

SWINGS

JUNE 2009

ROUNDABOUTS

SENT FREE TO ALL INDEPENDENT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRES IN NEW ZEALAND

How to motivate
staff in a
downturn

Active
Movement
in the winter
months

Resolving
conflicts among
children

Outdoor
environments:
the need for
nature



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"But how do you evaluate the security provided by a school or facility?"

The main distinction between, "security" which addresses protecting from deliberate harm, whereas "safety" addresses protecting from accidental harm.

The primary purpose of security is to protect the children from strangers and other unauthorized individuals. There are three aspects of security that one must evaluate in Schools and Facilities: outdoor security, building access, and classroom access.

Outdoor security: Outdoor play is critical for children's development. Therefore, Schools and Facilities must offer a secure environment for the children's exploration and gross motor activity. A quality School and Facility will have a play area that does not allow a visitor or stranger access without staff accompaniment.

The playground should be fully enclosed by a fence of adequate height and strength and gates that are appropriately locked. Moreover, it is often

just as important to keep the children inside the play area—under appropriate supervision and away from those who might do them harm—as it is to keep unauthorized individuals out; children should not be able to exit the play area unnoticed.

Building Access: Quality Schools and Facilities will have a system that allows them to grant or deny an individual access to the Schools and Facilities, while at the same time empowering parents to access their child at any time. This is successfully accomplished through three mechanisms.

The first is a reception area that allows Principals or Directors, or the Receptionist to view and welcome each parent or visitor and have him or her sign in prior to access. This provides a record of visitors and deters loitering trespassers.

The second mechanism is a security system that monitors all access points to the building.

And lastly, a card access system, for example, allows identified parents with a pass-card to access their child after being greeted, but makes sure that a visitor or stranger can enter the school or facility only after being identified and accompanied by a staff member.

In addition, all exterior doors should have an alarm that draws the attention of the staff to the opening and closing of a door.

Classroom access: Full-time monitoring of a classroom will greatly add to a parent's peace of mind. A quality school will have one or more ways for a parent, grandparent, or guardian to observe classroom activity. An exceptional method is through real-time video such as "Parent's Eye." By using a unique password that allows a parent to watch classroom activity via the web through a cell phone, computer, or PDA, parents can be reassured that the classroom is a secure environment.

Another method for classroom security is for the preschool to have one-way windows that allow parents and administration to monitor activity. At the very least, the Principal's or Director's should monitor classrooms via camera and windows. Of course, a quality preschool will always allow parents to visit the classroom and participate in class activities.

Having peace of mind is critical for parents/guardians of preschool children. The security offered by a preschool is a crucial part of feeling confident and peaceful about the care, teaching, and development opportunities available to the children.

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SWINGS ROUNDABOUTS

JUNE 2009 ISSUE

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For information go to the membership section of our website at www.ecc.org.nz, contact us on 0800 742 742, email admin@ecc.org.nz, or fill in the membership application form in this issue of *Swings & Roundabouts*.

The ECC is proud to have associations with the following companies:



The Early Childhood Council is the largest representative body of licensed early childhood centres in New Zealand. Our 1000+ member centres are both community-owned and commercially owned, employ more than 7000 staff and care for more than 50,000 children.

From the editor...

WELCOME TO THE JUNE ISSUE OF SWINGS & ROUNDABOUTS.

You will probably notice that we have a few more photos in this issue. Our stock of photos has been running low of late, so recently I organised a photo shoot to replenish it. This meant visiting two of our members' centres with a professional photographer in tow to capture all of the things that go on during the course of a day in an early childhood centre.

I would like to say a very big thank you to the centres who let us spend some time with them. I am full of respect and admiration for the commitment, care and professionalism that you all invest in caring for the children and families you serve. I staggered away exhausted after only a few hours of being climbed on, singing songs at mat time and having some seriously in depth discussions about the colour purple. The sheer energy involved as you educate, nurture, feed, sing, dance, play and clean up after the huge range of activities you offer is incredible.

A big thank you, too, to the dads who offered their time to be photographed. At the ECC we are committed to attracting more men into early childhood education and care. In New Zealand our rate of male participation is shockingly low. I think one of the simplest ways we can create change is to normalise the idea of men working with children. Men who want to engage with ECE as a career often mention that people think it is an odd choice for them. But the more we see it, the less "odd" it becomes. So, as well as a male staff member, and some shots of our photographer (taken, not very expertly, by me!), we got some dads to come along to help to increase our stock of photos showing positive male interaction with children.

And, finally, a big thank you to Steven Neville from Auckland Sports Photography. We decided to get Steven to take our photos because we wanted someone who could get shots of a centre in action. We didn't want cute, posed shots – we wanted to show children and ECE staff busy at work and play. Steven did a fantastic job – the children thought he was great fun, and he has the knack of spotting a photo opportunity and capturing it in that split second that it happens. If you want to know more about Steven's work, check out his website at: www.aucklandsportsphotography.com

As always, we have a great range of articles for you in this issue. I hope you enjoy it.

Stay warm!



Sarah Ellich
Publications Manager
Early Childhood Council



CEO's message

Welcome to this winter issue of Swings and Roundabouts. Temperatures are certainly dropping around the country, as woollen hats and gloves replace sunhats and sunscreen, and early childhood centres on ski-fields get busy. My 2 year old is enjoying his new big green gumboots, which he uses to jump into every puddle with great screams of delight.

Winter is such a wonderful time to enjoy together with children – if only it wasn't for the winter bugs, sore throats, coughs and colds. What strategies have you put in place or will you put in place to help prevent and limit the spread of illnesses and help protect the health of your staff and children?

Unrelated to winter, the recent swine flu scare had many centres checking and revising their Pandemic Plan. It's not really a matter of if, but when, we might have a major pandemic in New Zealand. Having a plan in place is vital. If your centre has to close, be it because of a national pandemic or, say, a measles outbreak among your children, how are you going to cover staff wages, rent and so on?

Is insurance something you need to be considering? Don't forget that the ECC's Child Proof business insurance scheme has pandemic cover up to \$250,000. See page 10 of this issue for more information

The staffing shortage poses at this very moment a most serious threat to provision of early childhood education and care. As one South Island licensee put it, more centres are under threat of closure if we have to meet the 80% registered target in 2010 than from the likelihood of swine flu!

The ECC first warned about this shortage a number of years ago. The situation is now chronic. Some centres have been forced to close already, some have been told they cannot stay on a provisional license indefinitely, while all the time more centres are opening because there is a high demand from parents for childcare. Many kindergartens have been changing from sessional to full-day, thereby raising their staff-

child ratios but placing even more pressure on labour supply. Poaching teachers is becoming a reality no one likes. The staffing shortage is not an Auckland problem – it is a national problem. It's not a problem of centre management or centre quality – it is, irrefutably, a policy problem.

I'm writing this message before Budget day and our national early childhood conference. We have our fingers crossed

that in her address to the conference Education Minister Hon Anne Tolley will say that the Government will put in place real measures to solve the staffing shortage. There are a number of ways the Government could do this and without cost.

There are some other big issues that we are working hard to try to see resolved, and we'll be staying in touch with our members on these issues via our weekly electronic updates. The Early Childhood Council membership is comprised of more than 1,000 centres representing a range of big to small, private and community, locally operated and nationally operated,

philosophically and culturally different centres. Membership is amazingly diverse and this gives our organisation a strong and informed voice.

Soon we will be running seminars to provide an update on what you need to do to comply with the regulations and amendments. I look forward to seeing many of you as we travel around the country.

Wishing you all a warm and fun winter,

Sarah Farquhar
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Council



ECC Annual Conference 2009

SARAH ELLICH REPORTS

Rotorua turned on some spectacular weather for us over the weekend of 29-31 May for our 2009 conference at the Energy Events Centre. It was still cold in the mornings, so our delegates loved this year's gift of a thermal mug to keep their coffee warm – we even had people trying to buy extras from us!

With most of our keynote speeches on Friday, the day was focused on the big picture. Dr Stephen Rollin opened with a discussion on promoting resilience in children; Dr Glenda MacNaughton spoke on inspiring children's rights in the ECE curriculum; and the ever-popular Joy Lubawy returned to talk about having a vision of creativity.

The Minister of Education, Hon Anne Tolley, addressed the delegates in the afternoon and spoke on the key Budget impacts on ECE services, the Government's vision for early childhood education, and promoting participation in ECE – particularly for children who are not currently accessing it. She then met with our CEO Sarah Farquhar and our President Margie Blackwood to discuss our sector's key concerns.

Immediate past ECC CEO Sue Thorne addressed our delegates on the role that each of us has to play in advocating for our sector through the important relationships we develop with parents, with local MPs and our wider communities.

A fun half hour was had at the end of the day with spot prizes generously given by trade exhibitors and suppliers. We made you work for them this year, and we were all very impressed by the delegates who named the most James Bond movies and the most Lynley Dodd books! After the prizes we filed next door to the trade fair for a cocktail function with some very delicious nibbles.

We had 61 trade stands this year and we still only took up two thirds of the Energy Events Centre's huge Unison Arenas. It was great for the delegates to be able to get their meals and wander around the stalls without being cramped.

Saturday began with the first workshop and it was BUSY! Almost all of our workshops were full this year, even with the very generous-sized rooms. There was a big range to choose from, from celebrating culture to managing time and stress, leadership and advocacy, creative yoga, through to sustainable childcare design.

We wrapped up the day with a keynote from Dr Lester Levy from The University of Auckland. By all accounts, Dr Levy was a real motivator and everyone was full of energy and inspiration as they left for the day... many to return for the What You Wanted To Be When You Grew Up Gala Dinner.

Talk about inspiration! Some of this year's costumes were phenomenal, and, along with my trusty co-judge, Carla from Icon, I had some difficult decisions to make. In the end we gave away seven prizes including the most unusual to the lovely Allison who wanted to be a tree when she grew up, and the best overall to the first women on the moon. Made from painter's overalls, washing machine parts, coke bottles, bra supports and silver boots from The Warehouse, these costumes were a sight to behold. Go to <http://lookphotography.zenfolio.com> to check out the photos from the night.

On Sunday we had our final two workshop sessions and our CEO Sarah Farquhar gave a keynote speech

addressing the Budget and what we can expect in the short and medium term from the Government. You can view a copy of her presentation on our website: www.ecc.org.nz

Finally, it was onto the conference closing, with a prize draw from Vero/Child Proof of a coloured ball pit, and our first ever conference auction. Naturally Wood donated a gorgeous wooden loft for this event and it was extremely exciting! The loft went for \$3850.00 on the day. Last, but definitely not least was the major prize draw of a 46" color LCD television valued at over \$4000 and donated by Sharp.

Another great conference – Thanks to all our delegates, presenters, exhibitors, and everyone who donated such wonderful prizes to this event. A very big thank you to Kathy Hawker and her team from Flying Start Childcare who packed our 800 conference bags with the mugs, a 2010 diary, pads and pens and over 25 flyers. And a massive thank you to Marleen and the team from Icon Conference and Event Management. This is their third conference with us and they do such a fantastic job. We couldn't do it without them.

See you all in Christchurch 2010!

