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Spring 2014

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FROM THE Editor

**"Look deep into nature,
and then you will
understand everything
better." - Albert Einstein**

This time last year *Swings & Roundabouts* celebrated innovated ECE centres who had embraced ICT within their teaching and in their management practices. We are currently living in a world where we are nearly always 'connected' with ICT being a part of our everyday lives. This of course has many positive effects, but there are also some negative effects being found in various studies, such as an increase in obesity, less physical activity, vitamin D deficiency, rising rates of depression and that many children have or are losing touch with nature and the outdoors. Influenced by the Forest Schools in Germany and Denmark and various research some NZ ECE centres have begun to incorporate their own NZ take on the Forest Schools philosophy. Three centres share their journey on how they began to use their local environment to enhance the learning of the children who attend their centre. Another worthwhile article to read is: *10 easy ways to connect your tamariki with nature.*

Along this theme of the great outdoors we also celebrate great ideas for our outdoor spaces within our ECE centres. Many ECE centres sent in photos of their outdoors area with a selection been chosen (hard decision) to inspire and invoke ideas for your own ECE centres. Interestingly, many of the images sent in also celebrated a 'natural' environment within their grounds of their ECE centres.

In a few weeks time we will all have the opportunity to vote in the NZ Election. Do you know and understand how many of these party policies could affect ECE? To be informed read the CEO's Message and

the political matrix before you head to the voting booths later this month.

Also another feature of this issue is the ECC Preferred Suppliers promotion in the middle of the magazine spread. If you are an ECC member find out who the ECC Preferred Suppliers are, and if you're not already using them, give them a ring and find out how their products or services can help you run a successful business. If you're not an ECC member, you may already be using these products and services. It may be worth a phone call to find out what you could save, if you were an ECC member!

The ECC's CEO Peter Reynolds has written an article in response to ERO's National Report in May of this year called "Improving Quality – Employment Responsibilities in kindergartens and education and care centres". Covered in this article are suggestions on making sure your employment practices are robust.

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

- Recruiting graduate teachers - how to get the best results
- Transitioning to schools – best practice
- Boys boys boys – strategies/ideas
- Profile on Montessori ECE centres

If you have a story to share on the above themes for the Summer/December issue or any other topic that you will think is relevant to other readers, email me at: info@ecc.org.nz.

Thank you to this issue's contributors and to all who sent photos of their amazing outdoor spaces.

Trudi Sutcliffe
Editor
info@ecc.org.nz



CEO's Message

By Peter Reynolds

Are we heading for another revolution in ECE?

Thirty years ago New Zealand experienced what one commentator called a 'quiet revolution'. Old social democratic ideas were steamrollered, and replaced by globalisation, free trade, free markets, deregulation, and consumer choice. Few were ready for the onslaught, and in a few short years, New Zealand was remade.

This history matters to us because it was this free market policy environment, known as Rogernomics, that gave birth to the ECE sector we know today. The application of these principles to ECE was called 'Before Five'. It worked like this: Government paid funding subsidies based on numbers of children and numbers of hours attended. The more centres gave families what they wanted, the more money they got, and the more successful they became. And because different families wanted different things, we got us - the great diversity of ECE service that exists today. Community-owned and privately-owned. Religiously inspired and ethnically inspired. Maori, Pasifika and Chinese. Montessori and Steiner. Centres targeting the poor. Centres targeting teenage parents, children under the age of two, and many others.

The 'Before Five' system, however, was and is quite unlike the contemporaneous 'Tomorrow's Schools' reforms that remade schools from then until now. There were no mandated democratic boards of trustees. There was bulk funding, with no separation of salary and operational costs. Privately-owned centres received funding on the same basis as community-owned centres. And there was no public ownership.

The core ideas of Rogernomics, the ideas that underpin the structure of our

sector, have dominated New Zealand political discourse for three decades. Even the Clark Government came to power by accepting Rogernomics as the new norm, but allowing it to go no further, and tweaking it only slightly, and occasionally. This tweaking produced, in our sector, both mandated percentages for qualified teachers, and '20 Hours Free'. But, despite this tweaking, the Clark Government left intact the fundamental market approach to the economy, trade, the public sector - and ECE.

This month (or perhaps in 2017), for the first time in three decades, we may get a Government that rejects the core principles of Rogernomics. The potentially radical consequences of this may catch the country as much by surprise as did the so-called 'quiet revolution' of the 1980s.

The implications for the modern ECE sector are especially disruptive. This is because we were born of Rogernomics. There is a sense in which we (the great diversity of education and care centres especially) exist because of it, a sense in which we are its children. We are not state-owned like the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. We are bulk funded, our many forms created by parent choice - our existence protected by 30 years of policy-maker unwillingness to disengage from the legacy of Rogernomics. One does not have to look long in the policy manifestos of the left-leaning parties, however, for evidence that ideological protection may be about to end - and end suddenly.

Labour's policy manifesto talks of 'a planned approach' to the 'public' provision

of ECE; of 'new public early childhood centres in areas of low-provision'; of 'a mechanism that would allow early childhood education centres, that chose to do so, to integrate into the public education system'. Green policy talks of 'work(ing) with the Labour Party on ideas for encouraging centres to become part of a public ECE system'. And Mana wants a '100% free public education system for early childhood to tertiary'.

The full purview of these words, as they might manifest in practice, is unknown, but there is no doubt they are open to radical interpretation. The ECC is concerned, as a consequence, that a public ECE sector might place severe pressures on community-owned and privately-owned ECE centres were those public centres to gain, via a Government incentive to go public, a significant funding advantage. There is, in such circumstances, substantial potential for a public-sector takeover, were the number of public centres to swell and the competitive unfairness to escalate. Such policy might eventually render the ECE sector, like the schooling sector, a creature of the state, and crush our capacity to innovate rapidly in response to the different needs of different types of family. This would be a loss for New Zealand.

Labour's policy manifesto talks also of extending 20 Hours and making 25 Hours 'free to all three and four year olds', to 'those five-year-olds who aren't yet in school', and to 'the most vulnerable children earlier than three years of age'. The Greens want to extend 20 Hours to cover two year olds.

Continues over page >>

CEO's message continued...

The ECC would not necessarily oppose such change. But Green policy talks also of reviewing 'the costs to parents of the current 20 Hours scheme'. And the former Labour Spokesperson for ECE said, in 2013, that 'nearly half of ECE providers are finding ways to require additional (20 Hours) fees for parents' and 'it's time the Government took responsibility and closed the loopholes'. These 'loopholes', however, are the means by which higher-cost centres render affordable a 20 Hours scheme in which subsidies are paid at the same average rates to both higher and lower cost centres. If these 'loopholes' were closed, especially in the context of an extended 20 Hours scheme, hundreds of higher-cost centres would be unable to cover costs and would be forced to choose

between withdrawal from the 20/25 Hours scheme and a plunge in service quality.

There are other policies also that if implemented, and taken together, would undermine substantially the currently parent-choice-led approach to ECE. Both Labour and the Greens would control the extent to which new centres could start up in areas deemed to have adequate coverage already. The Greens would set new maximum child numbers that centres could not exceed. Labour would direct subsidies for the establishment of new ECE centres to the community-owned sector only. Mana would increase funding, but for community-owned centres only. Both Labour and the Greens would increase the mandated number of qualified staff to 80%, a policy we support, but which brings, if poorly managed, the risk of

teacher shortages in areas in which fewer teachers reside. There is also a suggestion from Labour 'that a wider mix of children within an ECE environment may lead to better outcomes, than if all are from homes with significant social disadvantage', but with no indication of what this might mean, in practice, for parent choice.

Thirty years ago New Zealand experienced a so-called 'quiet revolution' that was actually noisy and highly disruptive of existing systems. Few saw, in advance, just how radically Rogernomics would change our country. Should we have a new Government this month, it is possible the ECE sector will find itself facing changes of similar consequence.

So you know



Welcome

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

- Greenpark Preschool, Tauranga
- Our Place Preschool, Hamilton
- Montessori Beginnings Preschool, Whangaparaoa
- Early Adventures, Orewa
- The Top Spot, Tauranga
- Gladstone Preschool, Invercargill
- Play Learn & Grow, Hamilton
- Kids Time Kindergarten & Top Kids (320 Limited), Ngaruawahia
- Paradise For Little Angels, Rolleston
- Beginnings, Waiheke Island
- Little Einsteins Montessori, Mount Maunganui
- Amber Learning Centre, Papatoetoe
- Forum North Childcare & Education Centre, Whangarei
- Buttercups Preschool, Christchurch

And welcome back to:

Oak Tree Learning Centre in Red Beach, Auckland



ECC Conference 2015 Leadership, Challenge, Growth 27-29 May 2015, Queenstown

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Keep an eye out on the ECC website, emails and the next *Swings & Roundabouts* for more information.

