

DATE: 1 August 2023

SUBJECT: Conceptual PlayWorlds introduced to Fijian educators

As part of Melbourne’s Monash University PlayLab team, Emmanuel Catholic Kindergarten Teacher, Lisa Refalo from Mackay, recently spent five days in Suva introducing Fijian educators to PlayLab’s intentional teaching model, Conceptual PlayWorlds.

Mrs Refalo was invited as one of six Australian early childhood educators to join the PlayLab team for the week-long visit to the Pacific nation to help facilitate the program funded by the Australian Research Council.

According to Mrs Refalo the program aimed to co-construct a Conceptual PlayWorld reimagining a Blue-Green Pacific and embedding STEM through play.

Headed by Monash University Laureate Professor Marilyn Fler, Monash PlayLab developed the Conceptual PlayWorlds model which involves a method of teaching that starts with a story followed by teachers and children entering an imaginary world to play together to solve challenges and learn STEM concepts in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Mrs Refalo said the Fijian program focussed on cultural competence in relation to designing and implementing CPWs in an international context.

“During the first three days we attended a symposium with Fijian teachers and heads of schools gaining valuable insights from leaders in the educational sector, including Professor Fler, as well as Fijian Ministry personnel and researchers from the University of the South Pacific,” Mrs Refalo said.

“We were involved in facilitated discussions, workshops and sharing sessions at the symposium, then worked closely with groups to plan and co-create Conceptual PlayWorlds,” Mrs Refalo said.

“On the final two days we visited education settings where we collaboratively implemented the CPWs with Fijian teachers and their students,” Mrs Refalo said.

Mrs Refalo said the experience provided many opportunities that benefited not only her Fijian colleagues, but also her own professional and personal development.

Cont/...

“It certainly allowed me to increase my own knowledge of CPWs whilst developing an understanding and appreciation of Fijian culture and perspectives and learning about the Fijian education system,” Mrs Refalo said.

“I gained a deeper appreciation and gratitude for the blessings in my work and personal life and have loved sharing this experience with staff and families at Emmanuel Catholic Kindergarten,” Mrs Refalo said.

Mrs Refalo said she was very much looking forward to discussing her learnings and knowledge further with fellow educators in Catholic Education and more broadly.

“I’m most grateful for the experience and the wonderful support I received from Catholic Education to enable me to attend. I’m very keen to share what I have learned,” Mrs Refalo said.

Ends

Photos supplied.

For further information please contact Maria Greene, Communications Officer, Catholic Education Office, Rockhampton – mob 0448985034.