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Summer 2014

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FROM THE Editor

***"Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.
What if Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"***

- Dr. Seuss, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*

Seasons Greetings to you all. December is a busy month with many end-of-year events to attend and last minute shopping. Hopefully you will have some down time to read the thought-provoking articles we have for you this issue.

First of all make sure you read Peter Reynolds, ECC's CEO message and his article, *What I expect from the National Government's third term*. Definitely food for thought on what may hold for the future of ECE.

Another interesting article is from a centre in Auckland, *Small is Beautiful*, where the owner had an unfortunate experience with the Education Review Office leading to significant legal expenses and wasted time for the owner and centre. You can read this article on page 14 and the response from ERO's Chief Executive/Chief Review Officer, Iona Holsted on page 16.

Waikato University's Sally Peters and her team have been researching 'transitions' from ECE to school. This has been an important issue for both the early childhood and primary sector with the current Government making this one of their focuses. Read their findings on page 18.

Poverty in New Zealand is another high priority issue and affects many of our children including many who you work with. The ECC's policy officer, Laree Taula, has been doing some work in this area and describes in her article from page 22 how we define poverty and the issues that we need to confront. Laree also introduces the new Vulnerable Children Act 2014 and how you can have your say on this issue.

Plus we have two articles on *Montessori education*. The first article describes the history of Montessori education and then there is a profile on a Montessori centre who has been involved in a 16 month Montessori Journey to Excellence pilot programme run by Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand and the Centre for Educational Development, Massey University in 2013-14. It's always inspiring to read about other ECE centres and an opportunity to reflect on what your own centre is doing.

Swings & Roundabouts is always on the look out to share great ECE centre stories. If you think you have a story to tell, big or small, contact us at the Early Childhood Council. Articles can range from being about events, to management processes, to a change your centre has made or anything in between!

**Themes to be covered in upcoming
Swings & Roundabouts issues include:**

- Working with Pasifika fanau in your ECE centre. What matters!
- Incorporating science into your teaching curriculum
- Self-responsibility around appraisal and teacher registration
- Budget tips
- If can contribute to any of these themes contact the editor info@ecc.org.nz

Trudi Sutcliffe

Editor

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CEO's Message

By Peter Reynolds



Shall we hang separately or hang together?

The New Zealand ECE sector faces a National-led Government determined to cut per-child funding, and a Labour-led Opposition with unworkable ideas for limiting how childcare services charge parents.

These twin risks to quality are deeply concerning.

National thinks the Clark Labour Government both overspent on universal ECE, and failed to provide targeted access for those children most likely to create long-term fiscal risk as adult welfare beneficiaries, and criminals.

The Labour Party and the Greens, on the other hand, are suspicious of the market-led approach to ECE created by the Fourth Labour Government, uncomfortable with public education funding becoming profit for private providers, and uneasy with the 'optional' parent charges deployed by higher-cost ECE centres to render affordable a 20 Hours scheme that pays low and high cost services at the same average rates.

All political parties believe, of course, that their analysis is ideologically correct.

The consequences of the National Party position have been made clear by six years of government. I have called these consequences 'funding cuts by stealth': an approach in which government cuts per-child funding in ways as invisible to parents as possible, then deploys the proceeds to part fund targeted access for low-income children.

The ECC supports the targeted spending, of course, but not the funding cuts for the rest of the sector, and especially not the annual failure to increase universal ECE subsidies in line with inflation.

The potential negative consequences of the Labour/Green position are, however, much more radical. Imagine a Labour/Green Government elected in 2017 with 'a mechanism that would allow early childhood education centres, that chose to do so, to integrate into the public education system' - as Labour's 2014 Manifesto puts it. Now imagine the competitive pressures on community and private ECE centres if those public centres gained, via a Government incentive to go public, a significant funding advantage. Such 'nationalisation by stealth' might have us longing for the days of 'funding cuts by stealth'.

If you thought, given all this, that there must have been widespread news media coverage of ECE, you'd be disappointed. National's funding cuts have led, in many services, to increased fees for families, the decimation of professional development for teachers, the replacement of qualified staff with the unqualified, and the cutting of teacher-child ratios. You'd think, however, given the level of media interest, that all was hunky dory at the local ECE centre.

If you thought, given the disruptive potential of 'nationalisation by stealth', that even one journalist might have looked into Labour/Green ECE policy at election time, you'd have been searching on Google News for hours, seen lots of stories about Dotcom and dirty politics, but nothing on the ECE issues that matter.

The lack of ECE coverage is, in part, testament to the political management of the current government, and its ability to relegate to public invisibility the negative aspects of its interventions. It is testament also, I think, to the fact that we, in the ECE sector, have spent more time focussed on our internal differences than we have telling parents what

is happening to their children's ECE. And while it is true there is much that divides us, there is one thing that unites most of us - 'commitment to quality'.

The New Zealand Childcare Association, for example, complained by news release at the time of the 2014 Budget that the funding increase did not cover inflation and was 'too little to deliver a high quality ECE sector'. New Zealand Kindergartens said the Budget lacked 'focus on quality'. And the Early Childhood Council said 'Budget 2014 will push up early childhood education charges for parents, and cause standards to fall in many centres.' I know, for a fact, that almost all ECE sector groups agreed.

What would happen, I wonder, if a united coalition of ECE groups said, all at the same time, that the quality of New Zealand ECE was falling, and would continue to fall unless the Government committed to maintaining per-child funding levels? What if we said this not only to Government, but to parents and news media?

What if this same coalition told the Labour and Green Parties that it would be disastrous for quality to proscribe voluntary 20 Hours fees. What if we said that the current non-public, private/community-run ECE system delivers a fantastically diverse array of services, and we think a creeping nationalisation is likely to damage quality?

Votes matter to political parties more than the mutterings of interest groups. And it is my view the time is coming for the ECE sector to speak as one to parents, to the Opposition and to the Government.

As Ben Franklin said to the potentially disparate states about to sign the Declaration of Independence: *'We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.'*



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What I expect

from the National Government's third term

How the Government views ECE

The ECE policies of the Clark Labour Government focussed on increasing the gross level of ECE participation, and improving quality by upgrading the skill level of the ECE workforce. Thus we got '20 Hours Free', and funding and deadlines to achieve 50%, 80% and 100% qualified teachers.

From the National Government viewpoint, however, Labour's universal, demand-driven approach was wasteful. It created huge expenditure growth, and exposed Government to funding more and more ECE hours, without limit. It wasted money purchasing extra services for middle class children already attending childcare and likely to succeed with or without additional services. But it failed to reach many low-income children receiving no ECE, unlikely to succeed without it, and at risk of becoming low-value workers, welfare beneficiaries and/or criminals.

This National viewpoint explains all the most significant ECE changes the Government has undertaken: the repeated cuts in universal subsidies; the targeted investment focussed on achieving historical ECE participation by 98% of new school entrants; and the various changes that support this.

The new funding system

Given the National Party view of ECE we can expect the new funding system, currently under development, to do a lot more than simply combine and simplify the disparate systems from the Ministries of Education and Social Development. And it is possible, I think, that the new funding system will institutionalise: an increased focus on measurable outcomes; the recent increased expenditure on targeted interventions; and cuts in universal subsidies.

Consequential ongoing restraints on these universal subsidies are likely to impact ECE services for middleclass families the most. And how and when the Government might move in this manner may be limited by the extent to which it is prepared to risk the wrath of its voter base. It may have won a third term with a substantial 2014 electoral victory, but it knows very well that no New Zealand Government has won a fourth term since 1969.

We may therefore get action on the new funding system well before the 2017 election (so there is time for voters to forget any negative impacts), limitations on universal subsidies designed to be as invisible to parent's as possible, and shrewdly-



By Peter Reynolds

constructed public relations messages suggesting it is services and not government that decide what parents pay.

The Early Learning Information System

The new Early Learning Information (ELI) system is likely to be an essential part of this change process. ELI tells government the amount of ECE received by individual children and allows it to track who gets what, and how much. Government is now able, for the first time, to tell what kind of ECE and how much leads to what kinds of short and long-term educational and other outcomes for what kinds of children - and to make investment decisions based on this data. It is this, I think, more than anything else, that suggests the long-run possibility of a radically remade ECE system in which funding is focussed on what government decides is 'bang for buck', and limited or withdrawn elsewhere.

In the shorter term, if ELI is revealing lower levels of ECE participation than revealed by the old system, it is possible there will be an intensification of targeted initiatives in order to meet the Government's 98% participation objective. And it is possible, if this happens, that there will be further downward pressure on universal subsidies.

A review of the implementation of Te Whāriki, and a closer relationship with schools

A soon-to-be established government advisory group is likely to focus not only on improving the implementation of Te Whāriki in ECE services, but also on the continuity of learning from ECE into the first years of primary school. It is common knowledge that implementation of Te Whāriki is uneven in our sector, and it is possible services are facing both tighter regulation of this requirement, tighter alignment with the early years of primary school, and the benefits of more effective child transitions from ECE to the compulsory sector.

Little or no action on home-based education

The cancellation of the Review of Home-based Early Childhood Education continues to be a concern. The review was to examine what government was purchasing and whether or not it was achieving 'quality education and care and positive learner outcomes'. It followed an August 2012 Ministry of Education report to the Minister of Education that spoke of 'concerns with educator and co-ordinator assessment and evaluation practice', 'educators' limited access to ECE qualified staff for supervision on curriculum delivery and safety standards', and increasing Ministry concern 'about irregular sector practices that push the boundaries of the home-based ECE framework'.

The report said:

The provision of home-help services (cleaning, cooking and other housework) as part of home-based ECE appears to

have increased... The provision of au-pair services through home-based networks is also a growing feature... We will review the legislative definition of home-based ECE. The current definition is brief and can be interpreted broadly. This broad interpretation has contributed to the Ministry licensing and funding the wide range of arrangements noted above, some of which may not have a strong education and care focus...

The Minister announced this review in September 2012, deferred it in December 2012, then cancelled it in July 2013, with a Ministry of Education news release suggesting it was 'working with the home-based... ECE sector to ensure all children get the best start in education'.

It is not clear, however, more than a year later, exactly how the Ministry's work with the home-based sector has addressed its many concerns of 2012. And I am expecting little of substance, in this regard, this year, or next.

A new professional body for teachers

The new professional body for teachers and education leaders, EDUCANZ, is likely to replace the Teachers Council in 2015. EDUCANZ is to have a governing body of nine, with all appointments made by the Minister of Education through a combination of sector nominations and direct appointments. The new organisation is set to separate registration (to recognise membership of the profession) and practising certificates (focussed on assessing the on-going competence of teachers).

I have hopes EDUCANZ will be more effective than the Teachers Council in running open disciplinary proceedings and acting swiftly to name and deal with teachers who are posing an immediate risk to children and/or bringing the profession into disrepute. I have hopes also it will do better than its predecessor in recognising the experience of overseas-trained teachers; as a strong voice on behalf of the teaching profession; and when it comes to increasing the quality of teacher leadership and the status of the teaching profession.

Reform of the Resource Management Act

The National Government would like to amend the Resource Management Act to make it easier to use and less expensive to negotiate. It would like to streamline council planning rules, and have 10-day time limits for processing simple consents. Prior to election 2014 these ambitions were blocked by United Future and the Maori Party. But after the election the National Party, together with ACT, now commands an absolute majority in Parliament, and has therefore the opportunity to make major changes. The specific implications for ECE services are currently unknown, but potentially significant for those constructing and modifying ECE buildings.

In conclusion

The Key government has a reputation for making little change. This reputation is not entirely deserved in ECE. In an ECE context, I would describe this Government as prudent and persistent. It is, I think, moving consistently, and as quietly as possible, toward an ECE system that:

- Limits government expenditure;
- Shifts the balance from universal toward targeted funding;
- Is driven by data that allows effective interventions to be expanded and the ineffective to be shut down;
- Is more tightly integrated with the early years of primary school;
- Benefits from an enhanced quality of teacher leadership;
- Is less tied up in government red tape; and
- Is easier for parents to understand and services to administer.

I am pleased to say that the Minister of Education's office has accepted an invitation to outline the Government's ECE intentions in the next issue of Swings and Roundabouts – and it will be interesting to see how closely her presentation matches the understanding I have outlined here.

So you know



Welcome

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

- Sancta Maria Montessori Pre-School, Christchurch
- Lindisfarne Nursery School, Christchurch
- Henwood Kindy, New Plymouth
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- Tamariki Station Ltd, Paeroa
- The Grange Early Learning Centre, Henderson, Auckland
- Just Kids Co Ltd, Hamilton
- Gumboots Maraekakaho ECC, Hastings
- Elim International Kids, Wellington
- Fountain of Knowledge Trust, Auckland
- Le Malelega a le To'elau ELC Centre, Auckland
- Puna O le Atamai Aoga Amata, Auckland

Appraisal of Teachers Phase Two: What is Evidence?