NZ Election 2014

Political Matrix – Election 2014

Political Party	ECE Policies	ECC Comment
National	No specific ECE election policy to date for election 2014.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Party policy has seen ECE centres lose, since Budget 2010: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for the 80 to 99% and 100% qualified teacher funding bands (which stripped tens of thousands of dollars from centre budgets); The Support Grant that funded training for Provisionally Registered Teachers; The equalisation grant that funded pay parity with kindergarten teachers (which means centres must now fund pay rises from their own pockets); and Inflation indexing for universal subsidies (which means the real value of this money is falling with every new Government Budget). We see little change should a National-led Government be re-elected, and think it most likely centres would face the continuation of per-child cuts in funding. On the positive side we think National would continue to increase total investment in ECE (but not per-child investment), continue with implementation of the ELI (early learning information) system, and attain its goal of 98% participation. In addition, the Minister of Education has signalled, in various forums, that she is keen, if re-elected, to focus on transitions within the education system (citing ECE to primary as an area of concern); issues around the provision of support for children with special needs; and the extent to which the ECE curriculum is being implemented.
New Zealand First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase support for programmes such as Playcentre and Kohanga Reo that involve parents directly in the education of their children. A funding review to 'realistically fund Playcentre as a quality parent-led service'. Fund administration, compliance and structural support staff for Playcentres. Explore the option of Kohanga Reo funding being re-allocated to the Ministry of Maori Affairs, and work with Kohanga Reo to develop a sustainable funding model. Review the funding model for kindergartens as 'the backbone of our early childhood education system'. Review the under two staffing ratio in ECE centres. Require all ECE providers to achieve 100% registered teachers. Support nationwide professional development. Ensure, via means such as 'mobile kindergartens', an increased ability of isolated rural communities to participate in ECE. Establish a fund for research into best practice in New Zealand ECE. 	If elected, New Zealand First could be in a coalition with either National or Labour. They are most likely of all the minor parties to be able to play a 'kingmaker' role and may well wield power beyond that suggested by the votes they acquire.

Political Matrix – Election 2014

Political Party	ECE Policies	ECC Comment
Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce 25 hours of free ECE for three, four and five year old children. Extend the policy of free ECE for the most vulnerable children earlier than three years of age. Reinstate the policy of 80% qualified staff in all teacher-led services, with an intention to move eventually to 100%. Encourage the greater co-location of schools and ECE centres. Develop 'high-quality early intervention programmes in ECE settings' so vulnerable children start school ready to learn. Investigate a mechanism that would allow ECE education centres that chose to do so, to integrate into the public education system. Develop a planned approach to promoting the 'public' provision of ECE and establish new 'public' early childhood centres in areas of low provision through targeted establishment grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ECC is, broadly speaking, supportive of the Labour Party intention to extend the 20 Hours scheme. We fear, however, that a Labour-led Government would eliminate the means by which higher-cost ECE centres have rendered affordable a 20 Hours scheme that pays low and high cost centres at the same average rates. Such means include: offering days of more than six hours only so centres can make up 20 Hours losses by increasing fees for hours beyond the six; and the charging of 'optional' parent fees. We are concerned because a move to 25 Hours, coupled with the lifting of the six-hour daily limit, would diminish the ability to charge for compulsory hours beyond the 'free' hours, and were this coupled with a ban on 'voluntary' fees, hundreds of higher-cost centres would be left with substantial revenue shortfalls. There is risk of regionally-specific teacher shortages if the move to an 80% minimum of qualified teachers is mismanaged (as it was in the 2000s). An anti-privately-owned sector bias may see greater funding discrimination against privately-owned ECE centres than we have seen in the recent past. It has been suggested the Labour Party establishment of a public ECE system, mirroring the public schooling sector might start with kindergartens, but be extended to ECE centres on a voluntary uptake basis. There is currently no public ECE in New Zealand, and its creation, therefore, would be a radical change. We are concerned policy that established new public ECE centres and integrated existing centres into the public system, might place severe pressures on community-owned and privately-owned ECE centres were public centres were to gain a funding/competitive advantage. There is thus potential for a gradual public-sector takeover were the number of public centres to increase and the competitive unfairness to escalate. Were this to occur there would be a disastrous loss of the diversity of service that characterises our sector. On the positive side a Labour-led Government is unlikely to continue the National-led Government's ongoing per-child cuts in ECE centre revenue, and may even move to restore some losses.
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the 20 hours ECE subsidy to cover two year olds. Establish a ministerial review committee to examine such issues as staff-child ratios and group sizes, the cost to parents of the current 20 Hours scheme, the ways in which parents can split up the 20 hours, and the opportunities for ECE teacher professional development. Extend funding from the current maximum of 80% qualified teachers to 100% for those centres that want it, whilst increasing the mandatory level from 50% to 80%. Build at least 20 new ECE centres onsite at low decile primary schools. Set maximum overall child numbers which centres may not exceed. Encourage the clustering of ECE centres and nearby Primary Schools to enhance the transition to school. Hold a ministerial review of funding and staff ratios. Re-start the inquiry into 'widespread problems' with the quality of home-based ECE services. Work with the Labour Party on ideas for encouraging centres to become part of a public ECE system. Ensure new ECE centres can be set up only where a network review shows a genuine need for a centre in that area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ECC applauds the Green Party intention to extend funding from the current maximum of 80% qualified teachers to 100% for those centres that want it, whilst increasing the mandatory level from 50% to 80%. We think this approach close to perfect because it restores funding for 100% qualified teachers while allowing for some unqualified teachers. We think the possibility of unqualified teachers desirable because it allows centres to employ those who best meet the needs of the communities they serve. For example: unqualified teachers with 'community charisma', can play important roles in bringing at-risk families into centres; and unqualified non-English language speakers can make the difference between good and bad communication with an immigrant community. The ECC would welcome ministerial review of professional development, especially if it produced new funding targeted to that end. The ECC would welcome an enquiry into the well-established quality problems with home-based ECE. The ECC supports the extension of 20 Hours to two year olds, but not if a Green-initiated ministerial review committee seeks to end the means by which higher-cost ECE centres render affordable a scheme that pays high and low cost centres at the same average rates. Were 20 Hours extended and the ability to charge parents to make up for shortfalls in government ended, the result would be substantial revenue shortfalls in higher-cost centres, and a consequential retrenchment of service quality. The ECC is concerned by the Green Party intention to work with the Labour Party on ideas for encouraging centres to become part of the public sector. (See comments on the Labour Party policy above.)
ACT	ACT has had little to say on early childhood education. It has stated it opposes the Green Party's extension of 20 Hours to two year olds which it sees as a 'bribe' to both parents and early childhood educators.	ACT, if elected, is likely to be allied to the National Party. It is likely to support the current ECE system that sees government funding follow the enrolment preferences of parents. It is likely also to oppose both Labour and Green intentions to nationalise parts of the ECE sector. It is likely to oppose policies that increase government investment in the sector.

Political Matrix – Election 2014

Political Party	ECE Policies	ECC Comment
Conservative	The Conservative Party has had little to say on ECE thus far. Its website states that all New Zealanders should have reasonable access to quality health care and education regardless of their ability to pay.	The Conservative Party, if elected, is likely to be in coalition with National. Its leader Colin Craig has talked about 'efficiency' in the Ministry of Education 'with savings used to decrease class sizes and improve resourcing'; funding following the child and giving parents greater choice in education; and 'reduced compliance requirements and costs for business'. He is likely to be a supporter of the current parent-demand-driven system and an opponent of nationalising ECE.
Māori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Māori participation. • Achieve special status for kohanga reo. • A 'nationwide discussion about compulsory ECE. 	If elected, the Maori Party could be in a coalition with either National or Labour. It believes in the rights of people to choose the ECE that is appropriate for them, and is a proponent of whānau choice.
Internet/ MANA	<p>No specific Internet/MANA ECE policy to date. Current MANA Party policy, however, includes the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 100% free public education system for early childhood to tertiary. • Increase funding for, and increase the number of kohanga reo. • Fund kohanga reo to provide meals for children, to grow trees and gardens in their centres, and to provide healthcare services. • An adult-child ratio of 1:3. • Minimum qualification levels for those working in home-based services. • 100% qualified and registered teachers in teacher-led, centre-based services. • Increase funding for community-owned ECE centres to meet new higher regulatory standards. • Increase funding for Playcentre to remove reliance on volunteer administrators. • Streamline processes for parents to establish new community and state-owned ECE services. • Fund research and professional development to ensure services are culturally relevant to the communities they serve. • Support ECE services to better support children with special needs. • Government-funded breakfast and lunch programmes and health care services for all non-profit ECE centres. <p>Earlier Mana policy statements have included 'phas(ing) out public funding for privately-owned "profit-driven" ECE centres'.</p>	If elected the Internet/Mana is likely to go with Labour. Both parties are likely to be hostile to privately-owned provision of ECE.
United Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more men to become ECE teachers. • Support the concept of parents as first teachers and encourage the expansion of programmes like PAFT and HIPPY to families other than those deemed to be at-risk. • Promote an increase of funding for early identification of children with special needs and disabilities. • Ensure that government funding of early childhood centres is reflected in the fees passed on to parents by requiring them to disclose what proportion of fees are taxpayer-funded. • Pilot the use of early childhood education centres as contact points for family support services, such as parenting courses, budget advice, health and counselling services. • Simplify, with a view to reducing, the quantity and complexity of compliance requirements that early childhood education and care providers must fulfill. 	If elected, United Future is most likely to go with National, but has gone with Labour in the past, and might again.

A++

ERO takes an interest in Employment Practices

By Peter Reynolds

The Education Review Office published a National Report in May of this year called "Improving Quality – Employment Responsibilities in kindergartens and education and care centres". This report focussed on the extent to which centres achieved the requirements of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations (2008) 47 and Licensing Criteria GMA7. The report focussed on:

- Recruitment and appointment of staff
- Support for ongoing professional development
- Improvement of staff performance through appraisal processes
- Staff turnover, managing complaints about staff and police vetting

The report sampled 235 ECE services taken from ERO reviews held in term 2 of 2013. Nine percent of these services were still under the 1998 Regulations. The sample was made up of 55 kindergartens and 180 education and care centres (of which 156 were stand-alone centres, ie: not part of a corporate service). These services were asked additional questions on the above issues on top of their normal review questions.

What the report found

Twenty-two percent of services (both kindergartens and centres) had highly effective practices across all areas. Thirty-seven percent of services had some effective practices, while forty-one percent

had minimally-effective practices across all areas.

