

Swings + Roundabouts

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Summer 2012

Q & A WITH THE NZ TEACHERS COUNCIL

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FROM THE Editor



Change is inevitable in early childhood education especially if you want to move forward and keep up with the best teaching practices. Since I first graduated in 1986 the changes and growth in teaching is vast and mind-boggling.

Alongside the theoretical change is the change in society, the constant changing demographics and the changes to who is accessing early childhood education. We now have a huge variety of services offered to families from education and care, home-based services and services who offer extra support to families through community hubs. Change is happening also in the way we communicate with each other, with the ever-changing growth in ICT.

So how do you stand-out in the crowd? There are many ways to do this. One way is to take risks as a centre, as teachers and be innovative. Make your centre be a place others talk about and other teachers and centre managers want to visit. Are you making a difference to your children, your families, and your EC community?

Has your centre made changes in the way it teaches, or in management or in the environment? If so, you should be sharing your innovative thinking and recent improvements to your community and to your peers. Let your current families/whānau know how lucky they are to be

part of your journey. If you're an ECC member you can enter The ECC-Telecom Innovation & Improvement Award and have the opportunity to do just this – share your success story so others can share in your achievement and be inspired.

This award acknowledges those centres that are moving forward, making changes, taking risks, making a difference, going deeper in their teaching and striving to be the best they can be.

The owners of Magic Kingdom, an early childhood centre on the North Shore in Auckland have just done this. This is their second centre and it was built with strong personal ideals and innovative design. This centre embraces innovation, technology, sustainability and a touch of magic.

Also be inspired by taking your teaching to a deeper level, read the success stories of those early childhood services who were part of the Centres of Innovation a few years back and how these teachers and their community haven't looked back.

Also find out what is happening to EC education in China and Brunei and their on-going journey.

Over the next few months I'm looking for stories under these themes:

- Numeracy – using language and concepts of maths in teaching
- Providing for Māori and Pasifika children – best practices
- Project Approach/Reggio Emilia

If you or your centre has a story to share under any of these themes or any other story you think will inspire others email me at info@ecc.org.nz

Trudi Sutcliffe

Editor



Your chance to WIN a set of Uncle Goose Maori ABC Blocks!

Thanks to the team at The Playing Mantis we have 2 sets of these beautiful blocks to giveaway. All you need to do is "like us" on Facebook by Monday 21 January 2013 to go in the draw.

These blocks have been created by Uncle Goose and Wellington artist Johnson Witehira. Johnson brings together two

cultures (Māori & Pakeha) by producing these alphabet blocks that are specially designed to educate children. When the blocks are placed together they form a beautiful art puzzle on the other side.

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CEO's Message



The last quarter has seen some big challenges for our sector. There was the yet-to-be announced Government planning to reform the ECE funding system; the release of a Government White Paper for Vulnerable Children, the announcement of social welfare reforms likely to directly impact ECE centres; a review of the Teachers Council; and a review of home-based ECE.

Reform for our funding system

The changes with the potential to impact ECE most dramatically are those threatened to our funding system. The ECC supports the likely increase in funding for Māori, Pasifika and other low-income children. We will not, however, support Government should it propose to pay for these targeted benefits by cutting funding and service quality elsewhere in the sector. Increasing access for some by cutting quality for everyone is not our idea of progress.

We hope that reform includes simplification of the funding rules and compliance processes, a special focus on the needs of smaller centres, and mechanisms to ensure that different types of ECE service are funded fairly in relation to each other.

The White Paper for Vulnerable Children

The ECC supports, however, most of the ideas announced in the Government's controversial White Paper for Vulnerable Children. We know at-risk children can be highly transient and we support therefore both the requirement for different agencies to work more closely together,

and the web-based system that would enable child-focused workers to access and contribute to a national database on vulnerable children. We support the idea that workers such as teachers should be better trained to recognise the signs of abuse and to take effective action. And we support the establishment of a 'Child Protect' telephone line for the public to report child abuse. Our main reservation about the White Paper focuses on the proposal that everyone working with children should report suspected abuse or neglect. If this is not handled carefully, there is risk of irreparable damage to relationships of trust between teachers and at-risk families, with the consequence of increased vulnerability for some children.

The Government's welfare reforms

While many oppose the ECE component of the Government's welfare reforms, the ECC does not. We welcome the decision that encourages parents on benefits to ensure their children attend early childhood education 15 hours a week from the age of three. It is a fact that children living on benefit incomes and not attending early childhood education are amongst the most likely to arrive at school unprepared to learn, and to stay behind for the rest of their lives. A requirement for beneficiaries to do their best to ensure children attend early childhood education has the potential to rescue thousands from educational underachievement. The ECC is not completely comfortable with the element of compulsion. And we will speak out if parents lacking funds or geographic access are punished. But we believe the potential benefits of the policy too compelling to resist.

A review for the Teachers Council

The Government commenced an independent review of the New Zealand Teachers Council earlier in the year and

the ECC awaits the findings with interest. It is clear some would like the Teachers Council to move from being a government regulatory body to being an independent professional body. A successful transition of this sort would require the Council to demonstrate an improved understanding that ECE, Primary and Secondary teachers have different responsibilities and needs.

A review for home-base ECE

The government more recently announced a review of home-based early childhood education. Home-based services must comply currently with far less demanding regulations than centre-based services. Let us hope the review recommends a future level of regulatory compliance and quality from home-based services similar to that required currently of other ECE services.

Centres of innovation

In conclusion, I would point out that this issue of Swings & Roundabouts revisits the old Centres of Innovation programme, and laments its demise. Government did a good job of funding some remarkable innovations, but failed to fund the dissemination of the new ideas throughout our sector. It then killed the programme altogether. In this issue we pay tribute to the teaching professionals who made the programme work. We have one of the best ECE systems in the world. The only way to retain this position is to keep innovating.

As the year draws to a close and we look forward to 2013 and the many challenges it brings, can I wish you and your team a very Merry Christmas, happy and prosperous New Year.....and a well-earned break!!
From Peter, Rose, Trudi, Anthony, Laree and Ellie.

So you know



The following early childhood centres have joined the Early Childhood Council recently:

- The Cottage Kindergarten, Waimauku, Auckland
- Kings School- Early Learning Centre, Remuera (provisional)
- The Farmyard for Early Learners, Gisborne
- Happy Days Childcare Centre, Napier

The 2013 ECC-Telecom Innovation & Improvement Award

Register now for the ECC-Telecom Innovation & Improvement Award.

The ECC-Telecom Innovation & Improvement Award will be an annual recognition of excellence in innovation and improvement within the early childhood education centre.

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Celebrate your hard work and enter into this Award.

Expressions of Interest close at 5.00pm Friday 1 February 2013.

To find out more go to www.ecc.org.nz (look under events).

ECC Annual Conference 2013 "Nation Building"

24-26 May 2013

Energy Events Centre, Rotorua

Nation building is about leadership – in our sector as well as developing leadership in our children. It's about maintaining social harmony; learning to be independent. It's

about deciding whether we are leaders or followers of our sector's future. Nation building is about accepting and confirming early childhood education is where it all starts – building the nation of tomorrow!

The ECC Annual Conference is the highlight of the New Zealand early childhood event calendar. Each year the ECC offers over 800 attendees the opportunity to be inspired, informed and entertained. Put it your diary now. (Early Bird bookings close 31 January)

The ECC Professional Development Programme

The Early Childhood Council is offering a series of half-day practical and interactive workshops for both Centre Managers and their teaching team in 2013.

EC Professional Support, based at the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland in partnership with the ECC are designing and delivering the ECC's teachers workshops nationwide.

The ECC are managing the centre manager and the ECC Blue Book workshops.

2013 Centre Manager workshops include:

- Good Governance Practices
- Strategic Planning
- Planning for Success (Business Planning)
- Marketing in a Competitive Environment
- Managing People
- Performance Reviews
- Continuous Quality Improvement

2012 Teacher workshops planned between Jan and Mar 2013:

- Wellington – Recognising and Responding to Schema
- Wellington – Self Review in ECE
- Northland – Self Review in ECE
- Northland – Introduction to Mentoring in ECE

- Hamilton – Fostering Children's Developing Social Competence
- Auckland - ECC Blue Book: Meeting registration needs

Keep an eye out for these upcoming workshops at www.ecc.org.nz (under Events)

New Zealand Teachers Council

The online world can be a confusing place...

The Teachers Council has developed a new web space to help teachers understand and discuss social media and ethical issues they may face when using social media. It includes guidelines for ethical use of social media, animated scenarios and presentation frameworks to encourage discussion in schools and centres.

The guidelines and resources use the Code of Ethics for Registered Teachers as their underpinning framework, in particular the four commitment statements to learners, parents/guardians and family/whānau, society and the profession.

The resources have been developed out of recognition that:

- teachers who model good social media use will grow learners who apply positive, respectful values in their interactions on social media platforms; and
- teachers need support and guidance around how to use social media in a way that is confident, competent and ethically sound.

The project was overseen by a reference group that included social media experts, teachers, professional leaders and teacher education providers. The Council hopes the resources will be useful to support teachers to be confident and enjoy using social media. We welcome feedback and in particular, any positive stories about how teachers have been using social media and the steps they took to manage ethical issues.



Early Childhood Council

Annual Conference 2013

"Nation Building"

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- Trade fair with the latest ECE products and services
- Social and networking opportunities including a welcome reception and gala dinner
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Don't Miss Out!!

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go to: **www.ecc.org.nz or call 0800 742 742**



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with the NZ Teachers Council

Centre owners and managers who are also registered teachers have for some time been calling for a change to the teacher re-registration process administered by the New Zealand Teachers Council. The ECC recently put a series of questions to Dr Peter Lind:

Early Childhood Council asks:

The Teachers Council appears to have changed the meaning of 'subject to confirmation'. Please explain why this has been done and what it now means?

Teachers Council responds:

The Teachers Council has not changed the meaning of subject to confirmation. All categories of registration are defined in relation to the fundamental requirement of needing to meet all of the Registered Teacher Criteria to gain or maintain full registration. The Registration Policy makes it clear STC is granted to experienced teachers who have not recently had an opportunity to be appraised as meeting the Registered Teacher Criteria (refer to <http://registrationpolicy.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/>)

ECC Footnote:

From our meeting with Teachers Council we were under the impression that when discussing fully registered teachers renewing their practising certificate that this clause was new. "STC is granted to experienced teachers who have not recently had an opportunity to be appraised as meeting the Registered Teacher Criteria".

We felt that it was necessary for the Teachers Council to give further communication that this was now being included in STC. In the past STC was usually for teachers who were previously fully registered and their practising certificates had expired and they were

returning back to work. I refer to what is written in your registration policy as well - The Council will also be changing the way subject to confirmation is described to make it clear that this category of registration signals that the teacher is an experienced teacher who has not been able to be meaningfully assessed against the Registered Teacher Criteria within the last 5 years for valid reasons. When is the Teachers Council going to do this??

Early Childhood Council asks:

Why, as a fully registered teacher, are we required to keep documentation folders like beginning teachers?