The first stage of this project is now complete and has been a great success. There are places for 2015 available in the Far North and South Island still available – participants will attend two workshops, participate in a Professional Learning Group and make use of a range of online resources.

Visit www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz for more information and to register.

Become the best 'leader' you can be, attend the 5 out of 5 Leadership in Early Childhood Education workshops!

The ECC with EC Professional Support and Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association (NZCA) have worked hard together to deliver a series of workshops based on the "5 out of 5" initiative to enhance your teaching and leadership skills and stimulate leadership conversations and actions to ensure '5 out of 5' children benefit fully from early childhood education.

Two workshops have been held already on the North Shore and in Manukau, with two more workshops in the New Year, *Engaging Whānau & Successful Transitions* (11 February, 2015) and *Growing Others* (11 March, 2015). You can still attend these workshops even if you haven't been to the first two workshops. Again these workshops are on the North Shore and in Manukau.

For more information about these workshops and to register go to the ECC website, www.ecc.org.nz, under Events.

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For more information on the ECC Conference 2015 go to the ECC website www.ecc.org.nz, under Events.

Don't live in Auckland, but keen to attend these workshops, let us know, contact info@ecc.org.nz.

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Is it time to review the review process?

THE processes used by the Education Review Office (ERO) have been called into question after an experienced educator was forced to defend her good reputation in a saga which resulted in significant legal expenses and wasted time.

By Liza Hamilton

Small is Beautiful proprietor, Val Morrison, wants to give hope to others caught up in ERO's review system when it fails to live up to the same high standards it demands. An esteemed figure in Auckland's education sector for the past three decades, Val has built up what locals know as an 'excellent' private pre-school in North Shore's sought after Devonport suburb.

In late 2013, ERO drafted a review calling into question Val's system of education, a system it commended in its 2011 report, with the reviewer's parting comments, "high quality stuff!" Val was therefore shocked to see her Centre curriculum described as "basic" in the draft review.

It was however, the assertion that the Centre's assessment practices were "based on out dated methods that do not promote children's competence as life-long learners" that, knowing her Alumni's achievements, Val was not prepared to ignore!

Val's approach, shared by some of Auckland's top private schools, is designed to find out if a child is ready to transition from the 3-D world of pre-school to the 2-D world of school. "I am keeping an eye on the fundamental skills; auditory processing, visual processing and motor skills and the integration of the three," explained Val. "When they are integrated, the child is ready to get his or her brain down on paper at the age of five. If they don't have these skills in place, then they have a problem, they may then become part of the twenty percent who struggle at school."

Having established an effective system of assessment, Val is in no hurry to adopt a system which she describes as 'nice' but 'anecdotal'. "Learning stories aren't really telling you anything about your child that you don't already know," she continued.

"I am more interested in, is this child ready for school? Can they use what the school is going to offer them? Is my information valid and verifiable?"

When the draft report first hit Val's desk, she considered challenging the ERO alone, but felt she risked being stone-walled. "I have no plans to retire, but in my heart I thought, I'm not going to retire with this on my record. I am well aware that after 32 years, this is not how I want to go out."

Nevertheless determined to challenge the draft review herself, Val spent weeks preparing documentation. The more time she spent, the more she became aware that she was asking for an almost complete revision, "I realised that I needed someone with in depth knowledge of procedure and regulations in order to ensure the success of my challenge".

It was a conversation with the head occupational therapist at North Shore's ProEd Centre that convinced Val to hire her own legal team. "He takes my referrals to check whether the children are ready for school. When I quoted to him the comment about our having 'out-dated' systems of assessment he was most concerned and said 'you have to go for a judicial review'."

That day, public law firm Chen Palmer was engaged to help Val present her case. Val believes that when contacted by her legal counsel, the ERO started to take her seriously, and ultimately ERO removed negative comments from the official 2014 review. Although the process did not result in court action, it did result in legal costs that Val could have done without. What's more, the legal process shifted Val's attention away from running her business and resulted in unnecessary stress.

In a written response to the ERO's first draft report, a number of comments raised by ERO were challenged by the legal team. After a meeting and a number of revised draft reports being considered by Val, she managed to come to agreement with ERO about what should be reflected in the report.

Val felt that the ERO Manager at the meeting listened with fairness and balance.

Although the processes followed by ERO did eventually result in a report that Val is content with, she believes that perhaps it is time that ERO reviewed its internal accountability mechanisms. In particular, centre owners and staff should be given confidence that their centres will be reported on accurately and that they will be offered adequate opportunities to respond through a formal process.

Ultimately, reviewing an early childhood centre within the time frames available to ERO reviewers is a tough task and these pressures are bound to result in mistakes being made from time-to-time. To mitigate the stress that this can cause to centre owners and operators, the ERO should be open to receiving feedback on the draft reports they produce.

Her experiences with the ERO have left Val with a belief that things can be done better: "I feel the review system really failed me. Their claims could not be substantiated. How did the draft review get past their own peer review system? There was a risk they could end up in court. Why did alarm bells not go off? How could a centre with such an excellent reputation suddenly go so wrong?"

Prior to the confirmation of the draft review, Val received a call from the Ministry, offering her support with Self Review. In June, a re-licensing officer paid a final visit, noting that



the offer of support had been made, but as the latest ERO Review had the Centre on the 3 yearly cycle, this support was not needed.

Small is Beautiful is among the 6% who do not use 'learning stories' as assessment. When Val and three supporters subsequently met the ERO she deliberately asked if there is "an expectation on the part of the ERO that its reviewers promote only one type of assessment?" An ERO representative was emphatic in his response, "No!"

"It was a total lack of engagement in what we do," continued Val. "The reviewer's job is to compare what I am doing with the regulations, Te Whāriki and my philosophy. In a nutshell, it is my job to prepare children for school in the most child-friendly way, keeping up with the latest research in the ways and methods of preparing children for the classroom. I might as well just pack up and go home if I'm not doing that; it's my *raison d'être*."

In a system where the early childhood sector has to supply reams of evidence, Val believes that centres have a legitimate expectation that all ERO findings should also be supported with evidence.

"ERO should be willing to substantiate all findings with proof and should record the evidence with which each conclusion is

reached. I don't think that's a big ask. What we have lost in New Zealand is this wonderful reputation for supporting innovation, people with new or different ideas, I feel we are all being shoe-horned."

When a Centre has been misrepresented, who pays? In this case, Val had to pay to protect her good name and she won't be getting a refund.

"I fought my battle and I am glad I did," insists Val. "I feel the ERO needs to be answerable to someone really. I want people to know that someone in the ECE sector has challenged them, someone has taken it seriously and won, I want to encourage people, show them it can be done."

About the Author

"Val trained as a Secondary School teacher and taught in all three sectors before opening Small is Beautiful in 1982, qualifying as an Early Childhood teacher in the nineties.

She is passionate about offering the highest quality care and education. She was thrilled when the Early Childhood Council was set up and became a member without delay. Their advice has proved invaluable over the years. Val lives with musician husband, Norm and 2 cats".

Response to Val Morrison

Small is Beautiful

Iona Holsted, ERO's Chief Executive/ Chief Review Officer, was given a copy of Val Morrison's article before it was published. Iona has since spoken with Val and has prepared the following written response.

I appreciate that Val provided her article ahead of it being printed to give me the opportunity to comment. As I said when I spoke to Val, I am sorry that she found the review process difficult. If any early childhood centre is, at any time, concerned about the review process or findings I urge them to contact an ERO Review Services Manager at the local ERO office. The sooner and more directly concerns can be addressed the better.

ERO's reviews are supported by robust processes to ensure a fair and transparent review process.

Our review officers follow the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Review Officers* which is grounded

in standards of fairness, impartiality, responsibility and trustworthiness. If a service or a school feels that ERO has breached these standards we want to know about it.

Peer review is an essential part of our review process. Our 'many eyes approach' is applied to the onsite review as well - ERO has review teams, not individuals, conducting reviews to ensure a balanced, evidence-based process.

We operate on a 'no surprises' basis - ERO reviewers will discuss their findings with service management during or immediately after the review. The conversations we have with the service are essential to the process and there should be no surprises when the draft report is received.

Most early childhood services are given 15 working days to provide feedback. When we consider that a service is not providing positive learning outcomes for children we ask the service to respond more quickly, in 10 days.

The purpose of providing a draft report is to give the service the opportunity to provide written comment on the content of the report including comments about any aspect that they think we have got wrong. We take these comments seriously and I can assure you that we will engage with any centre about them so that we can respond appropriately.

ERO reviews and reports on approximately 1200 early childhood services each year. The review process and important stages are highlighted on ERO's website and reiterated in review documentation. Feedback from the sector suggests that most people find the review process useful and do not have major concerns about the process or the contents of the final report.

Visit our website for more information about ERO's reviews of early childhood services.

<http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Early-Childhood-Services-and-Nga-Kohanga-Reo/ERO-Reviews-of-Early-Childhood-Services>

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Working together to support children's transition to school

By Sally Peters

For children, starting school can be an enjoyable learning experience with friends... or a scary dive in at the deep end... or anything in between.

Our recent research (Peters, Paki & Davis, forthcoming) has been exploring ways of supporting children's learning journeys as they move from ECE to school and trying to ensure that it is an enjoyable learning experience for all concerned. We have been particularly interested in building and strengthening the 'bridge' between ECE and school. Teachers in both sectors have been involved in a series of mini action research projects designed to enhance the transition.

Effective bridge building between sectors requires communication and developing shared understandings. One thing that was clear from this research, and earlier transition projects (e.g. see Hartley, Rogers, Smith, Peters, & Carr, 2012 or the review of literature by Peters, 2010), is that even when there is interest and good will on both sides, working together across sectors is not always without tensions and challenges. In coming together to explore transition ideas it is important to acknowledge that ECE and school have their own histories, philosophies and curriculum which create 'cultural understandings' that make it surprisingly easy to 'talk past' each other. Metge and Kinloch's (1984) discussion of cross-cultural communication seems relevant, even though it was written more than 30 years ago:

A culture can be simply and usefully defined as 'a system of shared understandings'—understandings of what words and actions mean, or what things are really important,

and how these values should be expressed ... most become so thoroughly internalised that we cease to be aware of them ... coming to think of them (if at all) as ... not only the right but the only conceivable way of doing and looking at things. (Metge & Kinloch, 1984, p. 8)

Tensions, when they did occur, tended to be due to lack of understanding of the other person's perspective on what was happening. Rogoff's (2003) reminder that "mutual understanding occurs *between* people in interaction; it cannot be attributed to one person or another" (p. 285) was important to keep in mind. Visiting and observing what happened in the other sector and then discussing this with the teacher(s) who has been observed was an important step towards developing understandings "Otherwise you have assumptions" (Primary School Teacher Researcher A). The school participants in particular noted that these observations have been valuable:

Visits by staff have provided a closer understanding of the learning journeys undertaken by children. This building of relational trust is so important in helping develop future understandings. (Primary School Teacher Researcher B)

The teacher researchers from both sectors went on to develop a range of action research projects which we called mini projects. The projects had a practical focus and were relevant to the teachers' own interests and concerns. Working together on the projects led to shared power between sectors and created opportunities for relationships to flourish.

"If we don't divide the sectors it's not going to be so hard for the kids". (ECE Teacher Researcher)

Hartley, C., Rogers, P., Smith, J., Peters, S., & Carr, M. (2012). *Crossing the border: A community negotiates the transition from early childhood to primary school*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER.

Metge, J., & Kinloch, P. (1984). *Talking past each other: Problems of cross cultural communication*. Wellington, New Zealand: Victoria

Peters, S., Paki, V. & Davis, K. (forthcoming). *Learning journeys from early childhood to school*. Teaching Learning Research Initiative Final Report.

Peters, S. (2010). Literature review: *Transition from early childhood education to school*. [Report commissioned by the Ministry of Education]. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Counts.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

We are very grateful to the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative [TLRI] for the funding to support this research. www.tlri.org.nz

Dr Sally Peters is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Waikato and an Associate Director of the Early Years Research Centre. One of her central research threads has been focused on transitions, especially the transition to school. This article draws on the findings of a three-year Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) project where university researchers worked in partnership with teachers in two schools and three early childhood centres to explore children's learning journeys from early childhood into school.

Strategies to support children's learning as they transition to school

While 'smooth seas do not make skilful sailors' (African proverb), leaving children to 'sink or swim' on entry to school potentially leaves many children at risk of failure.

