



STaR

access, opportunity & acceptance

STaR Inclusive Early Childhood Association Inc.
ABN 62 199 402 048

ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008



CONTENTS

STaR Vision and Mission	page 3
STaR History	page 4
President's Report	page 5
General Manager's Report	page 6,7
STaR Project Manager's Report	page 8,9,10,11,12
Morgan's Story	page 12
Treasurer's Report	page 13
STaR Board and Staff	page 14
Contact Information	page 15

VISION & MISSION

Our mission

"To empower children with disabilities and/or special learning needs, and those who support them, through research based education."

Our vision

"To be a highly professional organisation providing research-based education and support to children with disabilities and/or special needs, and those who support them, through research based education."

Objectives

- To assist early childhood services to accommodate children with significant levels of disability within their generic early childhood programs, thereby enabling parents of children with disabilities to access respite and/or childcare services as needed.
- To provide individual educational programs to 0 - 6 year old children with disabilities (primarily intellectual disabilities) in inclusive early childhood settings.
- To maximise the learning of young children with disabilities across all developmental domains.
- To work towards achieving the least restrictive educational environment for children with disabilities.
- To work collaboratively with parents and professionals in the education of children with special needs.
- To support parents through information sessions and parent workshops, and,
- To extend the knowledge of best practices and outcomes through research, teacher training and the dissemination of information.



STaR HISTORY

In 1992, the Early Years Program was established at Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC). This inclusive program was designed for 3-6 year old children with disabilities and typically developing preschoolers.

The research conducted by MUSEC over the 10 years of operation, clearly demonstrated that this model of inclusive early childhood education, benefits both children with and without disabilities.

In 2001, the University support for the program ceased. It was the success and positive outcomes, witnessed by so many parents and staff, that inspired and motivated them to ensure that the learning opportunity that the program offered should be made available to as many children as possible in the community.

The STaR Association was established at the end of 2001 to assist with transitioning the Early School model from the isolated University premises, to a long day childcare centre within the community. The STaR program commenced at Meadowbank Multipurpose Learning Centre in 2002. It had six children with special needs enrolled for two days per week. It was very successful and was eventually operating five days per week with 10 children enrolled in the program. However, with only 10% government funding, enormous pressure was placed on families to fundraise the remaining amount, and despite its success, the program was not able to continue without further government funding.

In December 2004, under the government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, STaR was one of just 26 organisations Australia wide, funded in the "Early Childhood Invest to Grow" initiative. A grant was awarded to see the STaR program become the STaR Project and expand into up to 12 centres over 3 years.



In March 2005, funding was granted to STaR by the Westmead Children's Hospital, specifically to assist carers of children with special needs. This funding was made available through the NSW Carers program, a State Government initiative established to increase the support available for carers of children with disabilities. We do this through our Caring for Carers program.





PRESIDENTS REPORT

The STaR Association was established to address the need for professional, research-based education and support in integrated childcare centres for children with disabilities and those who support them.

The STaR Association has had a successful year of operations in its key services, both the STaR Project and STaR Caring for Carers, and has continued to fulfil its mission in its provision of services.

We were pleased to receive recent advice from Access Macquarie, an arm of Macquarie University, of the extension of funding for the **STaR Project** by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA). This will allow STaR to continue to operate and to provide the STaR early intervention services, on an outreach basis, in eight community-based childcare centres across the Sydney metropolitan area. The Association will continue its efforts in endeavouring to secure on-going FACSIA funding for these critical services.

As indicated in the General Manager's Report, the STaR Association has continued to fund the **STaR Caring for Carers** program through fundraising endeavours. We are most grateful for the support provided for this program in this financial year from Parramatta Council through its Community Development Support Expenditure (CDSE) Grant.

The General Manager has recorded the Association's gratitude to all those who have supported STaR through the year, and who have assisted us in fulfilling our goals.

For the future, we will continue to pursue a range of opportunities for government funding and for corporate and private philanthropy and support. With government, our liaison this year has included local, state and federal government. We have made substantial progress in developing STaR presentation and promotional material to assist in raising the profile of the Association. We will renew our efforts in the next financial year and will pursue a range of strategies for fundraising.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and professional management provided by the STaR Association General Manager, Margaret Meaker, and by the members of the administrative team. I would also like to thank my fellow members of the Board: Dr Coral Kemp, Nicole Grantham (Treasurer), and Jane Cockburn. Dr Coral Kemp, with her link to Macquarie University, continues to inspire and to assist both the Board and the STaR Association with her expert knowledge.