It is fair to say that kindergartens came out of this report very well, given that only up to nine kindergarten associations were involved versus 180 centres. That is what we would expect, and why it is inappropriate to compare kindergartens to centres in the context of this report. It's like comparing apples and pears. Kindergartens operate under regional associations, predominantly responsible for their governance and management systems; they employ staff under one collective agreement. And tightly control their approach toward appraisals and PD planning. Centres, on the other hand, are independent businesses (whether community-owned or privately-owned) and responsible for their own systems design and implementation.

Another interesting factor highlighted by the report: those centres are part of a national body tended to do better in this report than those that were not. This suggests that centres take advantage of the support offered by organisations like the ECC.



In Detail...

Criteria	Centres that did this well	Centres that didn't do this well
Recruiting & appointing staff 38% of centres managed this well 41% were adequate 21% did not do well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear policies and procedures, regularly reviewed Part of a national body Job descriptions for all, reflecting service philosophy and values, RTCs Use of application packs, good recruitment practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More likely to not verify qualifications, referee checks Generic job descriptions No regular policy reviews
Support for staff development 37% supported their staff very well 47% were adequate 16% were not adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial orientation/ induction Ongoing support and strong PD focus Linked PD goals with philosophy and individual appraisal goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little/ineffective induction Ad-hoc PD No link between philosophy and PD or appraisal goals Appraisals inconsistent
Improving staff performance 12% had highly effective appraisal systems in place 39% had some 49% had minimally-effective systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear year-long appraisal cycle linked to philosophy and PD Clear connection to RTCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals not measurable Lack of support for PRTs Poor alignment between PD and appraisals Poor alignment between appraisal goals and RTCs Lack of observation of teaching practice Appraisal not always occurring
Staff turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 20% turnover in the preceding two years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 50% turnover in preceding two years
Managing complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific policy about making a complaint about staff Policy regularly reviewed Meets reporting obligations to the Teachers Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific mention of complaints about staff in complaints policy No evidence of regular policy review Does not meet reporting obligations to the Teachers Council
Police vetting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate written procedures Re-vets staff every three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not have written procedure in place More often fails to re-vet staff every three years Some staff not police vetted at all!

What does this mean?

The Ministry and ERO took immediate action to support those centres identified in the term 2 2013 review cycle that fell below the mark.

The issue is "what about the rest?"

The ECC has held a number of briefing meetings around the country to alert centre owners and managers to the report and the issues it identifies. Both members and non-members were invited to these free events.

Centres need to ensure they have clear recruitment policies in place. This does not

mean they have to advertise every vacancy! All qualifications should be verified. Police vet checks should be undertaken on all staff who have unsupervised access to children (noting registered teachers only get their registration having received a successful police vet report).

All policies should be subject to a regular (12 month?) review cycle.

There should be a clear link between a staff member's job description, their appraisal goals and their PD plan. For teachers this should explicitly include the RTCs. All staff should participate in an appraisal or performance review cycle that features

regular catch-ups throughout the year plus a formal annual review meeting.

The report findings covered more than is mentioned above, but this article provides a "heads-up" on the salient bits. For more information, go to: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Improving-quality-employment-responsibilities-in-kindergartens-and-education-and-care-services-May-2014>

A word of caution – ERO are likely to pay closer attention to these issues in the future. Make sure you attend to these issues in your centre, or be prepared to be marked down in your ERO review result!



Why connecting children with nature matters

Pause for a minute and think of your favourite memories of childhood play. Were you hurtling down a hill on cardboard? Digging a hole to China? Or making a hut at the end of the garden? Whatever your version, I'm guessing you were outside.

Mine was under an old totara tree. The branches came all the way to the ground. We made a path of stones to lead you in. It was secret. And quiet. And smelt of earth.

Inside were imaginary rooms and the creek was right outside. I'm guessing Mum knew where we were. But I can't be sure.

It sounds like a typical kiwi childhood. Lots of mud, risk and freedom. But childhood experiences are shifting.

Today's youngsters are spending far less time outdoors than any previous generation. Their schedules are busier, activities more organised and any free time competes with the ever present lure of indoor entertainment.

Then there's the fear. Parents go through more emotional gymnastics letting kids out beyond the garden gate than it seems their parents did. Modern day parents have been described as 'marinated in fear'.

Stranger danger, faster cars and the perils of the natural world itself are keeping our kids safely indoors. And it's rubbing off.

A Massey University study found that children are picking up on their parents' fears and are reluctant to be alone or venture out. When asked about their

adventures the children in the study talked about video games.

More than just childhood memories are at stake

Richard Louv bestselling author of *The Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle* coined the phrase nature-deficit disorder sparking an international movement and national debate across North America.

Louv suggests the disconnection of children with nature correlates with increasing social, mental and physical health problems. There's growing evidence linking a lack of time outdoors to childhood obesity, vitamin D deficiency and rising rates of depression.

Kids who do play outside are more adaptable, less likely to get sick and get along with each other better. It's no surprise 'nature prescriptions' are being written by paediatricians to help children cope with a range of issues from difficulty concentrating to autism.

The simple act of mucking around outside was a hot topic at last year's NZ Nature Education Network conference *The Natural Phenomena*.

Unstructured. Creative. Social. Mucking around comes with an inbuilt need to assess risk and adapt to changing circumstances.

Keynote speaker Griffin Longley, CEO of Nature Play, Western Australia, reported in one generation our parks are empty and our kids are more likely to be 'playing' on technology, blurring the lines of entertainment and play.

Take note how many kids you see meandering home from school. Or at the local park engaged in make-it-up-as-you-go type play.

"Every child needs to feel safe," says Griffin, "and brave to thrive." That may seem like a dichotomy but it comes back to our view of risk.

Distinguishing a hazard from a risk is important. Remove the hazard and tackling something risky builds bravery, discernment and a sense of accomplishment at any age.

Nature has a system that already works. And kids learn through trial and error.

So with more people on the planet living in urbanised environments how do we reconnect children with the outdoors? And importantly how do we do that in early child care settings?

It begins at our doorstep underneath the bare feet of our youngest tamariki.

Getting kids outside is a conscious action led by parents and educators.

A bug under a log provides wonder and excitement that can't be felt elsewhere.

Encourage children to feel part of nature at a young age. Help them watch clouds, feel grass under their feet, dig a hole in the back yard.

It needn't take a lot of resources. It's a way of thinking about life.

Richard Louv is touring NZ in November and will be speaking at The Natural Phenomena Conference 2014. See www.natureeducationnetwork.co.nz for details.

Kate Broughton is a writer living on the Tutukaka Coast. An avid playcentre mum and health educator, Kate is often dispatching nine-year-old boys into the wilderness nearby. Kate's contact details: katiebroughton@gmail.com

Ten easy ways to connect your tamariki with **nature**

Are you looking for nature play ideas? Here are some simple ways to bring good health and a life-long love of nature to your children.

1. Plan a scavenger hunt. Who can find the biggest leaf? The longest piece of grass? What animal is making the most noise? Can you find a spider's web? Which plant has the softest leaves? Encourage youngsters to show and tell what they found outside.
2. Have children lie on the grass and cover as much of the ground as they can with their body. What parts of your body are touching the ground? What can you see? Can you see shapes in the clouds?
3. Make a discovery board. Place a piece of heavy cardboard or plywood on the

ground. After a few days see what's moved into the micro habitat underneath. Keep checking at intervals to see what creatures have joined them. There's a whole new universe under there!

4. Rake leaves into a giant pile and let the children at it. They can have fun raking them up again.
5. Use natural materials for loose parts, eg, lumber scraps, rounds of tree & branches, logs.
6. Plant a garden. Choose seeds big enough for young children to handle. Planting sunflowers in a circle makes a fun outdoor hiding space. This allows young children a sense of being on their own.
7. Listen to recordings of nature sounds. Identify the sea, the wind, a river, bubbling mud, birds, and animals. Go outside and see what nature sounds you can hear?
8. Create a textural basket for young

children. Include big seed pods, pine cones, rocks, crystals, big strong leaves, large shells, fresh flowers.

9. Dig a hole in your garden/backyard and fill it with water. Squish and stomp in the mud. Make muddy foot prints.

10. Set aside an area of rough ground where children can dig, build, plant and use however they like. Include mounds of loose dirt that they can move around and mix with water. With old muffins tins and wooden spoons they can have an outdoor kitchen! What flowers are nearby to decorate the cake?

Keeping nature close by is the key to restoring frequent nature play!

Look here for more resources:
www.natureeducationnetwork.co.nz
www.childrenandnature.org
www.greenheartsinc.org

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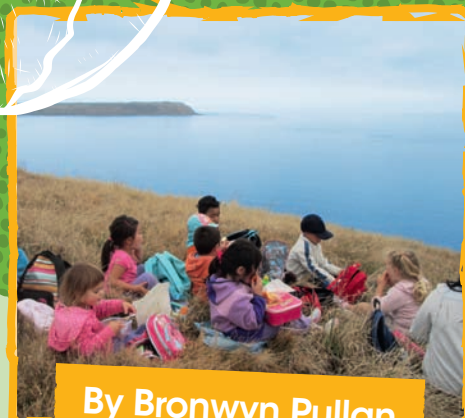
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Bronwyn's Place Children are on top of the world



By Bronwyn Pullan

Over the last 43 years that I have been in teaching I had become more and more disillusioned at how children did not know how to play and experience the wonders of nature. The changes over the years had led us to become a plastic P.C world with an increasing need to use the services of Special Education for behavioural problems. After reflecting on my childhood years of playing at the beach, spending hours at the rock pools, climbing trees and making huts etc. I knew there had to be a better way. Twenty three years ago I also became disillusioned with the centres I had been teaching in so I went outside the square and opened my own centre so I could implement my own philosophy and vision. Within 10 years of opening Bronwyn's Place, centres started to pop up all over the cities in high rise buildings giving the children even more plastic, artificial and unimaginative play areas. The future was looking grim. I began to look for alternative ways and the need to get back to the days of old was growing even stronger within me.