The 800 packed delegates' bags start to pile up



ECC President Margie Blackwood and CEO Sarah Farquhar with Hon. Anne Tolley

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How to motivate staff in a downturn

THE JOB OF A MANAGER IN ANY WORK PLACE IS TO GET THE JOB DONE AND TO GET THE JOB DONE THROUGH THEIR EMPLOYEES. SOUNDS SIMPLE ENOUGH? BUT, HOW DO YOU GET EMPLOYEES TO DO WHAT YOU WANT AND TO BUY IN TO YOUR IDEA OF WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THE BUSINESS? ELIZABETH FAHEY REPORTS

There are vast numbers of motivation theories – Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Theory X and Theory Y, Herzberg's theory of motivation, all of which are fascinating insights into human nature and what makes us as humans get up in the morning. However, in the real world where we need practical advice on motivating our teams, they can be summarised in one sentence – ask your staff what motivates them and they will tell you!

Each of us is different – we have different personal circumstances, different upbringings, different dreams and desires – therefore finding out what motivates us is as simple as asking us what our priorities are. In fact, the only person who can motivate an employee is the employee themselves. What you can do though is create the right environment for their natural motivators to thrive. It is common for managers to think that if they can just provide the right information/challenge/bribe an employee will see the wisdom of doing what the manager wants. This is the 'tell and sell' method of motivation. This may work temporarily, but for an employee to continue to be motivated they must find that motivation within themselves. You can assist them by taking some time to find out what makes them tick, try another approach if you feel like you're banging your head against a brick wall, and look at the other person's reality not just your own. Your biggest contribution will be in removing the barriers to them finding their own motivation.

So what can you do to motivate staff, particularly when you are watching your bottom line? The key thing is be flexible – don't always rely on the traditional way of doing things.

One of the common misconceptions is that if you pay people more they will stay, but in actual fact the motivational benefit of extra salary is only as short lived as the next one or two pay cycles. Research at the Minneapolis Gas Company, which interviewed 31,000 men and 13,000 women over 20 years, sought to determine what their employees desired the most. Top of the list was security, then advancement, type of work and a company to be proud to work for. A long way down the list was pay and benefits – contrary to popular belief, after a certain level pay and benefits do not provide any long-term motivation.



Cheap but VERY cheerful!

Think outside the square when thinking of ways to reward and motivate staff. Remember to ASK them what they want.

Here are some cheap but very cheerful options:

- Bottle of wine
- Thank you note
- Manicure
- Flowers
- Chocolate
- Dinner voucher
- Movie tickets
- Pizza lunch once a month for the team
- Where possible, be flexible with start and finish times to fit with staff members' family or travel needs
- Free coffee for a week from the local café
- BBQ
- Set up a centre points scheme where points are awarded for particular activities i.e. going the

extra mile for a parent, team work. With a public leader board this then creates some friendly competition as well as encouraging employees to go the extra mile

Remember that different things work for different people but as an inspirational leader if you get to know your people well you will soon hit on the right reward to ensure you are supporting their motivation.

Being an inspirational leader

It is common knowledge that people join an organisation but leave a manager. This is your opportunity to be an inspirational leader. Get to know your team, their hopes, passions and ambitions so you can help them progress in a way that's best for them. Rather than looking at motivation as something you have to DO to them, look at it as something you help them find for themselves. It is like nourishing a plant from the roots up rather than dumping a whole lot of chemicals on top afterwards and hoping for the best.

Team building

Really get to know your team and get them to get to know each other. Tools like the Myers Briggs Type Indicator are fantastic (and fun) exercises to go through with a team to really help them understand what makes each other tick. How about organising an event like tree planting for charity – it's free to participate, you are doing something worthwhile for the community and it provides a great opportunity to build up the team spirit.

Elizabeth Fahey is Director of Power Stanfield Consulting Ltd, a human resources consulting company. She has 14 years' experience in the business arena as a business owner, HR manager, coach and consultant. Elizabeth's expertise includes HR strategy development, coaching, facilitation, project management, organisational change, leadership development and career planning.

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Where's Dad?

TIM KAHN REPORTS FROM THE UK

I understand there are many similarities when it comes to attitudes towards men and women in the different English-speaking cultures around the world. Thus, although the legal and policy contexts in England and New Zealand may be different, I believe that what I have to say about engaging with fathers in England will, to a great extent, be true of engaging with fathers in New Zealand. Read on and I hope you will be able to relate to what I write here.

Policy context in England

It is hard to believe that it was less than five years ago when the UK Government first issued a policy document that addressed father involvement in family (and early years) services and stated an intention to “support a cultural shift in all service provision to include fathers in all aspects of a child's well-being” (Department of Health 2004:70).

Why did the UK Government do this? Because of the overwhelming evidence that when fathers are involved with their children, the outcomes for their children are beneficial over a whole range of social, emotional, physical and cognitive measures (see Allen and Daly 2007 for an overview).

Little of the research that focuses on early years and families services considers the role of fathers – most of it either focuses on ‘parents’ or ‘mothers’, but the evidence that does exist seems to suggest that father involvement in services benefits children in both the short and long term (O’Brien 2004).

So, the policy mantra over these past five years has been ‘work with dads’, but the practice on the ground has still been described in research as ‘patchy’ (Page et al 2008). That piece of research also found that wherever there is successful fatherwork, there is always an individual driving the agenda forward.

Barriers to father involvement

So, despite a focus on father involvement, fatherwork only seems to be happening slowly. It is hard to know how much this is due to fathers’ reluctance to get involved (because many fathers are happy to leave involvement with early years services up to their children’s mothers) other than attending sports days and nativity plays, and how much is due to practitioners’ lack of confidence in engaging with them. But, whatever the reasons, I would argue that early years practitioners are the ‘gatekeepers’ of young children’s care and education and can do many things to facilitate father involvement in settings.

Before we consider possible actions, it is important to review barriers that fathers face in engaging with settings.

Let's firstly consider barriers outside the setting. These include:

- fathers’ work commitments – which may stop them attending a setting that only runs activities during work hours;
- society’s attitudes – which are often influenced by the media, and that suggest that mothers are the natural carers of, and that men may be a threat to, young children;
- fathers’ own attitudes – they may be happy to leave engaging with the setting to their children’s mother.

What about the barriers within the setting? They include:

- the ‘female space’ of the setting, which can be experienced by fathers as intimidating, though they will usually tell you that other men are put off by it (as it’s not very manly to admit to your own fears!);
- some of the language that is used in settings appeals more to women than men – for example, “Come in for a cuppa and a chat” might be experienced as warm and friendly by a woman, but is likely to be terrifying to a man who may feel more comfortable being asked to help out with a job;
- the expression “all parents welcome” seems inclusive of all to practitioners, but mothers and fathers often hear it as “mothers welcome”.

Perhaps the biggest problem of all is: once you recognise that fathers may not feel welcome unless you organise something special for them, you assume that you know what they would like and put on a football competition for them. None of them turn up and only then do you discover that they hate sport and you should have asked them about their likes and dislikes first! In other words, consultation is a necessary first step.

It is these ‘within setting’, rather than ‘outside setting’ barriers that practitioners can more easily address.



Strategies to involve fathers

There are all kinds of simple things that settings can do. Images of fathers (as well as mothers) with children on the wall, men's (as well as women's) interest magazines in areas where parents gather, invitations to open days for prospective children that name both mothers and fathers, and an expectation that it is important that both parents attend. A piece of research based on videoing practitioners greeting mothers and fathers showed that practitioners gave more eye contact to mothers and spent longer talking with them. Reflect on the way you greet mothers and fathers. It's a simplistic generalisation but mothers often create rapport when talking with practitioners about children's problems. Fathers are unlikely to do so.

Do you have the time and know enough about the things that might interest 'your' fathers to enter into a conversation on 'their' territory? The principle is no different from learning about young children's interests so that you can enter into conversations on 'their' territory.

You may choose to offer a group on, say, a Saturday morning for fathers to attend with their children and publicise that the group offers the additional bonus of "giving mum a chance for a

lie-in". One group runs Pushchairs in the Park, a monthly event taking place in a small town in England. They attract about 50 families to each event, and about one third of the adults are fathers – that's generally unheard of as most people see success as attracting one or two fathers. Why do these fathers come? Presumably because they feel much more at home in the park than in the 'female space' of the childcare setting.

Think about the wording you use when offering services. You could run a parenting class and call it "The nuts and bolts of kids". That might grab a father's attention. Call something a "support group" and that will turn off lots of fathers. Call it an "advice session" where you will address "problems". Now that sounds more interesting, even though you are providing the same session with a different name.

What makes for successful father engagement?

I have mentioned the importance of the fathers' champion who drives forward this area of work. At the same time, inclusion works best when it is embedded throughout the service and is part of a 'whole team approach'. So, when a father comes through the door, it's not always the father's champion who is asked to deal with him, but everyone has the confidence to work with both fathers and mothers and sees it as their business to do so. Senior management commitment to fatherwork is essential, otherwise in a time of cuts there is a danger it could be the first service to be axed.

And let me finish on one final point. In England, services have generally been much better at providing "specialist" services for fathers, such as the discrete group for fathers and children, or the family learning workshop for fathers and their children on 'floating boats'. What services and settings have found more difficult is to embed working with fathers into their everyday practices and procedures: this might require running a father-friendly activity, such as rocket-making, in every meeting of your baby and toddler group, or regularly keeping in touch with non-resident fathers. Research suggests that many fathers want to do things with their whole families – their female partners as well as their children. So beware of thinking that a successful Saturday group for fathers and children means you are catering for all fathers. Remember the ones who want something else.

For more information on engaging with fathers visit www.pre-school.org.uk/fathers

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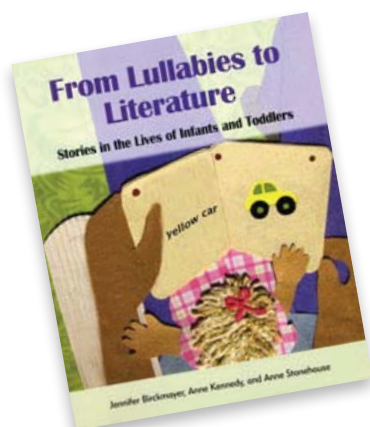
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Tim Kahn works as Inclusion Officer at the Pre-school Learning Alliance, an umbrella organisation in England that supports some 15,000 early years settings. As part of his role, he coordinates a project to support early years settings to engage with fathers. He is currently writing *Where's Dad? A handbook for early years practitioners on how to engage effectively with fathers*.



Reviews

BY SARAH ELLICH



From Lullabies to Literature – Stories in the lives of infants and toddlers

**Jennifer Birckmayer, Anne Kennedy, Anne Stonehouse
NAEYC and Pademelon Press**

What's great about this book is that the combination of theory, examples, and story and song ideas combine to create a really practical resource. This doesn't just tell you why stories are important, but gives you some real-world ideas about how to incorporate them into children's everyday learning experiences, including ways to get

families involved with their children's literacy. It tackles some day-to-day issues facing those working with children like "Should I expect toddlers to sit still when sharing a story with them?" and "How do I use stories with children whose home language is not English?", but it also covers larger topics such as children's development in relation to sounds, conversations, language games, and planning and developing story experiences. Broken down into short sections, *From Lullabies to Literature* provides valuable information whether read in snippets or from cover to cover. A worthy addition to your resources!

