

Extra Edge Services

Extra Edge Services is a career service provider in Western Australia, and part of the State Department of Education and Training Employment Directions Network initiative.

What did they set out to achieve?

This innovative project used the *Blueprint* with a group of mothers / caregivers and their very young children (0-12 months of age), to assess the development of career competencies amongst participants following a series of workshops. The caregivers involved in the project were often isolated within the local community due to factors such as lack of family support, husbands who work away or language barriers. They are referred to Extra Edge by local agencies and staff (for example, by Child Health Clinics and Social Workers).

Initially it was intended that both mothers / caregivers and their children would be targeted with career development interventions such as workshops. However, early resistance from mothers / caregivers to the notion of 'career', led project staff to focus on the early skills being developed by the infants only, via the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program[®].¹

What did Extra Edge do?

Extra Edge staff involved in the project used the *Blueprint* to map the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program[®] (P-CMGP[®]) against the career management competencies to demonstrate how an early childhood development program can provide the underpinning social skills that contribute to career development competence later in life.

In terms of a step-by-step process, the following activities were undertaken

- Read the *Blueprint* and made notes on the chapters that could relate to the P-CMGP[®]
- Conducted 10 family sessions of the P-CMGP[®] taking observations of the children's behaviours in the program

...the *Blueprint's* clear structure and matrices have made evaluating our program easier than expected...we found the performance indicators easy to work with and essential in terms of our project.

¹ P-CMGP[®] was developed in Toronto, Canada in 1986, to enhance language and communication skills in young children, as well as to strengthen the relationship between parents and their children. The program consists of rhymes and stories (which are presented orally or via sign language and is delivered in small groups, making it accessible for a variety of cultural and socio-economic participants. Training is mandatory for those delivering the program.



- Examined the outcomes of the P-CMGP® and then compared them to the career competencies, developmental phases, learning taxonomy and performance indicators of the *Blueprint*, looking for overlapping areas between the two
- Began drafting possible local standards relating to performance indicators to be used with very young children based on observations, outcomes of P-CMGP® and the *Blueprint*

Was the *Blueprint* helpful?

The *Blueprint* provided the mechanism to assess the career development outcomes of an early years program for infants. More specifically:

The Blueprint allowed us to show that participation in a quality early years program can assist the development of important foundational social skills that become important career management skills later in life. In terms of our adult participants, (the Blueprint) allowed us ...to show parents returning to the workforce how they have developed essential competencies during their time out of the workforce as parents / carers. It will also assist adult clients to become more familiar with the concept of work / life balance and (understand) that these aren't separate issues.

The trial project significantly challenged the assumptions that adult participants held about career development, although new understandings were not as widely embraced as project staff had hoped. Many of the adult participants in the project believed that career development had nothing to do with them at present, stemming from a belief that while out of the workforce as a parent, your career competencies are 'on hold' and no development takes place. Extra Edge staff were able to challenge this assumption by explaining the changing nature of career development to participants.