I started to research and read about these amazing Forest Kindergartens in Germany and Demark, and to my amazement a professional development tour had been planned to visit these places. What a wonderful opportunity, I booked in and went. Visiting the Forest Kindergartens in Germany and Demark in 2009 revitalised my enthusiasm for children learning through nature and it was then that I knew that there is a better way. I was in awe of how these children had no toys or no

classrooms and were just out in all the elements exploring, playing and having fun with their imaginations. The most amazing thing was the peace and harmony that filled the forest, no fighting or crying, just laughter and quiet chatter. The children explored together, knew their own limits and boundaries, and they also knew there were consequence's for their actions.

I came home armed with so many great ideas ready to implement a similar concept in my centre, knowing I will overcome any challenges that could be before me.

As Bronwyn's Place is lucky enough to have so many natural resources such as bush, rocky shores, beach and hills on our door step it made sense to make the best use of these within our budget.

I set out to educate and enlighten my teachers and parents of the centre, with the benefits of children learning in this environment. The response was fantastic and all wanted to get in behind the programme.

With only little back packs filled with their morning tea a small group of 10 children and two teachers would set out to the nearby pine forest to explore, fantasise and let their imaginations run wild. (This has since been cut down so we have diversified and utilise all of the natural wonders in our area.)

At first we started with the older children only, it was amazing how they couldn't walk far without complaining of sore legs or being tired. What had we done over these

years carting our children in cars, not letting them walk due to our sheltered and busy lifestyles, had we become too P.C.?

Over the last five years the outside world has become our extended classroom and is very much a part of our daily curriculum. Groups of 10 children between the ages of 2 and 5 set off to explore any one of our many natural environments we have around us. The children set the scene and plan where they are going, each child has this experience at least once a week for the whole morning. One of the favourite places the children love to go is to the rock pools and the beach. They spend hours poking around the rocky shores and pools sometimes finding the odd seal or other washed up treasures. At the beach it is an open canvas where the children build huts, hunt for treasure, and write in the sand. The logs and drift wood found on the shore become rocket ships, fairy caves, or whatever their imagination allows, it's endless. Then there are the bear caves or the spooky tree. I could go on for hours as our children are very spoilt for choice. No matter what the weather is rain, snow or shine there will be a little group of our children out there frolicking around having the time of their lives. The teachers fully support the programme and have grown with these experiences and are enthusiastic, competent and inspirational leaders for our children and love the whole outdoors experience.

Our infant centre also has experiences outside the centre. They go out on walks to the beach, the harbour, parks, and also to

the bush. We have a six seater pram which allows us to take six infants out at one time, the infants just love to get out and it is good transition for when they graduate to the preschool.

We took away the walls and now we have a peaceful harmonious culture within the centre, no behaviour problems and no need for Special Ed. for 5 years. Parents and teachers alike can see the benefits these adventures have to our children's mind, spirit, and soul, and to their development for the best learning outcomes. Our children can now walk for miles. There is no more plastic P.C. equipment within the centre or out and about. There is no such thing as bad weather only inappropriate clothing. One other thing we have noticed is that our children have become more resilient to illness and have less time off preschool.

Our children are challenging themselves, accomplishing their goals, are confident, co-operative, helpful to each other and have great amazing self-esteem. They leave our centre well equipped ready to learn and face the challenges of the world.

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Matapihi - Uru Taiao

(Into the realms of nature)

By Angela Kimber



We did not initially set out to establish a bush programme when we opened Matapihi. In fact, in an article we wrote for *Childspace* in our first year we said that although we loved the idea of forest kindergartens as teachers we liked our creature comforts too much and could not picture ourselves spending entire days outside. We therefore spent the first few years of operation mainly utilising the playground within the fenced licensed area, going for walks to explore the rest of the property once or twice a week. Our property consists of 8 acres comprising native bush, paddocks, a small lake, a stream and stands of kahikatea, so each excursion provided physical challenges, adventures and endless opportunities for exploration. Teachers began to notice a difference in children's behaviour on our walks, they generally seemed more relaxed, happy and very involved in their interactions with each other and the natural environment.

We began to think about taking children out for the whole day. Our teachers researched forest kindergartens in Europe and other literature relating to outdoor and nature play. We found that incorporating outdoor learning into kindergarten programmes has been a leading idea since Froebel opened the first kindergarten in 1837. In 1950 forest kindergartens were established in Denmark, and the movement quickly spread. "Rain-or-shine" schools evolved in 1957 with a simple philosophy; "if you can help children to love nature, they will take care of nature, because you cherish the things you love." (Linde, 2010).

The more we researched the more we found that sadly the opportunity for play outdoors, especially in nature, is becoming a thing of the past for young children in most western countries.

We discovered the writings of Richard Louv whose books *Last Child in the Woods* and *The Nature Principle* raise serious concerns about the disconnection of children from the natural world outdoors (Louv, 2009).

Of the various research exploring the benefits of young children learning outdoors, the majority seem to come in line with the 6 Key Impacts of Forest Kindergarten on children which O'Brian and Murray (2007) identified in their evaluative report, these were; confidence, social skills, language and communication, motivation and concentration, physical skills, knowledge and understanding.

The research overwhelmingly concludes that over time, with continued opportunities for learning outdoors children's enthusiasm, confidence, emotional well being, learning capacity, communication and problem solving skills are increased.

Our next step was to consult with parents and after receiving their feedback we decided to set up a trial with our Monday, Tuesday and Thursday group. Two teachers and 10 children would spend the entire day outdoors. To set up we needed a composting toilet, storage shed, wet weather gear, gumboots, ropes and tarps. We designated the bush days as regular excursions and devised a risk analysis and permission slip for parents. We began our Uru Taiao (which loosely translated means 'entering into the realms of nature'), in July 2012 in the middle of the wettest winter the Waikato had experienced for a long time!

From day one the children embraced it, they would dress up in wet weather gear and set out for the day. Frequently they spent a large part of the day in the puddles under the Kahikatea trees. Sometimes they swam in their wet weather gear and at other times it was just too irresistible

for them to strip down to their undies and totally engross themselves in the experience of getting thoroughly wet and muddy.

The daily learning adventures at Uru Taiao grow out of the ever changing environment - tree planting, gardening, hut building, collecting bugs and insects, collecting firewood and building fires, feeding eels and cooling off in the stream are just some of the activities children are free to immerse themselves in. They have a lot of space and time to explore, discover, experiment and self-direct their learning.

By giving children extended periods of time in the outdoor environment we are empowering them to take control of their own social and emotional competency. We have seen their vision of themselves as explorers and adventurers grow. When children are faced with the challenges that we are seeing every time we go to Uru Taiao, things like the inclement weather, assessing and taking risks, using the logs and ropes for crossing spaces, making sure they are not hungry, thirsty, cold or hot, lonely or afraid, creating shelter, asking for help, building friendships, and having fun, are helping to create resilient, socially competent children.

Our Uru Taiao programme also provides children with many opportunities to develop their risk assessment skills. These skills are refined through practice and in the early childhood years children are developing risk assessment abilities and management strategies that they will use throughout their lives.

Our natural environment provides challenges and adventures which empower children to explore risks in a practical way. When children are given the chance to engage freely in adventurous play they quickly learn to assess their own skills and match them to the demands of the environment. Such children ask themselves consciously or unconsciously – how high can I climb, or will this log across the stream support me. When they are given visible risk they rise to it and become very competent. Our job as teachers is to protect children from hazards, but also provide opportunities for them to experience appropriate risk.

On a daily basis we see our children meeting new challenges with confidence and with consideration and support for those who are adventuring alongside them. This reinforces our belief that the environment we provide, the expectations we have and our teaching practices are supporting children “to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.” (Ministry of Education, 1996)

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Learning in a classroom without walls

By Cathy Catto

Toybox on Rawhiti, in urban Auckland incorporates the Forest Kindergarten pedagogy which can be described as a 'classroom without walls'. This pedagogy of teaching and learning in our natural environment compliments the principles of the Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whāriki, and provides experiences that impact positively for the child's lifetime. The natural outdoor environment provides rich opportunities for physical, emotional, spiritual learning and development and research suggests that many other valuable experiences are provided in this outdoors play pedagogy.

Our centre has been undertaking regular walks to our local Cornwall Park 3 or 4 times per week since the centre opened 2 years ago. The walks are a length of 1 ½ hours to 2 hours and sometime include using the BBQ in the park for morning tea or lunch. The response from children and their whānau has been amazing, with parents feeding back to the centre how their children share their experiences and knowledge of the park at home. We have noticed an increased confidence of all our children who always keenly arrive on walk days dressed with appropriate clothing and footwear. Once at the park children confidently state where they wish to go, having even renamed the areas of the park to reflect their knowledge such as pony paddock, elephant trees (no elephants or horse live in the park), secret garden or top of the world where we can see both the Waitemata & Manukau harbours.

Children are encouraged to explore the grassy paddocks, climb hills, run in wide open spaces, and observe the people of the park (farmer, arborist, other park users). With changing seasons and weather elements no two walks are the same.

Children are developing their physical and risk assessment abilities together with a sense of belonging with their community.