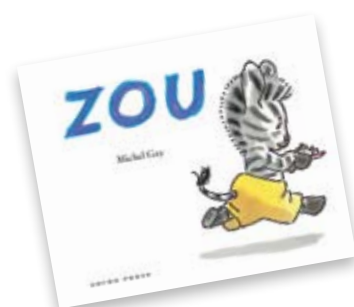


Little Kiwi Flies to the Rescue

**Bob Darroch
Puffin Books**

Little Kiwi is scared of pretty much everything, but when his much braver sister gets into trouble he digs deep to find his courage and earns the respect of the other animals, and the pride of his little sister. The book includes a number

of New Zealand creatures, including bats, a kaka, and some eels. Little Kiwi, his sister and all the other animals speak in easy, casual language to each other, providing a fantastic opportunity for some expressive reading! The setting is clearly identifiable as native New Zealand bush, which would make it a good resource to use to talk about our natives birds and plants. Added fun is to be had in trying to spot the wee ladybird who shows up in each of the pictures.

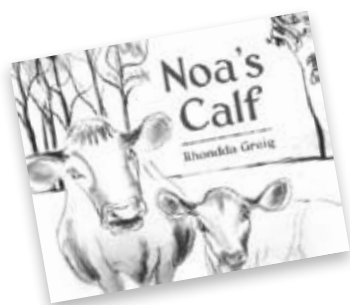


Zou

**Michael Gay
Gecko Press**

Zou is a small zebra who desperately wants to climb into bed with his mum and dad in the morning – but how to wake them up without making them grumpy? Zou embarks on a breakfast-making adventure the likes of which

many readers will relate to – either from childhood attempts at cooking or from being on the receiving end of a well-intentioned breakfast. Children will enjoy the humour of the various incidents and accidents that befall Zou as he resourcefully tries one thing after another to get the breakfast right. The illustrations clearly depict each step along the way, making it easy for those 2 and over to follow the storyline.



Noa's Calf

**Rhondda Grieg
Mallinson Rendel**

This is a beautiful book, with the story told entirely in black and white drawn illustrations. Rhondda Grieg is a well-known New Zealand artist and has set the book in the Wairarapa. In *Noa's Calf*, a boy becomes interested

in one of the cows in the field outside; it is clear there is something different about this cow from the others. As the drawings unfold we realise that the cow is pregnant, and in the course of the book we see her give birth to her calf. The soft, smudgy drawings evoke the sense of mystery and wonder that children experience when they see an animal being born. This book is something original and special.

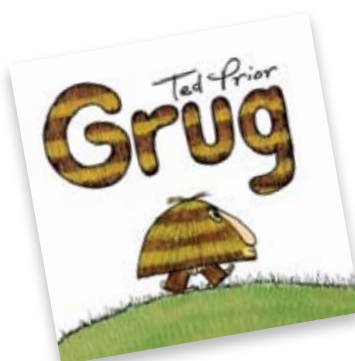


How Big is a Million?

**Anna Milbourne and
Serena Riglietti
Usborne Publishing**

Pipkin the penguin wants to know how big a million is – no one seems to be able to give him an answer. In his quest to find out, Pipkin finds ten fish, a hundred other penguins, a thousand

snowflakes and one new friend, but in the end his mother finds him his million, and it is revealed on a huge foldout poster in the back of the book (I won't ruin the surprise!). This is a great story about discovery and curiosity. It's a reminder of the knowledge we take for granted and that children have yet to learn for themselves. The illustrations of the snowy Antarctic add a sense of magic to Pipkin's quest.



Grug

**Ted Prior
Simon & Schuster**

The Grug books were published 30 years ago, and to celebrate this anniversary the 24 titles are being re-released – 12 in June and 12 in July. Grug began life as a Burrawang tree, the top of which fell to the ground and turned into this endearing and adventurous creature. Over the course of the books, Grug makes a kite, builds

a car, has a birthday, goes to the snow, learns to swim and has many other tales to tell. The stories are all short, simple and charming. A few words per page with an accompanying illustration make them attractive to the under 2s as well as those who are a bit older and who can appreciate the gentle humour as Grug goes about his business. Each book is enjoyable on its own, but as you read through the series you can't help but become more and more fond of Grug and his constant search for new experiences.



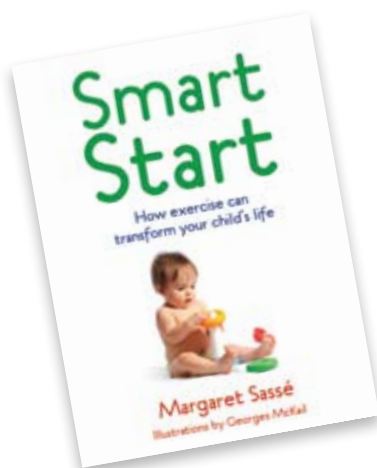
AquAnimals and Animals

**Kelvin Roy
Martian Music**

These two CDs contain songs about animals, and have strong educational content and a conservation focus. The lyrics highlight animals' noises, and eating, movement, and behavioural patterns. Many of the songs are over 3 minutes long with some quite complex lyrics. As individual songs they are probably more suited to the over 3s, who will enjoy learning the words

(which are included with the CD) and singing along once they become familiar with them. Individual songs could be a starting point for discussion about the particular animal they depict. The almost-reggae-like tempo might make them appealing to play as a whole CD to the under 3s as background music, as it creates a nice consistent atmosphere for activities.

The CDs are available from Kelvin Roy at Martian Music. You can email him for more information at: kandcroy@clear.net.nz



Smart Start – How exercise can transform your child's life

Margaret Sassé
Exisle Publishing

Written by the creator of GymbaROO, this book is aimed at parents, but it's an excellent reminder for those working with children of the huge range of movement-related activities that are crucial in children's physical and mental development. Covering the ages from birth to 5 years in 6-month or year-long increments, *Smart Start* gives a breakdown of various age-appropriate massage techniques, muscle development techniques, motor perceptual activities, music and dance,

and use of items like balls, hoops, ribbons and cords. Simple illustrations show how it's done. The foreword by Frances Page Glascoe, a professor of pediatrics at Vanderbilt University, points out the success of GymbaROO in getting dads involved in their children's development. A good book to have to lend to your parents if you have a parent library at your centre, or to use for inspiration for parent newsletters to share ideas on how to incorporate movement in their child's daily activities.

While working on these reviews I received the sad news that Margaret Sassé had passed away. We send our condolences to her family and friends and all of the many people she had worked with over the years.



The Big Yawn

Monika Spang
Illustrated by Sonja Bougaeva
Gecko Press

Something happens as the sun goes down at the zoo – one by one the animals get sleepy and... they yawn. It starts with the tigers and moves to the swans, the crocodiles, the giraffes, and on through all the animals. This is a really fun book with fast-paced

rhymes that race along describing each animal's night time activities until they reach the words "...They yawn". This set up creates anticipation and invites participation from children as you read. The animals have larger-than-life characters and are getting up to some pretty crazy stuff before bedtime. As with many of the books published by Gecko, the illustrations are unusual and full of energy and lots of funny details.



I am a Penguin

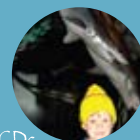
Barbara Todd
Illustrated by Helen Taylor
New Holland Publishers NZ Ltd

I am a Penguin is the first in a new educational series that aims to introduce children to a variety of wildlife. It combines rhyme, cartoons and colour photography to give an overview for those aged 4-6 of penguins' habitat, hunting, social behaviour, breeding, and relationship with humans. So far, so educational – but it succeeds where

other books may fail in this regard because it hits the nail on the head with the tone and level of information. The rhyme scheme obviously makes it appealing to children, and just the right amount of information is conveyed on each page - enough to teach children something and to create curiosity to find out more. The photographs provide a real-world depiction of each piece of information, while the cartoons interpret it in a more humorous way. An activity guide for teachers and parents at the back gives some good ideas for further exploration of the subject.



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Question: How many snowflakes does Pipkin find?

A special offer for *Swings & Roundabouts* readers from Wheeler's!

A big thank you to Wheeler's Books for giving us a copy of *How Big is a Million?*, *Noa's Calf* and *The Big Yawn* to review! These books are available from wheelers.co.nz, which offers special discounts to early childhood centres once you have registered with your customer code online.

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Finance 101

JOHN MAKOWEM REPORTS

In my view many advisers have made the financial advice proposition rather difficult to understand for many investors. I would like to share with you a few golden rules for prudent management of your finances. They are basic and mere common sense, but if adhered to will lay the platform for sensible financial decisions. Take these tips to heart and you'll have a solid foundation for future financial wellbeing. The information here is taken from an article in the South African *Personal Finance* publication and has been adapted for the New Zealand market.

- Save 10 cents from every \$1 you earn. If you put away at least 10 per cent of your income as part of a long-term savings plan, there is a good chance that you will have a financially secure future and be able to attain your financial goals.
- Put 10 per cent of every pay increase towards savings, particularly long-term savings such as a retirement plan. If you are employed and belong to a retirement fund, your contributions will increase automatically in proportion to your pay rises. This will help ensure that you stay well ahead of inflation.
- Use the "Can I sleep?" judgment when making investments. An investment is too risky if you are going to lie awake at night worrying about it.
- Diversify your investments. Never invest more than five per cent of your assets in a narrow investment (for example, a specialist unit trust fund such as an emerging company one) or in an unregulated investment. Diversifying your investments will ensure you don't lose everything if one investment bombs.
- Be extremely cautious if the returns promised on an investment exceed what is generally available. If they sound too good to be true, they

probably are. It usually means the investment is too ambitious in its claims, too risky, or simply a scam.

- Know the difference between effective and nominal interest rates. Normally, banks will quote you a nominal interest rate when lending you money, but a higher effective interest rate when you invest money. The nominal interest rate is the simple rate. The effective rate is calculated by compounding the interest earned or charged.
- Check whether the interest you are being paid is credited monthly, quarterly or annually. Say you invest \$10,000 for 10 years. If you receive interest at 10 per cent credited annually, you will get a total return of \$25,937. If it is credited monthly, you will receive \$27,070.
- If an investment product is too complicated to understand, avoid it. It does not mean you are stupid. It simply means that the product provider and/or financial adviser are trying to baffle you.
- Always check the costs of any investment product. Some products are prohibitively expensive. You should be given a breakdown of the costs in three ways: as a percentage of your investment; as a fixed amount; and as the amount by which the costs will reduce your investment at maturity date.
- Always check how much commission is being paid to your financial adviser. Some financial products - particularly those offered by so-called linked investment product providers - come with high costs and commissions. High commissions can be a perverse incentive for advisers to mis-sell.
- Don't be afraid to negotiate commissions/fees for financial advice. Most financial products allow you to do this. After all, it is your money.

- John Makowem is an adviser at Spicers Wealth Management in Wellington. John has a B Com LLB and a post graduate diploma in financial planning, and has eight years' experience in the financial planning industry. John's disclosure statement is available on request and he may be contacted on john.makowem@spicers.co.nz or on (04) 4969311.*



Q&A with the Minister

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, HON. ANNE TOLLEY, KINDLY AGREED TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS FOR THIS ISSUE OF *SWINGS & ROUNDABOUTS*. SARAH ELLICH REPORTS



Q. Often, in the past, the early childhood portfolio has been the responsibility of an associate minister of education. Could you share with us why you as the Minister of Education have taken on this role?

A. Early Childhood Education and Care is such an important step in preparing children for school, and I think that holding both the schooling portfolio and early childhood is hugely beneficial. It allows for continuity in policy around the transition between ECE and school. When I was offered the portfolio I jumped at the opportunity. It is a real privilege to work with such an important sector.