Almost any child is at risk of making a poor or less successful transition if their individual characteristics are incompatible with features of the environment they encounter. This allows adjustments to be made to the contexts and strategies implemented to support more positive experiences. (Peters, 2010, p.2)

Teachers from ECE and school have been working together to trial a range of strategies to support children's learning as they transition to school (see Peters, Paki & Davis, forthcoming). Knowing that no matter how academically capable a child is, unhappiness over lack of friends, problems in the playground or toilets, and so on, have negative consequences for their learning, the approach addressed a breadth of factors that can be influential. Brief details of a just two of these 'mini projects' are provided below.

Lunchbox Friday: One of the preschools introduced Lunchbox Friday. The idea was to help children cope with the change of routine and responsibility when they moved to school. Instead of having lunches provided, on Fridays the children were asked to bring their own lunchbox and snacks. The children participated in cooking and preparation activities to make their own lunches and discussed healthy food choices and what to eat for morning tea and for lunch. It became "something exciting that they get to look forward to". Once at school the teachers noticed children were able to think ahead about what they would eat at morning tea and lunchtime, ensuring they had enough food at each meal. They were also comfortable eating from lunchboxes, reducing uncertainty and facilitating familiarity and confidence in the school setting.

Playground activities, books and DVD:

As with a number of earlier studies some children found the large school playgrounds daunting. ECE teachers were concerned when they saw previously confident children spending the breaks wandering around without being included with peers, or relying heavily on siblings if they had them. The new entrant teachers responded immediately, making a shared book with the children about playgrounds, and later a DVD and a powerpoint as well. At the same time the spaces were modified with a 'safe place' created by each new entrant classroom with a tray of toys to play with. The resources drew children's attention to the fun places peers enjoyed playing in, and also to quiet areas and areas to meet. Characters the children were familiar with from the school's focus on key competencies were incorporated, giving suggestions of how to interact with others, e.g. asking open questions like "What are you playing?" rather than closed questions such as "Can I play?" which might lead to a 'no' response. Children gained new skills through discussing these resources, and the context became more supportive of their play.

the issues in each setting, developing deep understandings of the others involved and offering nuanced approaches to supporting children and their families. One teacher researcher concluded:

You can't just say 'do lunchbox Fridays and do signing in and you're going to be sweet'. It takes ... we have done 10-20 mini projects. It's just finding what fits. It's not like a formula 'do this and your kids are going to transition fine' ... for some kids it will just spark something. For other kids it won't. You have just got to find what fits. (Early Childhood Teacher Researcher)

Peters, S., Paki, V. & Davis, K. (forthcoming). *Learning journeys from early childhood to school*. Teaching Learning Research Initiative Final Report.

Peters, S. (2010). *Literature review: Transition from early childhood education to school*. [Report commissioned by the Ministry of Education]. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Counts.

The Flag

The flag is for the sandpit because when there is water in the sandpit you can't go in it.
By Ayushi

The flag is important because it tells you to stop.
By Alex

The flag means the grass is wet.
By Dylan



The examples are not intended as recipes for others to follow. The important messages for other teachers is the value of attending to

Thank you to the teachers who contributed to this article: Jennie Brook-Watt, Bridie Carr-Neil from Te Totara Primary School and Phylcia Tan, Julia Trin from Learning Links Early Childhood Care & Education.

We are very grateful to the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative [TLRI] for the funding to support this research. www.tlri.org.nz

Preparing for school literacy

By Aunty Alice

Preparing your child for school is far more than a few preliminary visits to familiarise them with the setting. It is far more than a new lunch box, new clothes, teaching them the names of the alphabet letters, and counting to ten.

The key to learning success more than any other, is talking to and with your child in a non-threatening, inclusive environment of acceptance, response, tolerance and love. As adults we can relate to that. We won't speak if we feel threatened, do not have the words or are not given the opportunity. We tune out as listeners if we do not understand the words, there is no opportunity for response, or if we are not interested in the topic. It is the same for children).

Babies understand more than you think. They can read and respond to facial expressions even though they can't respond to you in words. They love rhymes and action songs, lullabies, and movement and they begin to associate experiences with words such as *bath, dinner, teddy, daddy, mummy, etc.* Parents and teachers' need to constantly feed in meaningful experiences and words that babies can relate to.

Meaningful words are important symbols for meaningful experiences and give the child good tools for thinking. As more and more words and experiences are fed in, meanings of words are refined and thinking ability is expanded.

Reading to the child is a great way to gain experiences related to words. But those experiences mean little if no opportunity is given to discuss the pictures, examine the context and predict what may happen next. This means the story will take much longer to read as time is allowed for the child to think and express what he or she understands of the story.

Time is the wild card. Busy parents have little to spare.

Recent research from America indicates that children who have up to twelve million words on entering school have a higher IQ and do better than those who have less than 4 million words of expressive language practice. (TV talk is not counted, as it not only doesn't help, it is detrimental). The language-rich children continue to do well throughout their schooling, and those who are at the other end of the scale continue to fall behind.

It is therefore indisputable that disparities in word usage correlate to academic success. So prepare children well for school by giving them a huge bank of meaningful words whether from reading stories, having new

experiences, or just conversing with you during play or routine experiences.

It's not poverty in terms of money and resources we only need to be concerned about, it's poverty in terms of words.

Aunty Alice is the author of *'Helping a Child to Read and Write Well'*, which was reviewed in the Winter issue of *Swings & Roundabouts*.

Aunty Alice is a retired school teacher and principal with many years' experience in teaching literacy. She has a bachelor's degree in education, a certificate of teaching English as a second language, and a higher diploma of teaching. Her newest book unveils an organic structure of literacy acquisition that is common to all children.

You can contact Aunty Alice for more information about her book or any further questions, through her email: moonlight.bay@slingshot.co.nz.

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Child Poverty in NZ

How are we doing?

By Laree Taula

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." - Nelson Mandela

As soon as John Key and his National Government had secured a majority win on 20 September 2014, he did not delay in announcing his top priority for the next three years – tackling child poverty.

He said, "The recognition we all have is that there are some extremely poor children who are missing out," He went on further to say that he wanted the solution to be done without narrowing the gap between the incomes of those on benefits and those working, to ensure people were still encouraged into work.

What is child poverty?

In the *'Final Report: Solutions to Child Poverty'* published in December 2012 it states, New Zealand has no agreed definition of poverty or official poverty measures. It says, "Without an authoritative definition and widely accepted measures we will lack a common purpose or agreed goals. Likewise, we will be less able to develop focused solutions to child poverty or evaluate their success in achieving specified poverty-reduction targets."

To address this, the Annual Child Poverty Monitor project was born. It is a partnership project between the Children's Commissioner and paediatrician Dr Russell Wills, the JR McKenzie Trust, and Otago University. Each year, for the next five years, the project will report on income poverty, material hardship, severity of poverty and persistent poverty. In time it will also include information on child poverty-related indicators from health, housing, education and disability. Its current key child poverty statistics released are:

- 285,000 kiwi kids (27%) live with income poverty. That is they live off less than 60% of New Zealand's median income
- 63% of these are in beneficiary households
- On average;
 - 1 in 3 Māori children are in poverty
 - 1 in 3 Pasifika children are in poverty
 - 1 in 6 European children are in poverty

- 180,000 kiwi kids (17%) live with material hardship. That is they go without things they need
- 10% of kiwi kids live with severe poverty
- 3 out of 5 children living with persistent poverty. That is they live this way for many years.
- The level of child poverty in 1982 was 14%, today it is 27%.

Dr Russell Wills says, "Child poverty imposes costs. It harms the children directly affected and our wider society. It reduces the opportunity for children to develop their talents. It undermines their rights. It stifles educational achievement, reduces labour productivity and earnings ability, and increases the costs of health care and crime. A failure to address child poverty now will damage the nation's long term prosperity."

He also went on to say "Reducing child abuse and rheumatic fever, and improving the proportion of children receiving immunisations, attending early childhood education and achieving NCEA are all objectives we should get behind, however until we address the underlying social and economic determinants of these issues, we will continue to see poor outcomes for children and the adults they become."

Dr Wills also released a working paper, *'Parents', Families' and Whānau Contributions to Educational Success'*.

The paper describes parenting behaviours and attitudes that have major impacts on a child's development and educational outcomes, and that parenting behaviour can mitigate some of the effects of poverty and disadvantage on education success. It recommends a good approach is to start early in a child's life, be strengths-based and recognise the expertise of parents and whānau.

An international report by UNICEF, *Children of the Recession*, released on 29 October 2014 said child poverty rates in New Zealand are "stagnating", having barely changed

since 2008. UNICEF says it would like to see all developed countries make an explicit commitment to end child poverty and that it should be addressed from a child rights approach, in accordance with the commitments made in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has 54 articles in all. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure all children get all their rights.

For further information you can visit <http://www.unicef.org/knowyourrights>

What makes a child vulnerable?

Like child poverty, there is no agreed definition of what makes a child vulnerable. Sometimes a child might be living in poverty but they are not considered vulnerable. Or a child might be considered vulnerable but do not live in poverty.

In 2011, the ECC conducted a survey of its members and asked: What circumstances, in your experience, make some children particularly vulnerable, given that all children are vulnerable to a degree? They could tick more than one box.

Almost 90% of respondents said it was

- Lack of parenting support,
- 73.83% said it was drug and or alcohol abuse in the home,
- 71.96% said it was low income in the home, and 64% said it was low parental education levels.

When asked what could be done to protect vulnerable children.

- 86.2% said provide parent support,
- 82% said link the family with support services
- 64% said provide parent education
- 39% said teach resilience

Vulnerable Children Act 2014 – Safety Checking of Workforce and Best Practise Child Protection Policies

The Vulnerable Children Act 2014 passed into law on 30 June 2014. The Act forms a significant part of the Children's Action Plan, a set of new comprehensive measures to protect and improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children and strengthen our child protection system. The Children's Action Plan and the Act rest on the belief that no single agency alone can protect vulnerable children.

One of the key parts of the Act is an expectation on providers that provide services to children and funded by Government agencies will have child protection policies in place covering the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect. The Act requires the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that its funded providers develop and implement child protection policies "as soon as is practicable."

The Vulnerable Children Act also requires regulations to be made for the mandatory vetting and screening of all paid children's workers. Proposals for the content of those regulations will be provided to Cabinet in December by the Children's Action Plan Directorate.

Licensed ECE services are already required under the 2008 ECE regulations to have safety checking and child protection policies in place. MSD will be providing updated guidance on how to assess current policies and to ensure current screening and child protection policies meet the new expectations.

Treasury has issued a request for submissions

Treasury has issued a Request for Information inviting submissions from people who work with vulnerable New Zealanders as well as others whose input might help the Government invest to get better results. The Request for Information focuses on:

- Effective ways of identifying and engaging the children and families most at risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes.

- How existing services or support could be improved to deliver better outcomes for the most at-risk children and their families.
- Issues not currently being addressed that affect at-risk children and their families.
- New interventions, services or arrangements that could deliver better outcomes.

Information collected will be used to identify where existing Government services can be improved, or where new localised or citizen-centred services could be trialed as part of Budget 2015. *For more information visit the Treasury website; <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/budget/socialinvestment>*

Welfare Reforms

New Zealand's welfare system changed significantly in July 2013, making it compulsory for anyone on a benefit with dependent children to meet some social obligations around the health care and education of their children. These include:

- All children are enrolled with a General Practitioner (GP) or with a medical centre that belongs to a Primary Health Organisation
- From the age of three until they start school, children are enrolled in and attending an approved early childhood education programme, or an approved parenting and early childhood home education programme
- Children under five are up to date with core Well Child/Tamariki Ora checks

The welfare reforms raised concerns from some groups that it stigmatised beneficiaries and took away their personal rights. Opponents asked, "Why should a family on a benefit be forced to send their child to an ECE service while a family on a higher income and not dependent on a benefit be given the choice to keep their child at home?"

