



Kids' Own Publishing

www.kidsownpublishing.com

Innovation

Kids' Own Publishing gives voice and agency to the most vulnerable members of the community through the collaborative creation of books that are published by children for children.

Working in partnership with a range of stakeholders – including libraries, schools, festivals and local government - Kids' Own brings artists together with children in a workshop program to produce tangible books that are published in English or in the community's first language. Combining digital print-on-demand technology with traditional hands-on approaches of artists, the Kids' Own publishing process enables participants to tell their stories and publish them in books. The socially contextualized arts based approach to Kids' Own Publishing embeds children's literacy practices at the centre of family, friends and community.

In 2014, Kids' Own celebrated publishing 100 books and is publishing new books all the time. In addition, the Kids' Own *WePublish* App is putting a digital version of the program in the hands of children, and adults, around the world to write and illustrate their own small book to share with others.

Kids' Own vision is a world where books by children for children strengthen culture, language and literacy in all communities. To this end, our goal is to embed children's community publishing in different settings; such as schools, early years centres, libraries, after-school care, local festivals and events.





Outcomes

Too many children face significant obstacles to successful literacy learning through a lack of book experience and do not feel personally connected to the books they encounter in their journey to literacy. An overarching outcome for Kids' Own is for children to develop a deep investment in their own books and have a strong sense of ownership where they feel confident to share their books with the people they love. Through this approach, Kids' Own creates real opportunities for improvements in literacy, self-expression, self-confidence and social connectedness.

Illustrative of this approach is a partnership, begun in 2012, with Cardinia Shire in Victoria through Cardinia Best Start to develop The Cardinia Children's Community Publishing Program. The program is a good example of the changes for good that can take place when a children's community publishing initiative works across local government through a comprehensive series of professional development opportunities for early years staff, librarians, teachers and community workers. The Clear Horizon group undertook an independent evaluation of the program using a Program Logic approach and engaging all the project partners through the Best Start steering committee. This evaluation identified and described the rationale for and relationships between the activities, illustrated intermediate and final outcomes and evidenced *an overwhelmingly positive feedback from children, significant adults in their lives who participated in the Program and early years professionals.*

Examples include

Improving	What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence and approaches, such as
Student engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students being able to create their own books expressing their sense of fun, pride and love of publishing their own book and sharing stories. • Students go onto producing their own books at home. • The popularity of the books produced by students being borrowed from the library by students.

continued





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Social and emotional wellbeing	Through the process of book making students develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A sense of worth and value by willingly sharing their texts with peers, parents and wider family.• Positive associations with reading and sharing stories are evidenced by encouraging feedback from loved ones and reading more books.
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Family and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An increased personal interest in books and in reading to their children <i>"What came out in conversations with the Mums was [their] increased interest and enthusiasm in books and reading to their child"</i>.• Participants strongly commenting on the strengthened social connectedness across generations, within families and the wider Cardinia community.• Parents visibly developing new communication skills through the book making process to better engage their children in foundational literacy activities.• Families, in particular Aboriginal participants, validating the importance of family and community story and the role of story sharing to communicate culture.
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Quality teaching	Professionals are grasping key messages from their book making workshop training and they apply this in their practice, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early years professionals understand how and are able to make (origami) books and are confident to teach others how to make these books.• Teachers are integrating book-making workshops in their work programs, such as Literacy, Numeracy and Art with children.
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Confidence children, significant adults and early childhood professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post the training sessions, professionals are indicating in their post-program feedback survey forms that they now feel 'very confident' or 'quite confident' in using what they learnt independently.• Children have a new found confidence in their creative expression and are independently making their own books at home.
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**students
develop a
sense of
worth and
value**





Lessons learned

Seek continuous improvement, in both program delivery

and design, over time: A powerful legacy is left in the hands of participants when books are written and produced by, with and for a community. The community is on the road to being stronger and more resilient when the capacity for reading, writing and publishing is strengthened and participants have the skills and confidence to publish their individual and collective stories. Kids' Own experience shows that three-year projects, such as the partnership in Cardinia, provide greater social impact than three one-year funded projects. The reach may be broader in three separate projects, but a deeper impact is possible when engagement is with the same partners and community over a longer period.

Pay attention to implicit and explicit evidence of improvement:

One valuable lesson for us working in Cardinia has been the need to articulate more clearly how our publishing process embeds valuable literacy lessons implicitly, not just explicitly. As the Project facilitator in the Cardinia project said: "We didn't talk about literacy consciously but it was very much a theme that happened..." Spending time with your partners, such as external evaluators, school and community members, at the outset can help you better articulate and clarify what's working (and what's not) and why and for whom.

Use key learnings from one context to another, but not

prescriptively: Each of our projects or books brings fresh challenges and each new partnership demands a different approach. The next phase of the Cardinia Shire program extends the reach and depth of the engagement by working with new associated groups; In Transit, will support transition for children between communities to school and between schools. Our Books and Art Playgroup, based in the City of Melbourne, transfers our process to skill up participants to be able to create books with their very young children in a supportive and fun environment for new mothers. The work of Kids' Own is inherently transferrable as the core activity output, the book, is a common currency and can contain content from a range of participants.

