

# SWINGS & ROUNDABOUTS

SEPTEMBER 2009

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

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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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# From the editor

You'll notice a note on the cover of this issue that says: "Please share this magazine!". We make a real effort to include articles in Swings & Roundabouts that are of interest to teachers, managers, owners, and committee members of privately owned and community-owned centres. While we aim to include a range of articles, our submission guidelines particularly ask people to provide articles that are practical and hands-on - the kind of thing that a teacher or manager can easily apply to the day-to-day activities of running a centre. A supervisor of provisionally registered teachers recently told me that she often uses the articles for information and discussion with the teachers she supervises - that's a fantastic use of the magazine!

Please do share it with your staff and anyone else you think might be interested, or leave it in the staff room for people to browse through at lunchtime. You are also very welcome to reproduce articles or quotes in staff or parent newsletters: Please just make sure that you credit the author of the article and the issue of Swings & Roundabouts that it came from.

In this issue, we have a number of articles from presenters from our 2009 conference. These people received great feedback from our delegates and we wanted to share some of their ideas with our readers. We really do have a huge variety of presenters at our conference and things are well underway for 2010 in the beautiful city of Christchurch. Registrations open on 20 November, so don't miss out on the chance to benefit from New Zealand's largest annual early childhood conference.



**Sarah Ellich**  
Publications Manager  
ECC

# CEO's Message

Welcome to this spring edition of Swings and Roundabouts. This is a great time to take children outdoors to observe the spring flowers and nature. It's also typically spring-cleaning time. And, there's no time like the present to have a big tidy-up!

Thinking of cleaning I can't help but wonder why, given such an increase in government financial investment in the sector and administrative changes since the late 1980s, we still have so many issues to contend with.

Twenty plus years ago the pendulum was probably too far on the side of child 'care' - now perhaps it could be argued that we have swung too far to 'education'.

A significant change has been the rebranding of childcare as early childhood education and the professionalisation of our workforce. But I ask myself, is the quality of care experienced by infants and preschoolers considerably better as a result? Are learning outcomes for children higher? And, how do we know this?

For example, on the one hand it is considered highly desirable for everyone working in the sector to have training. But on the other hand we see that the 'qualification' has become the focus for the employer who is not always able to employ the person best suited to the job. With a scarce supply of registered teachers holding the ECE

diploma/degree the consequence then is that teachers are more often than not attracted to jobs because of the dollar and not because of personal commitment and passion.

When new staff do not fit easily into the culture of the centre and when staff are being poached by other services, this is not good for continuity of care for children and can have a negative impact on child outcomes. Having a diversity of skills and training represented within the teaching team will benefit children much more than having a team comprised of people picked primarily on the basis of holding the same qualification.

Policy will finally be right for children when there is a pendulum shift, allowing both care and education to be equally recognised and supported. Then we'll have an early childhood system that really truly is about children. Paperwork and compliance burdens will be lifted. And what a big spring-clean we'll all be able to have then!

I hope you enjoy receiving and reading this magazine. Do get in touch with our office and enquire about joining the Early Childhood Council if your centre is not already a member. Then you can access our weekly newsletter and a host of membership benefits.



**Sarah Farquhar**  
Chief Executive Officer  
ECC



# What a child needs: the contribution made by early childhood centres

DR SARAH FARQUHAR, ECC CEO REPORTS

Early childhood centres and the care of under two-year-olds have been criticised within the media lately. What got lost in the sensational headlines was that it's a social, cultural and economic reality that centres exist.

In this article I'll give a quick explanation first about the role of early childhood centres today and then go on to look at some of the critical views reported by the media.

Although we may disagree with the critics and their strategies for the care of young children, we nevertheless all share a common interest in ensuring children's needs are well met. So, included in this article is a list of the modern child's key needs, alongside which is description of how centres contribute usefully to meeting these needs.

I suggest that you add the special and personal ways your centre contributes to meeting the needs of children in the spaces provided. You could then use this chart of children's key needs and your centre's contribution to meeting these to discuss reactions to any future public criticism of early childcare and education with concerned parents and colleagues.

## The Role of Centres

It is a social reality today that many parents do not have their own parents or other family members living close by or willing to help out with childcare on a regular or even a casual basis.

**"...many parents do not have their own parents or other family members living close by or willing to help out with childcare..."**

This is where early childhood centres play an essential role of support for families today.

Women have a right to participate in paid work and have a career. Women want to work and many have to work for financial reasons. Parental roles have undergone a lot of change and it's not uncommon today for fathers to share or to take responsibility as the primary caregiver.

It is not appropriate in today's times to treat the needs of women as being in opposition to the needs of children. Research has pretty much conclusively shown that:

- (a) women do give their children's needs the highest priority;
- (b) working mothers can advantage the educational outcomes of their

children both financially and as positive role models; and

- (c) infants can have secure warm positive attachment relationships with their mothers whether or not they are attending a childcare programme.

Advances in neurobiology and the social sciences have highlighted the importance of the early childhood period in providing a strong foundation for long-term emotional, behavioural, and intellectual wellbeing. These factors have resulted in an appreciation of the educational benefits of children's participation in professionally staffed early childhood centre programmes along with the benefits of labour-force participation by parents.

## Views in the News

### 1. Daycare Causes Brain Damage

Quote: "A leading neonatal paediatrician is warning parents to do all they can to avoid putting their young children in daycare, saying it could permanently harm their developing brains. [He] bases his message on studies by Canadian expert Megan Gunnar and American researcher Michael Meaney." (Sunday Star-Times 7/6/09).

### Further Information:

- Meaney's research does not concern early childhood centres; it provides scientific evidence for the importance of early mother-child interactions in determining child mental and physical health.



- A small number of overseas studies have shown that children at home being cared for by a parent tend to have lower cortisol levels (an indication of stress) compared to children attending early childhood centres. Evidence that younger children have higher levels of cortisol in the afternoon is useful for early childhood practitioners to know and incorporate into planning the infant's day, rest and play routines. However, the evidence is totally insufficient on its own to argue that parents risk their child's brain development if they enrol their child at a centre of their choosing.
- Gunnar also looked at the social buffering of cortisol responses. She noted that it was the children with negative emotional temperaments that were more likely to exhibit elevations in cortisol under conditions of less than optimal care. Studies of cortisol activity under conditions of neglectful and abusive care have often have yielded evidence of reduced, rather than increased, cortisol levels.
- Younger children and children with immature behaviour are more likely to have higher cortisol levels in the afternoon. It's not known exactly why, e.g. in these studies were the children not getting a sleep during the day? Or were the higher levels typically found at times when the children were more likely to be hungry (in the afternoon)?
- Would a reason for higher cortisol levels amongst young children at centres versus at home with their parents be because the mother's presence at home acted as a buffer during the testing procedure?

## 2. Infant-Toddler Centres Are Failing

Quote: "Babies at some early childhood centres are going hungry and waiting too long to have their nappies changed, the Education Review Office (ERO) says ... Concerns were also raised about lack of compliance with official standards in some centres with such things as monitoring sleeping children, excursion record-keeping and fire and earthquake trial and safety

provisions. Just over half the 74 centres were meeting requirements but the rest were not." (Otago Daily Times 20/4/09)

### Further Information:

- The report for infant-toddler centres received the media's attention for a reason unknown. But to put it into context, the infant-toddler report was actually more favourable than for some other services, e.g. ERO identified compliance concerns in two-thirds of the kindergartens in 30 kindergarten associations, and in the playcentres of 24 of the 30 Playcentre associations.

## "Parents don't have to be with children 24 hours of the day, 7 days a week to still love them"

- ERO's report said that, on the whole, infant and toddler centres were well run.
- Only six of the 74 centres were deemed by ERO to require a supplementary review.
- The concerns in about half of the centres were more of an administrative, check list nature: monitoring of sleeping children; written hazard management systems; fire and earthquake trial and safety provisions; and some aspects of record keeping for excursions.
- The report identified a few centres in which children spent too long waiting for food, sleep or toileting. This is not acceptable and it is the job of ERO to communicate this to the centres concerned and ensure that practices are improved.
- Not all of the ERO's apparent criticisms were fair. For example, lack of parent involvement in centre management was criticised. The reality for many parents is that they are struggling to work and bring up children at the same time. They

choose centres specifically so they can spend all available spare time with their own children.

## 3. People Shouldn't Have Children If They Can't Stay Home With Them

Quote: "One parent or family member should try to stay home with the child, at least for the first two years ... My thought is why on earth are they having children if they don't want to be with them." (Sunday Star-Times 7/6/09)

### Further Information:

- Parents don't have to be with children 24 hours of the day, 7 days a week to still love them.
- When I did research on the PAFT programme, I was told by a parent educator that in her experience it was often the women who were highly organised and focused that needed the most support after having a baby. These women could be totally thrown by the unpredictably of demands and how disorganised life suddenly become. In other words, no adult knows what caring for a young child is truly like and how they will cope until they have their own child.
- Traditional perspectives on attachment theory focus on the role of the primary caregiver – usually the mother. However, young children have been found to form attachments with other caregivers including their early childhood teachers.
- Maori culture is one of a number of cultures internationally that expect many people, not just the biological parents, to accept responsibility for the care of the child.
- All children need at least one person who really cares about them. When a young child does not have a positive attachment relationship with a person biologically related to him/her, early childhood teachers potentially can help to make a tremendous difference in the life of the child by being a person who emotionally cares and is there for the child.

## The Contribution of Centres to Meeting the Key Basic Needs of Children

What a child needs	How centre-based care and education contributes	Add the special ways your centre contributes to meeting children's needs
<b>Shelter</b>	Not all children live in safe, warm and healthy housing conditions. Centres must meet building regulations.	
<b>Food and water</b>	Centres can help in advising parents on good eating patterns and role modeling healthy eating practices. For children on diets of soft drinks and junk food, the centre provides opportunity to have healthier alternatives.	
<b>Sleep</b>	Older children can nap if they feel the need and younger children's sleeping patterns can be responded to flexibly as needs change.	
<b>Love</b>	Parents aren't regarded as necessary nuisances in early childcare centres. Teachers do get to know parents and communicate frequently over issues affecting the child emotionally. Teachers aim to provide a place in which children feel wanted. The centre is a place that belongs to children; it is designed for them and is their centre.	
<b>Space to play</b>	Not every child lives on a ¼ acre section and has freedom to play indoors and outdoors. Modern furniture and electronics in houses, small sections or no sections at all in apartment living mean that centres contribute very importantly to giving children space to play – space to kick a ball, space in which to make a mess, and space to engage in a range of self-selected and initiated activity.	
<b>To feel good about him/herself</b>	It is incredibly important to a child to receive recognition of their achievements from people outside of their immediate family. Friendships with peers and other adults in the centre setting contribute to children's development of a sense of autonomy and self-esteem.	
<b>To be kept safe</b>	Centres provide a supervised and well-managed place for children to be.	
<b>Boundaries for behaviour</b>	It's a common comment of parents that their child will behave better for the teacher than for them. Centres model the setting of appropriate boundaries for child behaviour and positive strategies for behaviour management.	
<b>Positive role models</b>	Children from dysfunctional homes or where they may have been abused by an adult can learn by attending a centre that not all adults are bad, not all experiences are bad, and develop trust. Centre teachers and children can provide alternative positive role models.	
<b>Respect</b>	In centres children are respected for who they are. Attention is given to meeting their needs.	
<b>Experience of a range of activities and learning opportunities</b>	It's almost impossible in a day for parents to provide the range of activity and learning opportunities available in a centre for children to sample. Centre activities extend on and complement the learning opportunities provided within the home, church and other settings in which the child participates. Cognitively this has huge benefits for the developing child.	
<b>Be part of a social grouping: learn to be a team member</b>	The size of the modern family is shrinking. Many children have only one or no siblings. Opportunities to learn to give and take, to negotiate rules, to care for each other, to manage conflict, and to get along with peers are all very important in a child's social development and for later success at school and in working adult life. Centres contribute to meeting this need by providing children with the opportunity to interact with peers and gain early experience and confidence within a group setting.	