Q. Our sector has been suffering a serious staff shortage for a number of years – in short, we are getting desperate.

a. What can you (or the Government) practically do to alleviate the staff shortage in the early childhood sector?

b. Would the Government be prepared to revisit the diploma and degree in ECE as the only recognised qualifications for New Zealand ECE teachers and for overseas qualifications to be measured against for equivalency by NZQA?

c. Given that we have such a staff shortage, restrictions on equivalency with overseas qualifications, a cap on early childhood student numbers, and a successful policy of promoting increased participation for New Zealand's children do you still feel it is relevant and/or realistic to maintain the goal of 100% qualified staff by 2012, as set by the previous government?

A. We do want to attract highly skilled early childhood education teachers. In this regard, I am investigating the possibility of introducing short, intensive educational programmes aimed at assisting those overseas qualified teachers who are registered with the New Zealand Teachers Council, but whose qualifications cannot currently be recognised as equivalent to a New Zealand early childhood education qualification for funding and staffing purposes. It will be important that any such programmes are of a high quality and that teaching standards are maintained. A decision on these is expected in 2010. The goal of 100% qualified teachers by 2012 was set by the previous government, and I have asked for advice on whether this is a realistic aim, given the current teacher shortage.

Q. Do you see the role of early childhood centres as being primarily places of education (like schools), or do you see that the sector has other roles to play for children, for families and in the wider New Zealand social context?

A. I think early childhood centres have two really important roles - both care and education, especially in light of the increased hours some children are spending at early childhood centres. Learning through play is important, and it's also important that children are nurtured during their time at an early childhood centre.

Research shows quality early childhood education, and quality relationships make a significant difference to the way children develop and achieve later in life.

Early childhood education also has a strong contribution to make to this government's goal of improving literacy and numeracy, so that children get the basic skills they need to do well at school and later in life.

Q. What are the key issues you would like to receive input about and engage with the early childhood sector on?

A. Our major priority in Early Childhood Education and Care is to increase participation, particularly amongst groups with traditionally low participation rates, Maori and Pasifika, particularly in South Auckland. We can not simply build centres and assume children will appear. We need to ensure we have quality, relevant options for families. I welcome ideas from the sector about how to achieve this.

Getting children involved in cooking

ALISSA TOSSWILL REPORTS

Cooking with the children is a great way to stimulate their interest in healthy eating, as children get the opportunity to see how ingredients are combined while being involved in the preparation. It is important that children develop healthy eating habits from a young age, as these habits will help to determine healthy eating patterns later in life. The children will develop a sense of pride and ownership as they learn to cook, and they can put skills such as learning about shapes and colours into practice.

Begin a mat session by planning a menu with the children about what they would like to cook. You may need to guide them towards foods that are realistic to make in the centre setting. The next step could be a field trip to the local supermarket to choose the ingredients. Here the children will learn about reading labels and the cost of food. If that is not possible, you could create a supermarket in the centre as a fun way to learn about choosing different foods. Through role play the children's imaginations will soar and they will get the opportunity to think about what they might like to eat.

Winter is a great opportunity to practise food preparation and cooking skills, as this is an activity you can do indoors. Try to find recipes with lots of different colours, such as red (tomatoes), green (beans), orange (pumpkin) and yellow (sweet corn) that will inspire the children. It might be best to start cooking sessions with small groups of children who help to prepare the meal for the whole centre. It will be easier to supervise and ensure that each child is part of the preparation. Aim to create a cooking roster so that over the term all children will get a chance to participate.

Things to remember when cooking with the children:

- ensure safe food practice by beginning the session with hand washing;
- focus on one step at a time;
- choose flexible recipes as inaccurate counting and measuring may occur;
- have ingredients on hand and ready to go before you start;
- be prepared for participation, ensuring there are enough tasks and utensils for the children;
- ask the children questions throughout the session to promote thinking;
- have the recipe in pictures as well as words to promote literacy;
- allow plenty of time and try not to rush the process.

Alissa Tosswill is the Active Movement Advisor for Sport Auckland. She has a double degree in physical education and human nutrition. Alissa is very passionate about ensuring a healthy start in life through physical activity and healthy eating.

Fruit Kebabs

Have prepared slices of fruit (apple, kiwifruit, pineapple, orange, grapes) on the table and give each child a kebab stick. Ask the children to make their own kebabs choosing which fruit they would like to put on their stick. Enjoy!

Minestrone Soup (serves 30 children)

Soup is a classic winter dish and very easy to prepare. The process involves counting (maths skills) and stirring the soup (motor skills). Try making a Minestrone Soup, which is basically a complete meal in a bowl. The recipe below has been increased to allow for 1 cup of soup for 30 children. If a large pot isn't available it will be best to half this recipe and cook separate amounts.

You'll need:

- 4 tbsp oil
- 4 onions
- 8 each of carrots, kumara and potato (keep skin on for added fibre)
- 6 cups peeled and chopped pumpkin
- 16 cups of vegetable or chicken stock
- 8 cups of chopped tomato
- 1 1/3 cup of small pasta
- 12 stalks celery

Heat the oil in a saucepan and sauté the onion, celery and carrot until beginning to soften. Add the kumara, potato and pumpkin and sauté for 10 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and stock and simmer gently until the vegetables are tender.

Add the beans and pasta and simmer for a further 10 - 15 minutes stirring frequently to prevent the pasta from sticking. Taste and add iodised salt or pepper as required.

Mini Pizza Buns

Children will enjoy making mini pizza buns. Have the ingredients ready on the table and the children can then choose what they would like to put on their bun. Pop the buns under the grill for 5 minutes and they are ready to eat. Be prepared for a bit of mess with these ones!

You'll need:

- 1 wholegrain bun cut into halves per child

Toppings:

- Slices of tomato
- Grated carrot
- Grated cheese
- Pineapple chunks
- Shredded chicken
- Creamed corn
- Spaghetti
- Baby spinach leaves
- Shaved ham
- Tuna

Wanting to help a hurting child? Try some bibliotherapy

TRICIA IRVING HENDRY REPORTS



play and learning is affected, and regression in their development may occur, for example, in toileting or in their confidence at being separated from their parent.

Tough situations might include family break up, illness, disability, domestic violence, dying or death. Children cannot escape from these unscathed when their whole family is facing such issues. A bibliotherapy approach uses books to help children discover positive strategies for their own lives by engaging in issues that are similar to theirs, alongside the characters in the book.

'Therapeutic' books can provide children with:

- Helpful information and concepts about a life situation they may not understand well;
- Answers to questions they may not know how to ask – or may be afraid to;
- An opportunity to talk about their worries or concerns with you;
- A chance to learn about how other children (or characters) similar to them faced tough situations and came through them okay;
- An opportunity to get hope, and maybe courage, from the examples of others;
- Positive insights into their situations and strategies or problem-solving techniques to use themselves; and
- Reassurance that they are not alone – they can be supported and encouraged.

Bibliotherapy can offer a child safe shelter in a storm. Sitting quietly and

reading aloud to an individual child or a small group allows them to escape the noise around and come into a haven. And the reading can become interactive. From the story can come discussion, questions, explanations, perhaps singing and music or making a craft together, laughing together, and so on.

Bibliotherapy focuses on the child's real needs. These are always to be the basis for the use of bibliotherapy. Teachers need to select books with stories and characters that will connect the imaginative world of books to the child/children's own real life situations.

Bibliotherapy promotes enjoyment of reading and literacy. Using books that speak to a child's life encourages literacy, enhances their development and increases awareness of the value and relevance of reading to the real world.

Some steps to get started:

- Identify any difficult life situations being faced by any young child or children in your care as a teacher.
- Source appropriate children's picture books or therapeutic activity books to use (see below for ideas about this).
- Make sure you pre-read the book very well. Think through what illustrations or text you could emphasise – or not.
- Consider building up a collection of titles, possibly also making them available to families on loan at your discretion.
- Plan some activities around this book you could use to enhance a child's engagement with its characters and/or understanding of its themes.
- Choose an appropriate time to share the book with a child or small group, and enact your plan.

Bibliotherapy is about using picture or activity books to support a child dealing with difficult life events that may be confusing, stressful and possibly overwhelming for them at times. The impact of these events may mean their

- Use open ended questions to encourage discussions as you go.
- Make sure to finish with something light. In other words, reading a book relating to issues that are difficult for them may be a helpful but slightly 'heavy' experience for a child, so think of ways to transition them back into activities and routine life by using a 'light' moment. You could encourage them to think about something they've seen lately that was funny. Or if ask them if they can imagine having "the best dinner in all the world"; what would it be? etc.

Teachers are NOT therapists.

Bibliotherapy provides early childhood teachers with a powerful tool always to be used carefully, thoughtfully and appropriately with children, with full preparation. But teachers are not therapists or counsellors, and the key is to primarily let the story weave its own magic. Forcing responses is not appropriate. Just reading the story,

sharing the characters, storyline, illustrations and any related activities is helpful. Think of it as seed sowing.

Finding the right books can be a challenge.

Your local library, the National Library or any good children's bookshop can assist you to source books relevant to different life situations. Or contact Skylight for suggested booklists, or to buy suitable titles from their support resources catalogue.

Tricia Irving Hendry is Resource Manager at Skylight. Skylight is a national not for profit agency helping children, young people and their families/whanau move foreword through change, loss, trauma and grief - whatever the cause. They also help adults who are supporting them, such as family, whanau, friends, neighbours and professionals. See their shop and articles at www.skylight.org.nz or phone 0800 299 100, or email a request to rs@skylight-trust.org.nz

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Rise in whooping cough expected

HEALTH OFFICIALS ARE URGING PARENTS TO GET THEIR BABIES IMMUNISED ON TIME, AS NEW ZEALAND COULD BE FACING A WHOOPING COUGH EPIDEMIC THIS YEAR.

We are expecting a surge in whooping cough, or pertussis, cases based on a recent rise and the pattern of previous epidemics, says the Ministry of Health's Child and Youth Health Chief Advisor Dr Pat Tuohy.

"One of the best ways to protect babies from whooping cough is to get them immunised at six weeks, three and five months. Delaying these vaccinations increases the risk that a baby needs to be hospitalised if they get the disease."

The vaccine protection wanes over time so it is also important that 4 and 11 year olds get their booster doses, especially if there is a baby in the family.

"This is because whooping cough can be easily spread from children and adults to babies who may not yet have had all their immunisations against this disease. Babies who get whooping

cough can become very ill and may not be able to feed or breathe properly. Many need to be hospitalised."

Whooping cough usually starts with a runny nose and dry cough, which turns into coughing attacks. The 'whoop' sound occurs when children draw breath after a coughing bout. Sometimes there is no whooping sound.

Early childhood education centre staff can play an important role in stopping this disease spreading, Dr Tuohy says.

"If a baby or child becomes unwell, particularly if they are coughing, get in touch with parents straight away. Centres should remind parents to keep sick children at home. Sick staff should also stay at home," he says.

"Staff should check immunisation certificates or immunisation records in Well Child books for all children enrolled at their centre. If there is an outbreak of

whooping cough, unimmunised children may need to be kept at home to protect them from infection."

It is extremely stressful watching your baby struggle through a coughing attack, says mum Wendy whose baby Anna was about six weeks old when she got whooping cough.

