

THE STORY BEHIND FANTASTIC FINGERS®

I first started work on *Fantastic Fingers*® around ten years ago in response to requests from parents and teachers for effective fine motor activities. I have always been very concerned about the adverse impact of poor fine motor skills on children's self-esteem and academic progress. Now more than ever before, many, many children need additional opportunities to build their fine motor skills. Over the years I have created, selected and trialled activities that meet the following criteria:

- use inexpensive, everyday materials
- are user-friendly, and easy to learn and administer correctly at home and school
- have inherent appeal to children keeping them focused and on task
- develop and improve all essential aspects of fine motor skills for success at school
- facilitate academic learning while developing fine motor skills

During the development of this resource, the feedback from teachers, parents and other therapists has been encouraging and valuable. My main motivation during the many hours of work on *Fantastic Fingers*® has been the children's enthusiastic participation and progress. As one child said, 'It's very nice to get stronger and bigger, and perfect fingers!'

While working with the children, I quickly discovered what activities were successful. During whole class activities I learnt that movement to music keeps children focussed and allows for the repetitions required for optimally developing motor skills. This led me to create the action songs.

There have been very special highlights for me during the development of *Fantastic Fingers*®. In 2007, while working in New Zealand, I was invited to conduct a clinical trial of the initial version of the program in the classroom of a mainstream school. You can read more about the outcome of this successful study on my website.

In 2010, I was privileged to use my fine motor knowledge to set up school readiness HOPE playgroups for Zulu speaking orphans. In 2011, I had a memorable time conducting practical workshops with South African teachers and experienced occupational therapy clinicians. In 2011, I also released the first edition of the book and CD and made the instructional DVD which you can also watch in segments online. In Australia in 2014, it was very rewarding to see the activities being implemented in schools and early childhood settings. The children's enthusiasm was contagious: 'We see you on our whiteboard!'

Personally, it has been so special working with my own children, Erin and Craig, who have been wonderful models for the photographs in this book and when filming. It is very meaningful hearing people's experiences from using *Fantastic Fingers*® so do contact me through my website. I'd love to hear your story.

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