Regular experiences within nature also provide an opportunity for children to understand the natural world in context and questions of "why did that bird die?" result in discussion among the children with answers of "just sleeping", "old like granddad", "just died". Spontaneous play, filled with fun, imagination and creativity is valued highly. For example a stick could be a fishing rod, a weed eater or a dinosaur bone.

On walks children develop their language, mathematical and scientific skills by the practical use of observation and exploration. Children are able to learn from each other and appreciate learning by using all senses like when you stand in a mud puddle or cow pat and it goes "gloop", then splashes you in your face and stinks, making you want to laugh and repeat the experience over and over again. Children who learn kinaesthetically are able to see, touch, hear, smell and taste their environment, which develops their confidence due to being engaged through their learning style.

Children become aware of their and others impact on the environment and become natural kaitiakitanga, guardians of their natural world. Māori values of tuakana-teina and ako, the transferring of knowledge is valued within our learning. Many children draw on the knowledge of their peers and in-turn develop confidence by sharing their own knowledge with each others and new children.

Forest Kindergarten pedagogy can initially provide some challenges or barriers. A strong relationship with whānau and

community is central to the support and success of this programme. Fitness and agility of teachers is required along with an awareness of the potential hazards within the environment, for example water, animals and vehicles. Teachers invariably learn to extend their own knowledge and overcome personal challenges such as muddy play and going outdoors during unfavourable weather conditions (there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing). Safety is a priority and risk and risk management is central for each excursion. Additional first aid kit contents includes an epi pen, survival blanket, sting-go, lolly pops and a laminated map with information so that a passer-by may help us if required. All are included in our back pack that is carried on each walk with change of children clothing, water and collection bags.

Toybox on Rawhiti celebrated in becoming a finalist in Prime Minister Education Award for Excellence in Engaging Atah para Award, 2014, with innovative programme to enhance our children's learning. View our film clip at www.pmawards.education.govt.nz

Cathy Catto runs workshops on implementing forest kindergarten pedagogy within the New Zealand ECE. The workshops include linking to strategic plans, programmes & risk management. www.toyboxchildcare.co.nz

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26 Sept	12.45pm	Managing People/Staff	Christchurch
23 Oct	8.30am	Compliance	Kapiti (Wellington)
23 Oct	1.00pm	Reporting & Review/Managing ERO	Kapiti (Wellington)
24 Oct	8.30am	Business Planning	Christchurch
24 Oct	1.00pm	Marketing in a Competitive Environment	Christchurch
6 Nov	8.30am	Financial Management for ECE Centre Managers	Masterton
6 Nov	12.30pm	Managing People/Staff	Masterton
21 Nov	8.30am	Strategic Planning	Tauranga
21 Nov	12.30pm	Good Governance	Tauranga
21 Nov	8.30am	Compliance	Christchurch
21 Nov	12.45pm	Reporting & Review/Managing ERO	Christchurch
4 Dec	8.30am	Financial Management for ECE Centre Managers	Auckland
4 Dec	12.45pm	Managing People/Staff	Auckland
5 Dec	8.30am	Strategic Planning	Hastings
5 Dec	12.30pm	Good Governance	Hastings

Centre Manager workshops are offered by Whitireia in partnership with the ECC

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS FOR ECE TEACHERS (4 hour workshops)

25 Sept	12.30pm	Stepping up to Supervisor	Wellington
4 Oct	9-1pm	Blue Book Workshop (Registration & Mentoring)	Auckland
15 Oct	9-4pm	St John First Aid Refresher Course	Auckland
22 Oct	1.00pm	Stepping up to Supervisor	Christchurch
23 Oct	9.30am	Self review in ECE	Christchurch
24 Oct	9.30am	Self review in ECE	Dunedin
1 Nov	9-4pm	St John First Aid Refresher Course	Wellington

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**Early Childhood
Council**



Just two things to do to effectively market your childcare centre!

There are two essential elements that you can really concentrate on to make your childcare centre marketing more effective. The first is social proof, such as parent testimonials, and the second is a focus on the unique benefits of your centre.

Social proof is a great method to build trust with a parent or prospect. Interspersing your ad with parent testimonials, stories, or even multiple testimonials will work wonders. In fact, your entire ad could be focused on the story of a child or family that is enrolled in your centre. I've seen this strategy used on several websites of leading childcare centres, and it's been a huge factor contributing to their success. They use social proof because it works! Parents really are out there looking for what other parents are saying about your centre to help them form an opinion.

Take a minute to look at every brochure, ad, mailer, and flyer about your centre to see if it features any good, credible, solid, benefit-driven parent testimonials.

If it doesn't, think about how you can incorporate this strategy into your marketing, or how you can even create a whole campaign just using this method. For example, you could use a parent's story about how their child benefited from being in your programme and how this prepared them for a successful start at primary school, including a comment or endorsement from the school! Any stories you have that tie in with your brand can be used in your marketing. Don't have any testimonials or stories? It's time to get to work!

The second important element to integrate into your marketing involves communication of the unique benefits of your service, or, in other words, the differences that set you apart from other centres. Most in the childcare sector have really lost focus on this essential ingredient and, in turn, have made it harder for parents to tell services and service types apart. This means that some parents now believe all centres are similar and that they should therefore only ask about rates. Or that there is no difference between centre-

based ECE and home-based ECE. We all know this isn't the case!

What makes your centre special and unique? In your marketing, make sure to focus on bullet point benefits that explain how your centre is different from the rest. These unique benefits should be a part of every marketing piece, and should also be a main focus on your website. This should be what your employees talk about when they respond to inquiries on the phone and give tours. It's so important to constantly be communicating those unique differences across your messaging to parents. That will pull you out of being a simple commodity that blends in with the others, really setting you apart from competition, and finally allow you to charge what you're worth.

If you integrate just these two ingredients into your communications, you will be on your way to more effective marketing, driving more inquiries and ultimately more enrolments at your childcare centre.

Want to know more? Check out the ECC website for details of the Marketing workshops offered in your area.



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How to get powerful on-line reviews from parents

Getting reviews from parents is really easy and can provide powerful content to help potential customers make positive decisions about your childcare centre. The number and quality of online reviews of your centre has become increasingly important in search engine rankings. This means one important place to direct people to give you online reviews is Google Places, as it influences your rankings in Google's search results.

A lot of good reviews also add to the perceived quality of your childcare centre. People first look at the number of reviews about your centre and make a judgment about your centre. Only after this crucial first judgment will they then decide to read the content of the reviews to make a choice. If you don't have enough reviews online, your childcare centre may never be given a chance.

Finally, getting great reviews from parents is a really positive affirmation for your staff. Teachers and other staff will feel really happy with your centre and their job.

There are two keys to getting reviews:

1. ASK 2. MAKE IT SIMPLE

The first and most important step: **ASK.**

When customers are happy, they are generally quite willing to make some effort to do a review, but first you need to take the first step and ask them to do it.

When a parent says they are happy about your centre, all you or your staff have to say is something like "I'm glad you are happy, would you do me a favour and write us an online review? We have some easy ways for you to do this."

The first key to getting reviews is to ask; the second is to make it easy for people. Even though they are happy with your business, they are busy and most likely won't go through too many steps to review you.

Ideally, you want people to review you directly on-line. This makes the process quicker and easier for you. Some ideas to help get reviews online:

- Have a "QR code" visible in convenient locations around your centre that take parents to your Google Places review section. QR codes can be read by smart phones and makes it easy for a parent with a smart phone to complete a review on-line. You could have a sign where parents check in saying "Happy with us? Use your smartphone to read this code and write us a review." You could also have these QR codes in the rooms and teach the staff to offer this as an option when asking for reviews (better yet, print it on the back of your testimonial cards.)
- Have a computer in a good location with desktop bookmarks taking people to review sites. If you use a programme to log children in and out, you could set this up so you can direct a parent to quickly do a review if they say something positive about your centre. You can also use an

old computer for this task, set in a corner somewhere.

- Include links to review sites in any on-line communications you have with your parents. On-line newsletters or emails work great for this.
- Print up a flyer and send it home showing how to give an on-line review.
- All of these methods can be especially powerful if you are having a special event. It can be a part of the event to give a review. Make it easy and fun!

Don't forget about parents who have left your centre on good terms, as well as prospective parents. Just because they are not there now is no reason for you to not get a review. Sometimes these can be some of the most powerful reviews you can get.

Finally have fun with it. If you are doing a great job, which I assume you are, parents will be more than happy to give you reviews. Enjoy the process and it will be even better.

Remember – ask and make it simple! Many times all it takes to get reviews is to have an easy way for a parent to review you and to just ask them to do it!

Want to know more about how your centre can benefit from effective marketing? Check out the ECC's website (www.ecc.org.nz) for the next Marketing Workshop in your area.

Inspirational outdoor spaces

"I walk in the woods, the touch of a tree, to feel the ground beneath my feet. That's what heaven, I'm sure, will be." – Anonymous

With the modern experience of ICT, TV, hectic parent lives and smaller backyards it seems to be even more important for ECE centres to provide outdoor experiences that are more than just a playground. Is it time to think deeply about how children experience their outdoor play?

Some researchers suggest that the best outdoor spaces are the ones that replica the natural outdoors environment, with a variety of textures and materials, gardens, streams, loose parts, places to retreat to and things to create (Wardle, EarlyChildhood News). Within this space there should also be provision to allow children to experiment, take risks, control the environment and opportunities to support children's creative, social, emotional, physical and spiritual

development and develop their sensory and dramatic play.

Further ideas to consider: Imaginative touches, colourful plantings, and children's artwork including mosaics, sculptures and mirrors; Sensory gardens, herbs in pots and vegetable gardens all delight the senses, offer hands-on learning experiences and help children to form lasting connections to the natural world; Magical play spaces can be defined using simple materials such as sheets, old curtains or scarves and lengths of fabric; Small, secret, comfortable places where children can get away from the action; and finally add sound!