Teachers Council responds:

Fully registered teachers are required to be appraised against the Registered Teacher Criteria and will have evidence from their day to day work to show they have been met. Their evidence and documentation will not be the same as the "documentation folders like beginning teachers" but it is still important that fully registered teachers engage through evidence in professional conversations with their appraiser about how they meet the Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC) and that data/evidence is linked to learning outcomes or progress of ākonga/learners. (There is a rich resource of how to implement the RTC refer to <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/rtcworkshopresources.stm>)

ECC Footnote:

Our concern as mentioned in the meeting is that teachers in leadership positions and centre owners have so much paper work that we feel to keep a folder of more paper work is placing more pressure on people who are struggling with red tape already. The Teacher's Council needs to develop more a high trust model which is clearly defined with the expectations

of the teachers and Teachers Council. If the Teachers Council wishes to be a professional body within education instead of being a regulatory body, then as a professional they need to learn how to trust their members.

Early Childhood Council asks:

Who decides what 'trust' means when it comes to teachers signing other teachers off for registration purposes?

Teachers Council responds:

The Teachers Council operates a relatively high trust model in relation to endorsements from fully registered teachers. The vast majority of teachers are not required to provide specific additional evidence, but their appraiser is required to attest that they have appraised the teacher against the Registered Teacher Criteria. However to be assured that requirements have been met some, but certainly not all, teachers seeking to gain or maintain full registration can be asked to provide evidence of their appraisal processes against the Registered Teacher Criteria. Evidence is requested when it is not clear how the appraisal process is structured i.e. in the case of a professional leader who does not have an employing/governing body further clarification and evidence may be sought. (There is a rich resource of how to implement the RTC refer to <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/rtcworkshopresources.stm>)

Early Childhood Council asks:

There appears to have been quite a change in fully registered teachers renewing their practising certificate and what is now expected. This is somewhat different to what many of us were led to believe when we attended the training tours from the Teachers Council throughout New Zealand involving presentations on the new Registered Teacher Criteria.

Continued over page

Can you please outline, in simple terms, what is expected for fully registered teachers renewing their practising certificates?

Teachers Council responds:

There has always been a requirement that centres have in place a robust performance management system and this has always involved teachers employed in teaching positions being appraised against the Teachers Council standards. The Registered Teacher Criteria describe criteria for quality teaching. Fully registered teachers need to have been appraised as meeting the Registered Teacher Criteria and will have evidence from their day to day work to show to their appraiser and have a meaningful professional conversation as to what the evidence shows and the teacher's reflections on their professional practice. This has been the expectation since the Registered Teacher Criteria were introduced. (There is a rich resource of how to implement the RTC refer to <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/rtcworkshopresources.stm>)

ECC Footnote:

I specifically asked at the professional development training held at the Westpac Stadium if we as fully registered teachers were expected to keep documentation folders and what sort of process and documentation did you expect us to keep and was told that fully registered teachers were not expected to keep documentation on the criteria as we had already gone through the process. We were expected to ensure that PRT teachers were documenting their process and being mentored and meeting the new criteria. From the information we were told and what is now expected has changed. We feel it would be beneficial for the Teachers Council to run more workshops around the country to clarify what is now expected.

Early Childhood Council asks:

Can you please explain the difference between what is expected for fully registered teachers renewing their practising certificate and the Early Childhood Centre Managers/Owners and Supervisors renewing theirs?

Teachers Council responds:

All fully registered teachers need to be appraised against the Registered Teacher Criteria, including Centre Managers/Owners and Supervisors. The key difference will be where there

is no governing body responsible for the appraisal process. This will mean that for a Centre Manager/Owner's own appraisal there is the issue of perceived or actual conflict of interest if they were to only use one of their employees. This perceived or actual conflict of interest aspect would of course also be there when there is a close relationship (marriage/partner/parent/other relative) between the Centre Manager/Owner and one of their employees. This is where it is important to have both a policy to handle the conflict of interest aspect and to use an appropriate external appraiser in the performance management process. This external appraiser needs to have an opportunity to observe the Centre Manager/Owner's teaching practice, provide feedback and have discussions in relation to meeting the Criteria and give assured objectivity to evidence provided about a Centre Owner/Manager's day to day teaching. (Refer to <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/index.stm>. There is a whole section on guidelines for endorsing ECE owners and managers).

ECC Footnote:

I fail to see how there is no conflict of interest with a governing board.

Early Childhood Council asks:

What does the Teachers Council require in terms of "appraisal" for a person as a center owner or manager, and does this have to involve folders full of information? Can you outline what is required for "appraisal" in simple terms?

Teachers Council responds:

It is important to differentiate if the Centre Owner/Manager is fully registered. The Registered Teacher Criteria (RTC) has been implemented by the Council with the intention that they will be central to teacher appraisal for the dual purpose of professional learning and development, and accountability.

In terms of development, the RTC describe the teaching knowledge, practices and dispositions that the profession (backed by research) is agreed are most likely to positively influence outcomes for learners. As such, they are useful to guide teachers' inquiry into their own teaching, provide a framework for feedback to teachers by peers and leaders and from these, identify next steps in teachers' professional learning and development.

In terms of accountability, they represent the standard for entry to full registration as

a teacher and the competencies necessary for experienced teachers to maintain full registration. This gives an on-going assurance to employers, parents and the public of teachers' competence and currency of knowledge.

Appraisal requires all fully registered teachers including centre owners/managers to be observed teaching and undertaking other expected duties in the course of their day to day work. The appraiser then needs to consider whether the teacher has met all of the Registered Teacher Criteria. The appraiser will need to see evidence to support their judgement and this may include written observations of teaching, reviewing progress against goals set earlier in the year, discussion of previous meetings held throughout the year between the appraiser and teacher, assessment of children's learning, reviews of parent feedback and evidence of professional development.

(Refer to <http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/index.stm>. There is a whole section on guidelines for endorsing ECE owners and managers).

Early Childhood Council asks:

How does a centre owner in the rural parts of NZ, renew their practising certificate under your new guidelines?

Teachers Council responds:

Again, this is firstly about whether the Centre Owner/Manager is fully registered, or holds provisional registration or registration subject to confirmation. There are the Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring and Mentor Teachers for teachers seeking to gain full registration. This resource is available on the Teachers Council website and copies were sent to all centres in 2011. However it is important to note the requirements are the same for all fully registered teachers and consistency with a rigorous process are required. Some teachers who do not have a fully registered appraiser in their local area may need to arrange for regular meetings with a fully registered teacher in their wider professional network to ensure there are the opportunities to observe teaching practice, provide feedback and have discussions in relation to meeting the Criteria and this will require a little more planning. This is a situation faced by primary and secondary principals in rural areas and is not unique to ECE owners/managers. Networking with the local primary school is a realistic option.

Improving services for vulnerable children

The Better Public Services programme aims to make the public sector more responsive to New Zealanders' needs. It was launched by Prime Minister Rt Hon John Key on 15 March 2012.

The Better Public Service goals for vulnerable children focus on early intervention to ensure children have positive health, social and employment experiences in later life. The Government has set four actions to support vulnerable children in the next 3 to 5 years:

- increase participation in quality early childhood education
- increase infant immunisation rates
- reduce the incidence of rheumatic fever
- reduce the number of assaults on children.

The Ministry of Social Development is leading this work, supported by the Ministries of Education and Health.

Children are missing out

The Ministry of Education is focussing on increasing participation in quality ECE, while working with our partner agencies to achieve the remaining results. Our target is: in 2016 98% of children starting school will have participated in quality ECE. The current overall rate is 95% (as at June 2012). However for Māori children it's 90.9% and for Pasifika children it's just 86.8%.

About 3,000 children begin school each year without having participated in ECE. That means we'll need to enrol and retain

an additional 12,000 children to reach our target of 98%.

The children missing out are mostly Māori children, Pasifika children, and children from low income areas. We are focusing our efforts on those areas with the largest numbers of non-participating children – south and west Auckland, Northland, Waikato, Rotorua and Porirua. We're also working with the greater Christchurch Education Renewal Recovery Programme.

Making a difference

The key to achieving the 98% target is to connect with the families of children who are missing out on ECE and support them to enrol and sustain attendance in local ECE services. We began this work in 2010 through the ECE Participation Programme, but we know this programme on its own will not get us to the 98% goal.

Early findings from the Participation Programme suggest that barriers to participation include:

- lack of transport
- costs to attend services
- family financial circumstances
- instability in living arrangements
- lack of knowledge about services
- services not being responsive to the identity, language and culture of these children.

We are working with government agencies and non-government organisations to find new ways to overcome these barriers. We are talking to parents and whānau, iwi, and Pasifika groups to find out what needs to

happen in their communities to make it easier for families to engage in quality ECE.

Our work will bring us closer to our goal, but it's not enough – we need your help to make the real difference. And it's already happening – ECE services are finding innovative ways to increase participation in our target communities, from providing transport to implementing programmes that support children's identity, language and culture.

Services are also contributing to other Better Public Service goals for vulnerable children by encouraging parents to make sure their children are fully immunised, and supporting families and whānau to get help before they reach breaking point.

Together, we have the best chance of ensuring all children have the opportunity to benefit from participation in quality ECE, so they go on to experience positive social, health and education outcomes as they grow.

Contact the Early Learning Taskforce member at your regional office to find out about engagement opportunities, including participation summits, in your area.

When will we see results?

In April 2017 we will measure the percentage of children starting school in 2016 who participated in quality ECE regularly in the months before they started. We will also report on progress every three months until April 2017.

Read more about the Better Public Service programme. [Link is <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/BetterPublicServices.aspx>]

Early Childhood Teachers

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- Professional learning Programmes for ECE Leaders
- Specialised Programme for ECE Mentors



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
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Children in poverty and early childhood education

By Dr Fiona Imlach Gunasekara and Dr Kristie Carter

Child poverty is currently a hot topic in the news, but is this really a problem for New Zealand children and what does it mean for early childhood education?

Child poverty statistics in New Zealand

Child poverty can be measured in many different ways. A common method is to measure the number of children living in households with less than 50% of median household income. For example, if the median (being the middle value out of a range of values) household income was \$60,000, then a household with an income less than \$30,000 would be classed as 'in poverty'. When comparing incomes across different types of households and families, we also have to adjust ('equivalise') household incomes for the number of adults and children. This is because the same income that is adequate for a small household of one adult and one child may be insufficient for a larger household, such as two adults and three children.

New Zealand child poverty statistics are reported regularly, and around a quarter to a fifth of children were in poverty in 2011 [1]. But we also need to know how many children experience persistent poverty. Children exposed to prolonged periods of poverty are at high risk of poor outcomes, including poor child development, worse health as children and adults, and lower education and economic achievement as adults [2-8].

To measure persistent poverty, we need longitudinal surveys that follow up and collect data from the same individuals and households over time. One such survey was the Survey of Family, Income and Employment (SoFIE), run by Statistics New Zealand, which collected data from over

11,000 households from 2002 to 2010. From SoFIE, we could identify 4930 children who participated in seven years of the survey from 2002 to 2009. From this sample, we could classify children into households who were in poverty at each year, defined as less than 50% of median equivalised household income. We used gross (before tax) income, because although other poverty statistics usually use disposable (after tax) income, this was not available in the SoFIE dataset [9].