#### 4. Toddlers in Group Care Are Damaged

Quote: "A generation of children has been "disenfranchised" by being put in preschool group care, an early-childhood education leader says ... Group-based care for toddlers [in difference to care in another person's home] caused long-term damage." (The Press 7/8/09)

##### Further Information:

- Family day care – also called in-home education – is no different to an early childhood centre in also having people who are not biologically related to the child caring for the child.
- Attachment issues are exactly the same for whatever the type of non-parental care, whether it be centre-based, in someone else's home, or by a nanny in the child's own home.
- The primary caregiver model is practised in most infant-toddler centres, whereby teachers take primary responsibility for individual children.

- Differences between the centre-based model and the home-based model lie in (a) the education training level of those doing the hands-on daily caring (home-based caregivers are not required to be early childhood qualified); (b) support from other adults in the team and ability to cover for each other when having breaks etc; and, (c) children's sense of belonging and ownership of their environment (centres belong to the children attending them, whereas homes belong to the children of the home-based carer).

#### 5. Babies Can't Sleep in Noise and Light: Open Sleep Rooms Are Damaging to Brain Development

Quote: "The Government had failed in its responsibility to ensure babies and toddlers in all-day care had a quiet, dark room to sleep in... Research showed the stress hormone, cortisol, could inhibit long term brain development. Having a separate place to sleep was essential to minimising stress." (The Dominion Post 3/7/09)

##### Further Information:

- The Brain Wave Trust hypothesises is that younger children in overseas centres have higher cortisol levels in the afternoon, not because they have slept in an open-room sleeping arrangement, but because they are away from their mother for longer and having a lot of peer interaction can be tiring over a day.
- The place or conditions under which under 2s sleep does not appear to have been researched for its impact on the cortisol levels of under 2s.
- See Lauren Porter's article on sleeping arrangements in this issue of *Swings and Roundabouts*.
- The evidence sourced by the Ministry of Education in drafting the initial 2008 regulatory criterion that under 2s should sleep in a closed door room actually showed that open sleep room arrangements could work well and better met the emotional and sleep needs of infants.

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# In the centre of sleep: what do we know about sleep for infants in care?

LAUREN PORTER REPORTS

There is perhaps no area of infant and toddler care so rife with opinion and conflict than that of sleep. Yet it seems clear that addressing infant sleep in a manner that can strengthen their relationships, bodies and minds is essential, especially given how many hours a day sleep occupies. Instead of dispensing general advice that everyone should follow, I believe the way forward is to understand the physiology, neurology and psychology of infant sleep and then to apply this understanding in our lives and work with young children.

Babies have sleep needs that are quite distinct from those of adults. They have shorter sleep cycles, spend much more time in REM (also called dreaming sleep), and don't establish a circadian rhythm (doing the majority of their sleeping at night) until about 3 months of age. Sleep researchers note that the human sleep mechanism is not completely formed until 5 years of age and night waking is the norm in babies and young children.

In order to understand how to respond to babies and young children in the realm of sleep, it is critical to understand the meaning of sleep for a child, as well as its physiological, emotional and neurological importance.

Every time babies fall asleep they are faced with the job of temporarily being out of contact with the presence and security of their caregiver. For this reason going to sleep is often an experience of separation that can produce stress and anxiety if not handled sensitively. Wakings

**"It is often assumed that to help a baby with sleep we should apply the same criteria we would suggest for assisting an adult with sleep..."**

- which may be to feed, to be changed or simply cuddled and reassured - must also be handled in a responsive manner.

Babies are not born with an ability to independently regulate their physiological or emotional states. We are all familiar with the need to place a newborn baby on her mother's chest - or some other warm environment - to assist the baby with maintaining her body temperature. This is due to her inability to regulate her body temperature without assistance. Optimally, this assistance comes from her primary caregiver. Other aspects of physiology, such as heart rate and digestion, are also regulated within the caregiving relationship.

Emotional regulation is just the same. Babies need assistance in managing their emotions so they do not become overwhelmed. Whether it is fear, sadness,

surprise or excitement, babies can quickly succumb to emotional intensity. Witness the baby who gets startled and needs a cuddle to return to calm. Thus, it is inappropriate and relatively impossible to ask a young baby to self-soothe without assistance when upset, even in a sleep situation. Going to sleep evokes a state of heightened arousal and is a big transition. Babies typically need the assistance of a connected caregiver to make that transition a smooth and healthy one.

It is often assumed that to help a baby with sleep we should apply the same criteria we would suggest for assisting an adult with sleep. In other words, we typically think of darkened spaces, silence, and solitude. For some babies, peaceful sleep can be achieved within these criteria. However, for many babies, especially young infants, these are





exactly the criteria that will cause sleep disruption or distress. The younger the baby, the more the baby will rely on his or her caregiver to interactively regulate the environment. In other words, the more that child needs a loving and responsive caregiver to make him feel safe. Babies achieve sleep when they feel safe.

For many babies, the lack of stimulation is actually stimulating, it causes them to feel unsafe and makes it more difficult to settle or sleep soundly. Most anyone familiar with babies knows that when you rock a baby, walk a baby, drive a baby in the car (or similar experiences that induce sound, movement and presence all together), the baby falls asleep easily. While there is no right or wrong way to address a baby's sleep needs, it is critical to understand that these desires for sensory presence and connection are physiological and psychological realities.

This understanding is evidenced in the sleep recommendations from most countries, including our Ministry of Health. Within the information for parents and caregivers regarding prevention of SUDI (Sudden Unexplained Death of an Infant), which is also known as SIDS to many, the guidelines state, "The recommended sleeping environment is having baby sleeping in a cot or bassinette near the parents' bed. Babies who sleep in the same room as parents for the first six months are at lower risk of SUDI." The current understanding of the rationale behind this is that in a sensory-enriched environment, created by the presence of the parent, a baby thrives. Hence, the baby is influenced by her unique internal needs to awaken, to feed, to find reassurance, or to oxygenate, all of which can be easily met when a caregiver is in proximity. Research tells us that human infants appear to be pre-sensitised, as if biologically "expecting" to receive sensory signals, include detecting and responding to breathing (vesicular) sounds, chest movements, smells of mother's breast milk, and touches. These signals have been shown to change infant physiology, including heart rate and breathing. There appears to be nothing in the literature to indicate that being close to a caregiver during sleep is dangerous in any way; in fact, it appears to confer regulatory benefits to the baby and meet the normal physiological needs.

To date, as far as I know, there is no specific research regarding how daytime sleep fits into this paradigm, though it is logical to assume that a baby's daytime sleep needs would be physiologically consistent with their night time sleep needs. How early childhood centres negotiate this will depend on the children in their care, the cues of each child, the culture and values of each whanau/family, and the philosophy of care in general. There isn't a one-size fits-all answer about the way to proceed, but taking into consideration the research about infant sleep is a helpful piece of the puzzle.

In our centre work, as well as in our homes, we want to support babies toward healthy exploration and learning, all of which occurs within the context of safe and welcoming relationships that provide a stable ground from which to venture forth and to return to when needed. In sleep, as in all other areas, we seek to protect the children from unnecessary stress. In sleep situations, this typically means responsiveness to baby's needs and not leaving a child to cry without comfort.

Babies who are left to cry without soothing are also left vulnerable to the effects of stress. Stress is the emotional and physical impact our bodies experience as we adjust to challenge. The ability to handle stress is formed via our early experiences. Because a baby's brain is in an early state of development, it is quite vulnerable to stressful events. An infant brain possesses well-established fear circuitry but very immature circuitry for pleasure. What this means is that a baby is easily overwhelmed by distress and needs vigilant assistance to maintain emotional equilibrium and to feel good. Subjection to repeated, frequent, ongoing or intense stressors leaves a baby prone to the negative effects of future stress as well as more unable to recover from the stress of the moment. Crying is often the only way babies have to communicate that they are stressed. Leaving them in this state only increases their stress levels and teaches them they cannot rely on their caregivers to assist them. Regardless of where a baby sleeps or how sleep is managed, using the caregiver relationship to soothe the child, create a feeling of safety and develop the trust that allows

sleep to happen naturally is a beneficial way to nurture the child's wellbeing and management of healthy sleep habits.

Early childhood education practice continues to be grounded in the needs and uniqueness of each individual child. From Te Whariki to Pikler and beyond, we acknowledge that each child has his or her own way of being in the world and it is our goal to support each child toward achieving security and developing innate potential. Te Whariki, for example, notes that "infants [0-18 months] are very vulnerable" and are "totally dependent on adults to meet their needs and are seldom able to cope with discomfort or stress." It is easy to forget that for these young children, much of the time they spend in care will revolve around sleep in some way - going to sleep, waking up, feeling tired, needing to be settled, establishing a rhythm that allows for play and interaction within an ever-present backdrop of sleep. How sleep is handled - where a baby sleeps, how they go to sleep and wake up, and how they respond to sleep - is a big part of their day.

Because of the essential partnership between centre and family, how a baby's sleep is approached at home is important information for how a baby's sleep should be approached at the centre. The primary issue is to respond - to the best of each centre's abilities - to the needs of the child, knowing that just like with any other developmental task, the sleep picture will change as the child grows and develops.

## Further Readings

*Ministry of Health, Preventing sudden unexpected death in infancy, Information for health practitioner, April 2008.*

*Stern, D.N. (1985). The interpersonal world of the infant. New York: Basic Books, 1985.*

*AAIMHI position paper on controlled crying*  
<http://www.aaimhi.org/polsSubs.htm>

*Please note: this is an abbreviated list of suggested further reading; for a full list of the references used in the writing of this article please contact Lauren Porter at [Lauren@centreforattachment.com](mailto:Lauren@centreforattachment.com)*

*Lauren Porter is the Co-Director of the Centre for Attachment. Visit [www.centreforattachment.com](http://www.centreforattachment.com)*

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# Reviews

BY SARAH ELLICH

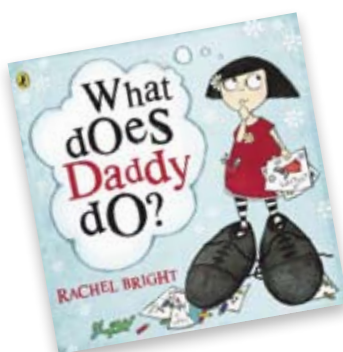


## There was a Crooked Man

**Gavin Bishop**  
**Gecko Press**

Gavin Bishop illustrates the familiar English rhyme "There was a crooked man" in this bright and funny board book. The simple words and rhyme

scheme make it a perfect short book for very young readers. The double-page vertical spread and the big, colourful images make it great for mat time. The six illustrations are bright and clearly depict each line of the poem, and the simple humour of the images will appeal to the very young.



## What Does Daddy Do?

**Rachel Bright**  
**Puffin**

Daisy's friends' dads are a fireman, a doctor and a teacher, but Daisy doesn't know what her dad does. She knows he has mountains of paperwork to climb, his boss is a dragon and he's always busy and has to fly, so she concludes he must be an "ExplorerSuperKnight"!