Thinking about re-developing your outdoor space? Before you head to a landscape developer (and there are many who specialise in ECE outdoor environments and who can offer valuable information and budget advice) first consider a self-review

approach. Research. There are some fantastic resources out there from books to images on Pinterest. Print out ideas from other ECE centre environments and discuss with your children, your staff, your whānau, and your local community. Think about your own local environment. How can your centre replicate the values of your community and involve them in the process? What matters to your whānau, what are their values, how do they vision the outdoor space their children will be using? Remember you don't have to radically change the outdoor space all at once if you don't have an extensive budget, but I do suggest having an extensive design plan to work from, and let your outdoor space evolve...as time and your budget allows...

Over the next few pages ECE centres from through-out New Zealand have sent in images of their outdoor spaces, look closely and be inspired...

Bronwyn's Place...



See It, Live It, Breathe It !



See It, Live It, Breathe It !



Congratulations to Bronwyn's Place who won the ECC Great Outdoors Photo Competition

"For our children to have as much time outdoors in a versatile, changeable and responsive environment. Where they can connect with nature, explore, imagine, experiment, be curious, take risks and have a place to ponder." Their world could be anything!

Wa Ora Montessori School...



Our centre is underpinned by the Montessori philosophy, both inside the classroom and out. Tamariki have the freedom to move, work and play with activities which are based on their interests. The environment is prepared in such a way that tamariki can be independent, purposeful and, of course, have fun. These

photographs show groups of tamariki singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, swinging, climbing, writing and carpentry. The second photograph shows tamariki harvesting food they have grown in the garden to take inside for part of their lunches other tamariki will be preparing.

St Clair Corner Early Learning & Infants and Toddlers Centres...



At St Clair Corner we have a passion for our natural outdoor environment and the great things our tamariki can learn there. We have lush, quiet, special secret gardens for the children to explore and make their own alongside larger areas for group play. We keep our outdoors open as much as we can, there is no bad weather only bad clothing!

Lollipops Educare Highbrook...



"Our outdoor area was designed and created to be a 'classroom without a roof' to encourage children to create, explore and investigate. Our outdoor set up is inspired by the beauty of nature, recognising and celebrating each individual child's strengths

and interests. In our outdoor space, the children have many opportunities to enhance their learning and imagination through a variety of natural resources and equipment".

Minerva House Preschool...



Besides the swings, slide and climbing frame that you would expect, our outdoor area contains so much more to excite and challenge children including raised platforms, native plantings, sandpits and digging pits, water features, hillocks and clearings,

tactile mosaics, log wrought stepping stones and our magical living willow tunnel and cave. There is also a secret garden of ferns and other natives alongside our vegetable garden in which the children help to grow food for our kitchen.

Karori Kids Preschool...



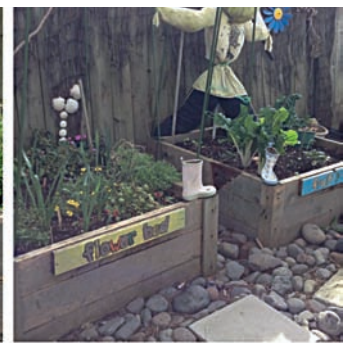
Our playground was designed by teachers, children and parents. These areas are used all the time for many different play activities, and we have had a few concerts on the deck. Being able to provide the children with an resourceful playground enables them to expand their play, gain confidence, develop physical development,

support friendships and encourage their imagination and creativity to flow and many times explode.

We love our PLAYGROUND!! And it continues to evolve which is very exciting for everyone.

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.



Whitby Educare - The Wilderness...



We have created this area over the last two years, as it was an area unused by the old centre.

As we have created it, the key concept is to encourage the children to challenge themselves, evaluate risks, give things a try, and have a natural playground to explore in. We are also an

NZ Enviroschool ECE centre, and have used as many recycled items as possible. One of the key factors when designing this area was to have the input from the children as to what they would like to use.

What you cannot see from the photo is the chook house in the corner that house our 4 lovely chooks.



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Aoga Amata Preschool, Waihopai...



Aoga Amata Preschool, based in Waihopai (Invercargill) has an inspiring outdoor environment that is unique and family orientated, where children are exposed to Pacific Island example, the culture,

language and values. Our outside environment has been created for children to be confident and capable learners, able to create their own play and have a sense of belonging.

Gails Childcare Centre...



Our Centres gardens are focused on providing rich sensory experiences that children can emerge and surround themselves in. Different textures, smells, colours and even tastes as a mixture



of native plants, herbs and trees provide a soothing environment where our investigators, explorers and scientists can do what they so best. Discover!

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"All the children, families and teachers are loving the changes Playscape have made to our playground. The updated areas have provided natural and challenging spaces for the children. Some of the areas were not used by the children very often but we now find they utilise all areas of the playground fully.

We enjoyed the ideas that Playscape provided for the playground and the chance to incorporate things that were of importance to us such as; including our memorial chair and moving the boat into the bottom of the playground".

-One Tree Hill Kindergarten



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Becoming a fully registered teacher

We all want to be assured that New Zealand's teaching profession is fully up to date and on board with current teaching practice. In 2009, when the NZ Teachers Council was looking to update its policy for registering teachers, we spoke with the profession and most of you agreed that teachers should be encouraged to move from provisional to full registration within a specified period. Being fully registered means you have been assessed and confirmed as having met the registered teacher criteria. During provisional registration, a teacher has the opportunity to develop the skills they learned on their ITE programme by completing the induction and mentoring. Sometimes, the induction and mentoring process gets disrupted and the teacher does not progress to full registration within six years. Reasons this can happen might include moving between jobs or cities, needing to take time away from teaching, or simply being unlucky in the search for a permanent role.

It's really important that these teachers maintain and build their teaching currency so the high standards expected of the profession are upheld.

This is why in 2015, we are introducing a requirement for some teachers to complete a Teacher Education Refresh programme (TER) before they renew their provisional registration.

The TER programme

You may need to complete a TER if you:

- want to reapply for provisional registration (this is usually after six years); or

- attained a teacher education (ITE) qualification six or more years ago and want to apply for provisional registration as a teacher for the first time.

TER programmes bring teachers in these groups up to date with current teaching initiatives. The course has four key components – learning communities of today and tomorrow; curriculum, assessment and planning; the professional teacher; and supervised practicum.

The NZ Teachers Council has worked closely with three tertiary education providers to make the TER programme accessible to all those who require it. Our providers are:

- Waikato University
- Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa New Zealand Childcare Association
- University of Auckland Uniservices

Both English and Māori mediums are catered for, as well as all sectors (ECE, primary, secondary), to make sure learners get relevant and helpful knowledge from completing their TER programme.

Course costs vary but in general are around \$4,000 for a 12 week programme. These fees are set by each provider and are necessary for them to deliver the curriculum that is set by the NZ Teachers Council. Fees are paid directly to the course provider.

Every teacher's progress towards full registration is different

We recognise that there will be some

teachers who are very close to having met the requirements for full registration and for whom a TER programme would not be beneficial. There is a review process which takes into account such circumstances, and may excuse some affected teachers from completing a TER.

Check with your staff

We encourage professional leaders to check and see whether their staff need to complete a TER programme. With a little forward planning, you can ensure your staff complete the programme and continue their development as successful teachers.

What to do next

We encourage all teachers who believe they may be affected by this change to go to our website and carefully read the information provided about TER programmes. If you do need to complete a TER, it's a good idea to get this sorted well before your practising certificate expires so you're not caught out.

Information on the TER programmes is available at:

www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/content/teacher-education-refresh-ter-programme

Please contact us if you would like to talk through your situation:

Phone: (04) 471 0852

Email: TER@teacherscouncil.govt.nz



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Teachers Council
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Best Practice 2040

By Phil Sales



I have been doing something very foolish over the last few weeks.

I have been spending way too much time thinking about what the future might look like.

Saner people plan for a family reunion, the next school holidays or even for retirement. In my case, I have abandoned all pretense of sanity and tackled the BIG ONE: What will the early childhood sector look like in 25 years' time?

Of course, 25 years is a somewhat arbitrary figure. (Arbitrary enough that I probably won't be around to see it!) But for some early childhood educators still in the flush of youth, with maybe 30 or more working years ahead of them, this timeframe is well within their professional lifetime.

Fundamentals of change

Given that it is far easier to speculate on change rather than best practice, per se, we might be wiser to start by focusing on the former instead of the latter. So let's start by acknowledging one of the basic principles of change: Change happens. It always has happened and it always will happen (in one form or another).

If we take a continuous improvement approach to change in early childhood education then we might be better to think of 'best practice' in terms of 'currently approved practice'. In fact, as accepted best practice has evolved considerably over the years, there is absolutely no reason for us to believe that what we take for granted today as best practice will be regarded as best practice tomorrow.

With the blessing of hindsight we can look back over the last 100 or more years and laugh at the rudimentary ideas the once constituted 'best practice'. On the other hand, while we give ourselves a congratulatory 'pat on the back', we should recognise that our own foresight is probably no better than that of our predecessors!

A true story

A few years ago I attended a meeting hosted by one of our local city councils. The idea was to bring together a broad cross-section of ratepayers who could discuss what the city (read: council services) would look like in 25 years' time.

With my own biases and interests in mind, I attended full of hope for a stimulating and invigorating discussion about the shape of things to come.

What trends could we learn from overseas? Would council be able to use big data and predicative software to attend to our needs before we even knew what we needed? Would councils even exist in 25 years?