This appreciates there are various reasons parents don't send their child to an ECE:

- They would rather have their child/ren home with them as precious bonding time before they go to school

- They don't need someone to care for their child/ren
- Lack of transport or accessibility
- Would prefer friends or family look after their child/ren
- Would rather teach and play with their child/ren according to their own beliefs and philosophies
- The centre opening hours are not convenient
- Lack of resources can cause parents who cannot afford simple things like a packed lunch, shoes and adequate clothing to avoid early childhood education services

Extending Welfare reforms

Prior to election 2014, the National Government also pledged that it will reduce the number of people on welfare by 25 per cent by 2017 stating that for most beneficiaries, work is the best way to improve their life prospects, raise children out of poverty, and reduce burden on taxpayers. It seeks to do this in a number of ways including;

- Offering incentive payments for beneficiaries who stay in work for a set period of time.
- Making first-time Work and Income assessments more comprehensive so people get the right support from the start.
- Offering more childcare support by expanding the Flexible Childcare pilot.
- Continuing to build a stronger economy and creating more opportunities for jobs.
- Helping sole parents take up tertiary education.
- Reducing barriers to employment, including helping beneficiaries get a driver's licence so they can get off a benefit and into work.
- Increasing the use of external providers working with beneficiaries.

continued over page >

98% ECE Participation Target

As part of the Better Public Services goals, the Government has set four actions for the Ministry of Social Development (as lead agency), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education 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

ECE participation is a lever the Government believes is worth investing into. The Budget 2014 announcement from the Minister of Education Hekia Parata included "We know that regular participation in quality early childhood learning significantly increases a child's chance of future educational success, particularly those from vulnerable families.

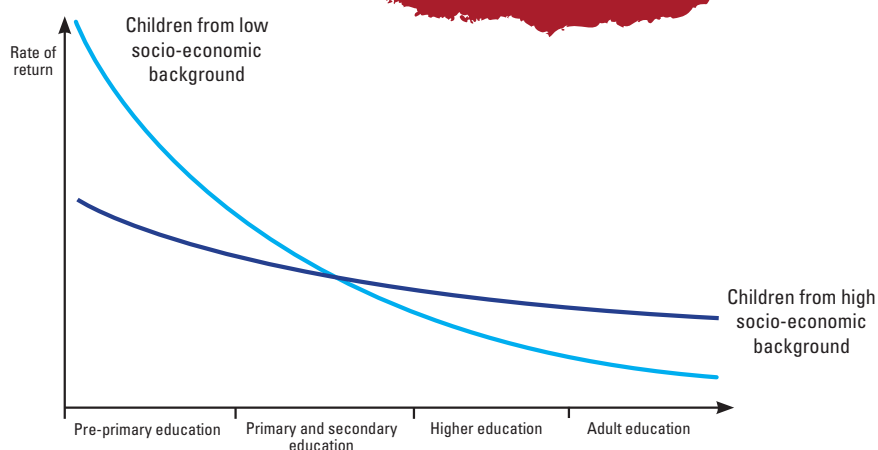
That is why we have set a target of increasing participation in early childhood education to 98 per cent of children starting school in 2016. The additional funding for ECE services in Budget 2014 helps to achieve that target."

This will support an estimated 5,800 more of our youngest children to access quality ECE by June 2018. Over a third of these children will be from areas where participation is low and extra support can help regular participation." <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/budget-invests-extra-1557m-ece>

Prior ECE participation rates by ethnic group as at March 2014 (www.educationcounts.govt.nz)

- Māori 93%
- Pasifika 89.9%
- Asian 97%
- European 98.3%
- Total 95.9%

It is well documented that while children who 'miss out' in early stages can often



Source: Report for the European Community 'European Expert Network on Economics of Education', p12; derived from Cunha et al (2006) and Wobmann and Schutz (2006). [Reported in The Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty (2012). Working Paper no 8 The Case for an Investment Approach to Reducing Child Poverty. Accessed May 2014.

'catch up' given appropriate interventions, this becomes progressively more difficult and expensive to achieve with age. Nobel prize-winning economist, James Heckman, has demonstrated the importance of investing early in a child's life, from birth, to get the greatest economic returns. The above diagram shows that investment in the early years of education from children from low socio-economic backgrounds yields the greatest returns.

Quality ECE

The Education Review Office released a report *Quality in Early Childhood Services* (August 2010), highlighting that in high quality services, it is the interrelationships between the following features, rather than any one on its own, that underpins the quality of education and care provided:

- Leadership
- Philosophy
- Vision
- Relationships and interactions

- Teaching and learning
- Assessment and planning
- Professional learning, qualifications and support
- Self review management

In addition, a comprehensive literature review conducted by Linda Mitchell, Cathy Wylie and Margaret Carr, New Zealand Council for Educational Research (May 2008), *Outcomes of Early Childhood Education: Literature Review*, found that the conditions that support the teaching and learning that in turn directly contributes to good quality outcomes for children and parents are:

- Intentional teaching;
- Family engagement with ECE teachers and programmes, where social/cultural capital and interests from home are included, and both family and teachers can best support the child's learning.
- A complex curriculum involving both cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions.



Partnering with Parents initiative

In 2011 members of the Early Childhood Council – early childhood centres – asked for help in supporting their parents. This was in recognition that it was their responsibility to ensure parents were getting what support they needed to do their job well, and to contribute to creating an environment that is supportive of families.

As parenting programmes tend to be based on deficit models (Sims 2011), it was decided to design a programme that brought together parents, health professionals and early childhood educators to find ways to work more cohesively in caring for their children. From this work would come a plan – with ongoing parenting education where needed and wanted.

The ECC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Services and Development's (MSD's) Strategies with Kids Information for Parents' (SKIP) team, and Plunket, came up with the 'Partnering with Parents' model to bring families/whānau, early childhood centre staff, health professionals and family support workers to answer the question, "How can we best work together to support the children we all care for?"

Partnering with Parents (PWP) has been trialed in 15 different ECE centres in various parts of New Zealand. In Phase one PWP was trialed in four ECE centres. In Phase two a further nine centres participated in the initiative. Phase three, underway now, consists of a further 6 ECE centres in addition to efforts to refine the initiative so that it is self-sustaining and available as a package to other ECE centres around the country to implement. An independent evaluation is underway and will be published in 2015.

Embedded into the Partnering with Parents philosophy is the belief that we need more confident parents, not ones who feel their experience or knowledge is inferior; that the family is the most important support group for the child and that the child learns best when their family and teachers work in partnership to support the child's developmental learning.

This is a shift away from a mechanical approach of applying techniques and methods to a problem to solve it. Instead participants whose lives are most affected by the issue are invited to come together to share what they each bring (interweaving). This concept is central to the underlying principles of Te Whāriki – the early childhood education curriculum based on empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships.

Research shows that the development of the brain is affected by the quality of a child's relationships with those around it. When a child feels loved and wanted, safe and physically nurtured, there is a high chance she or he will become a healthy, contributing member of society. These children are free to maintain good relationships, carry responsibility and nurture others. They are likely to earn more and have better health.

Research also shows that the relationship of families to early childhood services is of great importance. Strong relationships open the way for a free flow of information in both directions. Parents can come to the centre to learn more about their child's learning and centre staff can go to families to learn more about the families' values, cultures and languages.

Partnering with Parents Survey

We invite ECE centres to distribute our Partnering with Parents survey to parents at your centre (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/P69L2GH>).

The survey will close Wednesday 18 February 2015. Email policy@ecc.org.nz, if you would like an electronic copy of the survey to print.

Reaching Out

Once you have finished reading this issue of Swings and Roundabouts, feel free to pass it on to your local GP/doctor/PHO, WINZ office and/or any social service in your area. Whilst there, you could introduce yourselves and provide flyers or a wall advertisement about your centre (i.e. its unique philosophy, culture and language) inviting parents to enrol their children.

The parent voice

Too often the issues we try to find solutions to are right under our nose. A valuable method is to ask the people who know best. For the parents of the ECE aged children not attending ECE if this article might somehow find its way to you, please email us your thoughts about this article to policy@ecc.org.nz.

About the Author

Laree Taula manages the Partnering with Parents project in addition to helping to develop the ECC's policy position on a range of early childhood education areas as well as researching topics, preparing submissions to Government, report writing, assisting with member queries, designing and analysing surveys and overseeing key projects.

Additional web links

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/EmergencyManagement/Responding/ProtocolsForReportingAbuse.aspx>

www.cyf.govt.nz/keeping-kids-safe/if-you-are-worried/looking-out-for-at-risk-children-and-families.html

www.occ.org.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/10512/130703_FINAL_WP_Parents_family_and_whanau_contributions_summary.pdf

A report compiled by the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, Sir Peter Gluckman, 2011, *Improving the Transition, Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence; Chapter 2: Social and emotional competence: intervening in infancy*. Pages 35-48. www.pmc.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Improvingthe-Transition-report.pdf

An Agenda For Amazing Children – Final Report to the ECE Taskforce, 2011. www.taskforce.ece.govt.nz/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Final_Report_ECE_Taskforce.pdf

www.brainwave.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/PamphletDLE09-Web.pdf

www.familyservices.govt.nz/skip/

www.plunket.org.nz/

Vulnerable Children Bill - www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/legislation/bills/00DBHOH_BILL12424_1/vulnerable-children-bill

www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz

Parent, Family and Community Engagement Simulation http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/pfce_simulation

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/OurWorkProgramme/PositiveBehaviourForLearning.aspx>

<https://www.national.org.nz/policies/welfare-reform>

www.childpoverty.co.nz/poverty-measures-2013



Breast Feeding and Early Childhood Education

Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding is a global public health imperative. To support women who wish to continue breastfeeding when using any early childhood education setting, there are simple steps that can be followed to ensure a centre is breastfeeding friendly and meets women's needs. This is relevant for both staff returning to work after maternity leave and wishing to continue breastfeeding, as well as breastfeeding mothers who use centres to care for their infants and young children.

The World Health Organisation's global public health recommendation is exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with the introduction of safe complementary foods at six months and continuation of breastfeeding for two years of age and beyond (WHO/UNICEF, 2003).

Professor Judith Duncan from the University of Canterbury and Carol Bartle from Te Puawaitanga ki Otautahi Trust's Canterbury Breastfeeding Advocacy Service have recently developed a useful pamphlet that also opens out into a small poster for display. This pamphlet contains simple basic steps that can be easily implemented by centre staff such as development of a breastfeeding policy, displaying breastfeeding welcome signage and providing a comfortable space for women to breastfeed. The interest in developing a resource originates from research for a Ministry of Health contract Judith and Carol undertook in 2009 when the Early Childhood Education sector and the Breastfeeding Health sector were asked three questions: *What would support breastfeeding in early childhood education settings? What are the barriers? What are the issues for infant feeding generally within ECE settings?*

Two hundred and forty-nine individuals and/or organisations were contacted directly, 89 submissions were received on a web page created specifically for the consultation purpose and 69 emails were received. Focus groups were also held.

For women breastfeeding when their infant, toddler or pre-schooler enters an early childhood education setting, encountering a supportive environment, or knowing that such a place exists, may result in an extension of the duration of breastfeeding, with the associated health protection for both mothers and babies that this practice offers. With the growing awareness of the importance of breastfeeding to women and children, breastfeeding women are increasingly interested in finding a service that supports them to keep breastfeeding for longer when they return to the paid workforce and/or make their important decision about which ECE centre to use. In the competitive early childhood marketplace having a breastfeeding policy and a supportive and breastfeeding friendly environment may provide the impetus for a parent decision and this supports a business case for breastfeeding friendly. With an opportunity to choose between a



By Carol Bartle & Judith Duncan



designated breastfeeding friendly centre or a centre without policy or signage, women may go the breastfeeding friendly way.

The pamphlet contains a list of useful websites and resources including links to a literature review about early childhood education and breastfeeding originally developed for the Ministry of Health contract.

References

World Health Organisation. (2003). *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*. Geneva, WHO

Inspirational outdoor spaces

Acorn Meadows Education & Childcare Limited...

"Our tamariki love to garden. We enjoy using recycled material in our garden area and we have made a tin can scarecrow, used an old dingy to grow herbs and vegetables in, we have made a scarecrow from teachers old clothes and we use old gumboots to grow plants in. We compost and use our own worm tea to fertilise our garden and enjoy eating the produce that we grow."



[Our deepest apologies to the team at Acorn Meadows Education & Childcare Ltd for our error in using the wrong text in the Spring issue – Ed]

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Montessori

education

who, how and where

By Ana Pickering

Dr Maria Montessori was a major figure in the historical development of education in the 20th century.

As a young woman she became involved in the growing feminist movement in Europe and by the early 1900's was an established scientist, champion of the rights of women and children, paediatrician and lecturer in anthropology. In 1906 a petition seeking the vote for women was circulating throughout Italy and Dr Montessori was called upon to use her influence to draw attention to the cause. When this petition failed she decided that change would have to come through different means.