Figure 1 shows the proportion of children who were never in poverty over the seven years, those experiencing transient poverty (1 to 3 years in poverty) and those in persistent poverty (four or more years in poverty). The first graph shows the poverty statistics by age at the start of the survey, and the second graph shows poverty statistics by ethnicity. From the first graph, we can see that 17% of children aged 0-4 years experienced persistent poverty. Persistent poverty was a little less common in older children, but this could be due to the children growing older as the survey progressed, so the children aged 10-17 years at the start of the survey were aged 16-23 years by the end of the study. The second graph shows that persistent poverty was at least twice as common in Māori and Pacific children compared to children of European/Other ethnicities. A higher proportion of children of European/Other ethnicities were never in poverty (51%) compared to Māori and Pacific children (42%). In data not presented here, we also found that the rate of persistent low income in children of sole parents was three times greater than in children of couples [9].

Although many families are able to get out of poverty, a significant proportion of children are exposed to many years of poverty, and this risk is much higher in certain groups of children.



Kristie and Fiona

Implications for early childhood education

The first years of a child's life are critical for their future development and well-being. Children living in poverty are less likely to participate fully in education, which leads to long-lasting disadvantage into their adult lives. High quality early childhood education (ECE), with parenting support and education, can help reduce this disadvantage. Children in poverty, especially those experiencing persistent poverty, can benefit the most from such programmes, in terms of short-term educational and long-term social and economic outcomes. Children who miss out on these programmes are likely to be left behind once they start school, and may never catch up.

Although participation in ECE is high in New Zealand (nearly 95%), cost, difficulties in accessing services and lack of culturally appropriate services may be barriers for some families. Current welfare reforms aim to increase ECE participation in children of beneficiaries, but use punitive incentives (such as cutting benefits), which may be harmful to the children.

The Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, established by the Children's Commissioner, released a discussion document in August on the best available international and local evidence on how to reduce child poverty and mitigate its effects. This included recommendations to develop 'community hubs' in some ECE centres, which provide education, health, social support and other services for families and communities. The document highlighted the importance of high quality ECE for disadvantaged children and the

need for involvement and support of parents. The Group also endorsed the Ministry of Education's ECE policy work programme, particularly around targeting children with most to gain (those in poverty, Māori and Pacific children) and improving the quality and performance of ECE services.

Actions to take

Child poverty has never been more topical. The final report from the Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty is due in December. The Ministerial Committee on Poverty, which meets every quarter, must be noticing the media attention that the issue of child poverty is achieving. The Māori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the Social Determinants of Wellbeing for Māori Children has been considering poverty as a key determinant that must be addressed for Māori child development to be advanced. There has never been a better time to speak out about the importance of early life interventions to improve child outcomes, especially for children whose circumstances are difficult, through no fault of their own.

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Access to the data used in this analysis was provided by Statistics New Zealand under conditions designed to give effect to the security and confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975. The results presented are the work of the researchers, not Statistics New Zealand. We take full responsibility for the results, and Statistics New Zealand will not be held accountable for any error or inaccurate findings within this analysis.

Dr Imlach Gunasekara and Dr Carter work as Senior Research Fellows in the Health Inequalities Research Programme, Department of Public Health, University of Otago in Wellington. <http://www.otago.ac.nz/wellington/research/hirp/index.html>

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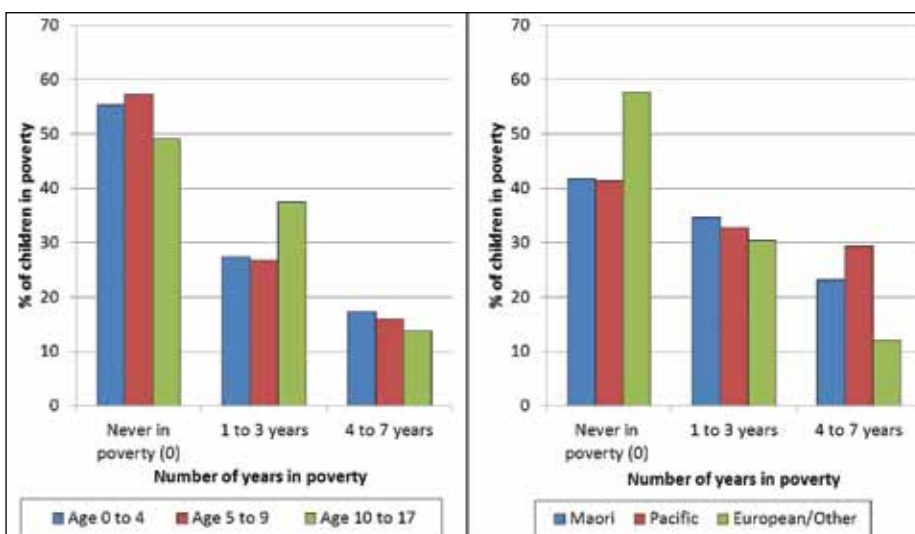


Figure 1. Proportion of children in persistent low income by age and ethnicity at wave 1, using seven waves of data from the Survey of Family, Income and Employment (SoFIE)

Free e-book



Author Anya Godwin

empowers children to keep safe

The free e-book 'Say "No" to Bottom – Games' by children's counsellor Anya Godwin and launched by Home and Family Counselling last year has been seen as a boon by many parents and educators.

Adults who are willing to tackle the topic of sexual abuse and want to learn how to discuss this topic effectively with children are finding this book invaluable.

'Say "NO" To Bottom-Games' is a guide for educators, caregivers and parents about how to teach children to have confidence and awareness in potentially unsafe situations. This book offers ideas and strategies for adults that empower children to use their instincts and safety rules to primarily make good decisions in potentially dangerous situations that may lead to sexual abuse.

Anya, the author, says "Most adults in charge of children know that sexual abuse occurs and realise this topic needs to be addressed. Unfortunately many who would like to say something don't say anything because in their specific role it is not appropriate. Say "NO" To Bottom-Games offers educators' simple ideas for developing body awareness and safety strategies for children that can be adapted to the education setting."

So how can educators teach children to Say and Do NO? Here are some ideas from the e-book you can teach children to say in potentially dangerous situations:

- "Stop it, I don't like it."
- "I'm going to tell on you."
- "Leave me alone, go away."
- "Ew yuck, I'm not doing that."
- "I am the Boss of my Body."
- "I'm not looking at that yucky stuff. It's yucky."
- "You're not allowed to touch me there, my body is private."
- Tell them they are allowed to Yell and tell till somebody listens.

In addition to Saying and Doing "No", a child can gain self confidence by learning to read and trust their internal signals correctly. Knowing how to pick up on their own internal signals or instincts could alert children about potential danger in their surroundings.

Being able to name feelings and recognise instincts is a helpful skill for children. Help them develop their instincts to become effective barometers for danger. The e-book suggests it's a good idea for children to become familiar with words that describe their feelings so they can talk easily about what happens to them.

Also when working with children you soon discover many children are curious about bodies, so what is normal? Playful exploration of bodies and genitals amongst young children is, for the most part, normal. There is a line between abuse and normal child-to-child exploration and it can be a challenge for an adult to recognise this line. Describing non-abusive activity:

- Children of the same age and developmental level, who are playfully touching each other in a light-hearted way.
- It is key that both children are participating in a playful way and neither child is at all upset by the playing.

If you discover a child is engaged in child-to-child touching of this nature, calmly ask them how they feel about it. If they are quite relaxed about it, you could simply leave it at that and keep an eye out in the future.

Here are some indicators for when child-to-child touching is not appropriate and could be called abuse. In these situations stopping the behaviour is required.

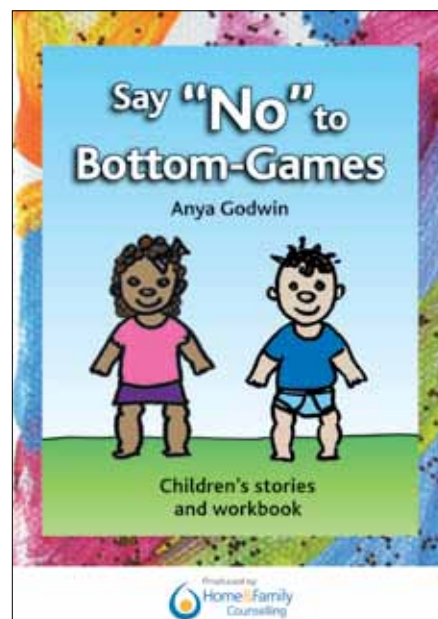
- When the behaviour appears to be repeated on a regular basis instead of playing other games.
- When one child forces another to participate in any way. This includes threats and punishments as well as

rewards, bribery or coercion.

- When one child has more sexual knowledge, is older, or is more mature than the other.
- When one child is developmentally more mature than the other.
- When the children are not equal in the relationship and the sexual touching is a game of power.
- When either of the children do not want to participate or are hurt in any way.

Deciphering what has happened to a child by assessing their description of events, as well as other symptoms can be very difficult and is a job for trained professionals. The e-book also covers how to respond if a child discloses sexual abuse and how to access support.

There are two separate books in the set: 'Parent, Educators and Caregiver's Guide' and 'Children's Stories and Workbook'. The books have been designed for children between the ages 2 – 12. These books can be downloaded by signing up for a free download at www.homeandfamily.org.nz





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A DAY IN THE LIFE....

The whanau of Little Einsteins is composed of many very special people, big and small. One of the small ones is our friend Will, an integral part of Ruma Tui for three days every week. Will is 3 ½ years old, and aside from all the normal challenges of being a toddler, Will also has the added challenge of having Down Syndrome. This may have delayed some developmental milestones, but on the whole, it hasn't slowed him down! Enjoy the journey of this busy young man's day!



Good morning Will! He starts the day the real kiwi-kid way, with weetbix and a milo, followed by toast smothered in Vegemite. Will is just one kiwi suffering from Marmite withdrawals, and settles for the poor relation.



Kia Ora! Will always arrives with a huge smile for his teachers and friends, he is always energised and ready to start the day.



Bye Mum. Will relies on his non verbal communication and hugs are just so important to him! He always has lots to give to his teachers, and they come with the biggest beaming smiles that speak of love and total trust.



Time for cuddles before preschool. Will adores the animals he visits when working at home with his Dad on the farm.



Then Will hits the ground running. There is so much to do, and he has many favourite activities. The sandpit is his first choice today, and his teachers watch him digging holes often. He works quietly and busily on his own.



Will knows how to use the bike track to best meet his requirement to thrill. His little legs power him up to the top of the rise, he lifts his legs and leans forward to achieve maximum speed! He squeals in delight as he pulls up to me.



A little later in the morning, Will spots his friends playing on the slide, and sits down to observe. He explores the way his body moves as he watches, and ends up nearly pulling off a backward roll on his own!



Eventually watching isn't enough. Will is becoming more of a participator, and with a little encouragement, decides that he should be a part of the fun!



Once Will is at the top, he positions himself cleverly to achieve maximum speed. He gives us one of his signature victory dances before returning to the ladder for another turn.



Such a busy day... Will happily drifts off to dreamland with the gentle tones of Brooke Fraser, a teacher stroking his back, and his favourite tired friends.



Although Will is very focused on the outdoors, he is an enthusiastic participator at mat time. Mr Alligator 'snapping those monkeys right out of the tree' delights him, and he helps Becca with the actions. He loves to dance, and can really bust out some moves!



Will has a huge sleep, and not long after he rises, Mum comes to pick him up. He waves goodbye to his teachers and his friends – See you on Thursday Will!