A brilliant depiction of how children's imaginations make use of the literal information they are given. The pictures place the four children right in the centre of their descriptions of their dads' jobs and the humour of the story and illustrations will appeal to children closer to school age. In the end what Daisy's dad does is to be her dad – a lovely message about the importance of fathers in their children's lives.



## The Sparrow and the Feather

**Written by Ben Brown and illustrated by Helen Taylor**  
**Puffin**

Sparrow finds a beautiful feather and sets out to find whom it belongs to. Along the way he meets a host of other birds and a very wily weasel.

The characterisation of each bird and animal Sparrow meets are cleverly depicted in just a few words: The rooster crows pompously, the weasel snaps and the swallows laugh and swoop. But it is the illustrations that make this book stand out – they are realistic and life-like, but still in simple colours and outlines, making them engaging for children.

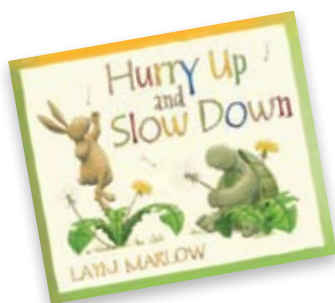


## It Was Bedtime in the Jungle

**John Butler**  
**Puffin**

This is a book that proves the importance of integrated design, words and images in children's books. There are many books that purport to teach children about counting, but few that do it so well as this. The numbers are so integral to the story and the images that they become part of the reading experience, rather than a means of labouring the point. The book identifies each jungle animal as they settle their babies down to sleep. Each double

page spread starts "It was bedtime in the jungle", then describes part of the natural setting, introduces the animal, then the number. "It was bedtime in the jungle/ And beneath a leafy tree/ A leopard tucked her paws/ Round her babies three". The second page repeats the setting and the number: " 'Snuggle' said their mother / 'We'll snuggle' said the three/ And they snuggled up together, beneath the leafy tree." Beautiful pictures and a consistent layout gently reinforce the patterns throughout the book. This is one of the most well thought-out books I've reviewed.



## Hurry Up and Slow Down

**Layn Marlow**  
**Oxford University Press**

A day in the life of friends Tortoise and Hare. As in the fable, Hare is always on the go; Tortoise prefers a slower approach to life and enjoys a cup of chamomile tea. But when it comes to Tortoise reading Hare his bedtime story, Hare wants to slow down and

make the moment last. A story about being friends in spite of each other's differences and about the joys of reading. The illustrations are humorous and engaging, with subtle emotions shown on the friends' faces as they go through their day of mishaps and adventure together. Additional creatures in the form of insects, mice and frogs inhabit the pages and add to the fun of the illustrations.



## Creative Yoga Games For Kids

**Edna Reinhardt**  
**Over the Moon Dance Studio**

This boxed set comes with 48 cards and a 28-page booklet outlining yoga-based games and exercises for children. There is a variety of ways these cards can be used and they are perfect for working with groups of children. Each card shows a child performing the posture and has an easy-to-follow description of the

movement. Inspiring ideas for combining movements, music and different exercises utilising the cards are given in the booklet. There is a huge amount of fun to be had with these cards; and it's easy to see the many physical, developmental and creative benefits that children (and teachers!) could gain from these activities. The cards are available to buy in New Zealand from Wheelers Books. Read more about Creative Yoga for Kids in Edna's article in this issue of *Swings & Roundabouts*.



## Bountiful Earth - 25 Songs and Over 300 Activities for Young Children

**Pam Schiller**  
**Gryphon House**

This is one of those books that provide a treasure trove of ideas and connecting activities that you can quickly dip into or use for planning a more extensive programme. All of

the songs and activities are in some way connected with the natural world. Each song has the lyrics, related facts, literacy links, vocabulary, and theme and curriculum connections. It is an American publication, so some of the songs may be unfamiliar to New Zealanders, but there is a CD included with the book, and they could just as easily be read out as poems. Absolutely full of inspiring ideas!



## Be in to win copies of these books!

We have a review copy of each of these books to give away. This issue there will be three lucky winners. To be in to win one of these fantastic parcels of books, simply write the answer to the following question on the back of an envelope and post to: ECC June Book Giveaway, PO Box 31672, Lower Hutt. 5040 by Friday 2 October 2009.

Thanks to Wheelers for sending us a copy of *What Does Daddy Do?*, *It Was Bedtime in the Jungle*, *Hurry Up and Slow Down* and *Bountiful Earth*.

**Question:** How many babies does the leopard have in *It Was Bedtime in the Jungle*?



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# Spring into action with Active Movement

ALISSA TOSSWILL REPORTS

Spring is the season of growth - new flowers emerge and lambs are born. It is a time to shake off winter and spring back into action - what better way then to participate in some Active Movement activity with the children!

With the days getting warmer, spring is a great time to use the outdoor environment to plan and implement Active Movement ideas. Being active outside adds oxygen and endorphins to the blood and these help develop happy, bright and cheery children. The children will learn about the environment and how their body can move by watching and touching things outside. Most children enjoy being outdoors and challenging themselves to try new things, which in turn will develop new skills.

Physical activity outdoors means that children will reap the benefits of vitamin D from the sun, which can help alleviate those feelings of the winter blues. Don't forget to be sun-smart, especially between September and March, and make sure children wear a hat and some sunscreen. It's also important to ensure the children drink plenty of water, as being active outside can mean expelling more energy, which can lead to dehydration.

## Three Active Movement reminders before you start:

- All activities are for boys and girls and inclusive for all - try to adapt the activity for the individual child.
- It is the order in which the child gains skills that is important, not the age that they gain them.

- Remember when children are being active, stay around them to ensure they are safe.

## Try some of the activity ideas below - Happy Active Movement!

*(The words in italics show the learning experience or movement skills being developed).*

- Ask the children to lie on their backs on a rug on the grass - look up at the clouds and watch them move across the sky. Ask the children what shapes they can see. *Eye development, imagination and visualisation.*
- Blow bubbles - provide the children with bubble mixture and bubble wands to blow and catch bubbles. In a large group try using a bubble gun to make lots of instant bubbles. The children can catch bubbles with paper cups or with straws. *Manipulative skills, eye development.*
- Draw chalk lines on the concrete and have the children practise balancing by walking heel to toe on the lines. Ask them to do it slowly and then quickly. Another idea is to jump over the line trying to land on two feet or ask the children to hop over the line. *Stability skills, walking, jumping and hopping.*
- Each day provide a different child with a digital camera and ask them to go outside and take a picture. You can then ask the child who took the picture to tell the other children a story about the picture they took at mat time. *Imagination, language development, self esteem.*
- Find some dandelions with seed heads. The children can blow on these to send the seeds into the air and try to catch the seeds as they fall. *Eye development, eye - hand coordination, spatial awareness.*
- Have the children make a card with a picture of a bright flower for someone they love. *Manipulative skills, self esteem.*
- Make a shaker - have the children each bring a small plastic container e.g. a used and clean marmite jar, collect stones and fill  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the container with them. Securely fasten the lid with adhesive and tape. Shake up and down! *Manipulative skills, develops a sense of timing.*
- Mown grass - get piles of this and children can stack it and jump off the top or alternatively they could throw it in the air and try to catch it. *Catching, throwing and kicking, balance, jumping.*
- Plant a special garden for the children to help develop and grow. The children can assist in watering the garden. *Manipulative skills, self esteem.*
- Sit together quietly and listen for the birds - watch the birds as they fly between trees and swoop to the ground. *Eye development, listening skills, and spatial awareness.*
- Take morning tea or mat time outdoors by placing large rugs down and having the children sit like they are having a picnic. *Provides the body with oxygen and endorphins to assist in developing happy, healthy children.*

Photo courtesy of Alissa Tosswill.







- Water play – fill an old bath, tub, bucket or paddling pool with a little water and add objects such as sponges, paintbrushes, cups, measuring spoons, whisks, yoghurt pottles with holes in bottom, fly swats, straws and whatever else you can think of! Supervise, and let the children explore the water with their hands using the objects. Manipulative skills, eye development, water confidence.

For information about Active Movement, or to contact the nearest Active Movement Advisor, call 0800 ACTIVE (228 483) or visit [www.sparc.org.nz](http://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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# Children and vegetarian eating

ALISSA TOSSWILL REPORTS

The traditional kiwi plate of “meat and three vege” is having a make-over in New Zealand with our growing multicultural society. For many families meat is no longer on the menu as they have made a vegetarian diet the lifestyle choice for their family. What does this mean for you and your centre? It means taking a look at your current menu and planning for change to ensure you meet the needs of children who are vegetarian. Children who normally eat meat will also benefit from the vegetarian options. Children need at least 1 – 2 servings of meat or meat alternative foods a day.

## What is a vegetarian?

Vegetarians choose not to eat red and white meat or fish. There are many variations of vegetarian diets but the two most common types are:

- Lacto-ovo vegetarian – dairy products and eggs are eaten, but no other animal products.
- Vegan – no animal products are eaten.

## Why do people choose to be vegetarian?

- Health benefits – a vegetarian diet is generally low in saturated fat and high in vitamins and minerals;
- Religious or cultural beliefs relating to food;
- Commitment to animal rights;
- To save money;
- Dislike of meat.

## What to think about when providing vegetarian foods

Providing vegetarian food options means more than just removing meat

from a typical meal; it is important that you replace the meat with an alternative such as legumes, pulses, nuts and seeds. This will ensure that children still get adequate levels of protein. Combining different foods such as vegetables sprinkled with nuts or beans on rice will also increase protein intake. These types of foods are often cheaper than meat products, so you may be saving your centre money as well as providing health benefits to all children in your care.

It is important for all children to eat a wide variety of different foods every day to ensure a good nutritional balance. Vegetarian foods may include vegetables and fruit; wholegrain breads and cereals; legumes e.g. lentils, beans, split peas; tofu; nuts and seeds; milk and milk products; and eggs. For vegan eaters soy milk fortified with calcium can be offered and you can also provide some calcium from foods such as broccoli, green beans, almonds, hummus and tahini.

Young children need to eat small meals often – this is especially important, as vegetarian foods can be high in fibre, making the meals bulky. Children have small stomachs (make a fist with their hand and this is about the size of their stomach), which may mean they are unable to eat all the foods they need for activity and growth in one sitting. A little and often will be the key to sustaining their energy and nutrient levels.

Foods that contain iron such as wholegrain cereal and bread, lentils, cooked dried peas and beans, dried fruits and dark leafy vegetables need to be included every day. Iron is essential for transporting oxygen around the body; it also plays a role in removing carbon

dioxide. When our body becomes low in iron this can lead to reduced concentration, tiredness and increased risk of infection. Foods that contain vitamin C such as kiwifruit, tomatoes and oranges should be served alongside these foods to help iron absorption.

Low levels of vitamin B12 can become a problem, especially in vegans, as B12 is mostly found in meat, milk, cheese, yoghurt and eggs. Encourage the consumption of foods fortified with vitamin B12 such as breakfast cereals, Marmite/Vegemite and soy milks or soil-based foods such as mung beans, peas, whole wheat, lettuce and ground nuts.

## How can we introduce vegetarian options?

Easy! Think of foods such as lentils, beans, tofu and chickpeas as meat alternatives. For example you can switch mince with beans, red meat with lentils or chicken with chickpeas – these foods can be bought either dried (some legumes need to be soaked in water overnight) or ready to use in cans. They are cheap, convenient and will go a long way in your food preparation. Try an idea below:

- Heat gently in a saucepan (until cooked through): lentils + chopped tomato + grated carrot + handful of spinach = a great topping for rice or filling for pita bread.
- Place between two slices of bread: hummus + tomato + grated cheese = a vegetarian sandwich.
- In a bowl combine: drained and rinsed chickpeas + chopped carrot, celery, tomato + grated cheese + lemon juice = a crunchy chickpea salad.
- Heat gently in saucepan (until cooked through): cooked kidney beans +

tomato-based pasta sauce + finely chopped onion + carrot chopped in cubes + cooked pasta spirals = a quick bean pasta salad.