Tenement buildings in a district of Rome were being renovated as part of a much larger, social experiment to develop a new public housing project. Dr Montessori, seemed the ideal candidate to assist with the project. When she asked if she might introduce an educational note to the venture, it was agreed that she could, if she felt "so inclined". The first Montessori children's house or casa dei bambini opened in 1907 with 50 to 60 children aged from three to six, and this is recognised as the beginning of the Montessori movement. The first Montessori casa dei bambini created huge interest and by 1908 curious visitors were arriving from around the world and Montessori schools were quickly established in both Europe and North America. By the 1920s only the occasional Montessori school survived in North America, however Montessori education endured in the United Kingdom and Europe and during the 1930s. Dr Montessori became known not just for her work in progressive education, but also for her work on peace and social justice. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times (1949-51) and died in the Netherlands in 1952.

The first recorded New Zealand teacher to have experienced this 'new method' of education was Margaret Newman, from the Auckland College of Education who travelled to Rome in 1910. There was also early interest by important figures such as James Allen, the newly-appointed Minister of Education who travelled to Rome in 1912, met Dr Montessori and attended some training lectures. Wanganui Central Infant School ordered a set of Montessori materials in 1912 as part of the school's objective to 'demonstrate the latest approaches to infant teaching' and the Montessori approach was also used in other state primary schools including Kelburn Normal School in Wellington.

By the 1920's there was a fading of interest in state primary schools in New Zealand similar to the declining interest in Montessori observed in Europe and the United States in the 1920s. However, in New Zealand Montessori did not completely disappear but became part of the Catholic school system until the 1940s and 1950's.

Widespread dissatisfaction with the American education system led to a major revival of interest in Montessori education in the USA from the late 1950s. The renewal of interest in New Zealand started in the late 1970s and was influenced by the revival in the USA in the previous decade. By 1982 there were eight Montessori early childhood centres and the first Montessori primary class opened in 1988.

Today there are approximately 120 Montessori early childhood centres, 10 state or state-integrated schools with Montessori primary classes, three independent Montessori primary schools and one state-integrated high school in New Zealand. There are Montessori schools around the world with strong growth in China and Thailand.

The aim of Montessori education is to place all the children in the world at the centre of society and to assist them in becoming caring, self-motivated and fulfilled individuals, able to create a sustainable and peaceful future for humanity. Dr. Montessori believed that by placing children in a stimulating, specially prepared environment, their natural curiosity would help them become self-motivated learners. She stressed following the interests of the child with a focus on self-discovery in a caring community. Education was to be a 'preparation for life', not merely a search for intellectual skills or preparation for school.

There is no Montessori franchise in New Zealand. Montessori early childhood centres are independent businesses, often privately owned or run by community or parent groups. The name Montessori has never been able to be trademarked and any centre can choose to use the name "Montessori". The majority of Montessori centres and schools are members of Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand.

You can find more information and a guide for parents at www.montessori.org.nz

About the Author

Ana Pickering is the Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ) Executive Officer and believes she has the best job in the world; telling people about the Montessori approach to living and learning. She has recently finished research reports from the Montessori Journey to Excellence Pilot Programme www.montessori.org.nz/journey-to-excellence

Reflecting on Montessori

makes an impact for children, parents and teachers

By Ana Pickering

Koru Montessori is an early childhood centre on the North Shore of Auckland. Like the majority of Montessori early childhood centres around the country; it is small and privately owned.

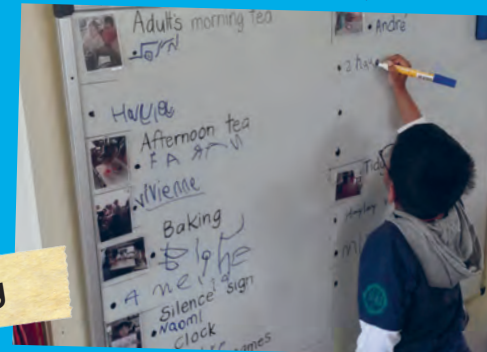
It is located in a quiet suburb, with a class of up to 28 children aged three to six years and five teaching staff. It is also typical of many Montessori early childhood centres that the centre owner, Ruth Libby teaches in the centre most days. The team engage with Montessori philosophy to guide their teaching practice; supporting the children to learn the skills of independence, to relate positively to others, to make decisions and active choices for themselves and to develop a love of learning that the teachers hope will last throughout each child's life.

Koru Montessori was one of 12 Montessori early childhood centres and three Montessori primary schools selected to be part of a 16 month Montessori Journey to Excellence pilot programme run by Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand and the Centre for Educational Development, Massey University in 2013-14. One aspect of the pilot programme was that each Montessori centre or school developed a focus for their pilot inquiry. The teaching team at Koru Montessori decided to continue a focus on independence and asked two inquiry questions: How do we support children's independence at our centre? and How do we support a shared understanding of independence between home and the Montessori philosophy at the centre? The team started by defining independence and linking this definition to Montessori readings, "We hoped that there would be a more consistent understanding of Montessori philosophy and practice between the home and centre environments, which will lead to better outcomes for children. Parents would feel empowered to incorporate some of the approaches in the home and we would see the level of independence of all children grow."

Observational data was collected about potential barriers to the development of independence in the classroom including physical barriers (activities with aspects that required adult assistance), teaching barriers (teachers providing verbal, interactive or interruptive barriers) and peer barriers (interruptions or disruptions from other children which result in children not being able to develop concentration). Analysis of data led to several teaching actions being taken including providing more engaging practical life activities that were more complex and provided the opportunity to develop skills for daily living. The teachers also held several class meetings to discuss the creation of a 'Jobs Board' and the children identified 'jobs' in the classroom which they could/would like to be responsible for during the day. These jobs included feeding the chickens, watering the vegetable garden, making lunch, washing and drying the dishes and making a cuppa for the teachers.

The team found that the impact these teaching changes made on the children's learning were significant, including an increase in peer mentoring, more engagement in the more challenging practical life activities with an improvement in fine motor skills, independence and confidence. In addition the jobs board highlighted to parents what children are capable of doing unassisted by adults. The parents were excited by what they saw their children doing and subsequently a weekly parent discussion group was initiated and is attended by parents and two teachers over a cup of coffee at a local café.

Involvement in the Montessori Journey to Excellence Pilot Programme made an impact on the children and parents at Koru



Montessori. Becoming part of a larger Montessori inquiry community also made an impact on the teachers. The networking and development of a strong support system between the Montessori centres enabled the teachers to have the opportunity to bounce ideas off others. Ruth explains, "It was a very worthwhile programme as it made me a more reflective practitioner. I now refer back to Montessori literature more often, or actually what seems like daily to confirm or otherwise what we are thinking/doing, I seek others input and opinions more and recognise that review of practice takes a team to make it work and implement change. Everyone has to be on board and being part of the pilot programme has led to a more cohesive teaching team..."

Working on your business not in it...

Recently Lisa (Capital City Preschool), Megan (Little Schools) and Marie (Children First Preschool) had the opportunity to attend an action packed day of learning at KPMG's Private Enterprise Business School in association with BNZ and HR Shop. What an awesome day of learning to work on the business rather than in it. The day covered a number of different topics involved in the successful operation of a business in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Johan Barton, the Director of KPMG, People, Performance and Culture spoke about the importance of a business culture, that reflected the values of the organisation and emotional engagement of staff commitment to the organisation. She stated that the culture of a business would 'eat' strategies everyday unless the behaviour of the business reflected the culture and the values system. Values identify what really matters and how everyone behaves in the business. The values of the organisation should also be reflected into the performance development system.

A robust performance management process was the most powerful way to grow a business culture ensuring that the values of the organisation were integrated into performance indicators. A good leader would lead by example, set goals for the business and communicating with staff, the values and vision of the organisation.

A great work place culture is symbolised by the emotional engagement of the staff to deliver on the business success and add value. In leading a business, clarity and clear direction are important factors of success. Treat people how you would like to be treated and encourage staff to take the journey with you.

In the afternoon Samantha Gadd, Managing Director of HR Shop shared her knowledge and experience on performance development. She introduced the concept of Employee Value Proposition (EVP) which related to how businesses managed the performance and development of individuals which must align with the culture and represents the values of the business.

All people in an organisation should have performance development objectives as this

impacts on the vision of the organisation.

Being a leader who was confident in providing balanced, relevant, specific and timely feedback to improve the performance of the individual and therefore the business was an important aspect of a good leader. Samantha introduced the concept of being a 'gutsy' leader in the 21st century, working in organisations that need to be resilient to change.

Individual objectives should have clear links to the vision, strategies, objectives, and key performance indicators to help set the individual performance and development goals. Job descriptions must be clear and relevant to the position people hold in the organisation and should be reviewed as part of a review process. Performance development reviews should be lead by the employee identifying how they supported the culture, vision and values of the organisation and how they were looking to develop and improve.

With the Gen Y group now infiltrating our work force, with degree qualifications, hungry for knowledge, challenges and experiences, it is a fantastic time to grow and develop the future leaders of business through a vision that is de-cluttered where clarity is clear on instruction.

It was inspiring to hear leaders in a variety of professions discuss their role within their organisation. The leader wasn't always the owner of the business either, however much importance was placed on the leader and how they set the tone and culture of the business. Leaders are seen as role models and they should care for their staff as well as provide clarity and direction.

Leaders set the systems and processes and these should reflect the culture and values of the organisation.

Leaders should reflect on the following:

- Do all members in the organisation have defined roles and responsibilities?
- Do we have defined policies and procedures?
- Does everyone feel like they matter?
- Does everyone feel like they belong?
- Is our information technology reflective of the culture?
- Do we celebrate success? How?
- Is our remuneration reflective?
- How do we plan for inducting new staff? Do we set them up for success?
- Are they inspired from the beginning?
- What will their first impression be?

Ensure your staff are emotionally engaged not just financially. Research has shown that there is an 87% chance of staff staying if they are emotionally engaged. You will find staff won't leave if they feel happy, valued and that they matter to the running of the business.

Leaders will face many challenges and these challenges are on-going and forever changing. What happened 10-20 years ago are different to what is happening now. Some leaders will have a team with a varied skill set, but also a range of team members including those who are Gen Y and those who are baby boomers, all coming together with different experience and expectations.

It is therefore important as a leader to note that one size doesn't fit all, what might work well in one organisation, may not work well in another. It is imperative for leaders to be creative in their leadership, provide shared responsibilities and



develop a sense of trust amongst all members in the team.

Your investment in your team will pay great dividends.

The strategic planning block of the course was really inspiring and it reminded us of the importance of using a plan within the business. Strategic planning is vital to defining the strategy or direction, and for making decisions on allocating its resources.

The process in which we were guided to develop a strategic plan was, 'determine position, develop strategy, build the plan, manage performance', then back to 'determine position' and so on. Working within a team is helpful and making sure the plan is communicated to the whole organisation is vital.

Determine Position – identify strategic issues to address, identify market issues opportunities and threats, assess current situation.

Develop Strategy – determine your organisations core purpose, identify core beliefs, create an image of what success looks like, and know your competitive advantages. Develop a 3 year financial projection.

Building the plan – doing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis enables you to set priorities. You then need to set 'SMART' goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely).

Manage performance – communicate strategy to whole organisation, establish a schedule for progress reviews that are held regularly, review annually and plan for the next year.

Why would a strategic plan fail?

- A plan for plans sake
- Partial commitment
- Not having the right people involved
- Leaving the plan on the shelf
- Unwillingness or inability to change
- Unrealistic goals

Your strategic plan is there as a working tool in your business environment. It sets direction and prioritise, brings everyone to the same page and simplifies decision making. It ensures you'll still be in business when your competitors may not be.



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Building Strong teams

From the Centre Manager to the cook, every person in any organisation needs to consider himself or herself as part of a team in order for the organisation to function smoothly. The moment a "That's not my job!" attitude appears, you have a problem and the makings of a dysfunctional organisation.

Building effective teams with the right attitude needs to come from the top. The key to remember is that teams are not born, they're built, and this means as a leader in an organisation you need to spend time and effort to make this happen.

Making employees realise that they are part of one team is the best antidote to an insular, narrow-minded work attitude. This will engender a willingness on the part of everyone to pull in one direction, regardless of the job or task at hand.

One of the first steps is to hire only people with the right traits for teamwork. This is crucial in building an effective team. Skills and experience will always be essential but they are not always enough. The value of positive and responsible team members who take action cannot be overestimated.

Encourage frank and open communication between all employees from top management to untrained staff. Organisations that encourage open, honest communication and foster employee interaction are in a better position to have good teamwork. Encourage your team to be listeners and question-askers. A team that values self-awareness and emotional intelligence will be a team that can work effectively together.