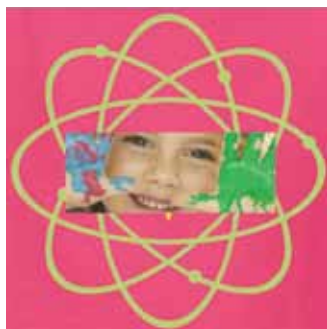
Always energetic, his huge nap at preschool has fuelled his body to continue the day the way it has started. Will's enthusiasm and joy is unequalled.



A love of books provides some quiet time to settle before bed. Will's Mum says he loves to play on his own with his books and his cars and tractors, and doesn't demand that she entertain him, his imagination keeps him company!



Goodnight Will! As they kiss him goodnight, Mum and Dad know there is a good chance that they will see Will during the night as he clambers in beside them for one of those yummy cuddles he loves so much.



THE 2013 ECC-TELECOM INNOVATION & IMPROVEMENT AWARD

Announcing, in association with the New Zealand Business Excellence Foundation and kindly supported by Telecom, the first Innovation & Improvement Awards for the early childhood education sector!

This award is open to any ECC member centre and will be presented at the ECC Conference in May 2013.

The winning entry will receive a cash prize of \$3,000, a framed certificate, a feature article in Swings & Roundabouts, a feature item on the ECC's website, media coverage, workshop slot at the ECC's 2013 conference and the recognition of your peers across the sector.



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The 2013 ECC-Telecom Innovation & Improvement Award

The ECC-Telecom Innovation & Improvement Award will be an annual recognition of excellence and improvement within the early childhood education sector.

The Award recognises examples of innovative practice or improvement in management, curriculum delivery, ECE teaching practice or in some way defined by the centre.

Innovation must be significantly innovative rather than a refinement of something normally done with the improvement being significant and reflect some aspect of the centre's normal practice.

How will it work?

All you have to do is go to the ECC website (www.ecc.org.nz, look under events) where you will find an Expression of Interest form with a range of questions to answer. These expressions of interest will be shortlisted to represent the best innovation and improvement examples.

Shortlisted candidates will then submit a full application.

Applications will be evaluated by a trained team. The evaluation reports will then go to a judging panel, made up of sector representatives, sponsor representatives and a representative from the Ministry of Education.

The winning entry receives a cash prize of \$3,000, a framed certificate, a feature article in Swings & Roundabouts, a feature item on the ECC's website, media coverage, a workshop slot at the ECC's 2013 conference, and the recognition from peers.

How much will it cost?

There is no entry to enter the competition. One entry per centre (must be an ECC member).

What are the benefits?

- This is a special award recognising your innovation and improvement

activities, and is unique in our sector

- It is positive recognition for you and your team
- It will help you to improve your planning and management
- It will help you to be more successful overall

What are you waiting for?

If your centre has made innovative changes or significant improvements it's time to share your experience and inspire other centres to develop and change their practice.

Expressions of Interest close at 5.00pm Friday 1 February 2013.

For more inspiration read the article *Turning Inspirational & Imaginative Childhood Dreams into Innovative Childcare Centre Realities* and stories from the *Centres of Innovation* programme.

What is an Entrepreneur? The Best Answer Ever

According to dictionary.com an Entrepreneur is a person who organises and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk. Wikipedia defines an entrepreneur as a person who is willing to help launch a new venture or enterprise and accept full responsibility for the outcome.

But what does being an entrepreneur really mean? A risk-taker? An innovative person? Or something else? If someone wants to be an entrepreneur, it's very important to know the right ingredients of entrepreneurship in order to apply them to be a successful entrepreneur.

When searching the internet you will find that the most commonly known characteristics of an entrepreneur are:

- **Risk takers:** an entrepreneur has to be willing to accept pretty big risks, with some level of comfort.
- **Sacrifice:** entrepreneurs also are willing to sacrifice. They give up family time and other personal time, they gave up the comfort and security that working for other people can give. A willingness to make decisions in the absence of solid data.
- **Creative:** entrepreneurs are able to make connections between unrelated events or situations. Entrepreneurs often come up with new and simple solutions.
- **Determination:** successful entrepreneurs do not believe that something cannot be done, they try again and again till success.

There are a lot of articles on the internet on entrepreneurship and its definition and how to be an entrepreneur, one of the highly recommended to read is "What's an Entrepreneur? The Best Answer Ever" on Inc.com. The article suggests another definition to an entrepreneurship:

"Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled."

By focusing on entrepreneurship as a process instead of personal characteristics, the definition opens the term to all kinds of people to adopt.

What do think? Do you agree with this definition? Does entrepreneurship exist in ECE? Should it exist in ECE?

(Thanks to New Zealand Business Excellence Foundation for this article)

Turning Imaginative Childhood Dreams into Innovative Childcare Centre Realities

After years of dreaming about the lyrics to Les Miserables' "castle in the clouds", Magic Kingdom Childcare became a reality and opened its doors in August 2012 to become one of the most innovative centres in NZ. The centre's journey started 30 years ago when the owner was a child dreaming about a "castle in the clouds", to 10 years ago from grass-roots, front line teaching experience in ECE, to three years ago researching and searching for the perfect centre location, to two years ago fine tuning childcare concepts, buildings and room designs, resource consent (and neighbour!) approval, and finally spending the last several months overseeing finishing touches of construction and landscaping.

The owners (husband and wife team who both come from three generations of teaching history in their respective families) have committed to a teaching and learning philosophy that embraces innovation, technology and sustainability - anchoring the perfect setting to "prepare future guardians of our world".

Innovation 1 – Sustainable energy

On the roof is Magic Kingdom's array of photovoltaic cells which produce electricity for the centre. Children can



view a digital graph and see how much electricity they have produced each day and match that with sunny and cloudy days. This is an excellent add-on to the centre's nature, science and exploration area. The community will also benefit in the long run as Magic Kingdom continues to produce electricity for the public grid on weekends!

Innovation 2 – Sustainable water

Buried underneath the playground is a massive 30,000L rainwater recycling tank that pumps back rainwater for all laundry, toilets and gardening needs. It is so big that the tank could not be transported by road and so had to be built on site! This builds on a continuously evolving learning program for children to enhance their awareness and respect of our limited natural resources.

"A lot of industries claim to be sustainable, but often it's like saying they are a little bit married" says owner, operator Nikeeta Singh. "We think it's an all-or-nothing approach and we want our children to start life knowing nothing less than a standard of living in which we save all our rainwater, grow our own vegetables, and produce our own electricity freely and cleanly from the sun....We'd love for them to challenge their peers one day when they grow up and say, 'how else do you do it??'".

Innovation 3 – Transformational entranceway

Magic Kingdom's entrance has been designed to instantly transport parents and visitors away from the busy hustle and bustle of Auckland city into a short walk through a rainforest, featuring a gemstone embedded pathway, water feature, dry riverbed, and gentle birdsong in the background (running on a continuous soundtrack loop!). All of this - before parents have even reached the front door! The welcoming setting gives a sense of



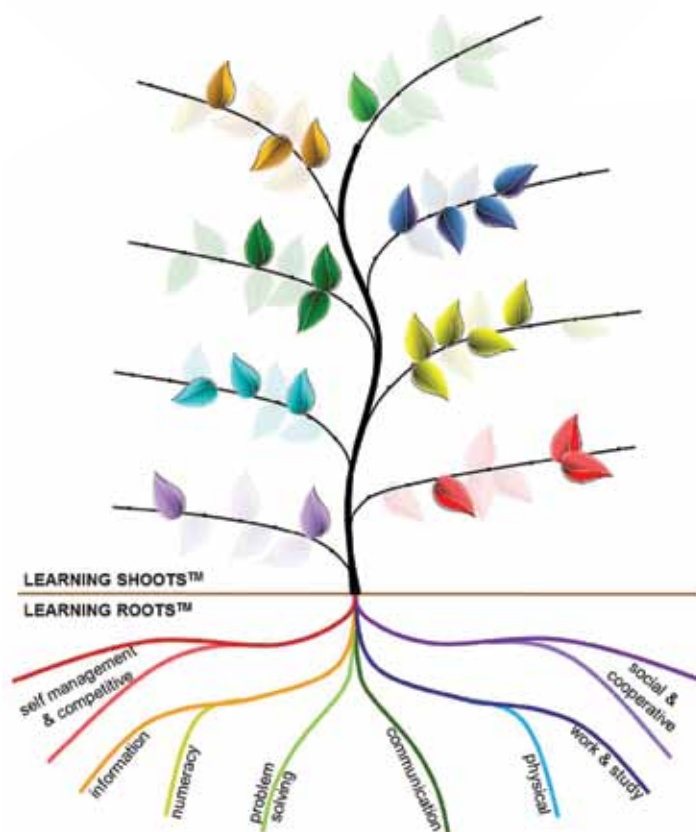
instant transformation into a unique and magical world for children.

Innovation 4 - KIDCAM™

Seeing how guilty some parents felt when they left their children in the mornings, crying at day care and then receiving parent telephone calls on the hour every hour for the rest of the day (!), the owners installed a series of cameras throughout the centre so that parents could observe in peace from reception and online from work, how their child settled at the centre (in most cases within minutes).

Innovation 5 – Learning Roots™ and Learning Shoots™

The most common feedback from parents over the years to the owners has been a lack of understanding of Te Whariki and its implications for their children. There is already an uphill battle going on in the industry to raise awareness in communities that ECE is not about "babysitting" or "playing all day", but is much deeper with professional goals, milestones, and outcomes to achieve for every child. A questionnaire by the owners last year brought about responses ranging from thinking Te Whariki was about "teaching Maori to children", to thinking Te Whariki was an "optional extension to the curriculum", instead of knowing that it actually is the curriculum! This specific gap in connectivity between day-care and parents/communities catalysed



the development of something new by the owners, in the form of visualising Te Whariki's essential skills, goals, strands, and dispositions. The invention is trademarked and patent pending and like any good idea, it is simple, because the idea comes from nature (a process called biomimicry), and best of all - it works! The model is based on a clever idea that:

1. "roots" are the invisible part of a tree that:
  - a. are hidden within (i.e. potential interests, skills, etc of a child),
  - b. absorb nutrients (i.e. learning from teachers, family and environment), and
  - c. hold the foundations steady for growth.
2. "shoots" are the visible part that reveal the fruits, flowers, leaves, branches (i.e. the visible outcomes of learning and in particular which directions a child's skills and learning branches are growing in).

As well as regularly documenting learning stories for each child that link to general curriculum outcomes, teachers can now go the extra step to identify and visualise each child's specific learning skills etc. Also they are now able to thread all of these skills and interests together throughout the child's entire time in ECE to enable parents to visualise all emerging developments at

a single glance using this new tool – thus providing a well-rounded and holistic (not prescriptive) sense of their child's interests and developments. All of this happens at the click of a button inside a child's secure online portfolio, where the learning tree holds every single learning story ever written about the child as chronological colour coded leaves that can be clicked to open the story!



Innovation 6 – Inspirational Themed Learning Environments

To live up to its name, "Magic Kingdom" concepts and designs reveal some very imaginative and inspirational learning environments for children and teachers. The under two's room is an enchanted forest in which babies and toddlers (and adults!) can play and learn. The enchanted tree was designed by centre owners and specially moulded and constructed out of fibreglass by the makers of props for the Lord of the Rings. The tree even has ring lines inside with peep holes through the hollow trunk. A perfect place to relax into a cosy 2-3-person reading nook.