Invite families to host a cooking evening where they can share with other families a favourite meal or one from their culture. They could either demonstrate cooking the meal or bring it along for people to taste and talk about the recipe.

Encourage parents of non-vegetarian children to provide meat-free lunch boxes a couple of days a week.

## Little Scholars Learning Centre – an example of a vegetarian centre

Little Scholars Learning Centre based in Mt Roskill, Auckland, has been a vegetarian centre since July 2008. I asked the centre manager, Emma, a few questions about how this works in their centre:

“We decided to become a vegetarian centre to help promote healthy eating

habits for young children. We also wanted to provide fresh and healthy foods for the children, and reduce the amount of preservatives and additives children are exposed to.

“We have noticed that children are a lot more willing to try new foods since becoming vegetarian. We have also noticed a big difference in children's behaviour. They seem to concentrate much better now.

“Parents often comment that their children eat a lot more fruit and vegetables at home; often things they wouldn't have tried or eaten before.

“Children eat a variety of seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables every day. All of the protein in meat has been replaced using legumes and pulses, eggs, and some dairy products.

“We try to use creative and fun recipes with the children, to encourage an interest in food and keeping healthy. Two of the recipes we use for this are making funny faces and pictures with our fruit

and vegetable sticks at morning and afternoon teas. We also freeze fruit cubes (in boiled water) in ice cube trays in summer. The children really enjoy licking the ice blocks to reveal the fruit inside.”

*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.*



## Meat-free sandwich ideas

Use two slices of whole grain bread, a pita pocket or tortilla wrap and choose a tasty filling:

- Grated carrot + crushed pineapple
- Cottage cheese + chopped nuts + pinch of curry powder + sprouts
- Grated carrot + crunchy low salt peanut butter
- Creamed corn + chopped celery
- Mashed egg + unsweetened natural yoghurt
- Cottage cheese + finely chopped dates
- Mashed banana + squeeze of lemon juice
- Low salt peanut butter + honey
- Mashed banana + cream cheese + walnuts

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# Yoga for kids

## EDNA REINHARDT REPORTS

*Edna presented a workshop on creative yoga and dance for children at this year's ECC Annual Conference – the feedback was so positive, we asked her to write us an article about introducing yoga to children.*

Yoga for children is a movement vocabulary: playful, exploratory and effective.

A growing body of educational and psychological theory supports the view that music and physical movement are key elements of effective learning. Experiencing joy and knowing how to find it in our lives is also an excellent reason for pursuing these activities.

Simple yoga postures can be the first building blocks to engage children in using their bodies to express themselves. It can also build their confidence in making dances. When you move from one yoga posture to another, you have started a dance.

Music is at the heart of creative movement. Children are highly responsive to music; and if it is music that they can relate to, it naturally finds expression in movement.

The mind-body connection is a basic principal of yoga. It highlights our experience of the moment. This is what yoga for adults and children has in common, but our approach to teaching children yoga can't be earnest or goal oriented. To engage children it has to be playful.

So how do we make this experience available to young children especially if we don't have a dance or yoga background?

Yoga postures comprise forward bends, backward bends, balances, spine twists and side stretches, movements that children can do naturally.

Children are usually supple and have a good sense of their own capabilities, which you should trust. They delight in the knowledge that they can do something that is difficult for many less-flexible adults.

Conveniently, yoga postures are often named after an animal or natural object. This is one of the ways we can capture children's imagination. They are intrigued by the relationship between the body posture and its name. Here are a few activities that you can initiate using six yoga postures:

## Learning the postures and their names

### Activity 1

Demonstrate or show one of these postures at a time.

1. Emu, 2. Cobra, 3. Down Dog, 4. Mermaid, 5. Flower, 6. Crocodile

Have the children name the postures as they practise.

Show the photos and encourage the children to perform the postures as accurately as possible.

### Activity 2

Find a piece of music with a running beat (or use a drum).

As the music is playing, children run, weaving in and out of each other.

When you stop the music, call out the name of a posture. Children then stop and practise that shape. After a few seconds, start the music again and repeat this process as often as you and the children like. Make up your own variations.

## Crocodile



## Emu



## Down Dog



Photos courtesy of Edna Reinhardt.



## Creating sequences

### Activity 3

Instead of teaching the postures as individual shapes, focus on making the postures into a sequence where one flows smoothly into the other, rather like the difference between individual words and a sentence.

The emphasis here is on a smooth transition from one shape into another.

Memorising the sequence is another challenge.

### Activity 4

Children have their own ideas about the order of the sequence. Ask the children for help in changing the order you designed to something they have made up. This presents new challenges in terms of negotiating the transition from one pose to another.

## Introducing music

### Activity 5

Find two contrasting pieces of music. A slow fluid piece and a percussive piece with a faster beat. For the slow music there are many relaxation or meditation CDs available, but if you find an adagio by either Mozart or Vivaldi, you can't go wrong. For the contrasting percussive piece look for something rhythmic that isn't too fast. If it's too fast the postures are too difficult to practise accurately. "The Primitive Truth" by Brent Lewis is a CD that I find very useful (it is available over the internet from the Amazon

website). Adults really enjoy it as well. Ask the children to practise their sequence with each piece of music.

Before you introduce a piece of music, try doing some yoga sequences to the music yourself. You will get a sense of what type of music works best.

### Activity 6

Children can create variations on their sequence such as practising from 1-6 and then reversing the order (6-1). Any posture can be repeated in a sequence (e.g. From Down Dog to Mermaid and back to Down Dog.) Children can make up shapes and practise them to the music.

## Centring

### Activity 7

Crocodile is a wonderful posture for calming children: "The crocodile is lazy; too lazy to move a muscle. The crocodile is so lazy, it can't even move an eyelash."

When children are skittish, crocodile posture can be a signal to stop, breath and take stock.

### Activity 8

Place ribbon or string on the floor in a straight line. Place a small cushion on each child's head. Children walk slowly along the line balancing the cushion on their head. Use slow music to support this activity. Children may also practise sitting down and standing up whilst balancing the cushion on their head. The challenge here is not to use their hands to hold the cushion.

Here we have introduced six simple yoga postures; linked them into a sequence and practised with music.

Mermaid



Flower



By alternating fast and energetic activities with slower ones we highlight contrasts. When practising centring activities immediately after something more energetic, children's focus is heightened.

This is the basis of a yoga and dance class that can be practised at any time. Each session reinforces the positive relationship that a child naturally has with his or her body in a non-competitive environment. When shared in this playful manner, yoga is a valuable life skill.

*Edna Reinhardt has been teaching children from 2 to 20 years old for over 30 years. She is the author of Creative Yoga Games for Kids and the principal of Over the Moon Yoga and Dance Studios in Victoria Australia. Visit [www.overthemoonstudio.com](http://www.overthemoonstudio.com) or email [overthemoondance@bigpond.com](mailto:overthemoondance@bigpond.com)*

*Read the review of Creative Yoga Games for Kids in this issue of Swings & Roundabouts and enter the draw to win a set of these cards!*

Cobra



# The laws of attraction

ELIZABETH FAHEY REPORTS

*Elizabeth presented at this year's ECC Annual Conference. Delegates enjoyed her insights into staff management and we asked her to write an article for this issue of Swings & Roundabouts.*

According to newspaper reports there has never been a better time to recruit. There are plenty of applicants, and while you might need to sift through hundreds of applications to find your two or three top picks you are still guaranteed some good candidates. Sound like your business? No? Unfortunately, this doesn't appear to apply to the early childhood sector where it remains difficult to recruit qualified team members.

It is time to get more innovative in sourcing candidates, examining what it is that attracts employees to your centre, why they stay and how to get the right fit for your organisation.

## Tracking them down

With the difficulty in recruiting trained staff and the requirement to have qualified staff on board, there is more and more pressure on employers. It is important during times like this to become more innovative in sourcing candidates.

- Perhaps you could recruit from overseas and pay for international staff to complete their studies?
- Could you develop a relationship with another local centre and have someone on a job-share basis to cover peak times?
- A practice adopted by a number of other industries is to recruit individuals from schools or build a relationship with the local training providers and offer a student part-time work or work

experience while they are studying. On completion of their course they are guaranteed a job, and if you have paid for any of their programme you could of course ask them to commit to a definite period of employment following graduation.

- Those who have been out of the employment market for a while are also potentially a good target for recruitment, for example, parents going back into the workforce. Many mature workers are also happy to work part-time, flexible hours.

It is time to get creative and think outside of the square in sourcing candidates and attracting them to your particular centre.

## Luring them in

### How do you convince a potential candidate that you are the right organisation for them?

Rachael Finnemore – practice manager at Hewitt CSI – believes that it is time for the early childhood sector to become more innovative in rewarding and retaining their staff. She recommends centres take the opportunity to review their employee engagement and remuneration practices.

## Picking the perfect people

Picking the perfect person for your centre starts from the very first impression the potential employee has of your business. In other words, it is just as important that they like you as much as you like them.

## Employee engagement - is it a buzzword or a big deal?

According to Patricia Soldati a 2006 study by The Conference Board: Employee Engagement, A Review of Current Research and its Implications, found there is clear and mounting evidence that high levels of employee engagement keenly correlate to individual, group and business performance in areas such as retention, turnover, productivity, customer service and loyalty. The important thing to remember is that what drives employee engagement varies depending on the individual; for example, employees under age 44 rank "challenging environment/career growth opportunities" much higher than older workers who value "recognition and reward for their contributions".

### The eight key drivers according to Soldati are:

- Trust and integrity
- Nature of the job
- Line of sight between employee performance and company performance
- Career growth opportunities
- Pride in the company
- Coworkers and team members
- Employee development
- Relationship with one's manager

The direct relationship with one's manager is the strongest of all drivers – something to remember when recruiting and managing staff.

The first contact you have with potential candidates will generally be the job advertisement. You need to ensure that it represents the vision/values and culture of your centre – remember you need to make a good first impression just as much as the candidate does. Is your ad colorful and interesting; does it describe the role in a way that makes it desirable? Once you have written it, get other people to read it, especially current staff – ask them if they think it represents your culture. Drab, boring and predictable is not going to appeal as much as dynamic, sassy and inventive!

**“Qualified teacher required for busy childcare centre to work with children aged 2-4, must have three years experience.” OR**

**“Want to influence the future of our country? Join our exciting team of passionate and committed childcare professionals as we strive to guide and develop New Zealand’s next generation.”**

As part of your interview process ask questions that are based on the competencies required for the position – for example; rather than ask: “Do you know how to deal with a child exhibiting disruptive behaviour”, which will elicit only a yes or no answer, try asking: “Can you please talk me through a time when you had to deal with a child exhibiting disruptive behaviour? How did you approach the child? What was the outcome?”

Don’t forget as part of your interview process to do reference checking. This is crucial to finding out any issues that may have arisen in previous roles; what the candidate’s relationship was like with previous employers; would the previous manager hire them back?

An important part of getting the right person is how they fit in with the rest of the team. A recommended approach is for them to go out for coffee with one or two other staff members. This gives the candidate the opportunity to ask questions about the organisation without ‘the boss’ present and also gives the team members an opportunity to a) be part of the selection process and b) evaluate whether they think could work with the potential new person.