Make sure everyone knows and understands where you're going, i.e. your vision for your business/centre. This means encouraging all employees to be part of the strategic planning process, particularly in areas that affect their day-to-day work as teachers. Then make sure they understand the goals to get there. It's important that every team member believes in the overall vision and philosophy of the centre. To make this happen you need to have regular meetings to discuss and consult with all your staff about the direction you'd

all like to see the centre move toward. Then set and establish clear team and individual expectations. Remember to clearly define your centre's vision, philosophy and goals when inducting new staff. If you have a few new staff members it might be time to open up the discussion again on your centre's vision and philosophy and let them participate and make a contribution.

Another area that can build a strong team is understanding that leadership is a skill that can be learned and improved upon and should be encouraged at all levels and functions of your organisation. First clearly define what leadership looks like within your organisation, then reward it when it happens. To encourage this kind of growth employees need growth situations. This can include professional development such as the recent Ministry of Education professional initiative, 5-out-of-5 EC Leadership seminars and workshops (check out the ECC website, ecc.org.nz, under Events for more info). Also offer opportunities to grow within the centre such as mentoring other staff, or taking or sharing responsibility within their teaching team, such as writing newsletters for families, running a staff meeting, being responsible for parts of a self-review, organising centre outings, team building type events, workshops for families or other staff, etc.

Another important key to building strong teams is to resolve team conflicts immediately. Work to correct performance, attitude or ethics problems of individual team members. If there is no change you may need to consider if this employee is the best person for this position in order to protect the integrity of the team.

Make sure everyone understands that it's the result of the team's work that counts. Team members work best when their individual contributions to the team are recognised. Base your reward system, if you have one, on the team's ability to achieve its goals and provide individual recognition based on contribution to the team effort. This can lead to a strengthening of the team spirit among individual members.

It's also important to monitor the mood and perspectives of the entire team. Solicit feedback on a regular basis on how your staff are feeling about their work, such as whether

they can see any possible improvements or changes to the daily routine, leadership, quality, services you offer, safety issues, or training – everything and anything that has a direct impact on your success. Then, of course, you must follow through by making improvements based on what you hear, measure and observe. Doing so improves employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Finally, for all of these team-building initiatives, you must be intentional and persistent.

People must see that changes aren't temporary or one-offs but part of an enduring, ongoing process. The more changes for the better are implemented and stay implemented, the more people seek to participate in improvements and new methodologies.

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No Community-owned centre Board is immune from Dirty Politics

It has long been recognised that no community-owned committee or board is immune from internal dirty politics. This can take the form of power play between individual board members and outright faction fighting for influence and control. There is sufficient evidence that voluntary organisations can easily fall prey to the ambitions and manipulations of a small minority of governing stakeholders. This can negatively impact upon the members, unsettling even the staunchest of supporters.

This is vividly illustrated in the many issues referred to the ECC for advice. Examples:

Our board includes the partner of a paid staff member. We have tried to point out that there are some things the Board needs to discuss that this person cannot be party to, such as consideration of staff pay rates. But this person doesn't see any conflict of interest and insists they should be involved in such discussions.

How do we trust this person's integrity if they are involved? How do we manage this person's attitude and address the obvious conflict of interest?

Our constitution allows for paid staff to be members and therefore eligible for election to the Board. We have a Centre Administrator who feels that is wrong and that it undermines her role as supervisor of all staff and facilitator of their annual reviews. We want to ensure our teaching staff are engaged in the management decision-making at our centre and, as teaching professionals whose opinion we value, are involved in driving the centre forward.

What do we do?

There are two types of conflict of interest centres need to watch out for. The first involves "pecuniary gain" – situations where an individual influences a decision in order for them personally, or someone they are connected with, to make a financial gain. For example, your centre needs a refurbished

playground and seeks quotes from local contractors. One of your Board members has a connection with one local contractor and influences the decision so that their favoured contractor gets the job.

The second type of conflict of interest involves "abuse of power". This is where someone, as a result of their position on your Board, attempts to influence the actions of others in a manner that is unfair on that person or others. An example is a paid staff member who is also a member of your Board using their Board position to undermine or otherwise challenge the Centre Manager in the performance of their role.

Simmering internal dissent can impact significantly on the good functioning of your Board, and on the good functioning of your centre. It can and does also impact on parents and can directly lead to a drop in enrolments, the resignation of disaffected staff and industrial disputes involving those who are remaining.

Regardless of the outcome of these issues, they can attract such wide publicity in your local market that in spite of a resolution, the blemish on the centre will take some time to remedy. It will also likely have an effect on your centre's reputation and relationship with the Ministry of Education, ERO, New Zealand Teachers Council and others. Remember, most of your enrolments come from word-of-mouth.

Situations such as these illustrate the importance of good governance and adherence to procedure that involves a declaration of personal and other interest of all board members and a record of proper fiduciary and regulatory supervision. A clear conflicts of interest policy should exist as part of a set of governance policies, and new board members should be "inducted" on these. Where necessary, changes should be made to constitutions where they provide for situations that easily lead to conflicts of interest.

Elected board directors should be familiar with the constitution and meeting procedure to ensure proper conduct and compliance at all times.

The ECC can provide an answer to queries from its members in this area. We also offer a range of professional development workshops for centre management, including Good Governance, and will offer this workshop as an in-house option for individual centres. Call us on 0800 742 742, option 2 for more information.

Professional development in the IT age

By Phil Sales

One of the unexpected joys of being a parent is the opportunity to begin sentences with insightful phrases such as “when I was your age ...” or “back in my day ...”.

More often than not this sort of opening line results in groans and excessive eye-rolling by my own children and desperate pleas from them not to recount the final days of the dinosaurs in the late cretaceous period!

However, the urge to hark back to “the good old days” is far more than a precursor to the onset of early senility. It has both reflective and instructive aspects that can inform our actions today.

Case in point: Earlier this week I was thinking about the technology that was around when I was a child.

At one time, the most revered piece of technology in my parent’s home was the telephone. It sat on a specially designated table of its own along with the telephone directory, a writing pad and a pencil. When the telephone rang then you would stop whatever you were doing, the household would hush reverently and whoever was nearest to the phone would rush madly towards it to answer its call.

The lure was unmistakable. This was someone making a deliberate and premeditated attempt to contact you with urgent information that couldn’t suffer the delay of a letter or the brevity of a telegram.

The other piece of revered technology in our house was the radio. Switched on first thing in the morning and switched off last thing at

night, it delivered news, opinions and cultural artifacts which were only rivalled by its late-coming challenger, the TV set.

Sure, books and newspapers had their place but this was cutting-edge technology-in-the-home!

So, what does this digression into the past have to do with professional development in the IT age? Perhaps far more than you might think ...

You see, technology has long been an important tool in the way that we improve ourselves, both personally and professionally. The original convergence of ideas that brought about the printing press, mass produced books, newspapers, the Age of Enlightenment, industrial technologies and even the postal system continues to influence the ways in which we make use of information today.

As the tools change so opportunity opens up in ways that were previously unimaginable. Our ability to communicate and share ideas is quite different today from any time in the past.

For example, it is quite possible to surround oneself with a truly global network of mentors. We can email, conference and skype these mentors with immediate (or near immediate!) results. We can exchange ideas with them, test best practice, compare notes, seek guidance, share experiences and participate in solutions. Spinning the model around, we can go from being mentored to providing mentoring assistance to others in return.

Specially-themed education channels are within clickable reach. We can link to on line seminars / webinars or browse clips at

our leisure. Did you miss the TVNZ doco on children with special needs last night? No problem, just look it up on the TVNZ site and replay when you are ready!

Interestingly, many leading institutions are now starting to explore the idea of providing online (and on demand) access to their courses, for free. No need to formally enrol (or pay any fees or make any formal commitment) until you are ready to be assessed on the material that you have been looking at!

Potentially, this means that early childhood educators can pick and choose the things that they want to gain formal recognition for. Management and leadership skills, conflict resolution and even foreign languages can be learnt at your own pace in your own home (and often with access to support groups of other learners).

Closer to home, the flexibility of the internet also gives us immediate access to specific templates and resources held by professional membership organisations.

The Early Childhood Council provides tools and resources through its website and it has an employment advice line for members.

The internet also gives us quite valuable opportunities to browse for the latest bells-and-whistles: Educational toys, interesting stories, interactive playthings, engaging activities, colourful furnishings as well as new ways of using existing materials.

In their own way, each of these examples gives us the opportunity to further our professional development in ways unimaginable a generation ago. It is tempting to conclude that

the richness of the experience is limited solely by our imaginations and (more probably!) by the number of hours in the day in which to take advantage of what the IT age has to offer!

There is, however, a downside to all this which we need to acknowledge as well. Somewhere, somehow we need to make time for the opportunities and we need to make sense of it all! The plethora of research, opinions and products challenges us to use our discretionary skills to filter this information and to distill it into something that is both useful and useable. Quantity needs to be reduced to quality.

There is a very good definition of quality that describes it as "fitness for use". When we talk about delivering quality education, quality services and quality outcomes we need to be

mindful that these things exist in the context of a particular purpose.

The same comment applies to the bounty of opportunity that the IT age offers us. Can you pick out the bits that offer the best results for your early childhood centre? Can you find the 'special bits' that will be of most benefit to the children in your care?

Fortunately, the same things on the internet that offer us quantity may also be the very things that lead us to quality. Find some good mentors, follow some exemplary teachers, join the best organisations and study the best that the internet has to offer!

Choose well!



About the Author

Phil Sales heads up the Business Development and Entrepreneurship for the Faculty of Business and Information Technology at Whitireia New Zealand [www.whitireia.ac.nz]. Whitireia are the ECC preferred suppliers for the ECC Centre Manager workshops [go to www.ecc.org.nz for upcoming workshops].

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Early Childhood Council

How well is your website working?

Diana Burns, a Plain English Specialist at Write Limited, offers tips for making your website useful for your readers.

Every organisation needs a website these days, and early childhood centres are no exception. But how do you make sure your website is doing the job you want it to?

You'll have various aims for your website. Some of those aims might include:

- To provide useful information or links for your readers
- To promote your organisation and boost your reputation in the community
- To be seen as important players in your sector
- To boost your success through increased sales or enrolments.

Your readers, however, are likely to visit your website for one major reason: because they want to get something done. Readers want to find information that's useful and practical. Once they find it, they'll leave your site.

So the success of your website may have nothing to do with how long people stay on it. In fact, a really good website may work well precisely because it allows readers to 'grab and go'.

Many organisations judge the success of their website using tools like Google Analytics. Such tools can tell you how long visitors spend on your website. You may be happy to see that most of your readers spend a relatively long time on your site. The more they linger, the more you may gloat. But your readers may not be there because they love what they see. Instead, they could be frantically combing through your web information, asking 'but where does it tell me ...?'

Think of who your readers are and what they need

For your website to work well for your readers, you need to put yourself in their shoes. What information do they want? How can you best make sure they can find it easily?

Think of who your readers are, and what environment they may be in when they look at your website. They may be in a busy, noisy, childcare centre, or at home coping with family demands. Most of your readers will be busy people, with only a short amount of time available for getting the job done. They're unlikely to be reading your website purely for pleasure. Most likely, they'll have a job they need to do.

Most people are impatient when they are reading online. We know that most readers will scan your website, and only read about 20% of what they see—even when they're interested. Evidence also suggests that people's understanding of what they read drops by 25% when they read online.

Keep it simple, and use short sentences

The best way to make your website easy and useful is to keep it simple. You can do that in several ways.

- Keep your sentences short—an average of 9 to 12 words is plenty. And have just one idea in each sentence.
- Choose words and phrases that are simple and straightforward. Your website isn't the place to try to impress with your wide vocabulary.



By Diana Burns

- Get rid of any jargon that will confuse or irritate people. Remember that acronyms are a form of jargon—keep them to a minimum.
- Reduce waffle and unnecessary language that can make your writing stodgy and long-winded.

Use plenty of informative headings

Make sure your readers can easily navigate to the information they want. You can help readers navigate by using informative headings. Rather than using label headings, try to make your headings contain your main messages. So instead of 'Information for parents', try something that conveys some of that information, such as 'How to choose a childcare centre that will work for your child'.

The easier you make it for your readers to find what they want on your website, the happier they will be. They'll be more likely to return, and to refer others to you. And that's the best way of knowing your website is working for you.

www.write.co.nz



By Pra Jain

Marketing your childcare business

How to achieve the best exit price...

We have all heard the 3 golden rules of buying a freehold property - **Location, Location and Location**

Experience has taught us when selling a business the golden rule is:

- **PRICE** it right
- **PREPARE** it right
- **PROMOTE** it right

Selling a childcare centre is similar to selling any other business. However, childcare centres tend to perform well and maintain occupancy levels in most locations and are not resilient to the effect of economic downturn. As such, there continues to be a high demand from childcare buyers.