"She had all the signs of a well child and yet every time she coughed there was just this horrible choking cough and I just knew something was wrong."

Over the next couple of weeks, Anna got worse:

"At this stage she was waking up in the night all the time. Anna was going red in the face and just choking and choking... There was nothing we could do except sit her up and pat her back...you know, make sure she wasn't choking on the saliva that was coming up with all the choking. Then she was so exhausted after that she would just cry for a little while and in the exhaustion just fall straight back to sleep from all the effort of what she had just gone through."

By now Anna wasn't feeding well and like many babies with whooping cough, she had to be hospitalised. Anna eventually recovered but it took about three months.

Anna had only had her first immunisation so was not fully protected at the time she got the disease. About 84 per cent of babies are protected from whooping cough once they have had three doses of vaccine at six weeks, three and five months.

Immunisation against whooping cough is also recommended, but not free, for ECE workers and health professionals who work with babies and young children.

The National Immunisation Schedule*

Age given	Diseases covered and vaccines
6 weeks	Diphtheria/Tetanus/Whooping cough/Polio/Hepatitis B/ <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b 1 injection (INFANRIX®-hexa) Pneumococcal 1 injection (Prevenar®)
3 months	Diphtheria/Tetanus/Whooping cough/Polio/Hepatitis B/ <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b 1 injection (INFANRIX®-hexa) Pneumococcal 1 injection (Prevenar®)
5 months	Diphtheria/Tetanus/Whooping cough/Polio/Hepatitis B/ <i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b 1 injection (INFANRIX®-hexa) Pneumococcal 1 injection (Prevenar®)
15 months	<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i> type b 1 injection (Hibervax™) Measles/Mumps/Rubella 1 injection (M-M-R®II) Pneumococcal 1 injection (Prevenar®)
4 years	Diphtheria/Tetanus/Whooping cough/Polio 1 injection (INFANRIX-IPV™) Measles/Mumps/Rubella 1 injection (M-M-R®II)
11 years	Diphtheria/Tetanus/Whooping cough 1 injection (Boostrix™)
12 years girls only	Human papillomavirus** 3 doses given over 6 months (GARDASIL™)

* from 1 June 2008 ** from 2009

Although babies are at highest risk of this disease, whooping cough can be debilitating if you get it as an adult, says Nicola Finnie, a GP liaison nurse for the community alcohol and drug service at Otago District Health Board.

"It all started with a small cough. Within five days I did not know what had hit me. I was coughing all night. I couldn't sleep. I went to my GP and he suggested it could be whooping cough. I thought he was completely mad. I just didn't believe him but it turned out he was right."

"I'd cough and cough and then vomit and vomit. One time I thought I was going to have respiratory arrest. I was pretty frightened. I cracked two ribs coughing. I got bleeding noses. I got pneumonia. I used up all my sick leave and then some. I have spent so much time on medication it's not funny. It took about three months before I felt better," she says.

"I was really worried that I had given it to other people, although I put myself to bed at the time when I was infectious. I would really encourage people to get onto it as fast as you can if you think you have it."

"If you had offered me a vaccine before this I would have just laughed but now I would highly recommend vaccination. This is hell."

Immunisation is important but there are also other ways adults can help stop whooping cough spreading.

"Try to keep your baby away from sick children and adults as much as possible. Never cough on babies. And if you have a cough that won't go away see your doctor, even if you have been immunised," Dr Tuohy says.

If you are sick, don't pass it on – cover your cough, use tissues, wash and dry your hands after you have coughed or sneezed and stay away from others until you have recovered.

Doctors can do a test for whooping cough. If confirmed, antibiotics can be given to close family to protect them, and others, from infection.

If you have questions about whooping cough, talk to your family doctor, practice nurse, call Healthline 0800

611 116, PlunketLine 0800 933 922 or the Immunisation Advisory Centre 0800IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or go to the Ministry of Health website www.moh.govt.nz/immunisation

Supplied by the Ministry of Health with interview excerpts provided by the Immunisation Advisory Centre.



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Active movement in the winter months

ALISSA TOSSWILL REPORTS



Winter days can seem especially long – children are more likely to feel unwell and it can be days before unpleasant weather clears. This can sometimes create a dampened atmosphere inside as children (and adults!) become bored and restless. SPARC's Active Movement brochures are a great resource to have on hand to provide you with ideas for activities inside to keep children busy. While participating in these activities they will be developing their fundamental movement skills and learning, as well as keeping warm and having fun.

Bring outdoor games inside and turn your indoor environment into an exploration area – use this as an opportunity to give your imagination a workout as well! Experiment with rearranging the furniture to make more space, or change the layout of the centre of a room to enable children to find new spaces to explore. Try to include fresh activities for the children every day while bringing back comforting favourites, as learning occurs through repetition. The positive Active Movement experiences you will provide by offering these activities will get the endorphins flowing to help build happy, confident and capable children.

Try some of the activity ideas below – Happy Active Movement! (The words in italics show the learning experience or movement skills being developed).

Balance Beam: Wrap old phone books in paper; lay them on the floor in a line to create a low balance beam for the children to walk along. *Balance and stability.*

Bean Bag Throw: Place cards with the numbers from 1 – 10 on a mat. Ask the children to throw their bean bag onto a card and say the number out

loud. (Use clean yoghurt pottles, socks or handkerchiefs tied into a ball as an alternative to bean bags.) *Throwing, spatial awareness, learning numbers and counting.*

Blow Bubbles: Children can try to catch the bubbles in a paper cup or as an alternative try to tap the bubbles with a straw. *Catching, eye tracking and hand-eye coordination.*

Crawl Tag: Hand out a scarf (or ribbon) to each child except for two children who will be "in". Ask the children to tuck the scarf in their waistbands like a tail. All children crawl around on the floor and when a child who is "in" catches another person's scarf they put that in their waistband and the child without the scarf is now "in". *Upper body development, cross-patterning and locomotor skill.*

Feather Catch: Children sit in a circle and throw feathers up into the air. Ask the children to watch the feathers and when they all touch the ground crawl into the circle and pick up one feather. *Eye development, upper body development, cross patterning and fine motor skill development.*

Freeze with Bubbles: Blow bubbles while having music playing – stop the music and the children freeze and watch the bubbles until these fall to the ground, which is when the music can start again and they can move once more. *Balance, stability, listening and eye development.*

Let it Snow! Get a large box and lots of white paper. Ask the older children to cut the paper into smaller bits and then put the paper 'snowflakes' inside the box. Once the box is full, you can create a snow day. Ask two or three children at a time to come into the centre of the

circle and sprinkle the snow down on to them. They can dance in the snow! Ask the children to pick up all the bits of snow to start again. *Fine motor skills developing hands and fingers.*

Moving to a Story: Choose a book with lots of pictures or actions. As you read out the story ask the children to act out the scene. For example, if the story is about a lion, ask the children to leap like a lion across the room. *Imagination, locomotor and positive self-esteem.*

Pass the Balloon: Children sit in a circle. Inflate a balloon but don't tie the top, children have to pass the balloon around holding on to the top without letting the air escape. *Fine motor skills developing hands and fingers.*

Ten Pin Bowling: Arrange empty plastic bottles (milk cartons, old drink bottles) like bowling pins and using a lightweight plastic ball, recreate a bowling alley by rolling the ball to knock the bottles down – lengthen the bowling strip to provide a more challenging activity for older children. *Spatial awareness and manipulative skills.*

For more information about Active Movement, or to contact the nearest Active Movement Advisor, call 0800 228 483 or visit www.sparc.org.nz.

Alissa Tosswill is the Active Movement Advisor for Sport Auckland. She has a double degree in physical education and human nutrition. Alissa is very passionate about ensuring a healthy start in life through physical activity and healthy eating.

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Being aware of children's time

MARIANNE KNAUSS REPORTS



Kristy and Mia are deep in play at their magic tree. It is a beautiful old tree that has fallen on its side. Parts of it are still alive with new leaves sprouting. They call it magic because that is how it feels. It is just the place to climb with many lower branches giving easy access. The tree has lots of little spaces that are like rooms. The whole place feels almost unreal. The girls spend much of their time here in pretend play. The joy of the tree space has captured them. It is a place where they play out their fantasies and make believe undisturbed. They are in a place where there is no time. Nothing else matters to Kristy and Mia when playing in the magic tree. They are focused on the now.

Young children do not know how to tell the time, nor read a clock. They are not concerned with the 'how much' or the 'how long' in time. It is moments in time and the now or present moment that is most important. The duration of time becomes irrelevant when absorbed in play, as seen above with Kristy and Mia where they have become lost in play. As adults we have a different sense of timing. What happens next is often on our mind, preparing for the next

event. Adults have the ability to think across time, viewing our lives in the past, present or future. We can learn to appreciate the here and now from children like Kristy and Mia. Adults have the power to dictate children's routines, but we often lack their sense of the present. This will help us to be aware of their immediate needs.

Within early childhood programmes it is adults who determine or regulate the timing of events. Most of the day in a child's life is segmented into routines and timetables. It is expected that children will fit in with these daily routines. A timetable tries to create efficiency and typically does not allow for time wasting. Timetables can often be linked to bells or whistles, which indicate that time is up. This division of time was first introduced in monastic rule in the 1600s. It was later adapted to education in the form of school calendars and timetables. Regulating time in this method is a way for adults to have power and control. When we control use of time it is a way of normalising behaviour. Often this can be done unintentionally.

It comes from expectations placed on us as teachers that arise from our traditions and history.

Established routines and timetables are not always important to young children. Patrick, aged 3 and Emily, who is 4, have been building a cubby together for most of the morning outdoors. The house is evolving and changing as they create their play. A teacher comes over to tell them: "One more play, it is time to go inside". The children huddle inside the cubby and continue playing. Everyone starts to go indoors. The teacher reminds Patrick and Emily to come inside. "One more minute?" Emily pleads. The teacher explains it is group time and then time for lunch. Patrick and Emily are faced with how to respond to this timetable.

Timetables, routines and schedules are examples of blocks of time allotted to children's lives. It is others who set these timeframes. Others, in this instance, refer to the adults who have power over young children's lives. These can result in conditions of power, domination



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and submission. Children, some at an earlier age than others, fit into institutional life and regimented patterns of routines and schedules. As children enter childcare services and school, time scheduling fits the demands of that particular organisation. As educators we should consider whether we are dividing a child's daily life into portions that relate to her or him or to the requirements of adults.

The role of an early childhood educator is often very demanding. The list of responsibilities can seem overwhelming. We try to juggle teaching, administrative tasks, needs of families, observing, programming, mentoring and cleaning. In our lives we can become caught up in tight schedules allowing no room for the unexpected or the pleasures of just being in the moment. Checking the clock and regulating ourselves to it allows us to be guided by the measurement of time. Such taken-for-granted practices need to be questioned. Is our busyness influencing the lives of the children we work with? Do our expectations encourage them to take on more adult rhythm in their lives?