Most important of all DO NOT employ someone who is not right just because you are desperate. This will cause you more problems than waiting it out – it will cost you in morale for the rest of the team, stress for you, and more than likely time and money in trying to manage their performance or behaviour. This in turn may damage your employment brand. As tempting as it is, you are far better to seek other alternative recruitment methods and think outside the square than to take the first person who comes along.

## Settling them in

One of the key things you can do with a new employee is ensure they are inducted into the organisation well from day one. A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey on recruitment, retention and turnover rates show that 22% of leavers had less than six months of service. The following are some ideas to ensure a great induction process:

- Make sure they are introduced to everyone and shown around the centre;

- Take time to ensure they understand all the processes, procedures, expectations and “the way we do things around here”. Studies show that an effective induction has a significant impact on the longevity of employment; and
- Ensure you communicate the centre’s mission and values. This is a way of enabling you to communicate with your team and any new potential recruits what it is that your business stands for and what the expectations will be of new employees.

Finding and keeping the right person for your centre can often seem like you’re waiting for all the planets to align. However, by ensuring you are clear about the values of your business, the type, skills and experience of the person you are looking for, finding out what candidates are looking for, rewarding them well and inducting them properly you will ensure you have committed, long-term employees that fit with your business.

*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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# Profile: Pubitha Thurai Rajah

SARAH ELLICH REPORTS



*ECC Publications Manager Sarah Ellich met Pubitha Thurai Rajah at this year's Early Childhood Council Annual Conference in Rotorua. Pubitha works as a teacher at Small Kauri Early Childhood Centre. Pubitha is profoundly deaf – she speaks clearly and is fluent in sign language and is able to read lips. In this profile, Sarah talks to Pubitha about her work.*

**Q. What made you want to get into early childhood education? Was it**

**something you always wanted to do?**

**A.** Working with young children has always been my passion. Before coming to New Zealand, I used to teach deaf children in Malaysia, starting from preschool to high school. For me the early childhood area is one of the unique areas where I can value and respect

the children's abilities and capabilities. It is amazing to see young children working to develop their own problem solving at such a young age. ECE is a challenging environment and it shows me each child's achievement to develop and celebrate in various ways.

**Q. Are you a qualified teacher?**

**A.** Yes, I completed my Diploma in Teaching and Bachelor of Education at Unitec, New Zealand.

**Q. How was your experience studying? Could you say a bit about the challenges you faced being deaf in a study environment aimed at hearing students? What support was available to you in this regard?**

**A.** The first few years, I found it very hard but with the help from a note taker and an interpreter and also support from the lecturers in the ECE area, I managed to complete my studies.

**Q. What other support is available to you in your work? For example, I noticed**

**you had access to a sign language interpreter at our conference.**

**A.** I had to go through Workbridge and Elevator for access support for an interpreter service. Usually I apply for interpreter services for conferences, staff meetings and professional development courses.

**Q. What is your role at the Small Kauri Early Childhood Centre?**

**A.** I am an early childhood teacher. My teaching practice is based on the centre's aims and the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, Te Whariki. It is my role as an educator to provide the right pathway for the future of young children. I value and respect the children's capabilities and interest in their own unique ways.

**Q. In your experience working with hearing children at Small Kauri Early Childhood Centre, what has been the children's response to your deafness? Do they understand what it means? Do they ask you lots of questions regarding this?**

**A.** When I first started working at Small Kauri, I made a little book with pictures of myself using the hearing aid, and explained a few things that linked to my deafness.

In the book it also shows the children how to approach me; they are encouraged to tap me on my shoulder. If they need something from me, or if they want to talk to me, they have to look face to face as it will be easier for me to understand them. The children at Small Kauri are also encouraged to use body language to describe their needs.

*Photo courtesy of Pubitha Thurai Rajah.*

Yes, children tend to ask a lot of questions about my deafness. Some of the questions are:

1. Pubi, what is that? (Pointing to my hearing aid).
2. Why are you wearing that? (Referring to my hearing aid)
3. How did it happen? (Asking me how I became deaf)
4. Why do you talk differently? (Amazing that they recognise the different sounds between a deaf and hearing person)
5. Why can't you go outside when it is raining? (I explained that my hearing aid is not waterproof. Now when it rains the children will say to me to wait inside and when I ask why, they reply "Because your hearing aid is not waterproof")

When I find it difficult to understand what the children are saying, I will ask a staff member to explain to me.

**Q. What special attributes are you able to bring to your teaching role at Small Kauri? For example, do you teach sign language to the children?**

**A.** Sometimes I do sign language to the children because sign language is also the third official language of New Zealand beside English and Te Reo Maori.

**Q. What do you find most rewarding about teaching as a career?**

**A.** My teaching career provides me with an opportunity to encourage children to be independent learners, as Te Whariki states: "Children to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators".

**Q. What are your hopes for the future of your teaching career? Are there any particular goals you would like to achieve?**

**A.** My future goal is that I wish to obtain my full Teacher Registration.

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# What's in "The Box"?

**WELCOME! WELCOME! TO OUR MAD MATHEMATICAL WONDERLAND. WHERE YOU WILL EXPERIENCE A 'SPATIAL SENSATION' AND 'GEOMETRICAL' CONVERSATION.**

**BY VICTORIA FARQUHAR-AYSON AND KAREN PRINCE**



*From left to right: The Know-All-Maths Octopus, and the Mad Mathematical Hatter.*

Read the Directions and Directly you will be Directed in the right Direction.....so...Come this Way!! Go that Way!! UP, DOWN, and maybe AROUND OR...just read all about our "Mad Mathematical Wonderland".

Howdy do! To each and every **One** of you! Although it is unfortunate that I am not acquainted with every **Single One** of you. 'Mad **Mathematical** Hatter' is my name and it's very nice to meet

you all the **Same**. No! I'm NOT the 'Mad Hatter' in Alice's Wonderland Scam.... I live in a **Parallel** land. The 'World of **Mathematical** Magic Land'. The **Difference** being my world is not a dream, but a **Mathematical** Extreme, where the Planet Earth is **Maths** Supreme.

Now, the **First** thing you need to understand in this Earthly Wonderland, is that...**Maths** is Everywhere! And Everything is **Maths**! So this is what

**No! How foolish of you....I thought I was a **Part** of this article too?!**

Oh Dear! How remiss of me? Please let me introduce my Wise Old Accomplice, '**Know-All-Maths** Octopus'. She will undoubtedly have a theoretical slant to this Mad **Mathematical** chant.

**Yes indeed I do, and here's my **First** fact for you...** (Oh no! Here we go) ... **Did you know that, Friedrich Froebel (in the 1850s) suggested that **Geometric Form**, and its manipulation in **Space**, are the **First Math** concepts a child should investigate? With this in mind, we need to ensure that every child explore, the physical (**Mathematical**) world they so much adore.**

Okay, Okay. That's enough of that for now....WHAT'S **IN** 'THE BOX'?

**What Box? There are Boxes Everywhere!**

This Box! That Box! Which Box! Who Cares? WHAT'S **IN** 'THE BOX'?

**There's Nothing **In** the Box!**

Please let me give you a gentle **Pull**, and suggest that 'The Box' is completely **Full**. Even though, 'No Thing' is actually **In** there, 'The Box' is totally **Full** of invisible Air.

**But surely, Something can't be **Full** of Nothing but Air!**

you need to do. **Open** your eyes and **Open** your mind too, and see what this **Mathematical** world has to offer you.

**Hmm Hmmm ..... Haven't you forgotten something?**

Why Yes! Of course! I really do apologise. I should have mentioned that it's not a Matter of finding **Mathematical** Matter, but having knowledge of what **Maths** does Matter!



*Photos courtesy of Talita Mostert.*





Oh! Come on Now! Please think **Outside** the **Square**. WHAT'S **IN** 'THE BOX'?

**Okay, I'm In 'The Box'!! And...Hey! This Box has 6 Sides, consisting of 3 Different Oblong Shapes of Different Size.**

Hip! Hip! HOORAY, you're finally thinking MY way! So now it's **Time**, to give you task **Number 2**. Think of **10 Different** actions of which you can do.

**Well...I can put things In the Box, On the Box, Around the Box, Behind the Box, On Top of the Box, Beside the Box, Under the Box, In the Corner of the Box and even Over the Top of the Box!**

Yes, Yes, Yes, that's all very fine, but in **Total** only comes to **9**....You could also consider...**Collecting** some Boxes, **Matching** some Boxes and **Turning** some Boxes **OVER**....**Line Up** the Boxes, **Pile Up** the Boxes and **Tip All** the Boxes **OVER**.

**Thank you my friend, for opening the door, to the Endless possibilities, both children and teachers can explore. You have Opened my eyes and thrown a new light, on the importance of tapping Into Maths real life.**

Good for you, **Know-All-Maths** Octopus! How about you take a moment to reflect, and decide on which **One** of these statements is correct...

'Seven and Five is Twelve OR 'Seven and Five are Twelve?

Please do take your **Time**, I'm sure you will be fine, but in the meantime, lets Ponder and Wonder, about the concept of **Under**?

**No, No, No...Over is the way to go!**

Okay! **Over** we will go if you say so.

**Over I go, Over you go, how High Over can we go? Over to the Left and Over to the Right, Over, Under but hold on tight. This Box is now a flying machine, going Over clouds and Even In Between. Fast and Slow, Over the town, Our flying machine is now Upside Down.**

**Didn't you know that...."Location and Direction are key to developing an understanding of Space and Shape". Knowing where something is, and which way to move, enables children to communicate important Spatial ideas.** <sup>(2)</sup>

Stop it, Stop it, that's quite enough... How about we think **Up**, a story **Around** the word **Up**? But, **First** of all, we must set the scene; create a Box house, the likes of which this 'Mathematical Wonderland' has never seen. With just a **Few Added** accessories, like scissors, glue and coloured confetti, our house is now complete including all amenities.

So, here's a story about **Up**!...

**Once Up** on a Time, I woke **Up** at **Half past Nine**. I got **Up** and **Out** of bed, opened **Up** the door and went **Up** the stairs. Sitting **Up** at the table, I drank **Up** my tea, then quickly tidied **Up** the mess so you would not see. **After** I dried **Up** the dishes and **Lined Up** my clothes, I did **Up** my laces and went **Up** the road.

When we met **Up**, you looked **Up** at me, opened **Up** your bag and gave me the discs you had backed **Up**, **Times Three**. Realising the **Time**, I hurried **Up Back** home, hung **Up** my coat and got **On** the phone.

Just **Before** bed, I cooked **Up** a brew, and ate it all **Up**.... Phew!

Now that this story has now come to an **End**. I **Closed Up** this wonderful book and curled **Up In** my sleeping nook.

**Oh very good, sir, and...did you know?....Children need to gain an understanding of how One Single word can have Multiple applications, such as the concepts of Up-ness and Down-ness. This will enable them to master our everyday language, and confidently participate in conversations about Space, Direction, Position and Size.**

It's **Time** now to go in a **Different Direction**, not the **Left** or **Right** kind of **Direction**, but **One** with a **Difference**!





**Think outside the square. Work out how we know the answer.**

**1. Think of a number between 1-10**

- Double it
- Add 6
- Halve it
- Minus it with the number you started with
- And the answer is 3

**2. Think of a number between 1-100**

- Double it
- Add 35
- Halve it
- Minus it with the number you started with
- And the answer is 17.5

**You mean we're going to look from the *Other Side* of the *Square*?**

Yes, let's be aware of the *Amount* of *Squares* Everywhere.

