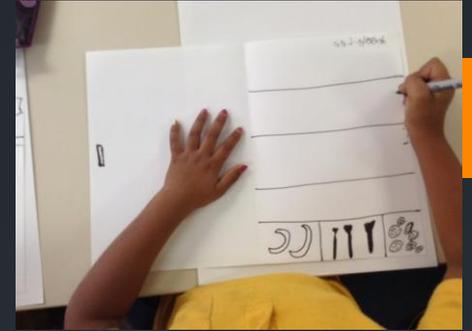


Children's ideas about families' access to food from a perspective of wealth and poverty

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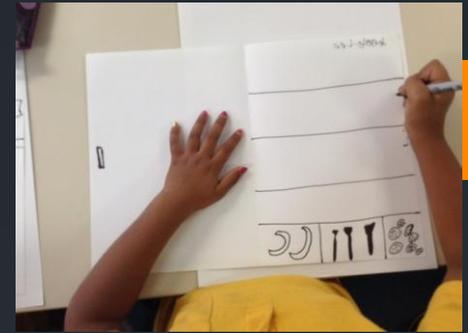
Ms Mary Vajda, OMEP WA



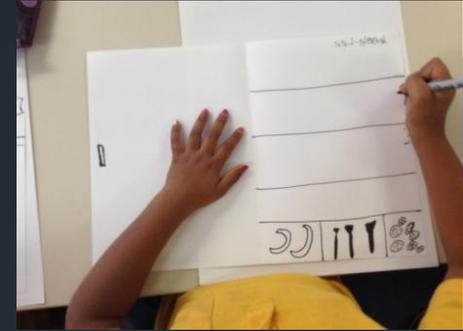
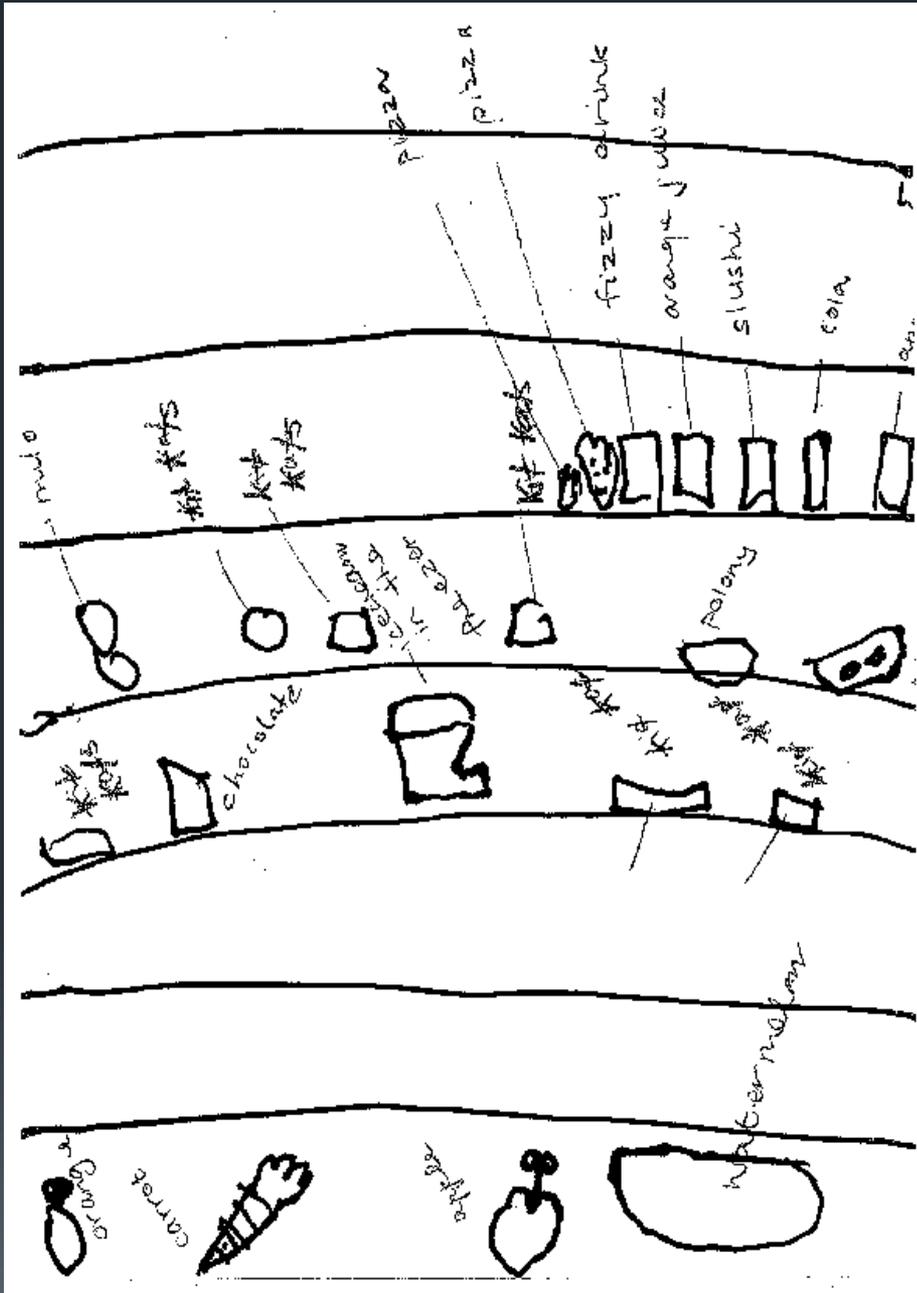
What's in your fridge?