The over two's room is spacious with little nooks in each corner, and for that desperate third consecutive rainy day, teachers have the option of controlling a 150" screen to shine a ceiling mounted projector onto for the odd "popcorn & movie day".



Sandpits come alive too as natural extensions of the magical faraway scenes on the fences.

The under two's are transported inside a lunar crater complete with "moon rocks" and simple shapes and friendly imagery to enhance spatial sense and imaginative play.



The over two's sandpit transports children into a shipwreck off the coast of a treasure island and inside a wild Amazon jungle, which comes complete with a thatched jungle hut.



The landscaping (by Playscape) follows natural contours which is an ideal setting for a themed NZ riverbed with flowing recycled rainwater cascading from the waterfall image on the fence, through the river rocks into a trough at the bottom. As well as a direct water play in a stand-alone trough, this creative setting enables a wider appreciation and understanding and fosters greater inquiry-based-learning about the environment and process from which water comes and goes.



A Hobbit cave is buried underneath a giant wave slide and rolling hill which itself encourages confidence and develops upper body balance and strength. The cave underneath measures 6m across and has

its own door, window, schist wall, and top terrace. With the Hobbit movie about to launch, all centres with Hobbit caves could be a stopping point for Sir Peter Jackson's promotional tour!

Innovation 7 – Spacious "time out" room.... for staff!

Happy teachers = happy children = happy parents = happy business.

Every MBA 101 course will preach that the number one asset in any business is not its facilities, buildings, equipment, software systems, etc – but rather is its people. Magic Kingdom owners have taken this philosophy and built a spacious "time-out" environment for teachers which even has a private north facing sunny deck.

It becomes very apparent from the moment you walk in the front entranceway through to the themed rooms inside and the themed environments outside, then view the upstairs staff facilities, then view the newly invented visualisation tool for children, that you get to walk away appreciating the years of dreams, designs and developments that have gone into creating one of the most innovative environments for children, parents and teachers.



"Our kids will one day be guardians of our country and our world", say Nikeeta, "so what better start than inside a magical world to learn about care and respect of our planet, people and possessions...it's the least we can do to inspire and prepare them for lifelong learning".

About the Authors

Nikeeta Singh and Dr Darius Singh are proud owners of two early childhood centres: Fern Garden Preschool in Tauranga and now Magic Kingdom Childcare in Auckland.

For more information about these innovations go to www.magickingdom.co.nz to contact Darius or Nikeeta.

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CENTRES OF INNOVATION – where are these centres now...

The Centres of Innovation (COI) Programme was established as a strategy to improve the quality of early childhood education in 2003. In Budget 2009 it was announced that the COI programme will end on 30 June 2009. Twenty-one services were involved over four rounds.

The intention of the COI programme was to promote a deeper exploration of innovative teaching and learning processes already underway in early childhood services.

An innovation for this project refers to learning and teaching practices which

are different in an identifiable way from typical programmes within the early childhood sector. The nature of innovation is something which takes the best of the knowledge we have and uses that to take practice forward to the leading edge.

The Swings and Roundabout theme for this issue was: The Ghost of ideas lost – a review of great ECE ideas that haven't gone anywhere. Have a read...do you think this was a good idea that never went anywhere? Should these types of projects be encouraged and financed again?

Roskill South Kindergarten in Auckland says they continue to be innovative since they completed the COI project and have developed many ideas since (e.g. in 2009 Bush Kindergarten began). This action research project provided their teaching team with an excellent foundation and even now continues to make a difference for their community and many communities throughout NZ and beyond. "Innovations emerge", says Roskill South Kindergarten, "when children, parents and teachers are researchers and when they are empowered to co-construct the teaching and learning curriculum together."

Massey Child Care Centre

By Raewyne Bary

The Hoiho Section of Massey Child Care Centre was selected as one of the four centres in the second round of the Centres of Innovation Programme. Its defining characteristic was an innovative Attachment Based Learning programme for infants and toddlers (ABL), centred on relationships between teachers, children and families, within a community of practice framework. At the heart of this programme was the way in which leadership systems, including distributed leadership, supported the teachers' work with children. Children's enquiry was chosen as a focus for studying the children's learning and the ways in which the teachers supported this learning.

The principal research question was: "In what ways does educational leadership, within a community of practice, impact on infants' and toddlers' disposition to enquire?"

Teachers and associate researchers spent three years gathering data, analysing, reflecting and writing as they worked on the research while ensuring the programme continued for children and families as usual. It was a learning journey of hard work, fun, and satisfaction. Would we do it again? In a heartbeat! The opportunity for the teachers to be

involved in an experience that afforded them the time and the support to critically reflect on their practice; to work alongside experienced researchers; and to grow their capacity in many areas of teaching and learning was one of the most rewarding experiences in their teaching career.

The principal finding was that the sense of security within the centre underpinned children's enquiry. The security that teachers gained in working together within agreed frameworks (the community of enquiry, distributed leadership and the attachment based learning systems) enabled them in turn to support the children's sense of security and further their disposition to enquire. The research identified the elements of enquiry in children as reciprocity, responsiveness and resilience, and established ways in which these elements could be maintained and supported.

The community of practice, self-sustaining teams (distributed leadership) and attachment based learning (ABL) all contributed to supporting teachers' work with children and to the enhancement of enquiry. Being a member of a self-sustaining team within this community of practice supported teachers' leadership by strengthening relationships and

encouraging teachers to take responsibility for curriculum decision making.

The effect of the Centre of Innovation research continues to impact on the teachers today and on the ongoing development of our programme for infants, toddlers and families. The understanding that the teachers gained of the importance of research, has developed a deeper level of critical reflection that constantly provokes them to challenge each other; to critically reflect on practice; and to question why and what they are doing. This outcome from the COI continues to grow the organisational culture of the centre, thus impacting on the new teachers, children and families who have joined the centre since the completion of the project.

With the increase of participation of infants and toddlers in group-care settings this research was both timely and of importance to the growing body of knowledge around infant and toddler care and education. The COI experience continues to prompt us to be proactive in the research field concerning infant and toddler care and education. We continue to draw interest from others in our field and still host visitors both nationally and internationally.

Greerton Early Childhood Centre

Teachers who are engaged with children's learning all have stories to tell; their 'windows of wonder' into children's learning lives. These are the magic moments that keep us involved and excited, caught up in the intensity of seeing learning unfold. So what might this look like in practice? How might we harness children's thirst to find out about this world in ways that support the goals they set themselves?

This was the driving force behind the Greerton Early Childhood Teachers' innovative practice. The investigative nature of our children's learning excited us. We constantly saw small groups of children shaping and re-shaping their knowledge as they experimented, tested, re-tested, deepened and broadened their understanding. Our major research question was: *How does a 'question-asking' and a 'question-exploring' culture support children to develop working theories to shape and re-shape knowledge for a purpose?*

The Centre of Innovation Research project gave us the opportunity to think deeply about learning in the twenty-first century. We unpacked what wise practice can look like when teachers have an image of children as researchers; learners out to explore their world, with dispositions like curiosity and purposefulness driving their investigations. With this 'researcher' image comes a reflective re-look at how curriculum and programmes might connect with twenty-first century learning that looks to a future where change is the only constant.

During the three years of the Centre of Innovation Research, the Greerton teachers spoke to teachers, researchers, academics and families at conferences across New Zealand. Many groups visited the Greerton Centre as part of this dissemination process and continue to. The teachers have written journal articles, web based articles and set up a website so teachers have continuing access to this work. The dissemination, rather than finishing at the three year completion of the research, has continued more strongly than ever. Greerton teachers' work, like many other Centres of Innovation, features in books and articles, is shared at conferences, used in pre-service training and in Professional Learning contracts and is known across the world. The initial cost of running this research has been repaid long

after expectation, and represents a very cost effective way of linking centres with exemplars of innovative practice designed to make a difference in young children's lives.

An excerpt from the final research report gives an insight into the Greerton Teachers' thinking about pedagogy, environment and teachers' practice.

"The teacher's role then is a finely balanced role, an intuitive role that sees each teacher making decisions 'in the moment' poised as provocateur, as listener, as learner, as teacher, ever vigilant for opportunities to widen and deepen knowledge, on that knife edge that draws children into mystery, as a crew member, not a passenger (Claxton, 2002). It is a highly skilled position and one that can enhance or constrain learning in the blink of an eye. Herein lies the 'flow' that Csikszentmihalyi (1997) has so aptly described. Challenge and skill in sync, where risk is a friend as learners step into the unpredictable, uncertain and surprising realm that is life, and thinking, find a way through.

In our early learning settings this journey is a social journey where each learner's capacity for competence is in active mode, not supported in a 'needy sense' but activated by the group's thirst to engage with surprise and uncertainty and develop working theories about the world we live in. As we all consider the learning culture we are part of in our own settings, the image we hold of children as learners and teachers and the image we have of ourselves as teachers and learners, will drive the way our learning settings unfold. We have a powerful influence on children's lives and learning. Te Whāriki's (Ministry of Education, 1996) principles are a gift to us, a taonga most precious and if we set our



sights on unpacking those principles into our everyday practice, rather than starting from practice and trying to manufacture principle, we will all be the very best we can be and wise practice will be assured".

Would we consider being involved in another research project? The answer to this is that we think of ourselves as teacher researchers and we constantly engage in our own self directed teacher research. This is the way we think of 'Self Review' and it means we continue reflective critique of our learning culture, always mindful of the newest child, family and teacher who comes through our doors.

To learn more about this research visit these websites: www.earlychildcare.co.nz www.elp.co.nz

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First Years Preschool

By Lisa Bond, Sarah Graham and Julie Sargent

In 2009 the over two teaching team at First Years Preschool was selected as a Centre of Innovation. Our innovation was 'fearless' science. Unfortunately the contract was terminated before we began to generate much data or undertake our research. Naively, we thought that the contract with the Ministry was safe, regardless of funding cutbacks. However, we received a phone call to say it was over. The cancellation really affected our centre, as we had already engaged families, research associates, teachers and children to research with us. It had been two years of work to get selected, and many hours of writing, meetings, hui, and documentation. We were terribly disappointed, both professionally and personally.

Our fearless approach to science picked up and followed children's scientific interests, and we went wherever it took us. Over time we developed teaching strategies which supported the learning that happened. Investigations were co-constructed by teachers, children and families, and they evolved with children's interests. We role-modelled excitement and enthusiasm, and worked hard to extend our own scientific content knowledge and terminology. Children learned the fearlessness of the centre's culture, as they held worms and



crawlies, dissected animal organs, and developed a questioning approach.

The centre of innovation journey taught us to recognise our innovative way of teaching and learning. Our research associates ignited an interest in teacher research, and we learned about the process, ethics, and value of research. We were excited to share our knowledge with the wider community, which included families, visiting teachers and the wider early education community. We presented at hui, conferences and wrote articles.

The Centre of Innovation made a huge difference. It was a new team of teachers, and we learnt to work together with a common goal and way of thinking. The initial round of funding allowed us to employ relieving teachers, so the researching teachers could begin generating data and share findings at hui. The centre became well known for being passionate about science. The concept of 'community' became really important to us, and the role that families play in supporting and engaging the learning that was happening. Our children's sense of belonging and empowered enabled them to make choices about their own learning pathways. This continues to happen today, as teachers have learnt to respect children's choices in their own learning. Our families quickly became more engaged about children's learning. Everyone learned together, that's what made it

exciting. It was a living, evolving way of teaching and learning.