**A window is a *Square* and that table *Over* there. The *Bottom* of a chair is a *Square* and so is the floor *Down* there.**

But look at the *Square*, look at it, look. What makes this *Square*, a *Square*? Take a good look.

**Well....it takes *4 Straight Lines* connected *Together*, making *4 Equal Sides*, *Parallel* to each other. Thus creating, *4 Equal Corners* of *90 Degree Angles* that do not get *In* a great *Big* tangle!**

Brilliant my friend! Your description is perfect to the *End*.

**Yes, this is the result of some very fine scaffolding by you my friend! You saw potential and took the opportunity to support my learning in a very positive way. You placed particular emphasis on our cooperative play, within our social Wonderland game!**

So, so, so.... 'The moral of this Game' is to look at the World in a *Mathematical* Way, and you'll find *Mathematical* things to Say and Play!

**Oh my goodness, my head is *Spinning Round* and *Round*.**

Did you know the world is Round?

***Round is Round* it has no *End* and that's how *Long* you'll be my friend!**

**The *End***

P.S. Knock Knock

**Who's There?**

Halfa

**Halfa Who?**

Half a box is better than none!

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Victoria Farquhar-Ayson is the Curriculum Manager and Karen Prince a Curriculum Advisor for Kindercare Learning Centres, based at Kindercare's Support Office in Auckland. A significant aspect of Victoria and Karen's curriculum portfolio encompasses researching, planning and delivery of workshops to Kindercare teachers. Professional development is a core focus for Kindercare, and workshops and seminars are designed to up-skill and meet the specific needs of Kindercare's babies, toddlers and preschool teachers. A "Mathematical Madness" workshop was delivered at the Early Childhood Council Conference in Rotorua in April 2009. Contact Victoria on [victoria@kindercare.co.nz](mailto:victoria@kindercare.co.nz), or visit [www.kindercare.co.nz](http://www.kindercare.co.nz)

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# Conductive education as an aspect of inclusive early childhood education

ILDIKO DITRICH REPORTS

*Ildiko Ditrach and her colleague Barbara Csepccsenyi presented a workshop at this year's ECC Annual Conference in which they described their Conductive Education centre and the programmes they run. Delegates gained a lot of valuable information from the presentation and it has elicited a great deal of post-conference interest for the centre, with teachers interested in how they can make their centre more welcoming and inclusive for special needs children.*

The intent of this article is to highlight how a persistent and purposeful inclusive teaching approach by early childhood teachers could empower children with special needs. Each child at our centre has a different degree of development delay in some or all areas.

Andras Peto, the founder of Conductive Education (CE), based his method on the belief that the brain's capacity could form new, activity-dependent, synaptic connections to compensate for damaged areas, thus enabling learning to take place. One of the most favourable ways of establishing new pathways in the brain to ensure the acquisition of new life skills is through active participation in daily routine activities.

Based on his assumption, our centre focuses on providing an active daily routine for children with cerebral palsy (CP).

The Focus 2000 Conductive Education programme is based on Peto's educational approach and:

**“Having expectations means that you are certain that they can learn, improve, achieve and fulfill their dreams.”**

- Is a learning process;
- Offers a holistic, integrated approach to education;
- Emphasises active participation as the key for development;
- Seeks to change the person not the environment;
- Provides functional activities as tools for learning and teaching;
- Teaches a way of living to reach the full potential of individuals; and
- Incorporates Te Whariki where “teachers are required to plan, implement, and evaluate curriculum in which there are equitable opportunities for learning for each child irrespective of gender, ability, age, ethnicity or background” (Ministry of Education, 1998, p.40).

**How then does one follow and implement the**

**principles of Conductive Education in an early childhood centre?**

When I was asked to give practical advice on how to implement CE in mainstream early childhood education by early childhood teachers, it gave me lots of food for thought. Firstly, I do believe that CE can be delivered only by trained conductors. Secondly, without knowing the child specifically, it would be irresponsible for me to give precise recommendations for any children with CP or developmental delay.

What I have aimed to do is to provide some general ideas that will hopefully support teachers in their planning and implementation of a more inclusive daily routine for children with special needs. Please bear in mind that children's response to these particular ideas can vary greatly, therefore constant evaluation and possibly modification of the plan may be required from you as an early childhood teacher.

**Key objectives of promoting appropriate levels of independence for children with CP/global developmental delay are:**

- Know the child's ability, interest and stage of his/her overall development;
- Set achievable goals and expectation in collaboration with family/whanau and the team, based on the current ability of the child;
- Identify small action steps to attain the specific goals;

*Photo courtesy of Ildiko Ditrach.*

- Implement these action steps into his/her daily routine/ activities. Repeating the same movements/short activity is highly advisable on a daily basis as a way of learning new skills. Repetition of same routines/activities in the home environment should be discussed with families/whanau;
- Communication between the team and the family/whanau, regarding any achievement or issues;
- Provide learning opportunities and experiences within existing routines and activities in the centre in a consistent manner; and
- Involve the children in small group activities with or sometimes without one-on-one support depending on his/her ability. Revisit the same activity/ learning environment on a regular basis. It will give him/her more time to engage in these activities more and more actively.
- Break down the planned activity into small sequenced steps. Always complete the sub activity before you move to the next sequence. Give feedback when the activity is finished and positively reinforce any movement that has been achieved;
- Respond to their emerging interest by questioning so you find out what it is they are interested in;
- Make the learning environment accessible for them at all times – resources should be at floor level as well as on tables and walls – enable them to revisit any of them; and
- Collect photos and other evidence showing the children's activities. This can help with assessing progress, their interest in a given activity, or form a basis for planning or sharing information within the team and with families/whanau.

### **Practical general advice on how to engage children with CP or global developmental delay more actively in routines/ activities**

- Always get their attention first either with a toy, a song or with the planned activity itself by showing the resources that will be used;
- Give them more time to respond to visual and/or verbal cues either verbally or by gestures. Giving children multi-sensory stimulation (in some cases) can increase their ability to participate more actively and purposefully;
- Wait for their response (if any) and then confirm their choice making a statement such as “ So you would like to paint today...”;
- Position yourself facing them when you communicate with them and on the side when you assist them during their activity. Each child has a hand dominance, and it is advisable to sit on that side. However, with more severely affected children you will also need to support the more affected side by stabilising its position with hand-over-hand help;
- Always ask them to look at their movement (hand-eye control). If they lose concentration, stop the activity. As a start you may involve them for couple of minutes at a time; as their motivation and skills improve so will their attention span;

Finally I would like to stress the significant importance of having realistic expectations of children with special needs. Over my years of teaching experience I frequently get told by others not to have expectations of disabled children. People tend to think that these children have enough challenges managing daily life and don't need us to add to their challenges with unrealistic expectations.

I cannot agree with that. Having expectations means that you are certain that they can learn, improve, achieve and fulfill their dreams. Having expectations reinforces that they have potential, that they have so many things to offer to others and that they can learn many things with appropriate support from people around them – most importantly from their teachers and families/ whanau. Sorrow cannot help anyone to overcome disability but setting expectations can.

*Ildiko Ditrach has overseas Bachelor of Primary School Teaching and Bachelor Degree in Conductive Education degrees. She holds a New Zealand Diploma of Teaching ECE and Bachelor in Teaching ECE and is a registered early childhood teacher and supervisor at the Focus 2000 centre. She has been working with special needs children for 13 years. Feel free to email Ildiko if you have any queries about how to make your early childhood setting more inclusive for a specific child with CP, or if you are interested in Focus 2000's free child assessment, which helps with setting specific goals and identifying individualised tasks in order to achieve these goals: [lditrach@focus2000.org.nz](mailto:lditrach@focus2000.org.nz)*



*From left to right: Max Esapour with Ildiko*

# Inclusive technology ideas for an early childhood curriculum

MARGARET PORTER AND SUNEL SWART REPORT

Technology has the potential to be a useful tool. However, not all early childhood centres can afford to implement the latest, greatest

information and communications technology (ICT) in their settings. Yesterday's technologies can provide rich technological learning experiences

for children. In celebrating these technologies your centre will be developing an approach to inclusive and sustainable technological

## Integrating ICT into play

The following are three interconnected ideas for teachers when implementing the oldest and the newest ICT into the children's play in the following ways:

### Role play

Old cameras, telephones and such, can be integrated throughout the centre environment as props to support role play. There are excellent opportunities for teachers to cooperatively play along with the children following the lead of the children, and fostering an interest in perhaps unfamiliar and curious objects that are the forebears to their more familiar technological environment. Think of the interest children have in visiting museums of technology and of the spontaneous play that can emerge from manipulating these tools, and of course engaging with a wide range of mathematical concepts.

### The work station

A well supervised work table with appropriately sized hand tools,

goggles, trays and small containers can be an excellent setting for discovering how things work. Parent and especially grandparent volunteers can help to ensure a safe working environment, and also provide their own knowledge, expertise and reflections upon the technologies that are being researched by the children. Exploring the 'guts' of machines encourages cognitively rich questions about how things work, about structure, form, systems, and hopefully, about how to put things back together again.

In addition, this type of activity can lead to many extended play opportunities and encourages the contribution of the community in ways that reflect the principles of Te Whariki. These kinds of knowledge that are associated with old technologies reflect valuable traditions and therefore can maintain our connections to our past generations.

Of course, this activity may not be suitable for some children, as it involves handling small and consumable components. It is also

important to make sure that the things you want to pull apart with the children do not contain toxic components. (This information is readily available at local councils and on the Internet.)

### Cultural tools

Culture and technology are intimately related. The early childhood centre is an excellent setting for bringing together different cultural tools and for encouraging children, teachers, parents and families to create relationships that are celebrated through technology. The tools themselves are often the means to pass on stories, which supports the development of linguistic diversity within the centre community through the various technologies that enrich our lives – both old and new.

Documentation of the centre's discovery of the technologies that play an important part of each culture will additionally provide the community with an important resource to return to over the years.



development, encouraging a philosophy of saving and caring for our tools, machinery, and appliances, rather than adding them to the rapidly expanding inorganic rubbish heaps.

This article will look at the value of the old computers, cameras, typewriters, calculators and telephones that are standard learning resources for many early childhood environments. While there is no doubting the amazing contribution of newer digital ICTs, their older relations are important resources that can weave together the teacher, child and family in an inclusive learning partnership.

First, it is important to note that old technology is still technology, and it is still readily available, and often cheap or free. For instance when businesses buy the newest technology they are often willing to donate their older equipment. Repair shops are also goldmines for older computer technologies that have been upgraded or fixed and are for sale for a minimal fee. Of course many

early childhood centres may already have an abundance of older donated and unused computers, telephones and cameras – whether working or not, these technologies are rich in information and communication, and serve as a site for amazing discovery and dramatic play opportunities for children.

## Summary

These ideas are closely aligned to the principles of inclusive practice, emphasising the importance of respect, seeing diversity as a positive, and using technology to build self-esteem and a sense of contribution. As with all aspects of the early childhood curriculum, careful implementation of old and new technologies requires observation of a wide range of factors that influence the use of technologies in the centre, and also of how it is being used, particularly when ensuring that all children have the opportunity to explore their interests.

The direct benefits to children, their families and communities, are the most important factors in implementing the use of technology into the early childhood setting. ICT can become the bridge between the centre and the home. Parent involvement is enriched as many more doors of interaction and opportunities are opened up for the children, families and teachers. Old ICT can continue to serve well the families, teachers, children and centres. Enjoy the benefits of implementing these ideas into your centres and refreshing the technological environment!