Routines and schedules can be adjusted to allow children the chance to develop their play themes without a sense of hurrying on to the next part of the programme. Early childhood educators have an important role in assisting the play process. One of these roles is to allow children enough time for their play to develop. They need time to move fully into the flow of their play so it can evolve. It takes time for ideas and roles to develop. When they are deeply concentrating and involved, children become fully absorbed and able to operate at the limits of their abilities. When children are fully engaged in an event, packing away interrupts the direction of the play. Children are able to focus on productive play when transition times are minimised. Rooms can be arranged to leave learning centres set up, thus allowing the play to continue at a later time. Rolling morning tea and lunch breaks provide the opportunity for children to eat at varying times rather than with the whole group all at once. Some children have breakfast earlier than others, so it allows them to

eat when they are hungry. It also gives the slower eaters more time to eat without feeling rushed. A flexible daily programme is not dictated by the clock, yet is consistent in sequence to maintain a sense of security.

When teachers are rushing around doing housekeeping chores this can create an atmosphere of stress and exhaustion. Routines should not only allow for large blocks of uninterrupted play, but also provide time to slow down and relax. Too often routines are focused around adult needs without considering a child's sense of time. The daily schedule in children's services is often designed to suit the adults; their starting and finishing times, breaks for morning tea and lunch hours. These enable staff to be rostered within a particular period. I have been to services where all the children are required to sleep at prescribed times, so the adults can have their lunch breaks. I am not suggesting that early educators stop having lunch breaks, but to plan them taking into consideration children's need and rhythms.

Too much of a child's day can be regulated by adults without the child having her or his own space. There are moments when we all like to have some alone time, just to sit and think without the feeling of being overly supervised. We lead busy lives, but can miss out on time for a child to simply be, and spend time in the here and now. Time is an important element when developing programmes for young children. Understanding time through a child's eyes requires careful consideration. When educators

carefully reflect from a child's viewpoint, we can integrate routines and schedules in an effective way.

Marianne Knaus is a teacher in child studies at Goulburn Campus of TAFE NSW, Illawarra Institute. She has taught at university, TAFE and in preschools and childcare settings. Marianne is currently a part-time PhD student at the University of New England and the focus of her thesis centres around the hurrying of time in the lives of young children.



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Resolving conflicts among children

IN OUR LAST ISSUE ROBIN CHAMPION LOOKED AT SOME IDEAS REGARDING TEACHERS' ROLES IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS AMONG CHILDREN. IN THIS ISSUE SHE PROVIDES AN IN-DEPTH EXAMPLE OF A PARTICULAR CONFLICT AND HOW IT WAS RESOLVED TO ILLUSTRATE SOME CONFLICT RESOLUTION PHILOSOPHIES THAT HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OVERALL CENTRE CULTURE.



Working at a centre where push-along toddlers' bikes had recently been purchased, the first fight began soon after outside play began. It was between two boys, both nearly three. I watched for a moment as the typical behaviours ensued. Both hung onto the handlebars with a force that was beyond my own adult strength. Accusations and demands were inaudible and incomprehensible through the screams.

One child was sitting on the bike defending his right to be there while the other strongly expressed his desire to be on the bike. Whether the child on the bike was quickest and strongest or whether he had taken possession through force I did not know. I now know that whatever the case was did not matter.

Regular teachers at the centre would have made a judgment call based on knowledge of these children. As a relieving teacher I could not do this. The nature of working with different children every week and my interest in the facilitation of 'goodwill' in the ECE setting led me to an eventual solution.

Approaching the boys I pointed out that there were several other bikes unoccupied. They explained these bikes weren't fast enough. This amazed me. Did these two year olds base this preference on their knowledge of aerodynamics (the bike in dispute certainly was slimmer) or on some sort of petrol-head values? Either way, the boys certainly did agree on this one thing.

Wanting to avoid declaring one child the legitimate rider of the bike and one child the loser in the hard-fought battle, I was relieved when I spotted one identical black bike lying forgotten in the play area. I pointed it out excitedly, expecting the child who was wrangling for the bike to run and 'possess' this other bike. Instead he stood his ground and they both insisted that this was the best bike. I then considered that this was more a battle of egos (between two otherwise good friends) than a battle over resources.

My next move led to what I believe was a successful outcome. I offered my hand to the child who was not sitting on the bike. "Come," I said. "Come with me. I have something very, very interesting for us to do." As those words came out I had no idea what that interesting thing was and I realised what a risk this was. To maintain credibility I had to come up with something that was equally or more interesting than riding the coolest bike in the centre. And I had to be quick about it. Surprisingly, this child actually did take my hand. Perhaps I had offered the unexpected. I hadn't taken the role of adjudicator; I hadn't pronounced one child the temporary caretaker of this centre status symbol; I hadn't growled at them for fighting; and I hadn't said those lines that I myself dread "Cameron had it first" or "You've had it for a long time, it's Blake's turn." Perhaps Blake was intrigued by this response. Perhaps Blake had built up sufficient trust in me in the two hours that he'd known me. Anyway, he took the hand that I offered.

I still didn't know my next move. We walked a few steps across the playground while Cameron got on that bike and

motored away, his little two-year-old legs pushing as fast as they could go. The other bikes meanwhile had acquired new drivers. My brain was working as fast as Cameron's little legs. Really I felt as though I had tricked him and that I had nothing to offer. I calmly took Blake to the park bench, which just happened to be beside the main biking route. Blake sat trustingly beside me, waiting for this very interesting thing to happen. Cameron came motoring past us with a huge smile and little legs pummeling as fast as they could.

Then inspiration came. Not only Blake, but several other children bought into it with total commitment. We became observers and commentators in Cameron's attempts at breaking his own speed records. "And here comes Cameron down the main straight.....up to the hairpin turn...the turn is tight but he maneuvers the bike well...back on to the straight and he's coming up to the finish line..." And then all the children join in with me "CAMERON, CAMERON, CAMERON!" "Yes... he's done it...he's broken his own record." This is repeated over and over, the onlookers having just as much fun as the rider. Blake happily plays role of commentator for about 20 minutes and then I ask Cameron if he's ready to be a watcher and see how fast Blake can go. Cameron offers the bike to his friend and off we all go again, cheering and commenting.

By this time more children are wanting to be involved in the game and the younger child who has been chugging along on the other identical bike enters the main bike route with several bumps and stops and starts. A commentary on this second driver is easily developed. "Oh no, the driver of car number two is having trouble. Oh dear, he's run out of petrol. Oh no, he's got a flat tyre." I take a group of children to the sandpit steps opposite to where we are sitting. I initiate a pretend pit stop and petrol station. No props needed, all done with mimes. The children and I change pretend tyres, do pretend oil changes, fill up with (and get paid for) pretend petrol.

Suddenly children come out from everywhere. Not only were the uncool bikes serviced and filled, but every child who wanted to play was able to play mechanic, petrol pump assistant or petrol station attendant. Then... wouldn't you know it. "Haere mai ki roto, haere mai ke te whariki. Inside everybody, mat time." Damn!

The above experience has validated my own philosophies.

Spending quality time with a trusted human being is as rewarding as possessing the most valued of resources. I was completely engaged in sharing the role of commentator with Blake. He had sacrificed the treasured bike to share time with me.

There are alternatives to taking the role of adjudicator. By a bit of lateral thinking I was able to avoid a situation where one child was pronounced the winner and one was the loser. "Cameron had it first" for me was not an option.

By building up a repertoire of these alternatives, teachers can positively change the culture of their centre. When teachers fall into the role of adjudicator, children develop a belief that there must always be a winner or loser. They also develop the concept that only an adult can solve their disputes. Conversely, teachers can facilitate cooperative play when

conflict arises. Children are competent learners and are capable of initiating patterns of cooperative play, especially if teachers provide a model or set up an environment conducive to cooperation. Over time, a centre culture will develop in which values of cooperation, quality time (versus material possession) and goodwill to others is fostered. By eliminating the role of teacher as adjudicator, annoying episodes of children running to the teacher in charge with "Jamie's having a long turn" or "I had it first" should decrease.

Interactions between individuals ultimately influence society. Bronfenbrenner's model describes the *microsystem* as interactions in the child's immediate environment e.g. a teacher provides non-competitive alternatives to dealing with conflict. The *mesosystem* is a system of linking **microsystems**. This could be children and teachers influencing other children and teachers. Common values held within the early childhood centre form, and a 'centre culture' emerges or evolves. The *exosystem* refers to larger communities and could be the influence that your centre has on other centres, professionals, supporting agencies, homes and families. These groups have a part to play in forming the cultural values and laws of a country - Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem. By providing children with the skills to deal with conflict, a society develops in which these cultural norms and laws are adopted. Bronfenbrenner calls this process that happens over time the *chronosystem* (Drewery and Bird, 2004).

A lot of our work as teachers involves using scripts; standard phrases we use in a variety of situations. I have never used the "...had it first" script. It was never a feature of my own childhood and as an adult I can't make sense of it. I challenge teachers to reflect upon the scripts they use.

Using team effort and lateral thinking, a multitude of solutions fostering goodwill and cooperation can develop. Meeting time can be spent sharing our ideas and successes. A list of alternative scripts (e.g. "I think you can play with this together") can be created and displayed in the teachers' area. I believe that as responsible adults we should actively nurture the altruistic values of children. By doing this we can contribute towards a centre culture of kindness and ultimately influence the cultural norms held by society.

References:

Drewery, W., & Bird, L. (2004). *Human Development in Aotearoa: A journey through life*. Auckland: MacGraw-Hill.

Robin Champion works both as a relieving early childhood teacher and an independent trainer delivering workshops to centres. She has a BA (Social Science), Diploma in Second Language Teaching and Graduate Diploma in Teaching (ECE). She is beginning her Masters on a part-time basis this year in children and public policy.

Her areas of interest in ECE are: children's acquisition of ethics and values, and creation and evolution of centre culture. Robin's contact details are: PO Box 20 286, Glen Eden, rchamp@paradise.net.nz

Growing your expertise in infant-toddler care

SARAH FARQUHAR REPORTS

Earlier this year Lauren Porter (Centre for Attachment) and Sarah Farquhar (ECC CEO) presented an ECC seminar series on infant-toddler care. Sarah summarises some of the information in this article, and also provides information on creating a breastfeeding-friendly environment.

For the young child, relationships provide the foundation for learning. We know the importance of relationships from attachment theory. We also know this now from neurological research. All learning takes place in relationships.

Much of the human brain develops its structure after birth. The really strong repetitive connections are kept in the brain. If relationships are good and experience is good, then learning is good and these are the really powerful things you help to lay down for children. In focusing on attachment and the relational aspects you will have made a significant difference in the life of the child.

Unfortunately, in the world we live in, often the really powerful things that you are helping to lay down for children during infancy go largely unnoticed and unappreciated. The care of under 3s and especially baby care is devalued in our society and within education policy and funding arrangements.

We can be made to feel that we must be seen to be 'teaching' – for example to be reading a book to the young child from beginning to end, when what the infant really wants is for us to show delight in their exploration of the feel, size and, yes, even the taste of it. We can feel that we must run and get the camera to document an episode for the child's portfolio, but then that special moment has been

lost. The pressure of making it look like teaching is not about valuing the child.

Often it's taken for granted that when a centre meets all the checklist items for licensing and other external requirements (the physical/observable aspects) that all must be right for children. However, it is possible to sometimes find yourself in the position of being torn between meeting a child's individual needs and doing what you are expected to do because of regulations, staffing ratio requirements for under and over 2s, sleeping arrangements, or whatever.

After reading this article, take time to consider what some of the roadblocks might be to developing good attachment relationships with children and then how you and your colleagues might work around these.

What Is Attachment?