- Drawing and labeling food items
- Cultural diversity
- Healthy food
- Sharing food preferences

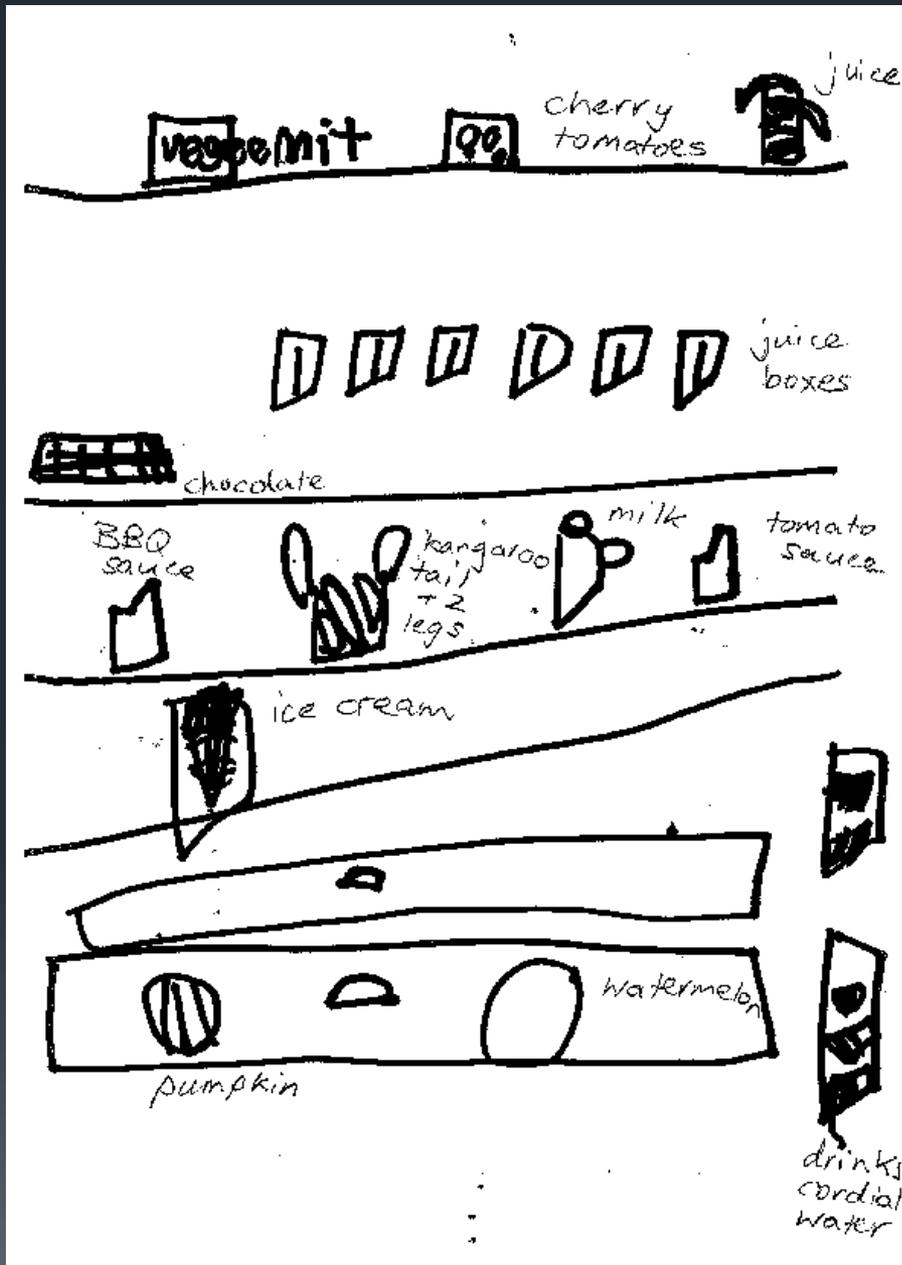
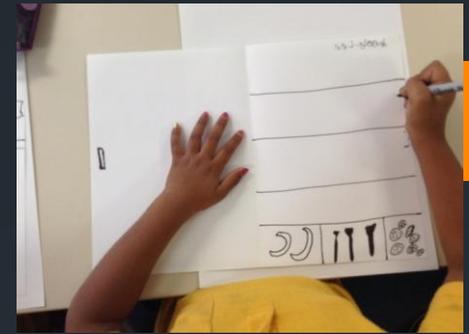
Theme One: Sharing knowledge about food



- Some children had very full fridges but others did not.
- They were keen to draw 'food' and share personal food preferences and their knowledge of food with those sitting close by.
- The cultural diversity of the classes meant that some particular food was featured in some fridges, e.g. Paratha in the fridge of a child whose family originated in India.
- One Aboriginal child had a bag full of kangaroo tails a reflection of his cultural heritage. Other fridges stored assorted medicine and 'fast food' items.



