

LearningGames®

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ACTIVITIES FOR EARLY LEARNERS



Teaching Strategies®
for Early Childhood



SNAICC



Parenting Research Centre
raising children well

IKANBALA

LearningGames®

Information sheet

Introduction

The future of our communities and our nation depends on providing children with good quality learning. When children are young, the most robust and beneficial learning occurs in natural contexts, with loving caregivers, and involves games.

The LearningGames® are a series of simple, one-on-one exercises for engaging children aged between 0-3 in educational activities. These activity sheets have been adapted from the American Teaching Strategies resource to be culturally appropriate and relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The Research

Professor Joseph Sparling is the authority on the Abecedarian Approach and its impact on children's life outcomes. In 2010 SNAICC supported Professor Sparling to undertake a consultation process on the implementation of the LearningGames® and the Abecedarian approach to early education and learning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care services in Australia. The feedback from these services indicated almost unanimous support for the project.

The LearningGames® are based on the Abecedarian Approach and are tested and proven games arranged to match the natural patterns of child development. The Abecedarian Approach is based on 30 years of research with at-risk children. Through the research, the investigators demonstrated benefits of early childhood education by developing simple tools, which increased children's learning capacity, improved health, social emotional well-being, employment and other life outcomes.

Using the LearningGames®

Most of these activities can be played anywhere, anytime. They may be played with children who are younger than those shown in the game photos. Each activity includes full-colour photographs and descriptions including how to play the game, what to expect from the child, how to engage the child and why the activity is so important. The most important thing you can do to make these games succeed is to adopt the child's attitude that playing is the best way to learn. Your voice is also an important part of every game. Say what the child is doing. Name the things he touches. Let him know you're proud of him. Your child will take in all this talk and, one day, surprise you with words of his own. Each activity is designed for both boys and girls. Enjoy!



About SNAICC

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC's mission is to provide a strong voice for our children and families. As a national peak body, SNAICC supports the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families sector through promoting the rights, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC's vision is for an Australia in which our communities are empowered and are able to make decisions regarding their own future.

SNAICC supports organisations working for (and with) our children and families by providing resources, training and advocacy in the child and family welfare and education sectors. SNAICC assists its member organisations by designing, developing and distributing community and organisational resources.

About PRC

We are Australia's only independent non-profit research and development organisation with an exclusive focus on parenting. We are dedicated to gathering scientific knowledge of effective parenting and developing practical programs to help parents raise happy healthy children.

We believe that parenting is the single most important influence on a child's health and wellbeing and that the most effective way to ensure better outcomes for children is to work with parents.

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SNAICC acknowledges Elders and Traditional Custodians of lands and seas across Australia.

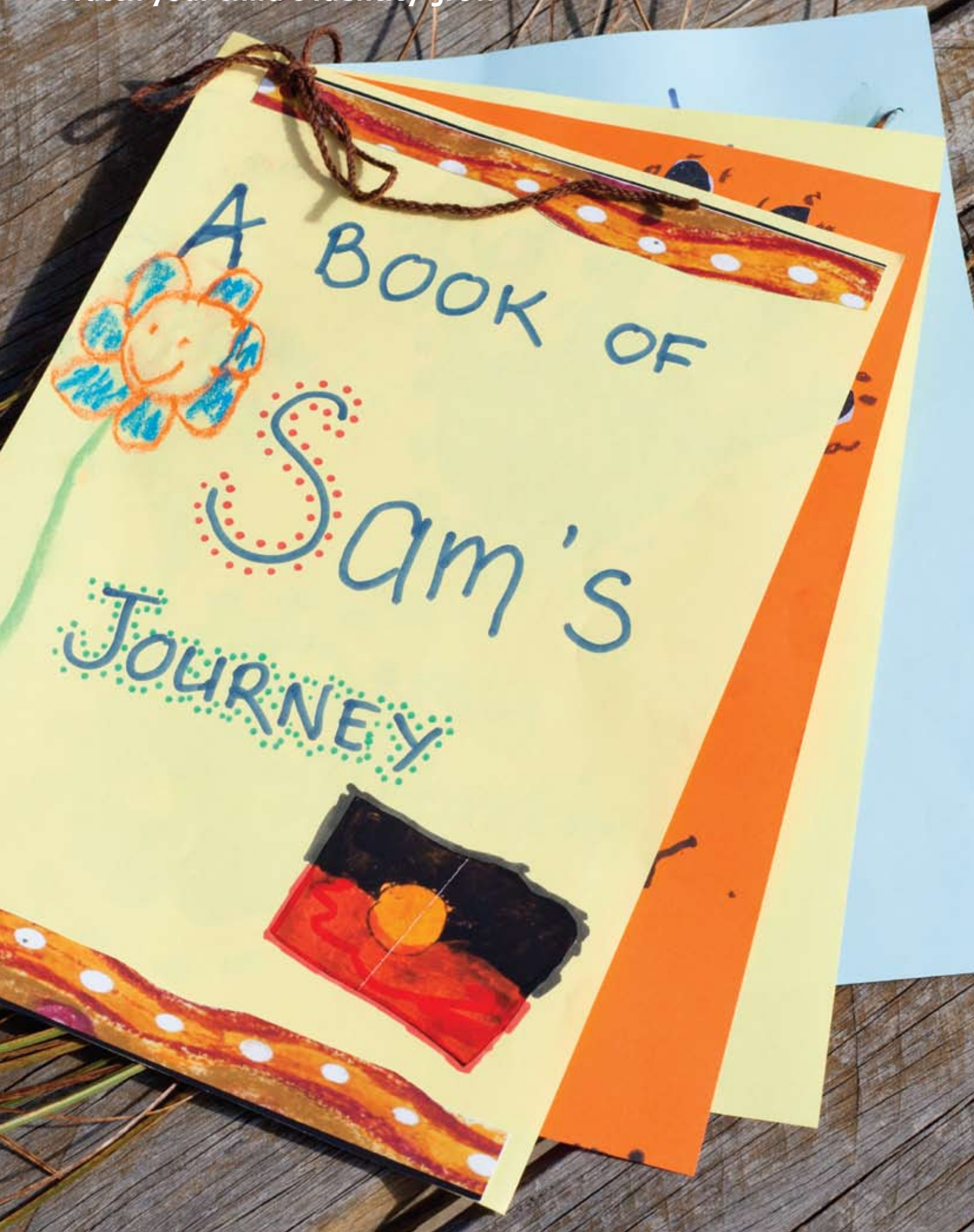
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Original LearningGames® by Joseph Sparling and Isabelle Lewis.