Attachment is not about what you do or don't do. You can do everything by the book, checking off all the reasons, for example, why the baby might be crying or might be quiet and withdrawn, but still not understand what is really wrong. Attachment is not about what you do for the young child, there is no set of instructions. Attachment is about how you and the child relate.

The recognised hallmarks of creating a healthy attachment are:

Proximity – young children are comforted and settled in proximity to another human being who has capacity to calm and settle them. Are you near enough to see and respond to the young child waking from a sleep? To notice

and calm the young child after being startled or scared by an unfamiliar noise or happening?

Sensitivity – can you respond to what the young child needs, likes, and enjoys? How well do you really know the child? Can you read the young child's cues?

Responsiveness – are you in a position most of the time to be able to notice when the child's interest is taken by something and to stay with the child to follow the attention through to its conclusion? Are you able to respond to the child when the child needs you? Or do you feel that you can't or shouldn't be responsive in some situations e.g. baby is looking sad but he needs to go to sleep on his own, he needs to learn independence?

Transforming Risks into Benefits

Despite the bad press that education and care centres sometimes get, the risks for children are actually the same for any type of non-parental care including home-based. You would expect your doctor to know the literature on the risks of different medications before prescribing a particular medication, and it's no different in early childhood education and care. You should know the risks in order to ease these and to be in an informed position to make a real difference in the early years of children's lives.

On average, statistically, but not for every child, there are greater risks of increased levels of aggression and anxiety the longer a child is in non-

parental care. Separation from the parent, from the family, is one facet of stress for the young child. Stress levels for the child at different points of the day are another. By midday, research suggests that though stress levels can be high, they do drop down again later in the day. But what this suggests is that there are points in time when children just want/need a bit of down-time.

It can be overwhelming to be with other children and adults, competing for attention and being separated from mum or dad or their main caregiver. Different children can react differently, though, for example a child from a larger family may react quite differently to an only child. What helps is if children have a really strong home life. But we often see children who don't have a wonderfully supportive, nurturing home life and therefore understanding the risks for these children is important.

If children have a secure attachment relationship with a primary caregiver when they start at the centre then this makes a lot of difference. But not all children do. If

you are there as an attachment figure for the child who does not otherwise have a secure attachment relationship, you are making a powerfully significant difference in the life of the child.

To be an attachment figure you must provide: (1) most of the physical and emotional care for the child while at the centre, (2) emotional investment in the child (really and truly care about the child) and (3) continuity and consistency as a central person for the child to go to during the hours that the child is at the centre.

The Primary Caregiver Model

The question is how you can possibly be an attachment figure for every child when there is more than a small group of children at your centre?

This is where the concept of the primary caregiver model comes in handy. The primary caregiver model is regarded professionally as a non-negotiable for working with under 2s. The reality is, of course, that it might not work every day

and for every child in your centre, but it is an excellent model to work to uphold. The idea is that for a child to feel safe, to feel good, there needs to be someone that the child knows is solidly there for them – especially around times of transitions, tired times, and nappy changing.

Sometimes there may be a reason to deviate from the primary caregiver model. For example, a seminar participant gave a lovely example of how children at her centre delighted in one staff member in particular doing their nappies – they saw her as heaps of fun and nappies was something she loved doing. Children would request/demand that she do their nappies, regardless of whether or not she was their primary carer at the centre. And why not!

Providing a Breastfeeding Friendly Environment

Why should you be interested in providing an environment at the centre that is breastfeeding-friendly? There is a wealth of literature on the health benefits for children of breastfeeding



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and of breast milk. Breastfeeding helps to provide health protection for children attending an early childhood programme. A large longitudinal Canadian study for example showed that for children attending an early childhood programme before 1 ½ years, the odds of having six or more prescription antibiotic treatments was seven and a half times higher if they were never breastfed. If children were breastfed for the first four months the odds were reduced to being four times higher.

The key message in the health research is that breastfeeding, when possible for the mum and infant, is important. While exclusive breastfeeding until aged 6 months is advised, if this just isn't possible then keeping some breastfeeding going is better than none at all. It may not always be possible for mums to get time off work to breastfeed their infant during the day or for someone to take their infant to them, but you can suggest that arriving early and breastfeeding again before jumping in the car and leaving at the end of the day is perfectly fine with you. Healthier children who get sick less often, means healthier early childhood centre staff and families too.

While there are strong nutritional and health benefits associated with breastfeeding, breastfeeding is also importantly about the relational aspects of care and nurturance. Earlier in this article, you will recall discussion of the role you can play in being an attachment figure for young children and that this helps to reduce the behavioural and anxiety risks for children who don't already have a secure attachment relationship with a primary caregiver. You can also help the child to have a good relationship with mum by supporting breastfeeding, because breastfeeding can act to strengthen maternal sensitivity, which in turn reduces the risks associated with using non-parental care.

You don't have to be an expert on breastfeeding, you don't have to have breastfed your own children, you don't have to be a woman – men can be wonderfully supportive of breastfeeding too. You do need to be supportive and non-judgemental.

Consider these reflective questions: How do you feel about parents breastfeeding at the centre? Do you know how many children in your care are being breastfed at home? Are you confident that families feel supported to continue with breastfeeding? What can you do and what needs to change?

This article has highlighted the importance of growing your expertise in infant-toddler care from a relational

perspective. It has given you a taste of the information presented at a recent Early Childhood Council seminar series. This is information that is not usually covered in training courses or discussed within our profession. There are many other dimensions to the work of the infant-toddler practitioner that this article has not been able to cover. Do look out further Early Childhood Council seminars on working with young children.

Eight low-cost ways to create a breastfeeding-friendly environment and make a wonderful difference for children

1. Inform parents at the time of enrolment that they have a choice to continue to breastfeed when going back to work because your centre will support this. Why not put a sign at the entrance 'We are a breastfeeding friendly centre' just like the smoke-free signs. Put a friendly note about this in the enrolment pack. Get some free flyers on combining work, using childcare, and breastfeeding to leave with parents. Contact your local La Leche League for a list of breastfeeding publications.
2. Be non-judgemental in your body language and what you say. There's no reason why an older child shouldn't be breastfed other than people's own biases about this, and no reason why a mum shouldn't express breastmilk during the day but breastfeed at night if such an arrangement means that some breastfeeding is able to be continued.
3. Show that you are happy for children to be breastfed at the centre, in the main play area, outside, or wherever the mums feel comfortable.
4. Check your centre has space available that is not within the main play area for mums to use for breastfeeding or simply to relax and have some cuddles with baby. Provide a comfy armchair, access to fresh drinking water, and good-sized cushions or pillows.
5. Facilitate contact for breastfeeding mothers with others – or partner with other nearby centres to enable there to be enough mothers to make a viable support group.
6. Learn to recognise the child's early warning signs of the need to call mum for breastfeeding. Encourage mum to visit and feed no matter how difficult the separations may be.
7. It's not uncommon for mothers to dislike expressing milk and to wish to move their child onto artificial formula or wean all together - so encouraging words from you about how great they are doing and how they are benefiting their child will make a difference.
8. Check the currency of what you know about the storage and heating of expressed breast milk and preparation of bottles. Using a microwave to heat damages the quality of the milk.

Outdoor environments: the need for nature

PHIL SMITH REPORTS

I recently had a really interesting debate with an early childhood practitioner in Auckland regarding the necessity for outdoor play space. Both of us had spent many years in London, and her children had attended a centre there where there was no outdoor play area. Her view was that while this was possibly not ideal, it had not held her children back in any way in their development. Her son, now a teenager residing in Auckland, plays team basketball and does all the usual outdoor and indoor activities that any other teenager would.

Having grown up in England, I remember my playgroup similarly having no outdoor area, although we were based in an enormous hall that was great for riding bikes around, especially when it was raining!

But I still cannot help feeling that these places, whilst fulfilling educational and social needs, are somewhat lacking in environmental – maybe this helps explain why as adults we have so little concern or awareness for our environment. I can vividly recall the ‘environment’ of my playgroup, but not because it was great – quite the opposite. I remember the darkness of the hall when it was raining outside, I remember the smell of the raw timber parquet floor, the almost deafening noise

the bikes and kids made as we clattered round and round the hall as fast as we could, the musty smell of the storage areas where the toys were stored, the smell of tea coming from the bright blue kitchen. The only positive environmental thing I remember from being there was ‘the other room’ – a room where we had quieter, more structured play. I can vividly remember the sun lighting this room up – this was a sunny and warm room. Strange recalling this now, how much friendlier that room felt compared to the other.

“...these places, whilst fulfilling educational and social needs, are somewhat lacking in environmental...”

Having spent my formative years in a very urban unnatural environment, I feel strongly that we should all have good access to nature. Possibly because I grew up in this environment, I went to the opposite extreme

as I got older – just about every available minute of my teenage years was spent with friends on the banks of my local rivers and lakes fishing; we even fished all night so that we could enjoy ourselves for longer. And it wasn’t just about the fishing – fishing was part of the discovery of nature – it was really a fact finding mission of what was in the water! And this extended to an appreciation of the entire environment – tree species, birds, weather patterns, etc.

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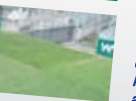
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Coming from this background, any indoor space, without a strong connection to a natural outdoor environment is as alien to me as trying to live on the moon! Thankfully, in New Zealand good access to outdoor playspace is a requirement of all our childcare establishments, but I would have to add that there is more to outdoor space than just meeting the space and softfall standards. All too often I see benign, badly conceived play areas that meet all the standards, but offer little of interest to children. And cost is no excuse – well-designed outdoor play areas rich in natural

surfaces and planting are often cheaper to build than large expanses of unnatural softfall.

So what makes a good outdoor play space (and what makes a bad one)? While searching the internet for research and examples, I came across an excellent UK website, which really illustrated the point I am trying to make: that not only do children need access to outdoors, but the 'natural' quality of this outdoor space is paramount to its success. The examples on this and the following page are taken directly from this website with both my own and their comments to illustrate. For more information, see

www.freeplaynetwork.org.uk/playlink/exhibition/woepossibility – I have found it a very useful check when designing outdoor child spaces.

Phil Smith is an English-trained architect, now working in New Zealand, specialising in early childhood design and 'green' buildings of all types. He spent 10 years in London, working at the practice of Lord Norman Foster, where he learnt much about sustainable architecture and designed many sustainable buildings. He can be contacted on phil@philsmith.co.nz or mobile: 021 716 893.

The good...

"...the proper approach to British or European Standards is not to regard them as laying down a compulsory standard to be followed slavishly in all cases....If a rational process of risk assessment, together with a balance of cost, risk and benefit can justify departure, then there would be no failure to exercise reasonable care." *Raymond Machell QC, PLAYLINK-commissioned legal advice.*

Now this statement to me says it all. I just heard a local councillor in New Zealand recently say that local community groups should no longer get involved with building playgrounds as the possibility of being sued by parents of children injured whilst using the playground was too big a risk! What kind of society are we creating?

Photo: Sue Gutteridge, Stirling Council

"Freiburg City Council has been installing non-conventional playgrounds – not the sterile flat fields full of brightly coloured fixed equipment so common in the UK – but rich naturalistic play spaces, full of mounds, ditches, logs, fallen trees, bushes, wild flowers, boulders and other natural features." *Tim Gill*

To me, any space that you can picture spending time in yourself will be good for children as well. I would be happy to be here!

