



Four Corners - DigiKids

DigiKids, reported by Louise Milligan, goes to air on Monday 11th November at 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday 12th November at 1.00pm and Wednesday 13th at 11.20pm. It can also be seen on ABC NEWS channel on Saturday at 8.10pm AEST, [ABC iview](#) and at abc.net.au/4corners

[Four Corners](#)

Monday night's ABC *Four Corners* program, *DigiKids*, covered a broad range of educational issues and concerns, and looked at structures that are supporting students.

I strongly recommend you watch the program and take note of what you notice and any questions you might have. The program is a powerful resource itself that can generate discussions with colleagues. I will go into more detail in a later blog.

The challenge

One cause for concern is the idea that four years at university equips an individual with understanding of every aspect of the complexity of the classroom and students, and the detail and complexity of expansive curriculum documents which require translation into

comprehensive, articulate and engaging programs and lessons. Every day. According to the [Australian Professional Teaching Standards](#)

There are seven Standards that outline what teachers *should know and be able to do*.

Standard 1 - Know students and how they learn.

Standard 2 - Know the content and how to teach it.

Standard 3 - Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.

Standard 4 - Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments.

Standard 5 - Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning.

Standard 6 - Engage in professional learning.

Standard 7 - Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

Four years at university cannot ensure competence in every one of these standards. We learn on the job, just like every other professional.

Professional learning

A teacher articulated one of these ‘problems’ for her.

“At no point during my own education was I ever explicitly taught grammar. I felt like a fraud. How can I stand here in front of the class when I don’t actually know some of the rules?”
Teacher

This is the best place to start ‘fixing’ the problem.

We know we don’t know everything when we start our teaching careers. We sometimes even have to put on a bit of an act while we work on building the knowledge and expertise we need. And every one of us has felt like a fraud at the beginning.

What we can do is work on what it is that we don’t know. That’s Standard 6 – ‘Engage in professional learning’



Grammar – freedom and convenience

As professionals, we can seek out the opportunities for learning all that knowledge about grammar - how the English language works - that we didn't get at school, or at uni, or from our wide academic reading. I didn't learn to drive at school. I identified that I really needed to have a licence to be able to enjoy the freedom of the open road. And the convenience.

I can guarantee that the freedom and convenience of understanding the structure of our language is worth it.

Books on Grammar to have in your library and read and refer to frequently:

- Beverly Derewianka's 2011 reference: *A new grammar companion for teachers*, 2nd Edition. Primary English Teaching Association
- Derewianka and Jones' 2016 guide: *Teaching language in context*, 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press
- Humphrey, Droga and Feez's 2012 practical handbook: *Grammar and Meaning*. Primary English Teaching Association Australia
- Winch, Ross Johnston, March, Ljungdahl & Holliday's 2014 extensive reference: *Literacy: reading, writing and children's literature* 2nd Edition (Chapter 16). Oxford University Press

Courses on Grammar to undertake:

- *Try Tell Me Your Story: Supporting EAL/D Students in the Primary Years* and others at NSWTF's <https://cpl.asn.au/>
- Teaching Grammar with Rich Literature and Rushton & Rossbridge's *Grammar and Teaching: A twelve week program* both at [PETAA](#)
- Various online courses at [ALEA](#)
- Online courses at [NSW Department of Education](#)

Activities to engage with:

- Writing – constructing texts yourself in each of the Australian Curriculum’s types of text, in numerous genres. This is the best way to learn what it is you need to know so you can feel confident about teaching our students.
- Consult colleagues you know are excellent practitioners. Work collaboratively with them while you build your knowledge and skills.

The freedom for our students of understanding the structure of our language will be well worth it.

References

<https://www.abc.net.au/4corners/digi-kids/11693706>