A BOOK OF MY JOURNEY

Watch your child's identity grow



A book of My Journey

Adult

Help bring the things your child knows about herself together to put into an album.

Save things together that are special to her: pictures of brothers, sisters, grandparents, cousins, aunties and uncles, pictures of favorite foods, pets, certificates of achievement, stickers, colourful fabrics and names and photos of other community members such as friends and teachers, or any objects like feathers and leaves.

As the days go by add other things to the empty album pages. As it develops, create opportunities for your child to show and explain the album to others including his child care group.

Child

The child begins to recognise himself as a complex person. He will come back to the album many times and ask, "What's that?" The adult can write some words such as "My pet" or "I found this" next to pictures and the child may pretend to read these words.

Why?

To help the child tell others about himself. To gain increased familiarity with books. By making one using pictures of his family the child will get the important message that he is an interesting person. This game gives the child a rich, detailed concept of himself as a source of identify and security.



Help your child collect things that are special to them



Using string tie the book together so it is strong



Encourage your child with the book. Say things like, "this reminds me of your favourite tree"





A GATHERING PLACE

A place to share, care and sing

A Gathering Place

Adult

Create a place for family and friends to sit around and share stories, songs and culture.

In your place, create a space for putting objects on, up and around you. You could have a surface for hanging things up. It should be low enough for the child to easily reach and see.

Leave an interesting object there that you want to share with your child. When she notices it, tell your child a little bit about it.

“Look Alex, these are the clapsticks your uncle made for you.”

Later encourage the family to put something in the gathering place or hang it up, tell a story and share a song.

Take time to listen to the child’s contribution. Thank her for sharing it with you and other members of the family.

When the child shows you something you might encourage and suggest it be displayed in the gathering place.

Child

Your child will feel good about the time spent together talking and sharing the objects, stories and songs. Gradually she will begin to contribute things to the gathering place.

Why?

To encourage sharing by making a special place for everyone to share culture, objects, stories and songs.



Gathering places are a great space for story telling



Little ones love to listen and learn about new and exciting things



Gathering places are a great place for children to learn and share with their Elders

WATER PLAY

Make bathtime fun



Water Play

Adult

Let bath time be relaxed for you and the child. Talk a lot about the soap and toys – how they feel in the water and what they are doing. Follow the child's lead and give him the words as he needs them.

When your child is bathing or is playing in water, many interesting things happen. Give him words for these things. During bath time you might say:

"The soap is making bubbles on your tummy"

"Listen to the water as it goes down the drain"

"The towel is drying you off".

Outdoors let your child have a pot partly filled with water and some plastic cups. Stand back and watch. Sometimes you can give him words for what is happening:

"You poured the water into that cup until it overflowed."

"I see some things are floating. Let's count them together. "

Child

Young children enjoy water because it moves in surprising ways. Your child may not seem to be paying attention to the words you are supplying, but each word is reaching them and being tucked away. Suddenly one day you'll hear them say one of these words.