Dr Frances Cunningham
President



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The STaR Association continues to gain a reputation for being a highly professional, innovative and unique organisation through its provision of research-based education and support to children with disabilities and those who support them.

The initial years of establishing our organisation have been wholly focused on developing our service models and establishing our project centres across Metropolitan Sydney. Our limited resources in terms of funding and staffing have been, rightfully, directed to this outcome. In our fifth year of operation we recognised however, that in order to safeguard the Association and establish partnerships with other services, the corporate sector and funding bodies, we needed to focus on the profile and operational structure of STaR.

We continue to face the challenge as a small organisation, to secure ongoing funding. We have actively pursued and met with several politicians to introduce the Association. Considerable resources were allocated to submitting 3 tender applications to the Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care (DADHC) and it was disappointing that these applications were unsuccessful. We continue to develop relationships with Government departments both at State and Federal levels as well as other organisations. The development, upgrade and reformatting of all marketing and promotional material as well as policy and procedures has been undertaken.

Our Services

The STaR project- We continue to operate in 8 community based childcare centres across Sydney metropolitan area. The STaR project provides an educational service to the participating childcare centres to assist them to support the STaR children. This includes developing Individual education programs, early academic skill tutoring in early literacy and numeracy, school preparation, transition to school, training, support and professional development for childcare staff. The project is funded by The Department of Families, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

STaR Caring for Carers- This program focuses on the needs of our STaR families providing information, resources, courses & workshops, developing social and service networks and case management as needed. It was established in 2005 with a one-year grant from Westmead Children's Hospital. Recognising its importance the STaR Association has continued to fund the program through fundraising endeavours. We were fortunate to obtain a Community Development Support Expenditure (CDSE) Grant administered by Parramatta Council this year, which contributed significantly to the ongoing operation and purchase of resources.

Our Supporters

Initially the Association relied almost solely on parents fundraising to operate, which placed added stress on families. As the project evolved and we moved into a number of childcare centres the "parent culture" changed and we were no longer able to rely on families to fundraise.



The Australian Stockbrokers Foundation has consistently supported us since 2003. Placing no demands on a very “stretched” team, they have played a fundamental role in ensuring we continued to develop and deliver such an important service. Their preparedness to support organisations lacking the high profile and secure funding is unique and greatly appreciated.

The MonStar Cup was held for a second year in March 2008 at Pennant Hills Golf Club. MonSTaR is an annual charity event organised by a committee of three generous businessmen who raise funds to support Motor Neurone Disease Association of NSW and the STaR Association. Their significant contribution has given us longevity and the confidence to plan long term. They are well supported by the corporate and community sectors and many family and friends. We are grateful for the time, thought, energy and resources that are pooled as a team to produce something that is making such a difference to the lives of so many.

I would also like to acknowledge Casey Bates Accountants and Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers who continue to provide us with invaluable advice, support and service pro bono.

Our Future

As we continue to strengthen we have a very clear and positive sense of future. In 2008/2009 our aim is to develop a STaR Centre of Excellence model that would have numerous benefits for the organisation, local communities and families we support.

It is a privilege to work with a Board whose members are highly skilled, committed and generous. I would like to thank Dr Frances Cunningham, Dr Coral Kemp, Nicole Grantham and Jane Cockburn for their consistent support.

An exceptional team of staff delivers the STaR services. Their dedication, focus and energy ensures our STaR children, their families and Childcare Centre staff have positive outcomes continually.

The STaR Board and team of staff remain very committed to continue developing this unique organisation. My motivation remains very personal because my daughter’s ability to learn and participate socially was enhanced forever because she attended a STaR centre for 3 years.

Margaret Meaker
General Manager



STaR PROJECT MANAGER'S REPORT

July 2007 - 2008 has been a difficult period for the STaR Project. It has been a period of uncertainty regarding the Project's future and its direction. At the end of 2007 the Project was due to conclude however towards the end of 2007 it was decided that the STaR Association would continue to support the current participating centres by topping up the ISP funding to employ an Early Intervention Support teacher. Several funding applications were lodged in an attempt to continue and/or expand the Project with no success. In May, the Project was notified that FaHCSIA had extended the STaR Project funding for another year.

Recruitment of Centres and families

From July 2007 the recruitment of centres and families was scaled down due to the proposed completion of the program at the end of 2007.

