces on the schedule, there were skilled volunteer translators available. In a group I attended we had a Korean person translating into Japanese and another person translating into Korean and English. Additionally there were volunteers students from many of the schools who would accompany us if we needed some support such as translating what the yoga teacher was saying.

Asia/Pacific democratic education community - APDEC

One of the key things that happened at IDEC2014 was the official establishment of the Asia/Pacific Regional group. This has been discussed for many years and now we have agreement to go ahead. I have posted the minutes on the ADEC eList and will also put them on the ADEC website.

The name for the group is Asia/Pacific Democratic Education Community, APDEC.

Some of the key points

- We hope to get a website up and running as soon as possible
- We hope to have a day after IDEC2015 in New Zealand to devote to APDEC
- Kageki and Keiko have invited us to have the APDEC meeting conference in Japan in 2016
- There are still some concerns about the relationship of regional groups and IDEC itself, the opportunity and cost of international travel.

I expect these issues will continue to be discussed and debated. Jim and the groups from Myanmar were not able to attend the meeting but were supportive of the ideas and want to be included.



IDEC2014 ended with a bang, literally, with lots of wonderful drumming and dance. It was amazing to have all those days to spend with the delightfully warm and welcoming hosts from Korea and such diverse people. The organising group consisting of young students along with Tae and Bong and a couple of other adult mentors, did a superb job. When I saw them lined up on the stage at the end of the conference, and were acknowledged and thanked for the tasks for which they were responsible, I felt very emotional about what they

had achieved.

The photo is of my helpers who took me to the hotel on the first day and they turned out to be students of San School, which is the school, who came to Sydney IDEC in 2006. I visited the school during the week and we hope that they will come to IDEC in NZ.

I want to say a huge thank you to Tae and all his team for the wonderful IDEC Conference. They did an amazing job and I am so glad that I could be part of it. I thoroughly enjoyed my travels in South Korea, meeting so many warm and friendly people and spending time in such a complex society with its incredible history. It was incredible experiencing a fragment of the intense urban cities next to the beautiful cultural and natural world.