Generally there are 3 groups of buyers:

- ECE qualified teachers who want to own a centre.
- Existing ECE qualified teachers who want to buy another centre.
- Investors such as accountants, bank managers and other curious people from NZ and overseas!

When it comes to selling, our experience has shown that many business owners have a limited understanding of the process involved in selling. Furthermore they often make fundamental mistakes that can be expensive and have legal implications. When a disciplined approach to this complicated process is carefully followed, mistakes can be eliminated.

For many business owners, selling their business represents years of hard work and commitment, rewarded by financial freedom and security. Selling a business provides an opportunity for change, retirement, or a chance to take on new ventures. However, for many owners parting from their "baby" can also be an emotional time.

The current market: demand from prospective buyers increases daily. Some buyers have been waiting to buy a centre for over 2 years. When a childcare centre comes on market there could be multiple offers affording owners the luxury of choosing the buyer they would like to take over future ownership. Many childcare buyers are also keen to purchase freehold property if it is available for sale with the business.

Another very interesting and distinguishing feature of childcare businesses is that we often don't have to advertise them as there could be a pre-qualified buyer who is already registered and waiting.

Some critical aspects of business selling:

Confidentiality - Childcare centres like most other businesses have commercially sensitive information which must be guarded from competitors, staff and customers. An intermediary such as a business broker can manage the successful sale of your business in a discrete, orderly manner ensuring that your confidentiality is maintained.

Business Preparation - some business owners are very diligent in keeping detailed and up-to-date accounts and records relating to children/ parents, staff, building leases and so on.

Business should be prepared well for sale so that facts are projected in the best possible manner to maximise the value of your business.

Establishing Market Value of Your Business

- experience has shown that a large percentage of business owners do not know what their business is worth, or how to go about establishing its true market value. There are many valuation methodologies used to establish the most accurate figure. An experienced broker can assist you with

market appraisal of what buyers will pay in the current market.

Identifying Potential Buyers - prepare a detailed Information Memorandum (IM) providing overview of your business. Identify and compile a list of the most suitable buyers so that you are not spending time with people who aren't in a position to buy.

Always maintain stringent protocol to control who receives information about your business and ensure that all have signed confidentiality agreements prior to any information being disclosed.

Qualifying Buyers - in business sales, brokers act as an independent third party and are able to maintain confidentiality (business name) until the buyer has been identified and qualified as a genuine purchaser for your business. Maintaining absolute confidentiality is also very critical aspect for smooth running and also for smooth handing over to new owners.

Take advantage of using a Professional Broker - you keep doing what you are best at - carry on running your business in the best way possible. An experienced childcare business broker will guide you through the whole process of selling from pricing to marketing your business, handling confidentiality issues and protecting you from legal pitfalls. All of this while preparing the sale and purchase agreements and using experienced negotiation skills to get you the best possible price.

You only get one chance to do it right!

Pra Jain of LINK is a specialist childcare business broker with over 20 years of selling businesses.

To find out more contact:

E: praj@linkbusiness.co.nz M: 027 279 4652

Bring COLOUR to your outdoor play

It's that time of year. It's getting hotter outside, families are busy getting ready for their Christmas and summer break and everyone is ready for some fun in the sun! As much as we love to play outside, summertime can get too hot sometimes. How do we beat the heat? With ice and water play, of course. Here are some ideas to have fun in the sun with ice and water.

Erupting ice chalk

All you need is: cornstarch, baking soda, water, liquid watercolour paint or food colouring, ice cube trays, vinegar, squeeze bottles.

Directions: The measurements do not have to be exact, but around a 1/4 cup of baking soda and cornstarch. Squeeze some liquid watercolour paint (use different colours) on the mixture. Then top it off with 1/2 cup of water. Mix well with a spoon then pour the erupting paint mixture into an ice cube tray and stick the trays in the freezer.

Once frozen, the ice chalk can be placed outside onto concrete to paint with. If you wet the concrete first before placing the ice chalk down it will help the ice chalk melt and spread faster, this isn't a must-do but it makes a difference and also showcases the blending of colours more easily.

Once the ice chalk has sufficiently melted and mixed, it's time to bring out the squeeze bottles of vinegar. If you don't have squeeze bottles you can use spray bottles, cups, bowls, or really any container. Now the fun really begins. Explosion time (the more spread out the paint, the smaller the explosion).

Chalk spray

All you need is: a spoon of tempura paint, 1 cup of hot water, 1 cup of cornstarch, squirt of dishwashing liquid, squirt/spray bottles.

Directions: Add cornstarch to one cup of hot water whisking to mix so that there are no clumps. Add one teaspoon of washable tempura paint and a squirt of dishwashing liquid. Mix well. Pour it into your squirt bottles and shake well. Let the designs begin on a hard surface such as concrete. After the sprays sit a while it will separate. Shake the bottle really well before you use it each time.

Make ice paint

The easiest way to make ice paint is by freezing tempura paint in an ice cube tray.

All you need is: tempura paint, ice cube trays, craft sticks and patience!

Directions: Fill ice cube trays 1/3 of the way with your colour of choice. Once the paint is solid add the second colour and leave it to freeze. Then if you want you can add the third colour and freeze. Or you can freeze solid colours in each cube and add a craft stick to paint with.

Ice paint works well on thick paper or melt in a water trough and watch the colours mix.

Mud paint recipe

All you need is: mud, powdered tempura (liquid watercolour paint or food colouring could be used in place of the powdered tempura), water, heavy card, paint brushes.

Directions: Add a large scoop of mud to each container then sprinkle powdered tempura paint over it. Add approximately 1-2 tablespoons of each colour. Next add a small amount of water. Once the mud paint is mixed you can start painting (keep water and spoons nearby in case the paint settles and becomes too thick).



Melting frozen hands

All you need is: latex gloves, water, salt (in bowls, coloured with a few drops of food colouring), table salt (in shakers), small spoons/scoops, syringes and medicine droppers, pate knives, paint brushes and turkey basters, shallow pans or baking dishes, bowl of room temperature water.

Ideas to fill gloves include: beads, buttons and craft foam shapes, tinsel garland, chopped up, natural materials, or whatever is considered a treasure!

Directions: Add treasures into the latex gloves. Fill gloves with water, and secure each one tightly with a twist tie. Place hands on a baking sheet and set it in the freezer overnight. Once the hands are frozen you can remove the latex gloves. Take care this is tricky and we don't really want any missing fingers or thumbs! To remove the gloves from the hands, run them under a light flow of very cold tap water. Using scissors to cut away the latex, slowly slide the gloves off the hands. It's important to work gently so you don't snap the fingers. Use the cold water to help melt away any stubborn bits.

Then place the frozen hands in shallow baking dishes or a shallow water trough. Place coloured salt with food colouring, a shaker of plain table salt, and a bowl of water on the table.

Now the fun begins by encouraging children to melt the ice using the salt and water. Here you can use the small spoons/scoops, syringes and medicine droppers, pate knives, paint brushes and turkey basters.

(Ideas sourced from <http://www.learnplayimagine.com/2013/06/fun-in-sun-with-ice-and-water.html> and <http://happyhooligans.ca/melting-elsas-frozen-hands-activity/>)

By the Numbers

145

the number of years we've had the same flag.

643,438,425

the total number of hours all children in New Zealand who are under six years of age watch TV each year (2013 Census plus TVNZ research).

365

the points scored for "quixotry" in 2007, the highest scoring word actually played in Scrabble history.

19,733

the number of notifications requiring further action to Child, Youth and Family for the 2010/2011 year for children aged 0 to 5 inclusive.

\$9,700

the investment in dollars per child participating in early childhood education in New Zealand in 2013 (MoE, excludes home-based and under twos).

\$13,135

the current investment in dollars per student participating in tertiary-level study in New Zealand (2005).
(www.educationcounts.govt.nz)

481

the number of education and care centres reviewed by ERO from January to October 2014 with a review result score of 3 or 4 (there were 78 with a score of 1 or 2) (ERO).

1,078

the number of licensed childcare centres that are members of the Early Childhood Council (ECC).

94

the number of professional development workshops offered by the ECC in 2014.

2,435

the distribution of the ECC's Swings & Roundabouts quarterly magazine.

The ECC exists to support independent childcare centre owners and managers. This support is more than just numbers. The support is real. The information timely. The advice, reliable. We will help you to run a more successful childcare centre. We will save you money.

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**Early Childhood
Council**

Resource Reviews



I am the Wolf...and Here I Come!

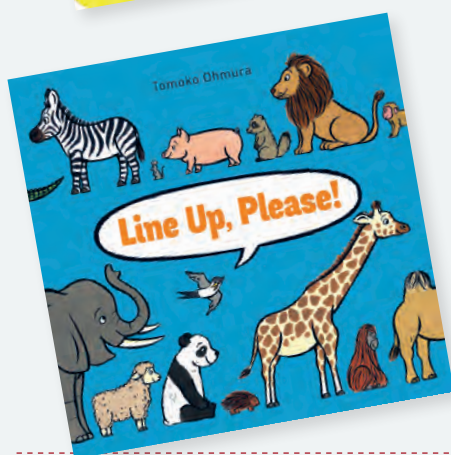
By Bénédicte Guettier

Gecko Press

Watch the wolf put on his trousers, his T-shirt, his socks, and more. But what is his plan once he's fully dressed?

This sturdy and fun boardbook is a boardbook with a difference. For one thing it has an actual storyline to the boardbook, one that

is simple for the intended age group and one that will delight! It's also a great book for discussions on getting dressed and the different items of clothing. Toddlers (in particular) and babies will scream in delight once the Big Bad Wolf is fully clothed. This is one of those books that you know will have repeat readings of.



Line Up, Please

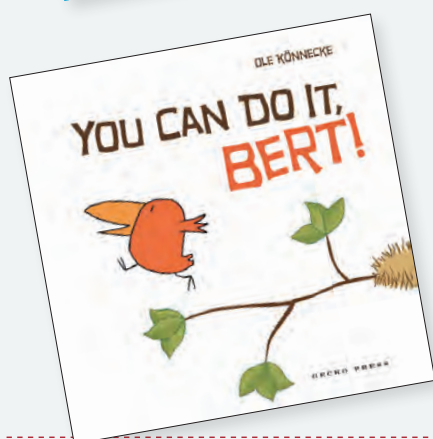
By Tomoko Ohmura

Gecko Press

Standing in line can be dull, but not when you mix tigers and frogs, sheep and skunks. But what could be worth waiting for?

This engaging book has many opportunities for learning. Children will enjoy counting, noting different sizes, naming the animals and the numbers they recognise.

The story will also be enjoyed for its humour and sense of mystery, such as why are these animals lining up? Due to the detailed illustrations and the opportunity for discussing numbers, size, etc, this story is probably best read in small groups or one-on-one.



You Can Do It, Bert!

By Ole Konnecke

Gecko Press

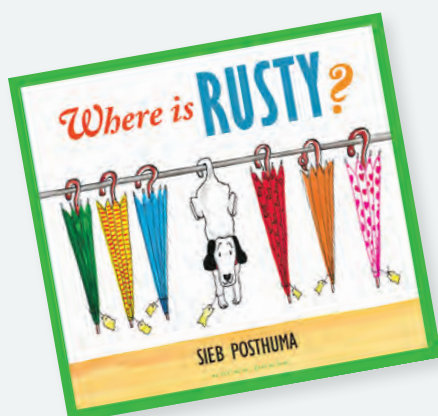
The themes of this story are on risk-taking, being brave and the support of friends.

Anybody of any age who has ever had to take a leap of faith will relate to this story about Bert (who ironically is a bird and should really have no fear at all of falling) who is trying to leap off

a branch from a tree. After several false starts Bert takes the plunge....

There is a slight twist to the story, such as why would a bird be afraid to leap off a branch except possibly a baby bird learning to fly?

With its simple text and illustration it's a book to be read at anytime, with anyone, from one-on-one to a large group. A must-have book if you believe in encouraging a child to have faith in themselves and just 'do it'.



Where is Rusty?

By Sieb Posthuma

Gecko Press

This story is about a curious dog, Rusty, who gets lost in a big department store when his nose leads him astray. But it's not long before his mother realises he's missing and everyone in the store begins looking for Rusty. But where could he be? The story follows Rusty as he hides away from the 'watchdogs' while desperately wanting his mother.

Many children will relate to this story with themes like the fear of being alone or lost, especially in a large department store/mall. To appease these fears, this story has a reassuring ending. Other discussions/themes that may arise include: keeping safe, shopping, hiding and searching. Good story to share one-on-one or in small groups.