If the Centre of Innovation programme restarted, we would re-apply in a heartbeat, however there would have to be a guarantee that the research contract was honoured. We believe it was a dreadful waste of resources, funding, and time to engage in research and not be able to disseminate our findings.

Today our fearless science still happens in the centre, but it is not our sole focus. Our practice has changed and evolved as a result of being part of a Centre of Innovation. Our teaching team has built on the skills and knowledge that we learned through the innovation and research. We have learnt to think outside the square, we think wider and with more depth. We pursue many different topics of interests now, based on what questions children ask, and their own interests brought from their home.

We are extremely proud of our achievements and still say with pride that we are a Centre of Innovation.

By Lisa Bond, Sarah Graham and Julie Sargent (lead researchers) on behalf of the teaching team at First Years Preschool, Dannevirke.



Mangere Bridge Kindergarten

When we applied to be included in the Centres of Innovation (COI) Round 3, 2006-2008 we had already been researching Transition to School with Educational Leadership Project, which we could now continue under the COI. Positive Transition partnerships were central to our kindergarten philosophy and the belief that children are "ready, willing and able to learn" when they feel comfortable and able to build on previous learning guided our research focus. We had seen the emerging influence of Roskill South kindergarten COI research on the practice of Early Childhood teachers and we saw this contract as an opportunity to make a difference for the children and families in our centre and in the wider education community. We felt we could strengthen and intensify relationships with the primary sector and make a real difference for children's learning.

The COI contract gave us as practitioners the opportunity to work with two highly supportive research associates to investigate our own practice using action research methods. This multi-pronged approach utilised multiple data collection methods and enabled the teaching team to build relationships with the teachers in two local schools and to develop projects that could help support children and families as they transitioned from the kindergarten into the local primary schools.

In association with Margaret Carr and Sally Peters, we developed three research questions that were constructed around the analogy of crossing a border, the border between two often very different educational settings - an early childhood centre and a primary school. The questions encompassed curriculum, literacy and relationships.

During the three years of the contract we developed a number of projects using a spiral approach. The teaching team collected data, analysed the data against the research questions and developed further projects which included the input of children, families, and teachers in a variety of settings. The use of portfolios in both settings and their value as a tool in Transition to School formed the initial project in the research and was followed

by a number of "Mutually interesting tasks" we came to see as providing the building blocks for relationships between all parties in the transition process. The later buddies project has become part of the culture of our community and is now well established influencing learning in both settings.

Each project provoked new thoughts and ideas about how we could strengthen our processes and the relationships that we believe are crucial to positive transitions for children and their families. Our community benefited from the involvement in the COI through strengthened relationships and through our ongoing engagement in study and research.

The financial support tied to the contract meant that we could spend time observing in the kindergarten and in the schools, meeting as a research team to think, discuss and write about our journey. Our teaching team changed during the time of



the contract and the funded release time in addition enabled new team members to focus on building their own skills and knowledge about research and research processes as well as becoming part of a cohesive research group.

While we had been involved in small scale research projects prior to the COI this whole experience led us to grow hugely as practitioners, as researchers and finally as writers. We have learned so much in the past 7 years - it was a huge and extremely challenging learning curve for all of us and we would do it all again tomorrow. In fact we are considering just that. Over the time of the COI we gained so much and although it involved a considerable

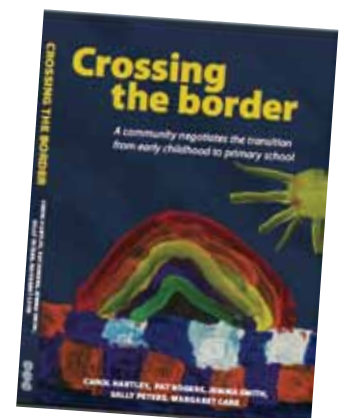
personal commitment over and above our teaching hours it was incredibly satisfying. We have enjoyed engaging in dialogue and hosting teachers and academics worldwide who collaborate on promoting effective transitions for children and their families.

We have written a book about our research and our journey and continue to disseminate regularly to audiences in New Zealand and beyond. We hope our book "Crossing the Border" (NZCER Press) will be of value for teachers in both sectors in New Zealand and internationally.

Feedback shows we met our goals which were a part of the COI contract; promoting better understandings and distributing information about effective transition from EC to primary practices.

Why do we think the COI was so important?

Because the original innovation for a COI application came from teachers who worked everyday with children. Becoming a COI gave teachers an opportunity to influence thinking about how children learn, to take the lead in the education community based on sound academic research and to show that practitioners talking to practitioners can create significant and valuable shifts in practice and thinking. Lastly, because the COI was a uniquely early childhood education initiative that built respect for early childhood education theory and practice both within the educational community and beyond.



Botany Downs Kindergarten

As we applied to become a Centre of Innovation in 2006 we could not have anticipated the exciting, demanding, challenging three year journey that lay ahead of us. We already had the strongest of commitment to the practice of inclusion at Botany Downs Kindergarten, so the focus of inclusion for the action research for 2006 appeared to have specifically written for us. Our research question, "How does an inclusive environment enhance the learning of all children and their families?" was carefully worded to reflect our belief that inclusion has little to do with children with special needs and everything to do with creating an environment that supports the best learning outcomes for all. Inclusion is about ethics, rights and quality outcomes.

Throughout the research we sought to capture and analyse our inclusive actions, expand our use of visual resources and continue to strengthen communication with all children and their families.

Our inclusive practice was affirmed and challenged as we disseminated the research progress and findings throughout New Zealand and the World. With each presentation new meanings and understandings added depth to the research and further developed our research and presentation skills.



Teachers in the audiences shared that they appreciated the actual realities that we shared of working with young children in an inclusive setting and the possibilities we brought to the fore as we shared the notion of possibility thinking, not always knowing the answers, but being open to possibilities. The teachers consistently shared that they valued practitioner research.

"...we wanted to understand our research better and be able to articulate our thoughts in a coherent thought provoking manner."

Such feedback and challenges from teachers built our capacity as presenters, as teachers and as citizens. We absorbed this as we wanted to understand our research better and be able to articulate our thoughts in a coherent thought provoking manner. We grew both personally and professionally throughout the three years. While initially daunting, the dissemination component of the research requirements was to be one of our most valuable, character building and enjoyable aspects of the research project.

Being part of a generously funded research project allowed us as the teacher researchers' quality time to observe, meet together as a team and with the academic research associates, collate and analyse the research as it was happening. This factor was pivotal to the quality and depth of the research.

The community of Botany Downs Kindergarten benefitted through the concentrated focus on improving teacher practice and the sharing of the practice outcomes. We are in no doubt that we

would have moved forward in our inclusive practice anyway. However, being part of the Centres of Innovation action research project focused all our attention on our practice and encouraged us to dig deep for our reflections, and seldom do teachers have the quality uninterrupted time for this.

Would we do it again? In a heartbeat! Although the project required considerable investment of additional personal time, being part of the research has defined who we are as teachers and as a kindergarten community at this point in time. One unexpected outcome is the wealth of contacts that have been made with other teams in the Centres of Innovation project, teachers throughout New Zealand and throughout the world, and those contacts have expanded our learning and created new opportunities. Our research continues to be valued in teacher pre-service education, sought out on line and there are requests for further dissemination.

The research has led us into new inclusive projects – a Skype project with a new entrant class at Botany Downs School – an inclusive relationship with Somerville Special School – and one teacher becoming an eFellow. Being part of the Centres of Innovation project opened doors, however we needed to be receptive to the opportunities that presented and build them to create new opportunities.



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Otaki Kindergarten

By Sue Barrett, Head Teacher

Our participation in the Centres of Innovation project was centred on the question: *How does environmental/sustainable education fit into our curriculum?*

The investigation was based on a broad philosophy of 'looking after ourselves, each other and our place'.

It was an opportunity to look at the strengths of our programme and the values, in this case environmental, we hold as important from an individual kindergarten and a community perspective. There was time to talk and to share stories, to strengthen existing relationships and establish new ones, to consider and reconsider and to listen.

Researchers, Dr Sarah Te One and Associate Professor Val Podmore worked

on the project with us and helped set the parameters for the project. We looked at:

1. how an ecological approach to teaching and learning can impact on both children's learning outcomes and reciprocal, respectful relationships with the community;
2. how do children learn to respect their environment?

We considered various elements of the curriculum and how it supported the different learning styles of children - the 'watching apprentices'; the 'curious workers' and the pragmatic, practical 'just get on with it' kids - all the while thinking critically about the learning outcomes we were seeing, or hoping to see. Were we seeing children's awareness of the environment developing in an ecological context?

When the funding was cut in the July 2009 budget, we had just started to analyse the data collected around parameter 2 - children learning to respect their environment.

We did reach a conclusion that, in order for children to have the opportunity to explore the ideas and values of sustainable education, the practices have to be embedded in a curriculum that encourages investigation and discovery. It also needs, like any area of learning, to be facilitated by enthusiastic teachers who are passionate about the need for environmental awareness in our young people.

As Rachel Carson, well-known conservationist put it, "It is not half so important to know as to feel."

While it was hugely disappointing to have our work cut short, it did reinforce our belief in an environment where children



can be unleashed, able to make their own explorations, in their own way.

Our kindergarten is very fortunate to be part of an organisation which values research as it contributes to 'best practice' in early childhood education. We were supported to continue the focus after the 'official' project ended.

Children continue to build relationships with each other and their place - stories are written or not written and the seasons continue to come and go, but our beliefs stay constant. Sustainable education should be a fundamental part of curriculum - intentionally embedded rather than a collection of "add-on" activities. How else can children learn to respect their environment?

The stories from the various and diverse Centres of Innovation played a part in motivating and inspiring novice and experienced kaiako around Aotearoa and the wider world. So, would we participate ano? It was a mana-enhancing experience full of challenges and we did learn a lot about ourselves. The children undoubtedly benefited from the focused curriculum and we have had the opportunity to share our stories with many colleagues. Aotearoa does need more of her own stories - projects like the COI are a great way to cultivate ideas to support children's learning.

The Wellington Region Free Kindergarten Association are a not for profit, community based organisation. WRFKA manages 63 kindergartens in the Wellington, Kapiti, Horowhenua and Petone area. Around 4,500 children attend WRFKA kindergartens.



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Early Childhood Education in Brunei

The Early Childhood Council's annual conference attracts a wide range of delegates. In 2012, Siti Sara Hj Tahir and her colleague, Mardiana Hj Sulaiman, attended the conference representing the Curriculum Development Department of the Ministry of Education in Brunei Darussalam.

Brunei is an independent sovereign Sultanate, governed on the basis of a written constitution. The Head of State, the Head of Government and the Supreme Executive Authority is His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the 29th monarch in succession to the throne. It is located in the North-West of the island of Borneo in South East Asia and has a population of about 408,000. Two thirds of the population are Malays and the rest are Chinese, indigenous people and expatriates. It is a wealthy, industrialised nation with rich natural gas and petroleum fields.

Education is seen as an asset for development of its human capital and its

nation, hence investing in early childhood education has become the nation's main agenda towards fostering the overall quality of education and for nation building.