For the latest research, discussions, and also great practical ideas for implementing technology in early childhood, with a particular focus on sustainable development, visit [www.327matters.org/](http://www.327matters.org/) hosted by Iram and John Siraj-Blatchford.

*Margaret Porter and Sunel Swart are both lecturers at New Zealand Tertiary College's Christchurch campus.*



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# An oasis of calm

ROBIN CHAMPION REPORTS

*Robin presented on this topic at the ECC Annual Conference and many delegates said they got some great ideas from her workshop. With centres now having to provide justification for having children sleeping in open areas, issues of noise and noise reduction around the centre may become more prevalent.*

**"The monotony and solitude of a quiet life stimulates the creative mind." - Albert Einstein**

Memories of my own childhood are of a fairly peaceful time where I had opportunities to spend lengths of time in quiet and solitude. As an adult I've achieved a lot, which I put down in large part to a quiet life that has

stimulated my creativity. Based on these experiences I had formed assumptions about the experience of today's children. I assumed that they have the same freedom to find the same places of tranquility that I had.

When I began ECE teaching, I quickly discovered that my assumptions were unfounded. Many areas within a centre had noise levels that were very difficult to work in. In conversation with children or adults I often had to raise my voice in order to be heard and ask other to repeat themselves. The delightful conversations children have with each other, the self-talk of children engaging in imaginary play and the babble of infants are frequently drowned out by other noises.

Taking steps to create calm within your centre can be important for a number of reasons. Children should have opportunities to have quiet times if they choose, and both children and teachers should be able to work within an environment that has sustainable and tolerable noise levels. You could consider developing a centre noise policy, involving your staff in the discussions to make sure everyone's needs are met. Here are some practical suggestions for moving towards your own centre calm.

Easiest to solve are issues where the physical environment can be changed. Soft-close on doors or cupboards, the addition of mats or carpets or the removal

## Bring down the noise

Focusing on the average limit of 85 decibels over 8 hours, staff meeting time can be allocated for brainstorming ways to bring down the average. Here are some of my own suggestions that could be used to start the discussion ball rolling.

Discourage staff and parents from engaging in their own personal conversations over the top of centre events such as mat times, story times, and meal times.

Acknowledge children who speak at an appropriate conversational volume. "I like the way you use your quiet voice".

Reverse the 'café effect'. The 'café effect' refers to the way that noise level increases because people get louder. People get louder because they can't hear. To reverse the effect, adults need to make a conscious effort to lower their voices rather than raise them.

Don't use noise to mask annoying noise. For example, putting on CDs at the noisiest time of the day not only adds to the 'café effect' but it can also mean that you could exceed your average daily decibel limit.

Create a centre environment where it's not OK to talk across the room. If engaged in conversation, move so you are next to the person you are talking to.

of unnecessarily noisy toys can all quickly reduce noise. Can the physical environment be managed to reduce unnecessary noise? A walk through can be done where staff can analyse the 'noise landscape' of your particular centre. Is there a pattern of where children like to be quiet or not-so-quiet? If so, encourage quiet play in areas where this seems to occur naturally by using shelves, cushions and other furniture to provide a sheltered area. Let children know it's okay to be noisier when they are outside or in open areas of the centre.

Noise describes the sounds that we would prefer not to hear. Allocate some meeting time to identifying noises in your centre. What noises really get on your nerves? Ask the children about centre noises. What do they like or not like. This is a policy area that children should be involved with. Brainstorm ideas for reducing these noises.

Hazardous noise is classed as noise that is 140 decibels or more if it occurs in a short burst (impact noise), or an average of 85 decibels if sustained over an 8-hour period. If either of these measurements are exceeded, health organisations recommend that hearing protection be used. A sound meter can be purchased for about \$120 to allow you to measure your centre noise. While there are a number of events within centre life that could measure 140 decibels (for example a crying child – the noise is intense and very close to the

ear of the teacher who is comforting the child), the average of 85 over 8 hours is concerning because many of us are not aware that this can be hazardous. If you don't have a sound meter, the following indication can be used: noise is hazardous if it hurts your ears or if you have to raise your voice to be heard by someone two metres away.

In this article I have provided some ideas about how you can create a centre environment that is quieter and more comfortable for adults and children. In the next issue of *Swings & Roundabouts* I'll continue with the 'calm' theme. How to move towards a centre culture where calm is valued will be discussed. This will include: ways in which teachers can acknowledge children; music; mat times; pace; rolling morning teas and individual disposition.



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# Thinking to change the world: becoming critical meaning makers in early childhood

PROFESSOR GLENDA MacNAUGHTON REPORTS

*Glenda was a keynote speaker and workshop presenter at this year's ECC Annual Conference. Our delegates really enjoyed her unique insights, so we asked her to share these ideas in Swings & Roundabouts.*

Critical meaning makers are people who think about knowledge-power relationships. Knowledge-power relationships refer to the competition between social groups (for instance, early childhood professionals and parents) to get their knowledge accepted as truth (Foucault, 1977).

We compete to have our understandings of the world seen as the true understanding because truth carries authority. Its authority lies in its claim to be factual and, therefore, correct. For instance, a developmental truth about a child is a statement about how a child develops that is factual and, therefore, correct. Developmental psychology is a Minority World social science whose truths include statements that explain and predict normal child development, enabling developmental psychologists to identify developmental delay and abnormal development. They carry authority because they assert that they are true, factual and therefore correct.

However, for Foucault (see MacNaughton, 2005) there is never a single truth about us as social beings and about our

social and cultural world. Multiple truths compete for the status of the most valid. To explore this idea, I devised an exercise: 'Truth of the Chair'.

## **'Truth of the Chair': an exercise for reflecting on truth and power**

Look at a chair – what do you see? Is it a seat? Of course, chairs are things that we sit on. That is a fact. That is a truth. Isn't it?

### **Now, consider the following statements about the chair and its truths.**

- A chair and its truths (1): You are the owner of a company that manufactures furniture. Your company produces this chair and it has not been selling well. Unless you stop production you are likely to go bankrupt. To you, this chair is an economic disaster.
- A chair and its truths (2): You are an Indigenous person living in the Pilbara in Western Australia. Parts of this chair are made from steel and the steel is made from iron ore mined on your traditional land. The mine is getting deeper and larger... and as it grows, so does your pain for the land. To you, this chair represents the rape and economic exploitation of your traditional land.



**“We compete to have our understandings of the world seen as the true understanding ...truth carries authority. Its authority lies in its claim to be factual and, therefore, correct.”**

- A chair and its truths (3): You are four years old and this chair is in your home. It is a train that you have been driving so that you can visit your grandma up north. To you, the chair is a train that takes you to a special person.
- A chair and its truths (4): You work in the automotive industry and you have just been 'laid off'. You used a credit company to pay for the chair and the company is about to repossess it. To you, the chair is now unaffordable and it represents the unattainable.
- A chair and its truths (5): You helped to make this chair. You live in South East Asia and you are paid less per year than the chair will cost to buy in Australia. To you, this chair is the result of your exploitation and is a reminder of the gap between rich and poor globally.
- A chair and its truths (6): You are the owner of a furniture store that stocks this chair and you live in a large, two storey house in a leafy suburb of Adelaide. This chair is a bestseller in your furniture store. It has produced such good profits this year for you that you have decided to upgrade your car to a Mercedes. To you, this chair is 'the best thing since sliced bread'.
- A chair and its truths (7): You are a furniture designer committed to high-end, unique designs. A friend has just bought two of these chairs and from your perspective, they've made a big mistake. The chair embodies everything you hate about mass-produced furniture. How do you tell your friend? To you, this chair is an aesthetic outrage and, if you tell your friend this, it could end the friendship.
- A chair and its truths (8): You are a furniture designer for a large company and you designed this chair. It is your first commercial design, you think that it is your best design so far and you're proud of it! To you, this chair expresses your self-esteem as a designer.

Now take a moment to reflect critically on the politics of the 'truths of the chair', using these questions:

- Which truth(s) are most familiar to you? Why?
- Whose truth is missing?

- Which truth do you see as most valid? Why?
- Whose truth has most power to influence others? How?
- Who benefits and who loses if we choose one truth over another?

### The 'Truth of the Child': an exercise for reflecting on truth and power

Let's use the same method of critical reflection in another exercise, this time looking at a child. Here is a factual statement about child development and hyperactivity:

*Hyperactivity: hyperactive children cannot sit still; are restless and are easily distracted; have trouble sticking to any activity; fidget; cannot concentrate, cannot pay attention for long; are impulsive; have difficulty waiting their turn in games or groups; or cannot settle to do anything for more than a few moments.* Understand the Early Years Early Childhood Development Study in the (KSI Research International 2003).

Suppose that a child from an ethnic minority in your context was described as hyperactive. Reflect critically on the politics of the truth of the hyperactive child using these questions:

- How familiar to you is this truth about hyperactivity?
- Do you see this truth as valid? Why?
- Does this truth influence what you do with young children? How? Does it influence other people you know? How?
- Whose truth about hyperactivity and the ethnic minority child is missing?
- Who benefits and who loses by seeing this statement of the hyperactive child as true?
- Who is silenced or marginalised by this truth of the hyperactive child?

In early childhood education, truths such as 'developmental normality or abnormality' have implications for social justice and equity:

Developmental truths about the child operate as a regime of truth in different ways in different places, but many children and many adults have experienced their consistently inequitable and unjust effects (Smith 2000; Campbell

& Smith 2001; MacNaughton 2001; Cannella 1999; Johnson & Jipson 2001; Viruru & Cannella 2001). For instance, Valdivia (1999) discussed a series of developmental skills, the emergence of which depended on responses to tactile stimulation, verbal interaction, nonverbal interaction, and feeding routines. These ways of interacting are culturally specific and so it's no surprise that researchers in the USA found different responses in children from African-American, Chinese-American, Mexican-American, Hopi and Navajo families. Nonetheless, when researchers found developmental differences in children from different cultures, they assessed them as developmental delay and placed these children in programs to redress their delays. In this way, the researchers defined the 'normal' interactions of these children and their families as problematic and denied them the opportunity to grow 'normally' within their own culture. (MacNaughton, 2005, p. 37)

To produce more equitable knowledge-power relationships, we must seek multiple truths. In particular, we must identify those truths that are normally associated with privileged groups in society and those truths that are normally associated with minority groups in society. Then we must attend to the truths of the minority groups and ask, 'Who benefits and who loses by not acting on these truths?'. In this way, as we begin to think differently, we can begin to act differently by disrupting the unfair politics of truth that disadvantage those with least power and influence in the field.

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*Professor Glenda MacNaughton works at the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, The Melbourne Graduate School of Education, at the University of Melbourne.*

# Announcing a new issue of the New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education Journal

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## Articles in this new issue:

### **Reviewing the Reviewers: Commentary on the Education Review Office's Evaluation of Assessment in Early Childhood Settings by Ken E. Blaiklock**

This paper argues that it is inappropriate for the Education Review Office to sanction an approach to assessment (Learning Stories) that is not adequately supported by research evidence.

### **Dictators and Directors: Leadership Roles in Children's Collaborative Play by Brent Mawson**

This article reports on factors that appear to initiate and maintain collaborative play between young children in early childhood settings.

### **Recognising a Child's Perspective of Time in Daily Practice by Marianne Knaus**

What often happens within a child's day is dictated by the routines and schedules set by the adults in his/her life. The lived experiences of young

children observed in this study reveal that their understanding of time differs to that of adults.