Why?

To enjoy playing in and with water. To let the child hear the words for what he is doing at that moment and what he is touching.

Water is an important natural source of rejuvenation and life in Aboriginal culture.

NOTE: ALWAYS SUPERVISE CHILDREN DURING WATER PLAY



Give your child words for what is happening in the bath



You might say, "the duck makes a splash when you drop him in the water"



Watch your child as he plays outdoors



WHO AM I IN THE MIRROR

Watch your children discover themselves

Who am I in the Mirror

Adult

Encourage your child to stand in front of a full-length mirror. Your child will get to know herself as she watches herself in the mirror. Give her an object so she can feel what she sees is happening in the mirror. Laugh with your child as she 'pulls' different faces.

As you give your child an object let her play with it as she watches what is happening in the mirror.

Respond to some of her actions, saying things like: "You're holding the boomerang above your head" and "it's a big boomerang, isn't it?"

Mostly, just watch her.

You can talk with your child about her image, "This is you when you are clapping the sticks." Have fun imitating some of her motions but realise she needs to play the game by herself.

A box with cultural and natural objects can be kept within reach for spontaneous fun.

Child

Your child will think it is fun to see her image. She'll probably wiggle and giggle, pose and 'pull' faces. You can help by making her feel important when she can make her image do whatever she wants it to do.

Why?

The more your child learns about herself and what she can do, the more confidence she will have in new situations. This will contribute to your child's pride and identity. It will create awareness, movement and speech and help with eye contact.



Talk to your child about her image



Mostly just watch your child as she watches herself



Having her face painted in the mirror can be fun

SINGING AND DOING

Add rhythm and singing to caregiving



Singing and Doing

Adult

The singing and stroking you do to your baby introduces them to music and rhythm. During bathing, changing, feeding, comforting and bedding look for ways to use gentle rhythmic motions. Then add your voice to these motions. Choose songs that have lots of rhyming sounds.

Your touching and the sound of your voice are much more important to your baby than the sounds of the radio or television.

Hearing these songs will also help your baby later on when they learn to read.

Child

Sometimes it may seem like your baby doesn't notice the rhythm and singing you're providing. But when he is happy and relaxed, you can be sure that you are giving him something he needs and likes.

Snuggles and smiles show that he is enjoying the music. Even if your baby is tired, drowsy or shutting his eyes, he is still absorbing the music and rhythm.

Why?

To add the pleasure of singing and rhythm to everyday caregiving. To help the baby connect music and rhyming words with pleasant events. Before they are born, babies hear the rhythmic beating of the mother's heart – so this game builds on something they already know. The rhythm of singing paves the way for some of life's later activities like dancing, sports, or playing a musical instrument. And the rhymes help your child later with literacy, reading and communication. For Aboriginal families story-telling and culture is often passed on through song and movement.



After a fun bath, add some rhythm and song



When you sit with your baby, sing as you move back and forth



When he's upset, your calming hands could stroke his back while you walk around and sing over and over, "It's okay now"

SEE, SHOW, SAY

Make reading fun



SEE, SHOW, SAY

Adult

Your child will learn when she uses her ears, eyes, hands, and voice during reading time. Begin by being sure that she is listening to your voice and looking at the book.

If she looks at the possum while you are reading about it, stop and say. "Yes, you're looking at the possum." Read the same book regularly.

When she is familiar with the story, ask her to point. Say things like, "There's a turtle." Can you put your finger on the turtle?" or "Where are the man's feet?" By pointing she's showing that she recognises the words you are saying. As soon as you think she's able, invite her to say the word for the thing she pointed to. Say, "You touched the man's feet. Can you say feet?" Then on regular readings of the book ask her to point and say. Later, ask a question for her to answer in a word or two. Say things like, "What is the little boy holding?" or "Is the lady happy?" If possible, have a little conversation with several answers and questions before moving on. Seeing, showing, saying are three levels of child response. Each level is a little harder than the last. Ask your child to answer the hardest level you think she will be able to give.

Be happy if your child asks a question! Stop and give her a thoughtful answer.

Child

Little ones enjoy booktime. They like familiar books as well as new ones. A two year old will often find a favourite book and hand it to the adult to read with them.

Why?

To give the child a way of being mentally active during reading time. Young children who pay close attention and talk about the story and pictures are building early literacy.



SEE: The first few times you play, watch her eyes. Make sure she is looking at the pictures you are reading about



*SHOW: Ask her to point to the pictures you are talking about.
"Where is the rainbow?"*



*SAY: Ask a question she can answer in one or two words.
"What is the little boy holding?"*



Secretariat of National
Aboriginal and Islander
Child Care

The national peak body
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