Kit Kat (many)
 Fizzy Drink
 Chocolate
 Cola
 Slushie
 Fruit
 Vegetables

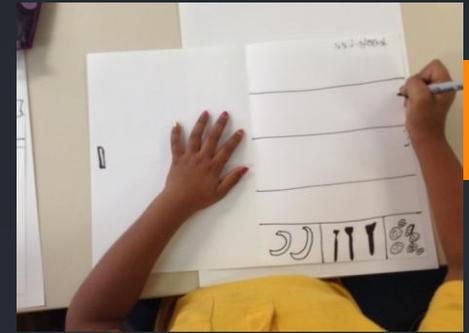


Vegemite

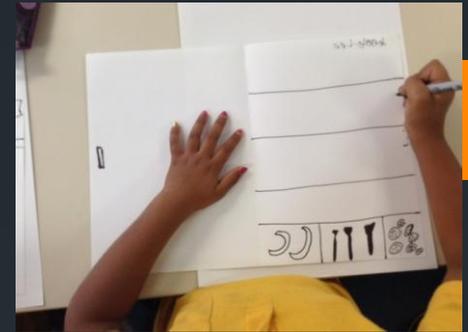
Kangaroo Tails
(and two legs)

Juice
Fruit
Vegetables

Two Fridges



Theme Two: Inequality and disadvantage



- When viewing 'two fridges' some children said "my fridge looks like that" (pointing to the near empty fridge).
- One child explained that her father lived in another country and that her mum sent money to him so that he could join them in Australia.
- Some children said they knew relatives who had an empty fridge.
- The 'very full' fridge: children suggested that the money for the food had come from a parent working in the mines (located in remote rural Western Australia).
- Socio-cultural context of children in Western Australia where mining is an important part of the economy.
- Understanding the relationship between work, money and the capacity to buy food is one that children articulated quite clearly: for example, knowing when a parent is paid, thus, has money to spend or to save.

Theme Three: Reason and Rationalisation



- Children rationalised that the families 'lack of food' was self-inflicted (by not having money, not working hard, misadventure or fate):

“This family is broke, they don’t have much money”

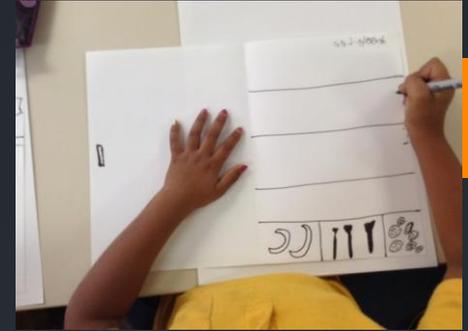
“A robber took it”

“The other family work hard”

“They’re lazy... The mum didn’t buy the food”

“They might spend the money on toys instead of food”

Theme Four: Ingenuity and Empowerment



Is it fair that some families have a lot of food and some don't?

Children said it was 'unfair' and recognised that people without food, "would die" or "get sick"

How could things could be fairer?

Sharing food with neighbours, borrowing money, and getting more money 'out of the bank'

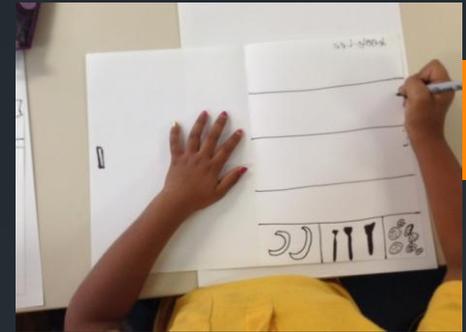
Children commented that "share is fair", and food should be taken from one fridge and put in the other fridge

Children did not associate 'education' with improved quality of life outcomes, but rather focused on family ingenuity

An Aboriginal girl in one class reflected on where food could be found in the bush and also recounted a family fishing trip.

Other suggestions showed connections to popular culture and knowledge acquired through lived experiences.

- *Ask for money from another person- ask a friend, mum or dad, go to your neighbour*
- *Play music and people give you money -busking, you could write songs- “Justin Beaver (sic) did that!”*
- *Have a garage sale- “sell old toys you want to chuck away then you could get lots of money”*
- During the discussion children did not identify their own local community or the wider Australia. Children involved in this research project did not measure the scale or severity of disadvantage in their own family or community.



Conclusions



This project provides insight to how early childhood educators can promote new ways of thinking about sustainable practices for children to consider, and how this can be achieved at the school community level.

An important aspect of this study was to avoid the use of concepts such as poor, risk, poverty or wealth. Hence more neutral terms were used.

It may be that children would have difficulty defining who is rich or who is poor in their own community.

What appeared evident is that children did have a sense of inequality, a sense of 'fairness' and an optimistic outlook on how to remove inequality: 'share is fair'.