The Cake

By Dorothée de Monfreid

Gecko Press

The animals all want different cakes made from their own favourite foods. Everyone has an opinion, but will tiger listen? Just when you think you know what is going to happen next there is a wonderfully funny laugh-out-loud twist at the end.

This is one of those stories that most children will instantly 'love' and want repeat

readings of. It's also simple enough that older preschoolers will quickly memorise much of the storyline and dialogue (which are in speech bubbles) to read to themselves or to others! It's a bright funny story full of twists and surprises with characters whom are rebellious in the way children can be. The bright bold illustrations add to the books appeal. A book for any occasion.



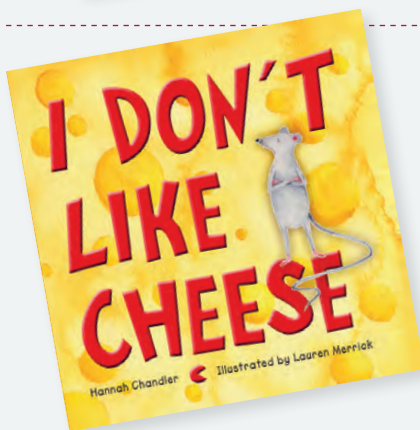
Ko Wai E Huna Ana?

By Satoru Onishi

Gecko Press

Who's Hiding was a Gecko Press bestseller and this te reo Māori edition was released in July to celebrate Te Wiki o te reo Māori (Māori Language Week). It's a perfect story for young children or anyone learning te reo Māori, with fun lessons in counting, colour, the names of animals, and recognising emotion

and expressions, without it feeling too much like a 'lesson'. Readers and/or listeners are asked questions such as who is hiding, who is crying, who is backwards, etc. While the English version has been around for a while this version is great for anyone learning te reo Māori.



I Don't Like Cheese

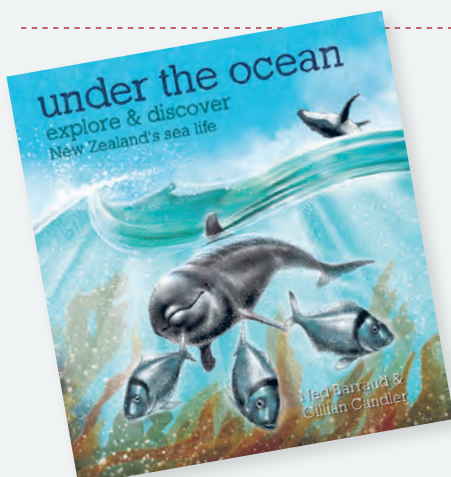
By Hannah Chandler

EK Books

This is an amusing tale about a little mouse, Mike, whose taste buds are captivated by international cuisine. This is a mouse that has refused to eat cheese! But luckily for Mike he makes friends with Ashley, a girl who feeds him delicious treats like tacos and pizza...but hang on, doesn't tacos and pizza have cheese?

It took me a while to click on to this fact, I wonder how observant your listeners will be?

This book written by an eleven year old with its quirky illustrations could possibly encourage the fussiest eater to try a new flavour. A book to be read for any occasion and perfect for projects on international cuisine!



Under the Ocean. Explore & discover New Zealand's sea life

By Gillian Candler

Illustrated by Ned Barraud

Here is another book from the best-selling series, Explore and Discover, following Gillian Candler and Ned Barraud's best-selling *At the Beach*, which was a finalist in the non-fiction section of the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards, and the popular title *In the Garden*.

This book focusses on the creatures that can be found under the sea around New Zealand. The book describes different habitats: underwater reefs, the sea floor, the open ocean and the deep ocean. Animals featured in the fact pages include octopus, squid, sharks, rays, whales, dolphins, penguins and many others.

This beautifully illustrated book will be devoured by those who love non-fiction books and have a love of the ocean and all its creatures. Great for individual passions or group work.



Teamwork

By Kelvin Roy

Martian Music

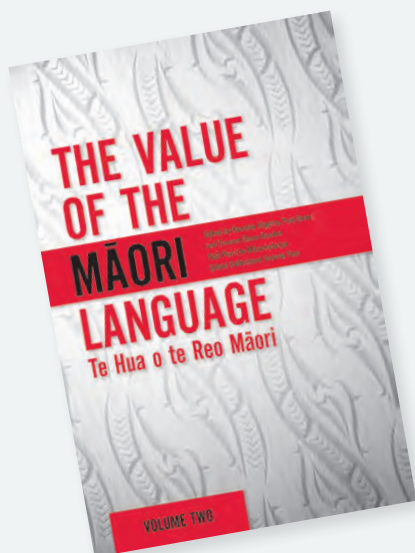
Here is another CD from the popular children's musician, Kelvin Roy. Like his other CD's Kelvin focusses on having fun and educating alongside a jazzy tempo. Songs like *Teamwork*, *Please & Thank You*, *Everyone of Us Counts* and *Concentration* have obvious merits to any teacher or parent.

Kelvin's music is also becoming more multi-cultural with songs like *Pick up Sticks* (in English/Samoan & English/Māori), *A Beautiful Thing* (English/Māori), *Please & Thank You* and *Everyone of Us Counts* (both songs multi-lingual).

As fans of Kelvin will know, his songs introduce children to new words like in the song *Solar Systems*, children will discover the words, constellation, zodiac, telescope and orbiting.

One song, *Looking in a Mirror* encourages children to sing in front of a large mirror or hold a hand held mirror (that can be passed around) and make different expressions as the words indicate. It's a sure hit!

A personal favourite of mine was, *Jump Up & Down*, as it got the body moving, was a lot of fun, and is very quick to learn with its repetition. To find out more about how you can download or buy this CD go to www.kidsounz.com.



The Value of the Māori Language: Te Hua o te Reo Māori, Volume Two

Edited by Rawinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and Vincent Olsen-Reeder

Huia Publishers

Even though the Māori language obtained official language status some 27 years ago, Māori are still expending energy to revitalise and normalise the language within Aotearoa New Zealand. The challenge for Māori is to win the hearts and minds of mainstream New Zealanders, now and in the future to understand the enormous value of the language to the nation across the board – in education and media, in tourism and the broader economy, and to culture and society. Māori words, terms and phrases like 'kia ora', 'haere mai', 'iwi', 'marae', 'haka', kāumatua, 'powhiri', 'hāngi' and 'moko' are iconic to this country, and are recognised by most people.

But imagine a country where we are all bilingual, speaking Māori as well as English. To achieve this, the value of Māori language must be understood, appreciated and adopted at all levels of society – from the corridors of the classroom, to the corridors

of Parliament. This book aims to facilitate the discussion, raise awareness and heighten the consciousness of society regarding the Māori language and potential or actual opportunities this brings for the country through its wholesale adoption by wider society.

This book draws on research from a scholarly community to contribute to the value of the Māori language over the past 25 years and their aspirations for the future direction of the language.

Contributions to this book have been presented in the authors' language of choice, all of whom are bilingual, with an almost equal number of Māori and English language texts.

If you're interested in the revitalisation of the Māori language, and want to be able to articulate this to others this book will help you do this. The book also gives you a deeper understanding of how the language began its decline and gives you an appreciation for those who have and those who still are fighting to rejuvenate te reo Māori.



Play in the Garden

By Sarah O'Neil

New Holland

This book is being marketed for children between the ages of 6-12 years, but when I read through the book I realised how useful this book would be for many teachers. *Play in the Garden* has many creative tips for teachers who need more confidence when planting with

children in the garden or who want to create a children's garden. The book is separated into three sections, Spring, Summer and Autumn, with ideas such as making a three-storey bug hotel, corn husk people, sprinkler fun using a soft-drink bottle, a medieval bird scarer, painting with veges, and growing a whole range of goodies from pumpkin to kumara to beetroot to spring onions. Have some fun in your ECE garden!



Three New Zealand Board Books: 123, ABC, Colours

Te Papa Press

Te Papa Press has created three board books for very young readers, in te reo Māori and English featuring popular objects and artworks from the national art collection.

If you or your centre appreciates art you will love these books. But it's not just the images; the text is also a pleasure to read. For example in the *My New Zealand Colours Book* for red where it has: 'Can you see this tiki's tongue? Can you poke out yours for fun?' (The image is a Hei Tiki made from corian and pāua shell.)

And in the *My New Zealand ABC Book*, under the letter 'Rr': 'R is for rooster – cock-a-doodle-doo! That's how a rooster says 'how do you do?' (The image is a Rooster from a Crown Lynn ceramic.) In the *My New Zealand 123 Book*, for number one, tahi it has: 'This buzzy bee has stopped to see if there's a flower for its tea.' (The image is the iconic wooden buzzy bee!).

Although this book has been designed for very young readers centres that have a strong focus on art may also appreciate these books for its imagery (reference list at the back so you know where the image is from, medium, etc).



Tiny Tots Christmas

By Lois Rock

Illustrated by Kay Widdowson

Lion Children's

If your centre shares the traditional Christmas story with your children you may want to have a look at this version of the Naivety, which has been designed for young readers.

This retold version has no more than 50 words per double page. The bright and colourful artwork also expresses the story well, if you want to condense the story further. A book best read in small groups or one-on-one due to its small size.



A PUFFIN PRIZE PACK!

Puffin Competition Winners

Congratulations to the following winners who have won the September Puffin Prize Pack:

- **Kathleen Murray**, Blue Frog Early Childhood Centre, Auckland
- **Mel Moore**, Midcity Childcare Centre, Hamilton
- **Emma Hatton**, Little Papis Early Childhood Centre



WIN BOOKS FOR YOUR CENTRE!

Swings & Roundabouts is giving readers the chance to win one of two Prize Packs containing a selection of 5 books for your centre. All you need to do is answer this question:

What was your favourite article in this issue of *Swings & Roundabouts*?

Email your contact details and the answer to the above question to info@ecc.org.nz by **Friday 23 January 2015** and be in to win.

Is your cashflow tight before your MOE bulk funding arrives?

Do you get stressed trying to juggle payments to suppliers and staff when you know your MOE funding is just around the corner... **WE CAN HELP**

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Our application process is quick and easy, and once approved, you will have the funds within 24 hours. There are no fixed contracts and no ongoing costs. One flat fee takes away all your cashflow headaches.

For more information about how Childcare Funders can help you and your business, visit www.childcarefunders.co.nz or call one of our friendly team on:



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Last Laugh

Q: What do you call a man with a car on his head?

A: Jack.

Q: What do you get from a pampered cow?

A: Spoiled milk.

Q: What is the easiest way to double your money?

A: Put it in front of the mirror of course!

Q: Why did the girl smear peanut butter on the road?

A: To go with the traffic jam!

Q: Why do bananas have to put on sunscreen before they go to the beach?

A: Because they might peel!

A prisoner, after many years, is finally released. He runs around yelling, "I'm free! I'm free!"

A little kid walks up to him and says, "So what, I'm 4."

Hey diddle diddle

The cat did a piddle

Behind the kitchen door

The little dog laughed

To see such fun

So the cat did a little bit more.

Birdy Birdy,

In the sky,

What you doing in my eye,

It tastes like sugar,

It feels Like soup,

Oh My God,

Its birdy poop.



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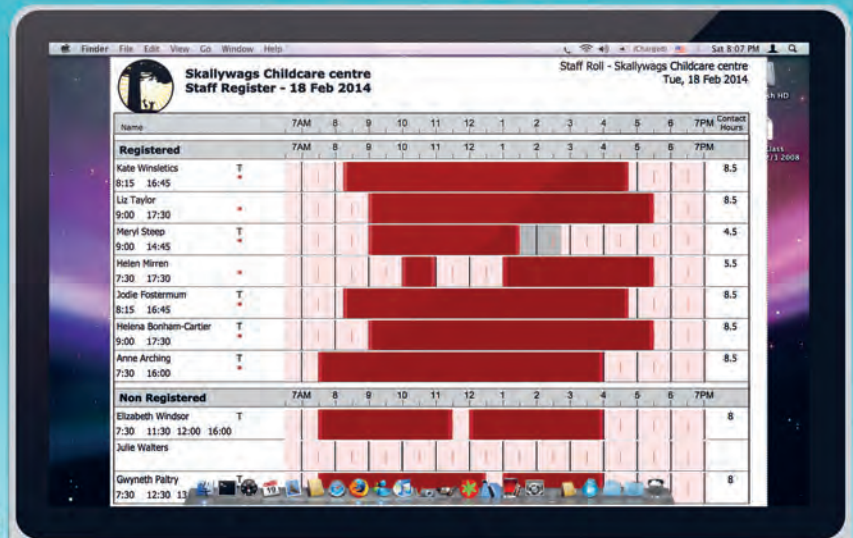
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