To be honest, I still don't know the answers to those questions. As it turned out, both the other participants and Council were far more interested in discussing how often rubbish would be collected in 2030 than they were in considering what the impact of change and convergence might be before that time.

What the future may hold

Clearly, when we talk about the early childhood sector, there some potential changes that loom large on anyone's list of opportunities and threats. Political or economic change can bring funding implications and legislative changes that can affect the way we do (or don't do) things.

Advances and refinements in research can be expected to have an obvious impact on best teaching practice. Scientific research in the fields of genetics and human development may be expected to influence the early childhood sector in ways that we can only yet imagine.

Growing migrant populations from around the world may create its own pressure for special childcare facilities where best practice reflects the interests of specific cultures and traditions. And let's not forget the role that the environmental and technological factors will undoubtedly play in shaping early childhood centres of the future.

So, with this in mind, let's get specific and try to make a few more detailed predictions about what might (possibly) influence best practice in the next 25 years.

Let's start with three relatively benign possibilities ...

Firstly, ERO (as we currently know it) will restructure at some stage and morph into something different. Quite what that change may be is something that we will have to wait and see but you can be sure that as a legislated state sector organisation it will itself be subject to the vagaries of best practice review. Possibly we could see less emphasis on review and compliance and more focus on facilitation to test different models and philosophies with an emphasis on results and outcomes? Maybe industry organisations such as ECC will be asked to play a greater role in this regard, picking up services that fit naturally with their role as industry representatives?

Secondly, we might see more of a policy push towards aligning early childhood centres with primary schools. Centres may take more of a socialising role, providing a seamless transition into more formal learning environments as part of the continuing move towards better use of government money.

Thirdly, the increasing volume of personalised content (especially through internet and social media channels) may encourage social compartmentalisation as people become more enmeshed in specific communities-of-interest. This could lead to increasing opportunities for childcare services to niche and specialise in order to meet the expectations of demanding parents.

... and now for three slightly more scary and challenging futures ...

Without any shadow-of-a-doubt, technology will play a much greater part in our everyday work. Imagine Google Glass and monitoring technology allowing you to track the well-being of every child in your

centre and to respond to real-time changes in anything from the child's brain activity (anxiety) to core temperature (illness).

Image also, not just children at your early childhood centre but also their digital personal assistants and automated task rabbits. Customised minders, if you like, who follow the child, supporting and guiding their everyday activity as they encounter and master the environment that the early childhood centre prepares for them each day.

And finally, could early childhood education knowledge itself come in 'take home packs' issued by hospitals to new mothers (rather like the free pack of Huggies that my wife found bundled with the arrival of our first child?)

Some futurists are predicting a world where each one of us will download knowledge directly and instantaneously into our brain. Could early childhood educators become redundant relics of the past as years of training become democratised and expertise becomes universally accessible to anyone who wants it? Could 'experience' be recorded, distilled and repackaged in the same way, ready for distribution as a promotional giveaway with infant milk formula?

A bit far-fetched? Given the current rate of technological change these futures could be much closer than you might think!

What we can do now

Of course, there is nothing that says that we have to be the passive recipients of change.

Perhaps the real challenge for us isn't in trying to anticipate the future. Maybe our challenge is to anticipate ways in which we can shape the wider environment to meet our evolving needs in the early childhood sector.

From one perspective, early childhood centres are already doing that every day. We also have ECC championing a range of initiatives and relationships for the benefit of the sector.

However, there may be other ways that we can actively take a hand in shaping the future.

My own background involves time spent in the fascinating world of business incubation where people with bright ideas develop their projects and passions into fully fledged business propositions with world-class potential. In the early

childhood sector this could mean anything from building ready-to-use educational systems through to the use of technology-on-the-mat.

So, as we embrace the future and all the challenges that it will undoubtedly bring, can we make change our servant (rather than vice-versa)?

Could a 'best practice challenge' be your personal opportunity to leave a lasting mark on the industry?

(Invitation to participate: If you found this article stimulating and thought-provoking then please share your own thoughts about the future of early childhood services with me at phil.sales@whitireia.ac.nz)

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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Making sure of maths

By Aunty Alice

Some parents are so proud that their pre-school child can count to ten or even twenty before they go to school. Surely they have a head start in maths? Well, that's like expecting them to be able to read because they can recite the alphabet. There is far more to be done with young children if they are to succeed at maths and discover what an exciting subject it is, full of puzzles and challenges. And it is all in the understanding and use of maths language.

There are rich opportunities to feed in words relating to maths in the context of a pre-schooler's every-day life experiences at home and at pre-school.

What does this mean?

First let me give you an example of learning in context. (The maths words are in italics).

Context: Dinner time

Dad: Here is *some* cheese. You eat that while I cook the tea.

Here are *three small pieces* of cheese; *one, two, three*.

Here's *one* to eat for you, *only one*.

Oh, now there are *two left*; *one, two*. *One* has gone down in your tummy. It is *not here any more*. (the concept of negativity).

Now I'll eat one. Yum. *It's gone* and *not here any more*. It is in my tummy. Now there is *only one left*. You eat that and then they are all gone. *Two in your tummy and one in mine which makes three altogether*.

Counting is one aspect of maths, but not the only one. Child-appropriate language should also explore maths through discussions about shape, space, symmetry, patterns, groups, categories and probability.

The contexts are all around us: in books, at the dough and carpentry table, lego and block play, water play, climbing apparatus, on the beach, etc. It is all a matter of knowing what words to use to enrich the child's mathematical understandings.

The list of words in the blue box are used in maths at all levels. It is often assumed a child understands these words in myriad contexts and often they don't. Without this understanding they cannot 'think' mathematically with ease and confidence. If you wish to be an enriching educator, pin the list on your fridge or the wall at pre-school.

Oh yes. There is far more to maths learning for pre-schoolers than counting to twenty.

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

Mastering Maths

- a list of mathematical words to use everyday

Up, down, across, over, under, left, right, in the middle, below, above, along, on the top, from, to, on, between, far away, near, nearest, furthest, beside,

Empty, full, too much, not enough, no more, overflowing, more/greater than, less than, all, none, some,

Pattern, different, equal, same, alike, might be, possible, impossible, certain,

Many, more, less, most, least, take away, add to, leaves, divide, break up, put together, half, whole, altogether,

Always, likely, unlikely, never, sometimes, now, later,

Length, width, short/shorter/shortest, long/longer/longest, large/larger/largest, heavy/heavier/heaviest, small/smaller/smallest, tall/taller/tallest, balances, equal, same.

Thin/thinner/thinnest, thick/thicker/thickest,

Day, night, sunrise, sunset, evening, morning, afternoon, minute, hour,

Dollars, cents.

Square, circle, oblong, rectangle, triangle, red, yellow, blue, green, white, black.



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- ▶ It includes our **NEW purpose built Teacher Registration & Appraisal Module.** This provides a quick and easy way for teachers to show and update their registration requirements, create teaching stories, upload learning evidence, plus much more.
- ▶ It offers a **multi-language option of English, Te Reo Māori & Mandarin Chinese.**
- ▶ **It includes our Purpose Built Free Apps** for iPhones, iPads and Android mobile devices. Parents and teachers throughout their workday, can simply login to their own secure online account and access progress updates on the go!
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Resource Reviews



Have You Seen a Monster?

By Raymond McGrath

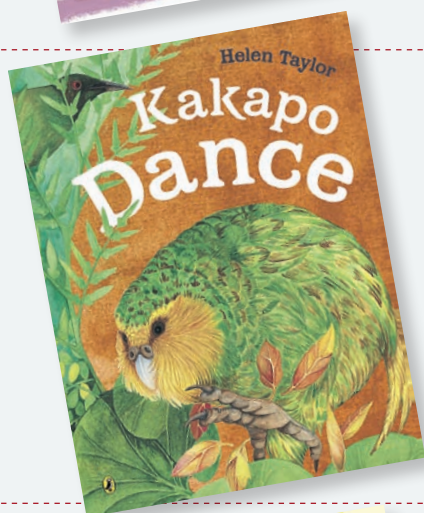
Puffin

Elliot and Emma-Jane Rose have a knack for finding things, and right now they are HOT on the trail of something very . . . BIG and very . . . HAIRY.

Elliot and Emma-Jane Rose follow the clues to something they did NOT expect – BARNABY. And luckily they know just how to help him.

From the author of *It's Not a Monster, It's ME!*, this exuberant new picture book about a monster-sized friendship also includes a bonus CD with three all-new songs performed by The Little Critters, and a read-along version of *Have You Seen a Monster?*

This hilarious book will be enjoyed by all and is being released in October. Keep an eye out for it.



Kakapo Dance

By Helen Taylor

Puffin

Kakapo Dance is a stunning picture book from award-winning writer and illustrator Helen Taylor. This book will be enjoyed by both children and adults with its play on sound and movement.

All the birds in the bush are singing and dancing. All except Kakapo. Kakapo can't coo and glide like Kereru, chirp and twirl like Fantail, hop and chime like Bellbird, or whistle and waddle like Whio. But all the other birds are having so much fun that he can't help joining them – in his own Kakapo way . . . Thud, ching, tumble, shuffle, BOOM!



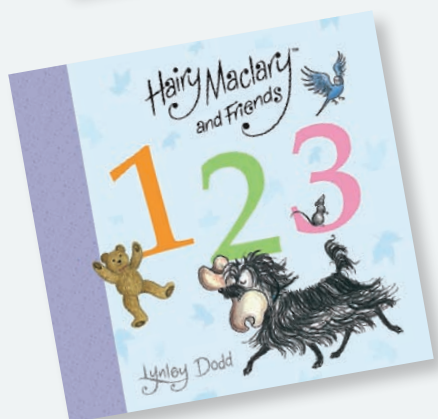
Hairy Maclary and Friends - ABC

By Lynley Dodd

Puffin

In addition to *Hairy Maclary and Friends - ABC*, there is also the *Hairy Maclary and Friends - 123* hardback to encourage and

help young children count from 1-10. Also included is a fold-out spread with a full 1-10 counting chart. A fun introduction to learning to count!