Children as early as 5 years of age are enrolled in preschool classes where teaching is done in an informal setting. The curriculum in preschool education placed great emphasis upon the development of five major domains aiming towards the holistic and balanced development and learning of children. The five domains comprises of the development of self and social, cognitive, aesthetic and creative, physical and ICT.

The education for children under the age of 5 years are provided by private agencies and registered with the Ministry of Education. In relation to this, Brunei has a range of types of privately-owned early childhood centres and government-supported programmes for young children. There is legislation to support both the care and protection of young children as well as to provide for the wellbeing of young children at childcare centres.

The representatives from Brunei Darussalam at ECC's conference came to learn more about New Zealand's early childhood education system because New Zealand is viewed as a world leader in early childhood education. The women said:

'We are so lucky and grateful to be there as participants in your conference. There are lots of resources and information we can get from it. We valued our visit to the ECE learning centres as it give us ideas

and real pictures of what is going on in the centres. We hope we could see and learn more, and see how the teachers carry out the curriculum in the class.

'We had talked to our Director about your curriculum as the best in the world and how we feel amazed with your centres.'

They are hoping to visit more New Zealand centres in the future because of the relevance and benefits they can get from it, which include:

- in supporting them in their jobs as curriculum officers;
- enhance their knowledge in early childhood education;
- open their minds toward the issues regarding the development of early childhood in other country;
- create their awareness how to prepare the young children for all possibilities coping with the challenges in an ever changing world.

I asked Siti Sara and Mardiana if their early childhood centres were teacher led or child led. They responded:

'Previously early childhood centres were teacher led but we are now moving towards a child led focus as we realize that each child is different and activities designed to develop each child's skills at an early age are essential. This will help the child to cope with the changing world as he learns to value himself as part of the class. We would like to introduce some of the ideas and activities we observed in New Zealand, although we are very aware that our situation in Brunei is not the same.'

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Sara (far left) and Mardiana (far right) visiting an ECE centre as part of the 2012 ECC Conference & centre tour.

Preschool Education in China



Like most countries the Chinese Government has recognised the importance of early childhood education. They are targeting more Government revenue toward this area to not only encourage expansion and growth within the industry and to cater for more children, but to also raise the standards of quality within the sector.

The China daily had an article on October 17th 2012, about how young children are often pushed to learn far beyond their natural level. The Ministry of Education in China released guidelines in October 2012 in an effort to "curb the growing practice of young children being educated in a way that pushes them beyond what children at their



age should learn". The guidelines are also designed to clarify to some parents what children at different ages should be able to do. Teachers and University Professors are praising the Chinese Ministry for these new guidelines and hope that it will improve people's understandings of children's development.

The Directors of Education within various provinces of China have started to focus on the quality of the programme they are providing children within early childhood. They have decided that to stay ahead educationally they need to look at how they are teaching and what it is that drives educational success beyond the classroom.

They are doing this by looking at educational settings from other countries

to see how they can integrate some of these teaching methods, ideas and pedagogies into their own programmes.

Each province within China is at a different stage of improving their educational systems. Some have visited many countries and have begun to implement some dramatic changes to their teaching approaches. Others are at the beginning of their journey.

The preschools and kindergartens in China cater for a larger number of children compared to early childhood centres in New Zealand. On average, kindergartens and centres in China provide for up to 700 children, but some cater for as many as 1500 children. When catering for so many children the issue of space can become a problem. Many children are in buildings several storeys high. Therefore the indoor-outdoor flow that most early childhood centres in New Zealand have does not exist in China. Outdoor play is restricted to scheduled times for various classes throughout the day.

Wuxi, a city approximately 40 minutes from Shanghai on the fast train, is advanced in some of its teaching practices. I have visited many experimental kindergartens within this city that have a western style influence in some of their teaching methods. There is a more play orientated approach within experimental kindergartens in Wuxi, as opposed to some other provinces. Bilingual classrooms are also becoming popular, but many bilingual teachers don't have teaching qualifications.

Teacher training is of high importance to every province I've visited. It's exciting to be involved with teacher training delegations that are coming to New Zealand to develop more of an understanding of our New Zealand curriculum and various parts of our programme. It has taken almost two years to develop relationships with the various provinces in China. 'Guanxi' (relationships) is extremely important when working with local Chinese.

It's important to note that Chinese do not want to become western. They are happy and comfortable within themselves as a country and within their culture. What they are trying to do for their future generation is to combine the best from the Chinese educational system with the best of western teaching methods.

While having in-depth discussions with Directors from both the Shaanxi province and Wuxi city, both are asking similar questions about our programme and the teaching styles in New Zealand. They would like to know the differences between public and private educational settings and are interested in visiting centres and kindergartens. They want to gain a greater understanding of transition to school and how this is achieved in New Zealand.

One of the main themes the Directors are interested in learning more about is learning dispositions, values, virtues and habits of the mind.

China is an incredible place to not only visit, but to also work in. The people are extremely welcoming and I enjoy learning as much about their teaching programmes as they do about ours. Not only are the people amazing but the history is incredible and the food is delicious!! I would encourage anyone who hasn't visited China to put it on their bucket list.

About the Author

Maria Johnson is the owner/director of three Little School in Wellington, one in St Heliers, Auckland and is in negotiations to set up two large Little Schools in two Chinese cities. Maria is also president of the ECC.





Online Portfolios in ECE

By Nathan Li

For the past 20 years, early childhood teachers have developed paper-based portfolio systems to record children's learning, and assess children's efforts, progress and achievements during their early childhood education. A child's portfolio usually consists of a collection of learning stories, artwork, diary and journals that showcase a child's early years learning.

In recent years, with the advancement of computing and internet technology, online portfolios have become increasingly popular in the ECE sector. In this article, we are going to look into what an online portfolio system is, what the benefits are, what are the things you should look for.

What is an online portfolio?

An online portfolio is an internet-based software system that allows teachers to document and record children's learning

online. Essentially, it's an alternative to the paper-based portfolio systems that people are familiar with in the early childhood sector.

What are the benefits of an online portfolio?

Adopting an online portfolio system in your ECE centre brings a variety of benefits. Here are some of the most prominent.

Increased parent engagement and participation

The nature of being online means parents and whānau can access children's portfolios any time and anywhere, as long as there is access to the internet. Mum and Dad can access the portfolio at work during breaks, and grandparents who live overseas can be informed of their grandchildren's progress halfway across the world. Compared to paper-based portfolio systems, online portfolios provide an easier way to get parents engaged with children's early education. We estimate a well-implemented online portfolio system can increase whānau participation by 30 times compared to paper-based portfolios.

Improved assessment quality

A well-thought-out online portfolio system will align its assessments to Te Whāriki. It should also be able to support various other philosophies and values, such as learning dispositions, the Montessori philosophy, or Christian values etc. This offers ECE teachers great reference when writing learning stories. Some systems also provide predefined assessment templates, such as "What's happening here?" and "What's next?". This encourages ECE teachers to uncover and record learning experiences and to plan for a child's future learning.

Increased efficiency in your centre

An online portfolio is easier to access for teachers compared to a paper-based system. This allows teachers to work more efficiently. Teachers can review or proofread their own and each other's learning stories online without needing to print them out (which currently happens in many centres), and the review process can happen anywhere and any time. Some online systems also provide reporting and reminder mechanisms that help

centres to produce regular and consistent assessments for all children's learning. Videos, photos and scanned art work can also be uploaded and shared easily and efficiently with parents and whānau.

Time and money saved

Online portfolios usually come with a range of tools, such as templates, reports and story alerts that enable ECE teachers to complete learning stories much faster. Greater parental engagement also means time saved by not having to chase parents for the paper portfolio books for feedback.

It is estimated a centre implementing an online portfolio system can save printing costs by 15–20 per cent. Having photos, video and learning stories stored securely online, ECE centres will no longer need to pay for expensive hard drive storage and computer backup.

What are the things ECE centres should look for?

Security and privacy

First and foremost, you need to know that the information is securely stored, securely transmitted and can be securely accessed by all parties.

Secure storage: Where are the photos and the videos stored? Are they stored on a private server, or elsewhere, such as on YouTube?

Secure data transmission: Is the traffic between your computer and the systems' server encrypted? How is it encrypted? What are the chances of the information being compromised if captured by malicious users?

Secure access: Are our photos, videos and stories password protected? Who can see what information when a user logs on?



Where is our data physically located, and who has access to that?

Last but not least, the biggest question you should ask is: "Who owns the information?" Quite a few ECE centres use a particular social networking site for children's portfolios. However, if you dig a bit deeper, you will find that any information you upload or publish to the site is actually owned by that social network. This means any photo you update can be used for any purpose they like. So make sure you choose an online portfolio where you as an ECE centre own the photos, videos and any other material you publish to the system.

Easy to use and flexible

To successfully adopt an online portfolio system in your ECE centre, one of the key aspects is how easy it is to use. The system needs to be simple so that all teaching staff and the majority of the families involved are able to operate it with no major difficulties. This requires a system that has been designed with simplicity in mind and also comes with excellent customer help and support. Some of the questions you should ask: What happens if I or my teachers need help? What happens if a parent needs help? Is there a support team to answer technical inquiries via emails and phone calls?

Most ECE teachers are familiar with one or more software tools for creating learning stories. These tools may include Microsoft Word, Publisher, PowerPoint, Apple Pages, Keynote, ComicLife, SmileBox, and Picasa, etc. Over the years, teachers have invested a huge amount of time and effort in becoming proficient in those programs. Does that mean you have to throw all those skills away when adopting an online portfolio system? Not necessarily. If you choose the right platform, you will be able to leverage all the skills your team already has, and move online with very little effort.

Access for children

A lot of people are concerned that implementing an online portfolio system will eliminate children's access to their paper portfolio book. This is not true! Most online portfolio systems come with printing functions. This allows ECE centres to produce physical copies of learning stories for children to access. However, if you choose the right platform, built with children's access in mind, it will increase children's ICT skills and development. With the fast adoption of smartphones and tablet devices in the ECE sector and in many homes, some online portfolio systems also



provide native applications that run on iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch and Android phones and tablets. This gives children a richer and more intuitive experience in exploring their online portfolios.

Is an online portfolio right for your ECE centre?

Implementing an online portfolio system may not be for every centre. And we don't recommend you jump on it right away. It's technology dependent. It requires internet access in your centre and in the children's home or parents' workplace. It also requires the commitment from the centre manager (or owner) and the whole teaching team to get on board. Online portfolio systems work best if you have everyone using it regularly. This requires teachers and parents to change from what they are used to. But the benefits for centres, teachers, parents and children are fantastic, and, as technology advances, the online portfolio system will become even more accessible to the ECE sector.

About the author

Nathan Li has a five-year-old daughter who recently graduated from an ECE centre in Lower Hutt. He is the creator of Educa, an online portfolio system and preferred supplier to the ECC.

Are your facilities up to scratch?

By Neville Saunders ANZIA



Out of over 50 clauses in the Education Early Childhood Services Regulations 2008 only one clause, number 45, relates to the premises and facilities standards of Early Childhood Buildings.

The Regulation states that:

"The premises and facilities standard: general is the standard that requires every licensed service provider to whom this regulation applies— to use premises and facilities that, having regard to the number and age range of the children attending the premises, provide sufficient and suitable space for a range of activities, facilities for food preparation, eating, sleeping, storage, toileting, and washing, and sufficient and suitable heating, lighting, noise control, ventilation, and equipment."

