Thank you for your contribution to the E4Kids study. We are in the thick of data collection: our team of researchers are visiting participating children in their centres and schools. It has been lovely to catch up with the children and to see how they have progressed and grown!

A number of the children participating in E4Kids have made the transition into new centres and schools, so we are also meeting many new directors, principals and teachers for the first time. We have had a fantastic reception from all the services and schools participating in E4Kids. Staff have been welcoming and shown great interest in the study. Their contribution and your ongoing support is helping E4Kids to provide new evidence about children’s learning and development and helping government to support high quality services for all children.

Collette Tayler  Karen Thorpe

E4Kids Bus Story

‘The Bus Story’ gives us an understanding of the quality and quantity of children’s social relationships in services and schools.

The Bus Story is used to ask children about their peer relationships. In this task children are asked to nominate three friends to take on an adventure. Stickers are used to represent each of their friends and placed on a picture of a bus that they can also colour in. The children are then asked to talk about who they have chosen and the reason for their choices.

Children’s responses allow us to understand the nature of friendships and also friendship qualities. Friendship qualities we are interested include emotional connectedness (e.g. “She is always kind to me”), reciprocal friendships (e.g. “We go to each other's house”) and the history of friendships (e.g. “We have been friends since we were babies”). Each child’s stories provide important insight into their friendships and social world.

What is happening with the information you give us?

Our aim in E4Kids is to inform policy makers, professionals in the field and parents about the contribution that early education and care programs make to children’s learning and development. There are a number of ways we communicate our results: we present our findings at conferences, write articles for publication, provide advice to government, teach at universities and even present our findings through the media. The time taken between collecting data and publishing our results can seem slow. This is because we first have to be sure our analyses are of a high standard. Members of the team check the work before it can be sent out and then the work is reviewed by others and often revised before it is accepted for presentation or publication.

Although the study is relatively young, we have already had success in being accepted for high-level presentation and publication in journals. In April this year Collette Tayler presented our work at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development in Montréal, Canada. You can find more of our publications, including an upcoming presentation by Karen Thorpe and Sally Station about the Bus Story at our website: http://www.e4kids.org.au

We look forward to keeping you updated about the study and our publications.

E4 Kids main caregiver survey

The 2011 main caregiver survey is now available online. You will notice that many of the questions in the 2011 survey are the same as the 2010 survey. We do this so that we can see how your child and family grow and change over time. Parents and caregivers know their children best and it is for this reason that the information you provide to us in this survey is so important.

Please take the time to complete the survey soon – or if you have already completed it for 2011 – thank you!
Why is reading important?
Reading with children is important for so many reasons. Here are just a few...

Develops their skills - children who are read to from birth find it much easier to learn to read themselves.

Improves vocabulary - reading helps kids learn new words and the right way to pronounce them.

Opens up the world - whether books are fact or fiction they expose children to new ideas and can make them curious about science, art, history and the world around them.

Helps kids make friends - listening to stories can encourage empathy for other people and assist kids understand how to respond socially.

Gives some quiet - stopping to spend time with books gives both kids and parents a chance to share some calm, focussed time together.

Sets them up for school - listening and participating in reading sets children up to succeed at school and achieve in ongoing education.

It’s fun - reading aloud with children brings stories to life and can be just as entertaining as tv!

Book Review
The Faraway Tree Books by Enid Blynton
Jo, Bessie and Fanny climb up the faraway tree all by themselves (with no parents!). The faraway tree is the tallest tree in the forest and it is magical. You have to climb up the faraway tree but you can go down on a slippery slip and land on green moss at the bottom.

There are lots of lands to visit at the top of the tree – my favourite is Birthday Land because I’d like to eat some wishing cake! I like (the character) Saucepan the best because he is funny and says thing like “house” instead of “mouse”. I read the Far Away Tree with my Mum and Dad. Sophie – aged 5

We need to keep in touch with you throughout the year. If you are moving or any of your contact details are about to change, let us know.

Email: e4-kids@unimelb.edu.au
Website: www.e4kids.org.au

Who am I?
My name is Tim Gilley. I am the Partner Investigator from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

What I like about E4Kids
I became fascinated in how we could improve people’s lives through improving children’s experiences in the early years over 20 years ago, when I was responsible for establishing a longitudinal study of children born in 1990 for the Brotherhood of St Laurence. These babies are now 21 years of age and we have learnt a lot about the factors that influences children’s life chances. What I particularly like about the E4Kids study is that it focuses on improving one of these important influences: the quality of our formal child care and kindergarten programs!

My favourite childhood book...
Winnie the Pooh was my favourite book as a child and I loved reading the Dr Seuss books to my daughters Eva and Laura.