By the end of 2007 the STaR Project model was operating in 8 centres:

- One private centre in Ryde/Meadowbank owned by Kay Doyle
 - Cressy Road Multipurpose Learning Centre
- Two Blactown City Council childcare centres
 - Bob Sinclair Childcare Centre
 - Joanne Samarco Childcare Centre
- Three Penrith City Council centres
 - Werrianda Children's Centre
 - Carita Children's Centre
 - Stepping Stones Learning Centre
- Two centres run by not-for-profit organisations
 - Banksia Cottage (Students at Macquarie)
 - St Anthony's Childcare Centre (St Anthony's Family Care)

In June 2008 the STaR Project commenced operation in its first sponsored childcare centre:

- A private centre in Beecroft
 - Thinking Hats Early Learning Centre

The STaR Project is currently operating in 9 childcare centres supporting 36 children with disabilities, their families and the childcare centres they attend. The children we are supporting are primarily children with reasonably high support needs.

To date the STaR Project has catered for 85 children with disabilities across 12 centres. In 2006, 11 centres catered for 49 children (Not all 49 were in the program at any one time.). In 2007 36 children received the STaR program in 8 centres. In 2008, to date, 39 children have received the STaR program across 9 centres. It is considered that 4-5 children with disabilities is the maximum number of children that can be adequately programmed for within a centre at a given time.

Project Management

The project is managed by Access Macquarie and the STaR Association. FaHCSIA funding, which was due to cease at the end of June 2008, was extended until June 2009. At this time the board decided to negotiate with Access Macquarie to take over the financial management of the Project including the employment of staff. This was completed in September 2008. The project Director (also a STaR Association Board Member) is responsible for the oversight of the Project



operation and was responsible for negotiating the completion of the final external evaluation which was completed in February 2008.

Staffing:

FaHCSIA STaR Project funding ran out at the end of February 2008 and a decision was made by the STaR Association Board to use ISP funding supplemented by STaR Association funding to continue to support the 8 participating childcare centres. It was also decided to continue the Project Co-ordinator position whilst waiting for funding tenders to be determined.

Staff for 2007-2008 were:

Project Director (honorary): Coral Kemp

Project Co-ordinator: Dawn Chadwick

Early Intervention Support Teacher: Kathy Hodgetts

Casual part-time release staff: Yuriko Kishida, Debra Drinan replaced by Nicole Lesley,
Kim Waldron and Aleksandra Ucinyk

All but one of the staff working on the Project (a casual release worker) is a qualified special educator.

In addition to the paid staff, several students and interns (3 from July 2007-October 2008) have supported the project centres. They have proved a valuable support for the project centres.

Collaboration with Partner Organizations:

- Meetings have been held with the managers of all centres to ensure the smooth running of the project.
- Meetings have been held with Penrith City Council and Blacktown Council to update them on the Project. The meetings also explored the possibility of extending the Project and establishing a centre of excellence in the council area. Negotiations with Penrith council resulted in the possible collaborative use of a Preschool centre at Erskine Park. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, the proposed project was unable to continue. Both council Children's Services Managers were happy to be referees for funding tenders.
- The project coordinator is assisting one of the managing agents with their applications for Intervention Support Program (ISP) funding through the Department of Education and Training and the evaluation of programs funded through ISP money.
- The project co-ordinator assisted interested centres to apply for Capital Grants funding to purchase hydrolic lift change tables and make improvements to centres where applicable.

Staff Training:

University Course: Seven Special Needs Managers (4 from Penrith centres, 2 from Blacktown centres and 1 from a University childcare centre) have now completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Early Intervention from Macquarie University.

Onsite training: In addition to the member of staff nominated to enrol in the university course or with qualifications in special education (10 trained as SNMs over the life of the project), 15 additional teachers have been trained on site in the STaR Child Support Model. Five of these were trained as special needs managers but did not enrol in the university course. The other 5 were trained in addition to the SNM in the centre either because the SNM moved or because there were STaR children in another class and it was considered easier for that classroom teacher to program for the child.

In addition to on site training within the childcare centres, the Project provided in-service training for all STaR affiliated childcare centre staff. Training is now carried out in the centres themselves usually during centre staff meeting times. This is more time consuming but has proved more successful as it is compulsory for all staff to attend and workshops can be more personalized to meet individual staff/child needs. Where possible 2 centres are combined for a workshop.