Photo: Tollplatz: Freiburg, Lindsey Houston

"Play provision should be inclusive and offer all children a range of sensory experiences: – just like the Garden of Senses." *PLAYLINK.*

A rich balance of natural surfaces, plants, trees and water – it is no coincidence that there is nothing artificial in this picture.

Photo: Garden of Senses, Faelledparken, Helle Nebelong

"Where they can, children consistently choose natural environments for their play – grassy slopes, woodlands and shrubs, rockpools, sand and water, piles of fallen leaves, snow." *Sandra Melville PLACES for PLAY.*

Compared to images of a similar sized expanse of softfall, this picture really illustrates the delight of nature over the sterile safety of many 'designed' outdoor play areas. Where would you rather your children were?

Photo: Sue Gutteridge, Stirling Council



The bad and the ugly...

"Some 30 – 50% of a playgrounds budget is spent on safety surfacing and fencing. There are few if any grounds for believing that this percentage of overall spend represents best value." *Bernard Spiegel, PLAYLINK.*

What amazes me here is that someone designed this. Someone, who was once a child themselves, decided that this is what children should aspire to!

Photo: Bernard Spiegel, PLAYLINK.

"When we visited this site, children were playing in the trees and bushes in the other side of the field" *Sandra Melville, PLACES for PLAY.*

Why is there a belief that children must like gaudy, bright, unnatural colours? Thankfully this proves otherwise and they have voted with their feet to go to natural surroundings – but at what cost?

Photo: Bernard Spiegel, PLAYLINK.

"Professor Ball found that the scientific evidence of the effectiveness of safety surfacing (softfall) as a risk reduction measure is mixed and he raises doubts as to whether the costs of this are proportional to the resulting reduction in injuries to children" *Health and Safety Executive Press Release, UK*

Useful evidence backing up what I have long suspected, that children really do not need sterile, low risk environments. Children are more than capable of deciding, even at a young age, what constitutes an acceptable risk for them.

Photo: Nicola Butler, Free Play Network



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UNICEF Report

BARBARA LAMBOURN REPORTS

The children of New Zealand deserve the best start in life. As one of the world's rich countries we are in a position to make sure they get it – even in a recession.

There's no argument about how vital early years are to short- and long-term outcomes. It's not something we can afford to get wrong.

But a recent report (December 2008) from UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre based in Florence, Italy, showed that New Zealand rates poorly compared with other OECD countries for spending on childcare and preschool education services – 19th out of 23. We trail countries like Mexico, Portugal and Hungary and are well behind countries like France, Iceland and the Nordic four.

The OECD standard for spending in this vital (as we all well know) area is 1% of GDP – New Zealand's offering is 0.4%, less than 50% of the expected standard.

And if that is not enough to worry about – we scored at number 23 out of 25 for “effective parental leave” with just 14 weeks' entitlement at 50% of salary. In Norway and France it's five times higher and in the UK parents have entitlement to a year off at tapering rates – the first 6 weeks at 90%.

We failed on child poverty (at 15% we are well over the 10% benchmark) and on universal access to health care services. Dr Nikki Turner, Advocacy Advisor for UNICEF NZ reminds us that child healthcare services are not universally free and after-hours services are expensive and often well beyond the reach of those most in need.

But there is good news – we ranked 7th overall and beat all other English speaking countries on a set of 10 benchmarks measuring basic minimum standards.

Over 95% of our 4 year olds benefit from being enrolled in some form of early childhood education – and there

is no argument about the advantages of this for later learning and socialisation ability. We have a well monitored national plan, subsidies, adequate regulatory systems and good staff training and ratios of staff to children.

But, the report cautions what it terms a “parallel revolution” as a great change comes over childhood in the world's richest countries (yes, that includes us).

Today's rising generation is the first in which a majority spend a large part of early childhood in some form of out of home care. At the same time neuro-scientific evidence points to the earliest months and years being critical for every aspect of a child's development – with long-ranging implications. The quality of relationships with caregivers in those first years is the nub of the dilemma and poses the question as to whether the transition to more out of home care represents an advance or a setback for today's children and tomorrow's world.

It is often an economic imperative for both parents to be in the workforce, and many families without available grandparents or extended family to assist them look to an early childhood service for support with childcare and enrichment for their child. The challenge, then, for all providers of non-parental early care and education, be it kindergartens, childcare centres, or home-based education is to be aware of this neuro-scientific evidence and work alleviate the risks around non-parental care. You can do this by supporting parent-child attachments and by having in place practices to support the development of secondary attachments between children and staff.

Download the full report from www.unicef.org.nz or

view a PowerPoint of the main points – you are welcome to use it for informing and educating others.

Barbara Lambourn is National Advocacy Manager for UNICEF NZ. Her role involves identifying and advocating on matters that impact on children in New Zealand, in respect of their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC).

Before taking up her job with UNICEF in July 2007 Barbara was part of the inaugural team at the Ministry of Social Development that conceived and introduced the very successful SKIP (Strategies with Kids Information for Parents) programme designed to guide parents in the use of non-physical discipline and positive parenting methods. Her background is in community development in the Bay of Plenty and in Wellington.

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Expiry Date

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Card No

Early Childhood Council Annual Conference 2010

New Zealand's largest annual early childhood conference

7 - 9 May 2010

**Christchurch Convention Centre
Christchurch, New Zealand**

- International and New Zealand keynote speakers
- Huge range of workshops
- Trade Fair
- Gala Dinner
- Social and networking opportunities

Registration dates to be announced soon!

For all ECC Annual Conference information go to
www.ecc.org.nz/conference/home.html
or contact us at admin@ecc.org.nz
or phone 0800 742 742

This is New Zealand's premier early childhood event
Don't miss out in 2010!



**Early Childhood
Council**



Don't forget – You can use your Support Grant for Provisionally Registered Teachers for the Early Childhood Council Annual Conference



Upcoming ECC Events

Mark your diaries now!

Keep an eye on our events page on our website for further details and to register for ECC events:
www.ecc.org.nz/events

JUNE/JULY 2009

WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW

This seminar will focus on meeting your obligations as an employer. It will cover essential topics including: Staff induction, staff appraisals, dealing with performance issues and the specifics of the Employment Relations Act, and an update on recent legislative changes.

The seminar will provide clear and concise information delivered in plain language and of relevance to employing staff in an early childhood centre context.

Three locations: Auckland 30 June; Wellington 2 July; Hawkes Bay / Havelock North 4 July. All seminars run 10.30am – 3.30pm.

For information, visit the ECC website: www.ecc.org.nz/events

JULY/AUGUST 2009

EARLY CHILDHOOD REGULATIONS

The new regulatory system is substantially different from the previous system of licensing and chartering. Update your knowledge about the new system and what the new regulations actually say.

Know your rights and how to meet your obligations under the new regulatory system. This is a no-scare, factual half-day seminar involving group discussion. A package of handouts will be provided.

A government review of the 2008 Regulations is currently taking place. For all new and existing early childhood centres the amendments to the regulations will be in place or known by July 2009. For more information on dates and locations of this nationwide seminar and to download a registration see the events page of the ECC website: www.ecc.org.nz/events

Join the ECC now – get half price subscriptions from 1 July till the end of 2009 and attend the seminar at ECC member prices! To join, go to our website: www.ecc.org.nz or phone us on 0800 742 742.

MAY 2010

ECC ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2010

7 – 9 May

Christchurch Convention Centre

Preceded by the Early Childhood Research Symposium 2010, 6 May, also at the Christchurch Convention Centre.

Come to New Zealand's largest and favourite annual early childhood conference. Take an extra day to join early

childhood researchers and catch up with the work they are doing. Exclusive ECC Member discounted prices! Weekend and full conference registrations!

An amazing range of national and international keynote speakers, trade stalls presentations, prizes and giveaways.

Registration will be available from 20 November 09. Keep an eye on our conference website for further details:
www.ecc.org.nz/conference

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smart
stays

clv smart stays
new zealand + australia
>group accommodation
+ conferencing



service without the price tag this summer

UC Accommodation located across the road from the University of Canterbury, delivers affordable accommodation for sports groups, associations, corporate and education travellers.

University Hall offers over 500 rooms, while the Sonoda Christchurch Campus is a boutique Hall of Residence, perfect for a corporate or church group retreat.

Call now for a site inspection on 03 364 3444 or visit clvsmartstays.com for more information.

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\$45 per night

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Admin software for early childhood centres

Keep comprehensive child records

Store staff records & MoE staff funding data

Create rolls, sign in lists & general reports easily

Control invoicing, receipts & debtors

Produce Ministry Returns (RS7, RS61, WINZ forms)

Auto-activation of future enrolment agreements

Keep medical & vaccination records

Make waiting lists & keep full histories

Keep confidential notes

Bar Code Data Entry

Easy payment options

20 Free ECE

FirstBase keeps administration tasks simple, so you can spend more time with the children in your charge.

Waikāhikamāu Childcare Centre (666)

Monthly Attendance Statistics Report for June 2008

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Total
Enrollment	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
Enrollment	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
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Enrollment	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4									

JUNE 2006										Service No. 666			
Subunit Forward (Class) Hours					Key Forward (Class) Hours					Staff Hour Count			
					Free Release		Free Subunit Activity			BIC Forwarded and Registered			
										Type %			
										Type %			
June 1	1				June 1	1				June 1	1		
June 2	1				June 2	1				June 2	1		
June 3	1				June 3	1				June 3	1		
June 4	1				June 4	1				June 4	1		
June 5	1				June 5	1				June 5	1		
June 6	1				June 6	1				June 6	1		
June 7	1				June 7	1				June 7	1		
June 8	1				June 8	1				June 8	1		
June 9	1				June 9	1				June 9	1		
June 10	1				June 10	1				June 10	1		
June 11	1				June 11	1				June 11	1		
June 12	1				June 12	1				June 12	1		
June 13	1				June 13	1				June 13	1		
June 14	1				June 14	1				June 14	1		
June 15	1				June 15	1				June 15	1		
June 16	1				June 16	1				June 16	1		
June 17	1				June 17	1				June 17	1		
June 18	1				June 18	1				June 18	1		
June 19	1				June 19	1				June 19	1		
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June 38	1				June 38	1				June 38	1		
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June 41	1				June 41	1				June 41	1		
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June 44	1				June 44	1				June 44	1		
June 45	1				June 45	1				June 45	1		
June 46	1				June 46	1				June 46	1		
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June 51	1				June 51	1				June 51	1		
June 52	1				June 52	1				June 52	1		
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June 61	1				June 61	1				June 61	1		
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June 63	1				June 63	1				June 63	1		
June 64	1				June 64	1				June 64	1		
June 65	1				June 65	1				June 65	1		
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June 70	1				June 70	1				June 70	1		
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June 91	1				June 91	1				June 91	1		
June 92	1				June 92	1				June 92	1		
June 93	1				June 93	1				June 93	1		
June 94	1				June 94	1				June 94	1		
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June 98	1				June 98	1				June 98	1		
June 99	1				June 99	1				June 99	1		
June 100	1				June 100	1				June 100	1		

The software is fully networkable & is available for Windows or MacOS users.

FirstBase is already in use in
hundreds of centres & kindergartens.
It maximises your funding,
and handles even the most
taxing charging setups

**Includes
MoE
Staffing
Returns**

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Web: www.first-base.co.nz
Email: info@first-base.co.nz



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