### **Accentuating the Otherness of Men in Early Childhood Education by Alex M. Williams**

An analysis of nine 'Personal Stories' posted on the TeachNZ website was conducted to gain an insight into how men can be positioned as outside the norm and how the differences between male and female early childhood educators can be accentuated.

### **Everyday Cultural Development in the Life of a Three-year-old Child by Hilary Monk**

Social interaction is impossible without words and words are nothing without shared meaning. The research reported looks at the home context that is full of shared cultural understandings.

### **Parents as Educators at Playcentre by Suzanne Manning and Judith Loveridge**

This paper reports on a study that investigated four parents as educators'

use of their life experiences, skills and knowledge in their teaching practice in an urban playcentre.

### **Researching Children's Musical Learning Experiences within a Learning Story Framework by Berenice Nyland and Jill Ferris**

This paper reports on research into the musical experiences and competence of children. It draws on socio-cultural theory in documenting children's learning through Learning Stories.

### **Bicultural Meanings: What do Practitioners Say? By Chris Jenkin**

Many educators report difficulties with the expectation of a bicultural curriculum. This article reports on findings from a survey that explored practices and understandings of 'biculturalism'.

### **Planning, Undertaking and Disseminating Research in Early Childhood Settings: An Ethical Framework by Joy Cullen, Helen Hedges and Jane Bone**

This statement is intended to guide academic researchers, teachers,



postgraduate students, managers and any other persons who may be involved, who plan to conduct or participate in research in centres.

### Building Positive Research Relationships with Young Children by Rosemary D. Richards

This research investigated four young Australian children's experiences of art in their homes, and as they moved from centres to schools.

### The Hearing Status and Exposure to Noise of Early Childhood Centre Staff by Stuart J. McLaren and Philip J. Dickinson

A study investigated the sound exposure that children and teachers receive in childcare centres. Requests

for concurrent work to evaluate the hearing acuity of the teachers resulted in a small extra study.

### Embedding Self, Others, Culture and Ethics in Intercultural Research by Karen Liang Guo

This paper highlights the tensions for researchers in maintaining ethical principles while simultaneously responding to interpersonal and cultural demands in an intercultural centre setting.

### Writing Research: Narrative, Bricolage and Everyday Spirituality by Jane Bone

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<b>If Total A is 25 or less, Calculate your Amount Payable here:</b> <table> <tr><td>Total A = 17 or less:</td><td>\$253.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$408.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 18:</td><td>\$264.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$419.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 19:</td><td>\$284.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$439.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 20:</td><td>\$304.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$459.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 21:</td><td>\$324.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$479.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 22:</td><td>\$344.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$499.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 23:</td><td>\$365.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$520.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 24:</td><td>\$386.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$541.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total A = 25:</td><td>\$407.00</td><td>+ \$155.00</td><td>= \$562.00</td></tr> </table>		Total A = 17 or less:	\$253.00	+ \$155.00	= \$408.00	Total A = 18:	\$264.00	+ \$155.00	= \$419.00	Total A = 19:	\$284.00	+ \$155.00	= \$439.00	Total A = 20:	\$304.00	+ \$155.00	= \$459.00	Total A = 21:	\$324.00	+ \$155.00	= \$479.00	Total A = 22:	\$344.00	+ \$155.00	= \$499.00	Total A = 23:	\$365.00	+ \$155.00	= \$520.00	Total A = 24:	\$386.00	+ \$155.00	= \$541.00	Total A = 25:	\$407.00	+ \$155.00	= \$562.00	<b>This is Total B</b>            
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<b>If Total A is 26 -119 (Inclusive), Calculate your Amount Payable here:</b> Enter <b>Total A</b> _____ -     25 = _____ x \$ 4.00 <b>This is Total C</b> = \$ _____  First 25 places: \$407.00 + <b>Total C</b> \$ _____ + \$155.00		<b>This is Total B</b>           																																				
<b>If Total A is 120 and over, Calculate your Amount Payable here:</b> Enter <b>Total A</b> _____ -     119 = _____ x \$ 1.00 <b>This is Total C</b> = \$ _____  First 119 places: \$794.00 + <b>Total C</b> \$ _____ + \$155.00		<b>This is Total B</b>           																																				

**Payment Details**

Enter Amount Payable (**Total B** from calculation sheet above): \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ **Cheque**      Either POST this form with cheque. [Make cheque payable to EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL]
- ☐ **Internet**      Or make the payment over the INTERNET  
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 Please make sure to put your centre name AND 5 digit Ministry of Education  
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- ☐ **Credit Card**      Or FAX or POST this form with credit card details:

☐ VISA    ☐ MASTERCARD      Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

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Expiry Date

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Card No



# The Infant Mental Health Approach: What is it?

**DR KIMBERLEY POWELL**

**INFANT MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AOTEROA/NZ**

Infant mental health, covering children from birth to 4 years, is a multi-disciplinary approach that includes early childcare and education, primary health care, nursing, psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, social, and family services. This approach to child and family work is being promoted by the Infant Mental Health Association of Aoteroa/NZ because increased professional communication and sharing of information across relevant agencies may assist families to efficiently find the support and services they need.

## The Infant Mental Health approach is concerned with:

- the state of emotional, mental, and social competence in young children;
- the impact on development of interrelated biological, relationship, and cultural influences;
- the supports and barriers that foster or inhibit infant resiliency in family life;
- the importance of the parents' past relationships in their current parenting experiences; and
- the need for professional support of the parent-child relationship and the importance of reflection on the part of the early childhood professional.

In early childhood centre practice we see concepts of promoting infant mental health come into play when:

- The centre provides a responsive, supportive environment that ultimately builds competence, curiosity, and effective learning outcomes;
- Children's self-regulation and the development of stable relationships are based on consistent, attachment-

based, responsive caregiving. Emotional responsiveness and nurturance is at the heart of all routines and experiences provided for the young child;

- Caregiving is consistent so children's and caregivers' relationships are strengthened over time. A primary caregiving approach in the centre helps to foster the development of individual relationship models that will provide a buffer for any risks or challenges that the developing infant may encounter in the first years and, indeed, throughout the life span; and
- The curriculum recognises and allows for an infant who is an active, enquiring individual. The environment fosters a wide range of mobility both indoors and outdoors, as well as multiple sensorial experiences to nurture brain development through a variety of learning experiences.

## And, as early childhood practitioners you would be involved in:

- Taking an active interest in the infant's developmental course, including the capacity for self-organisation and active interaction with the social environment;
- Learning how to spot parental risk factors and how they may affect infant development; and
- Liaising with professionals from other agencies, such as Plunket and health professionals, SES workers, and psychotherapists.

Most infant mental health proponents agree that practitioners, who

demonstrate competency in this approach, share the following personal and professional characteristics:

- An ability to listen and observe;
- An ability to work collaboratively and to establish group relationships across disciplines;
- An ability to effectively consult with a range of professionals to provide continuity and sensitivity with families;
- An ability to allow parents to take the lead in work with their infants;
- The ability to promote security for families; and
- The ability to engage in reflective supervision, practice and team building.

Research indicates that comprehensive infant mental health services and the early identification and treatment of risk factors in infancy provide long- and short-term benefits economically and socially for our communities. Some of these benefits are the reduction of poverty, reduced rates of neglect and abuse, and the more efficient provision of social services to families. Children that start off well and are supported early in life from the prenatal period onwards have the potential to achieve well within the New Zealand education system because they develop, learn and grow more rapidly when their emotional environment is healthy and nurturing. As early childhood practitioners, you have a valuable and central role to play in ensuring the best outcomes for young children now and into their future.

## Web Links:

[www.aaimhi.org](http://www.aaimhi.org) and [www.imhaanz.org.nz](http://www.imhaanz.org.nz)

# Upcoming ECC Events

Keep an eye on our events page on our website for further details and to register for ECC events. Dates and locations are subject to change – please check details online at the ECC's event page at [www.ecc.org.nz/eccevents](http://www.ecc.org.nz/eccevents). To register, download a copy of the seminar registration form from [www.ecc.org.nz/eccevents](http://www.ecc.org.nz/eccevents) or email us and a request a registration form at [admin@ecc.org.nz](mailto:admin@ecc.org.nz) or phone 04 566 4605.

## UPCOMING ECC PROFESSIONAL AND EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS

There are a number of exciting ECC seminars and workshops coming up. Most are scheduled in the evenings and on Saturdays, so you won't have to worry about finding relievers and

centres can bring their whole team if they wish. And don't forget, for provisionally registered teachers the cost of professional development can be covered by the Support Grant.

### SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2009

#### PUPPET SKILLS AND STORYTELLING TEACHER'S WORKSHOP *Erin Devlin*

A practical hands-on workshop for teachers and supervisors with Erin Devlin, singer, storyteller and puppeteer extraordinaire! Come and have fun, learn new skills, and gain confidence you never had before.

#### NOT-FOR-PROFIT MANAGEMENT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED CENTRES *Michelle Pratt*

This seminar will focus on ensuring effective governance and management, different ways of getting financial grants and other needs of community-based centres. Essential

#### ENGAGING FATHERS *Adam Buckingham*

Come and be inspired to successfully involve men as dads and to work with male teachers in your early childhood centre. A key role of an early childhood centre is to support not only mothers, but also fathers in their parenting role. This seminar is a must for all provisionally registered teachers, teachers,

- **Auckland** - Tuesday evening 22 September
- **Queenstown** - Monday evening 28 September
- **Rotorua** - Saturday afternoon 10 October
- **Wellington** - Thursday evening 29 October
- **Nelson** - Thursday evening 19 November

These workshops are limited to 40 people, so register early.

information for all community-based early childhood centre committees and centre managers and head teachers/supervisors will be presented and discussed. The dates are to be confirmed and will be during October/November. Locations: Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin.

head teachers, and centre supervisors/directors.

- **Christchurch** - Friday 1–4pm 16 October
- **Wellington** - Saturday 1–4 pm 17 October
- **Auckland** - Tuesday 6.00–9pm 20 October
- **Whangarei** - Saturday 12–3pm 7 November
- **New Plymouth** - Saturday 11am–2pm 21 November.

### 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

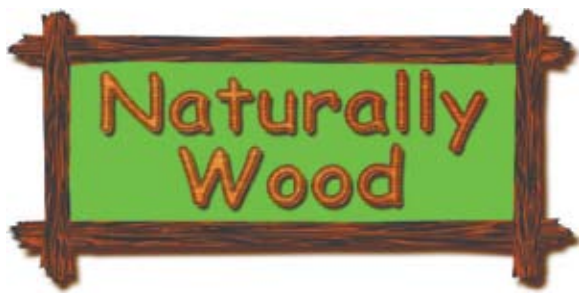
doing. Exclusive ECC Member discounted prices! Weekend and full conference registrations!

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Registration will be available from 20 November 2009. Keep an eye on our conference website for further details: [www.ecc.org.nz/conference/home.html](http://www.ecc.org.nz/conference/home.html)

**To download registration forms for any of these events, go to [www.ecc.org.nz/eccevents](http://www.ecc.org.nz/eccevents)**





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or phone 09 2352980, fax 09 2352981, or email [naturallywood@paradise.net.nz](mailto:naturallywood@paradise.net.nz)



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Ms. Jones	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Brown	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Green	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Black	U1	1	1	1
Ms. White	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Grey	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Yellow	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Purple	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Blue	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Red	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Orange	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Pink	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Brown	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Green	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Black	U1	1	1	1
Ms. White	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Grey	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Yellow	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Purple	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Blue	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Red	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Orange	U1	1	1	1
Ms. Pink	U1	1	1	1

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