Workshops conducted in the past year include:

7/8/2007	Managing Challenging Behaviour – Banksia, St. Anthony’s – Dawn
28/8/2007	Basic Communication Using Sign – St. Anthony’s, Cressy Rd, Banksia – Aileen Ryan
18/7/07	Developing communication through shared book reading – Bob Sinclair, St. Anthony’s – Dawn and Kathy
25/7/07	Developing communication through shared book reading – Carita, Werrianda
1/8/07	Managing Challenging Behaviour – Werrianda, Joanne Sammarco, Carita, Stepping Stones, Bob Sinclair
15/8/07	Basic Communication Using Sign – Carita, Stepping Stones, Werrianda
9/10/07	SNM Training/Workshop Day - all SNM’s - Dawn and Kathy
6/11/07	Implementing IEP’s in the Classroom – Werrianda – Dawn and Kathy
13/12/07	Implementing IEP’s in the Classroom – Carita – Dawn and Kathy
13/3/08	School Options – Dawn – Banksia
22/2/08	Implementing IEP’s in the Classroom – Werrianda – Dawn and Kathy
5/3/08	Implementing IEP’s in the Classroom – Bob Sinclair – Kathy
11/3/08	School Options - Stepping Stones - Dawn
19/3/08	School Options – Joanne Sammarco , Bob Sinclair
27/3/08	Implementing IEP’s in the Classroom – Werrianda - Kathy
29/4/08	Developing communication through shared book reading – Stepping Stones – Dawn and Kathy
16/7/08	Implementing IEP’s in the classroom – Bob Sinclair – Kathy
28/7/08	Managing Challenging Behaviour – Werrianda, Carita, Stepping Stones
5/8/08	Implementing IEP’s in the Classroom – Thinking Hats - Dawn
6/8/08	Managing Challenging Behaviour – Macquarie Uni centres
13/8/08	SNM Meeting – Coral, Dawn
27/8/08	Teaching Strategies – St. Anthony’s – Kathy and Dawn
3/9/08	Managing Challenging Behaviour – Bob Sinclair, Joanne Sammarco

Evaluation and Acknowledgment

The FaCHSIA external evaluation of the Project was completed by Dr Mark Carter in April 2008. A copy of this document has been sent to the STaR Board.

During the evaluation period 75 children with disabilities received services in STaR affiliated centres. The developmental measures used in the evaluation indicated that, on the whole, children made good developmental progress, particularly in the areas specifically targeted for intervention. Family surveys indicated that most families were satisfied with the programs in general and were very satisfied with their children’s progress. According to evaluation data, collected from evaluations of professional development for staff and parent education programs, parents and staff responded well to educational programs provided by the STaR project staff and staff surveys indicated that there were modest increases in staff knowledge, attitudes and skill. A norm-referenced measure of enabling practices used with the families indicated that parents felt comfortable with their relationships with the professionals involved in the program and felt that



they had a high degree of autonomy. There was a small decrease in family stress and a modest increase in family coping.

In March 2008 a submission was made to the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) to have the training component of the STaR Project accepted as a promising practice. A letter was received from AIFS in April 2008 informing us that this submission had been successful and that an edited version of the proposal would be put onto the AIFS website.

Submissions

During the past 12 months several funding applications have been submitted. These include:

Potter Foundation – Developing a Model EI Centre

DADHC Developing Innovative Services and Practices

DADHC Extending Services

FaHCSIA ASD Service Provider Panel Applications

- STaR Association Lead Agency in collaboration with EASIA Clinic and Autism Central
- Consortium member with St Anthony's as Lead Agency

The FaHCSIA Panel Applications were both successful. It is hoped that through these approved panel memberships the STaR Association will be able to extend their services and become more viable.

Research and Publications

Over the last 12 months data have been collected for research conducted by Dr Coral Kemp and her research student Yuriko Kishida. One paper related to this research has been published in 2008 and two more papers submitted, one of these having been recently accepted for publication in a peer reviewed journal. More papers will be submitted over the next 12 months. Yuriko Kishida has been awarded her doctorate and will graduate next April. Most of her doctoral work has involved data collected in STaR affiliated centres.

Current Project Directions

The 9 centres currently being supported by the STaR Project have expressed their desire for continued support. It is proposed that these centres will continue to be supported by a STaR Early Intervention Teacher and the STaR Project Manager. It is also hoped to recruit 3-4 new childcare centres in 2009.

At present the STaR Project is in the process of recruiting childcare centres in the Baulkham Hills Shire council area. Negotiations were held with council but, as on a previous occasion, no council centres have shown interest in joining the project. It is considered that council does not support or encourage staff to complete further training.

Collaboration with the Northern Sydney region Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) has proved more beneficial. The co-ordinator and ISA facilitators have been extremely supportive and have located centres interested in joining the Project. It is hoped that 3 new centres in the Hills area will soon join the project. A centre in Lane Cove has also indicated interest.