All this is provided of course to support the activities of an ECE centre so all activities comply with the requirements of Schedule 4 regarding the size and use of activity spaces.

Although all centres might comply, are all ECE centres planned and fitted out in the best way? Could they be better?

While each ECE centre may run differently depending on their own modus operandi or philosophy the basic parameters are the same; the design of the centre should fulfil its reason for being and provide the best spaces possible for the activities carried out.

How often do we see inadequate kitchen or toilet facilities or children's learning/play rooms that are as cold as charity because no sun could ever penetrate the space! Worst still outdoor play areas that provide little or no protection from summer sun or in winter turn into mud baths due to inadequate ground surface treatments.

The ideal childhood centre of course would be purpose built, architect designed by an experienced designer that is familiar with childhood centre design and be built to incorporate all the best principles of construction, amenity and at a cost that enables a profitable business model.

It is possible of course, to design around an existing structure and many successful centres have started life as an older building, warehouse, city office tenancy or suburban house but still deliver a 5 star approach to the amenities and spaces provided.

So what sort of criteria makes for a 5 star design?

Like any building the design starts with a proper entry; one that is firstly visible, provides easy and safe access from a car park or path, provides a canopy or shelter for parents dropping off children, has a

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Resene Innocence



gated area separate to the front door, and preferably an automatic door (how many times are a parents hands full?)

The spatial layout inside the building must be laid out in such a manner that it provides good "flow" with all rooms logically placed. Activity rooms that will get sun and be adjacent to an outdoor play area, service rooms usually bunched together and sleeping areas in a quieter spot.

The main activity spaces can be divided into classrooms or have walls that can be moved to provide separation as required.

The toilets should be adjacent to the activity spaces (often placed between two spaces) and change rooms similarly. Each toilet should have a screen between the pans to provide children's privacy and with wash basins or washing facilities close by, all with temperature controlled push button taps.

Design of the change room should utilise ergonomic principles with correct bench height and depth, good access to nappies and wipes, and efficient disposal for soiled items. Steps built in will help older children access the change area with assistance.

The sleeping area should be adjacent to the activity space with a viewing window and the ability to be darkened slightly.

Good lighting is paramount to provide an ambiance throughout the early childhood centre and have the ability to adjust the levels of light depending on the task at hand.

The kitchen may be the hub of many centres so should be well planned for safety and efficiency with a dishwasher, oven/stove, fridge, microwave and a large pantry. Surfaces should be easy to clean and hygienic. Floor coverings such as vinyl with coved skirtings at the edges meet this criteria.



An area close to the kitchen would be provided for dining and again with easy to clean floor coverings.

The laundry should be separate and equipped with dryer(s) vented to the outside to prevent moisture build up and mould. A door to the outside is a good idea for natural ventilation and access to the rubbish bins.

Staff requirements should be met too with a separate staff room for "time out" and equipped with a small kitchenette.

Some centres may require an administration office or an office for the Centre Manager but each centre is different and will depend on licence numbers.

A comfortable centre is a happy one so heating in winter and ventilation or cooling in summer is an important issue not to be overlooked. A new centre ideally would have underfloor hydraulic heating as this type of radiant heat is at the level where the children will benefit most. Heat pumps may a secondary solution for some spaces and are efficient and quick reacting to temperature fluctuations.

Another factor often overlooked in perceptions of comfort is the colour scheme and décor used throughout. The trends of the past with a kaleidoscope of

bright colours has been replaced with a colour pallet of restful, warm and earthy colours more akin to what children might experience at home.

Putting all these design elements together into one package may seem an impossibility but once they are professionally approached a plan can be developed that will more than satisfy each requirement and provide a "state of the art" 5 star early childhood education centre.

The other clauses in the Regulations are important too but the one clause that makes all of the others happen is surely the one that addresses where and how the Childhood Centre facility is designed and built.

Thank goodness for Regulation Clause 45!

About the Author

Neville Saunders owns Saunders Architects situated in New Plymouth and has been practising for over 37 years. His work includes over 30 designs for Early Childhood Centres throughout New Zealand. To find out more go to www.saundersarchitects.co.nz.



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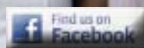
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Resource Reviews

Reviewed by Lynette Radue, Ann Barrowclough and Trudi Sutcliffe



It's Not a Monster, It's Me!

Raymond McGrath

Puffin

Sebastian has one tail, two horns, three eyes, four legs, sharp teeth and lots and lots of fur. Sebastian is a monster. A monster who finds it hard to make friends. But one day a small girl called Alex who walks to her own tune does something quite unTHINKable.

This is a book with bright fun illustrations

children will receive lots of joy from, especially the facial expressions of Sebastian and the other children. The look of terror on Sebastian and the children's faces are classic images.

This book is about friendship. How to reach out to others and how to be a friend. It's a fun book with an important message. This book can be read with a small group or a large older group. Plus there is the bonus addition of a CD inside with a fun song relating to the story. TS



The Old Man and the Cat

Anthony Holcraft

Illustrated by Leah Palmer Press

Puffin

This is a beautifully illustrated story told in the style of a traditional fairy tale about an old man who lives near a forest and who enjoys the singing of the many birds who live nearby. He longs for the birds to sit on his hands so he can stroke them, but of course the birds are too timid.

When the old man makes himself a wooden flute he is delighted that its magical song attracts all the creatures of the forest. A black cat watches from the shadows and one day the flute mysteriously disappears.

But magic the old man soon discovers isn't always the best solution. This is a tale of greed, need and how to appreciate the wonders that surround us.

Although a simple story, it's quite long and definitely best to read one-on-one and in small groups. TS



Kiwi Play With Me

By Helen Taylor

Puffin

This is a kiwi counting book illustrated with well known or common

New Zealand creatures and bugs.

This simple counting book is perfect to read to older toddlers or older children with its bright illustrations that encourage repetition, counting and sound effects. TS



The Fishing Trip

Beatrice Rodriguez

Gecko Press

A book with a difference. There are no words! Instead the author offers a synopsis of the story. Reading pictures is the first stage of reading for young children and while the concept of not having words on every page is a great one, this book's

illustrations do not make it easy for young children to work out what is happening on every page. Older children would more likely work out the story or at least have their own interpretation of each page. While the intention is to promote individual verbal storytelling, a simpler scenario with less detail in the illustrations would be a better creative literacy experience for young children. LR



Holidays Are Special Days

Kelvin Roy

Martian Music

This is a sing-along CD celebrating a range of holidays and celebration songs celebrated in New Zealand.

If your centre enjoys sing-alongs you will enjoy this new CD from Kelvin Roy. First of all for a person like myself who finds it hard to hold a tune, this is a CD that is accessible to everyone, as the music isn't too high unlike some children's CDs.

Songs have catchy phrases like: 'Santa

Claus is coming on a rocket ship' and 'Everyday's a holiday when you smile. Celebrate a holiday, smile, smile, smile'. These songs will capture a child's imagination, and sense of fun and develop into familiar tunes.

Holidays celebrated include Easter, Christmas, Mother's and Father's Day, Halloween and Valentine's Day.

The CD is not just for singing along to, but also perfect background music where you will hear children picking up the catchy tunes and phrases as they work and play. Go to www.kidsounz.com for more information or order the CD. TS



The Biggest Thing in the World

Kenneth Steven

Illustrated by Melanie Mitchell

Lion Hudson

The main character of this small board book is Little Snow Bear. Together with his mother, the polar bear cub discovers his world after sleeping for 97 and a half days. They encounter many large things along their walk and each time Little Snow Bear wonders if this is the biggest thing in the world. Finally returning to their den, Little Snow Bear cuddles closely to his mother and this is when he finds out from her that

love is the biggest thing in the world.

This delightful book has a great message for children about love. The story is well written and has illustrations that are appealing. The number of words on each page makes this easy to read to young children. The board book makes it very easy for young hands to turn the pages. This would be a great addition to any child's collection of books. However, for teachers the size of the book means that it is only suitable for one on one reading times as opposed to big group story times. A bigger book version would definitely be more useful for early childhood teachers. LR



Hoha te Taniwha

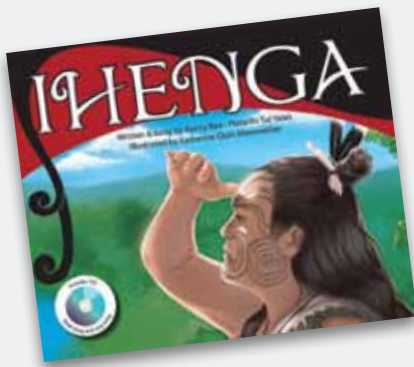
Aunty Bea-Piatarahi Tui Yates

Illustrated by Katherine Quin Merewether

Aunty Bea Publishing

Aunty Bea-Piatarahi Tui Yates has created a lovely story about Hoha the taniwha. Hoha can do many things but his snoring at night annoys the people on Mokoia Island. When they discover it is Hoha making the noise, they become angry. After being hurt and threatened by the people, a sad Hoha begins to cry and a boy called Te Rake comes to his rescue. What follows is Hoha's chance to be a hero and of course he is given a hero's welcome as he returns to live with the people. Hoha and the people live happily together with Hoha as the island's special kaitiaki (guardian).

Often it is difficult to find cultural story books that are appropriate for young children but Aunty Bea has achieved this with this delightful easy to understand story. This bilingual book gives teachers the option to tell the story in Māori or English. The illustrations are vibrant with each page reflecting New Zealand's cultural and natural heritages. The last pages of the book contain information about Mokoia Island. Added to this is a CD which has five tracks, thus giving teachers different options as to how to use this resource. For example, included on the CD are the options of hearing the story in English or Māori as well as Aunty Bea singing a special song for Hoha. This book and CD combination would be a great addition to a centre's cultural collection of books. LR



Ihenga

Aunty Bea- Piatarihitui Yates

Illustrated by Katherine Quin Merewether

Auntie Bea Publications

This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of a famous Arawa chief Ihenga who discovered and named many places in the Bay of Plenty/ Rotorua area. The Māori and English text are on facing pages. A simple map shows the places visited and named by Ihenga. On the DVD, which comes with the book, is the author reading the book

in English and Māori, some waiata in Māori accompanied by guitar and backing finally tracks for each song. The Māori words are provided for only one of the waiata and no English translation of the others. The illustrations are stunning. For best effect teacher efficiency in Te Reo is recommended, as it is difficult for a teacher who is not fluent in Te Reo, to follow the words of the songs without a text as the singing is quite quick. This set would be a wonderful resource for primary aged children and older pre-schoolers. AB



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Definition: "Figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation." i.e. "Where there's a will, I want to be in it."

1. Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
2. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
3. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
4. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong...
5. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
6. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
7. Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
8. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
9. A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.

Q: **Why couldn't the sesame seed leave the gambling casino?**

A: Because he was on a roll.

Q: **How do you start a book about ducks?**

A: With an introduction.

Q: **What do you call a butler with no teeth?**

A: An in-dentured servant.

Q: **What doesn't a ghost need in his house?**

A: A living room!

Q: **What is the surest way to double your money?**

A: Fold it!

Q: **What's the difference between an angry circus owner and a Roman hairdresser?**

A: One's a raving showman, the other is a shaving Roman.



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