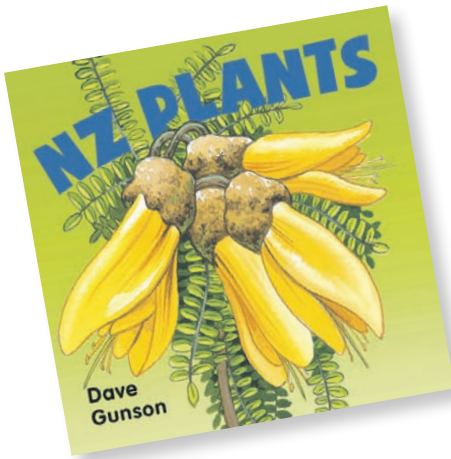
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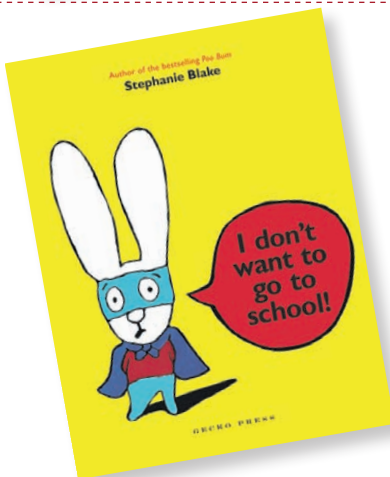
NZ Plants

Dave Gunson

New Holland

Here is another robust boardbook from Dave Gunson. This time the author/illustrator is offering beautiful and realistic illustrations of New Zealand's natural plant world. Included in the illustrations are

trees, shrubs, climbers, grasses, flaxes and ferns. The trees are shown with figures drawn to scale for additional reference. This book is a pleasure to look at.



I Don't Want to Go to School

By Stephanie Blake

Gecko Press

"There once was a cheeky little rabbit. You might know him already. When his mother told him, "Simon, tomorrow is your first day at school!" He replied: "I'm not going."

If you've read *Poo Bum* and *Stupid Baby*, you will know how cheeky, but also how realistic this character of Simon is.

Simon's cheekiness and forthrightness is in the heart of us all and especially in our pre-schoolers. This story will relate to any child who is feeling anxious about starting something new, especially school. A humorous story with the ability to explore feelings - it's a winner!



Grasshopper's Week

By Tania Norfolk

Illustrated by Chris Norfolk

Craig Potton Publishing

This book is much more than just another book about the days of the week. Through the imagination of Grasshopper's wise old friend, Tree, Grasshopper is introduced to the wonder in the everyday and the natural

world. Each day Grasshopper explores his world through the days of the week, Monday becomes Wild-Wind-Day, Tuesday becomes Bug-Day, etc.

This is a heart-warming tale of friendship, fun, imagination and the senses and will be enjoyed by both children and adults.

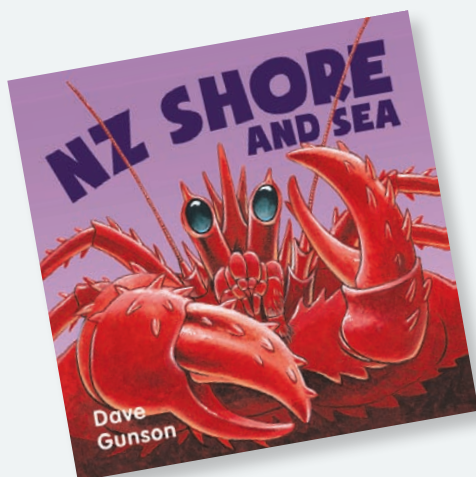


First Readers in Māori

Huia Publishing

Here is the perfect set of 10 books to practise basic Māori sentences for both adults and children beginning to learn Māori. Adults because it is simple, and children because the stories follow simple story patterns they know already and of course the playful illustrations add to the attraction.

Throughout the ten books you will explore, learn and practise: numbers and counting, colours and shapes, names of animals and simple everyday sentences. The illustrations also support the text and give clues to a new word (like any first reader book). The stories are in Māori, with a complete English glossary at the back of the book. The books are small for a large mat scenario but could easily be shared in a small group, but perfect for one-on-one.



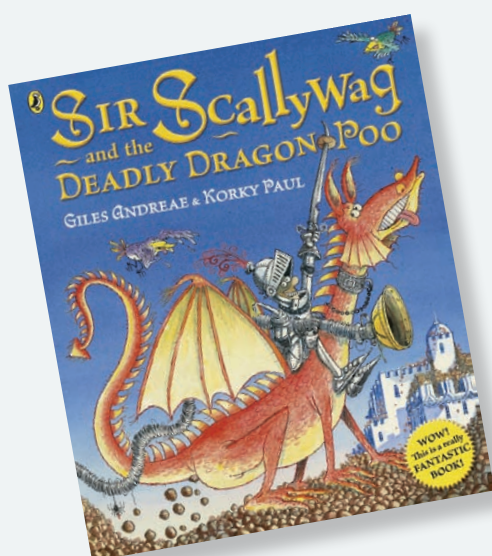
NZ Shore and Sea

Dave Gunson

New Holland

Explore the New Zealand seaside with your toddlers with this robust boardbook. The bright illustrations are easily recognisable and are a perfect introduction to New Zealand's shore and sea such as shells,

seabirds, fish, crabs, starfish, seaweed and marine mammals (including a terrifying looking Great White Shark, which will have immediate attraction). The labelling is in both English and Māori.



Sir Scallywag and the Deadly Dragon Poo

By Andreae Giles

Illustrated by Paul Korky

Puffin

This book will be enjoyed by all, especially the humour and sense of fun:

There lived a king in ancient times who wasn't very brave. He didn't look for knights to joust or damsels he could save . . . And instead of fighting battles and performing daring feats, King Colin simply lay in bed . . . and guzzled loads of sweets.

The story's young hero, Sir Scallywag is called into action when Baron Greedyguts using a dragon poo weapon tries to steal King Colin's giant sweet machine. Will the six-year-old knight save the day and stop the kingdom being buried under pile of deadly dragon poo? Be aware, a lot of poo is flung!

This story has sweets, poo, and dragons, a perfect combination for a pre-schoolers story. Great to read in small groups or mat time.



A PUFFIN PRIZE PACK!

Puffin has kindly donated **THREE** prize packs for Swings + Roundabout readers, each pack containing **FIVE** Books!

To win a free pack of Puffin books answer this question: **Which well known NZ story book character has two new books reviewed in this issue of Swings & Roundabouts?**

Email your contact details and the answer to the above question to info@ecc.org.nz by Wednesday 22 October 2014 and be in to win.




Puffin Competition Winners

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

- **Carolyn Standish**, Gumboots Early Learning Centre, Helensville
- **Vicky Mettner**, Waiapu Anglican Social Services Trust Board, Gisborne
- **Wendy Dunn**, Koru Early Learning Centre, Auckland

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Last Laugh

"Good teachers are the ones who can challenge young minds without losing their own." ~ Author Unknown

"I am a teacher: I am silently correcting your grammar." ~ Author Unknown

"I am a teacher. I see no good reason why I should act my age." ~ Heidi McDonald

"If you really want to know about the future, don't ask a technologist, a scientist, a physicist. No! Don't ask somebody who's writing code. No, if you want to know what society's going to be like in 20 years, ask an early childhood teacher." ~ Clifford Stoll

"I teach. What's your superpower?" ~ Author Unknown

"Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon."
~ E. M. Forster

"The only reason I always try to meet and know the parents better is because it helps me to forgive their children." ~ Louis Johannot

"You know you're a teacher when: You go to leave school at the end of the day and realize that you never had time to use the bathroom ALL DAY!"

"When all else fails, pray for a fire drill." ~ Author Unknown



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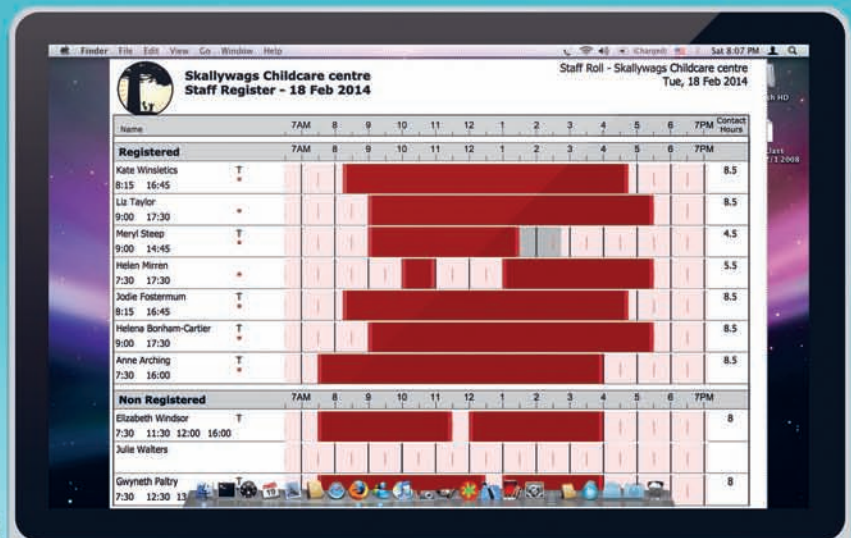
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