

## Healthy Superheroes: new research links young children's pop-culture interests to learning about healthy living and sustainability

*The Healthy Super Heroes Project* research findings suggest young children's popular-culture interests can provide a platform for children to learn about healthy eating, physical activity and sustainability at kindergarten.

Early childhood education does not typically link children's popular-culture interests to the curriculum, but this new research demonstrates the potential for learning when educators do tap into children's fascinations with characters like Peppa Pig and Spiderman.

"360 degree marketing is the term given to the media environment that sees young children exposed to multiple forms of advertising for high calorie foods and consumable toys, clothing and products," explains Helen Skouteris, Professor and Researcher Partner at Deakin University.

"In early childhood education, the extent to which '360 degree marketing' influences young children's play, the type of foods they bring to their centres and the range of clothing and toys is a topic of interest for educators. Educators are concerned not only about the calorie counts of such food choices and rising childhood obesity, but also the sustainability consequences of the excess packing associated with the foods."

Janet Williams-Smith, General Manager of Service Development at Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS) says "This research encourages our educators to maximise children's learning through tapping into their fixation with favourite characters. We are turning the influence of pop culture and 360 degree marketing into a great learning opportunity."

Deakin University, Southern Cross University and Australian Catholic University partnered with ECMS, Victoria's largest not-for-profit provider of early childhood education and care services, to undertake the study in multiple kindergartens during 2014/2015. A research paper entitled *Young children learning about wellbeing and environmental education in the early years: a funds of knowledge approach* is now published in the esteemed journal - [Early Years: International Journal of Research and Development](#).

Researchers worked with ECMS early childhood educators to generate 20 learning outcomes that could be linked to children's popular-culture interests. For example; understanding nutritional food panels, understanding sugar/fat content, growing foods, living and non-living things, recycling, and energy intake/expenditure.

The research paper and study findings will be celebrated at a launch event at Werribee West Family Centre this Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 at 9am.

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### About ECMS:

ECMS is Victoria's largest not-for-profit provider of early childhood education and care services, including kindergarten, long day care, family day care and 3+ activity programs. Visit [www.ecms.org.au](http://www.ecms.org.au) for details.

### Media enquiries and interviews:

Helen Skouteris from Deakin University is available for media interviews at Werribee West Family Centre.

Interviews and photos with educators and families are available on request; arrangements can be made for opportunities on alternative days. For media enquiries please contact:

Angie Farrugia - ECMS on 0422 929450 or [afarrugia@ecms.org.au](mailto:afarrugia@ecms.org.au)