It is hoped to commence a Special Needs Playgroup at Macquarie University in 2009. This playgroup will be available to families of the STaR Project and also any other interested families.

A Training Manual is currently being written which will detail the Special Needs Manager training process and all relevant documentation.

The STaR Project role as an ASD service provider:

Children with an ASD and their families enrolled in the STaR Project will have access to extra services that will be funded by the FaHCSIA ASD funding. Families of children with an ASD, attending STaR affiliated childcare centres, will have the option of more intensive school preparation for their child and a more intensive school transition program. Families will also have access to a more intensive and co-ordinated family/child support program through the Caring for Carers and Autism Central programs.

MORGAN'S STORY

Morgan was born in January 2005 with a rare type of Muscular Dystrophy called Ullrich's Congenital Muscular Dystrophy. This means he has respiratory problems, muscle wastage and muscular fatigue.

Morgan's physical disabilities mean he will never be able to participate fully in a physical environment, therefore accessibility will always be an issue for Morgan and his family. Morgan has been a STaR child for the past 3 years during which time we have seen a cheeky and loving personality emerge combined with a fierce determination to overcome the barriers that his disability presents. The STaR program has helped Morgan to develop his social and communication skills as well as specific gross motor skills through the interaction with other typically developing children. These children see beyond Morgan's disabilities and together Morgan, his classmates and STaR demonstrate that disability is no barrier to learning.

Morgan and his family look forward to him attending a mainstream school in 2010.



TREASURERS REPORT



The STaR Association generated a surplus of \$3,045.00 in the 2007-2008 financial year and as at June 2008 held cash of \$114,309 providing a good financial base to continue organisational growth

Income from fundraising was generated through participation in the 2nd Annual MonSTaR cup, which generated \$65,000. The Stockbrokers Foundation continues to support STaR donating \$35,000 this year.

STaR continues to fund the Caring for Carers program recognising the importance of providing support to the families of our STaR children. The cost of running this worthwhile program for 2007-08 was approx \$22,000.00

Significant resources were allocated to writing Tender applications to the Department of Disability, Ageing and Home Care. In all 3 applications were submitted and it was very disappointing to receive the news they were not successful. We recognise the importance of continuing to work towards securing recurrent Government Funding in the future.

STaR contributed approximately \$62,000.00 in support of the on-going delivery of the STaR project. This is only made possible by the generous donations we receive from The Stockbrokers Foundation and MonStar Cup Event.

Overall, the 2007-08 year was one of growth for the STaR Association. We are gaining a reputation for innovative and holistic service delivery and recognise the importance of developing our profile in the community through information dissemination as well as networking and forming linkages with other like-minded services.

The organisation is well positioned to continue to expand its service base to enable delivery of research-based inclusive education and support to children with disabilities or special learning needs and those who support them.

Nicole Grantham
STaR Association Treasurer





STaR BOARD & STAFF

2007/2008 Board Members

Dr Frances Cunningham Sc.D, B.A, Dip Ed, FAICD, AFCHSE	President
Dr Coral Kemp PhD, MA (Spec. ED), BA Dip Ed, PHD	Board Member
Ms Nicole Grantham B Business, CPA	Treasurer
Ms Jane Cockburn BAappSc (Biomed) GAICD	Board Member
Ms Margaret Meaker Adv. Certificate in Social Welfare	General Manager (ex-officio)

2007/2008 Staff

STaR Association

Margaret Meaker	General Manager
Elise de Jong	Caring for Carers Coordinator

STaR Project

Dawn Chadwick	STaR Project Manager
Kathy Hodgetts	Early Intervention Support Teacher

STaR Project Release Staff

Yuriko Kishida

Nicole Lesley

Aleksandra Ucinyk

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Make a donation

Help us to continue our work to support young children with disabilities and/or special learning needs and those who support them by making a direct donation.

Just call 02 9888 3717, or send a cheque made payable to:

STaR Association

PO Box 209 THORNLEIGH NSW 2120

Donations \$2 & over are tax deductible

Support our events

The STaR Association Annual fund raising event is the MONSTaR Cup. For more information see www.monstarcup.com or call 02 9888 3717.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Suite 2.5 56 Delhi Road
NORTH RYDE NSW 2113

Postal Address:
PO Box 209
THORNLEIGH NSW 2120

Tel: 02 9888 3717
Fax: 02 9888 1475
Email: office@star.org.au
Web: www.star.org.au