

Swings Roundabouts

Spring 2011

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- Policy
- Other

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- Access to topical surveys on specific issues

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- Incident register
- Wallplanner
- Diary
- and more

Swings & Roundabouts

The sector's premier quarterly magazine, full of current and topical articles, information, government agency updates and more

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For Teachers: Including curriculum delivery, child behaviour, becoming a mentor teacher, conflict resolution, educational leadership, improving transition, managing under twos, and lesson planning

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The ECC represents your views with government agencies on sector policy development; with Ministers on topical policy decisions and issues impacting on your services; and much more!

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FROM THE *Editor*



What a bumper issue to bring you, covering some really meaty topics – child advocacy, caring for our planet and I.T. systems in centres.

I feel honoured and privileged to be the new Editor of Swings & Roundabouts.

Since starting my employment at the Early Childhood Council I have come to know and love this sector. I'm inspired by the innovative people we have working in early childhood centres throughout New Zealand and by the amazing things children do and say every day.

And this issue! What a bumper issue to bring you, covering some really meaty topics – child advocacy, caring for our planet and I.T. systems in centres.

We meet the Dr Russell Wills, the Children's Commissioner on page 14 and Adam Buckingham shares his ideas on turning trash into treasure on page 22.

Pages 35 to 41 share different ways centres are managing information technology – child databases, social media, parent portals and more!

If this sounds a little overwhelming be sure to keep reading. This is an issue that everyone can learn from.

Swings & Roundabouts is produced for the early childhood sector. Our distribution list exceeds 2700 and is still growing. It's important the content reflects your interests so if you have a suggestion please contact me. Likewise if you're interested in sharing information or getting experience as a writer.

"I have come to know and love this sector. I'm inspired by the innovative people we have working in early childhood centres throughout New Zealand and by the amazing things children do and say every day."

I'm particularly looking for people who can help with articles that would fall under the following themes, to be covered in upcoming issues:

- Starting school and the secrets to smooth transition
- Great ECE playgrounds
- Centre innovations: pets, play and pedagogy
- Maintaining a world-class curriculum
- Quality improvement in ECE

Enjoy!

Amy Cook
Editor

Email: publications@ecc.org.nz

Early Childhood Council Professional Development Programme

The Early Childhood Council is offering a series of half-day (four hours) practical, interactive workshops. The programme for 2011 is broken into two streams: one for centre managers and one for teaching staff.

Please note that advance bookings are essential and will close off strictly, one week prior to each event.

The ECC reserves the right to cancel workshops a week prior to the scheduled date if there are insufficient registration numbers.



Early Childhood Council

Keep an eye out for more information being released soon on:

- www.ecc.org.nz
- Facebook ('Like' the Early Childhood Council)
- Twitter ('Follow' [ecc_nz](https://twitter.com/ecc_nz))
- And in your weekly E-News

For Centre Managers

- Stepping up to Supervisor
- Managing People
- The Regulations & Compliance Minefield
- Business Planning
- Self-Review & Surviving an ERO Review
- Governance and Strategic Planning
- Leadership and Management

For Teaching Staff

- Becoming a Teacher Mentor
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- Under 2s – a unique group
- Conflict Resolution
- Lesson Planning
- Child Behaviour
- Working with Te Whaariki

CEO's Message



The argument for change.

Benjamin Franklin once said: "nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes."

I tend to disagree, only in as much as I believe there is one other great certainty in life, and that is change. People say that change can be good, but the truth is most of us don't seek it. We experience it instead as something undesirable that happens usually as a result of decisions made by others.

Having said that, change can be good. The trouble in our sector is that change so frequently can be a double-edged sword. An example is the recent change to the ECE regulations lifting the limit on centre size to 150 enrolled places. The good change is that the decision removes a significant amount of compliance administration for services that have previously had multiple licenses requiring multiple sets of policies, multiple reports, multiple ERO visits and so forth. The not-so-great side of this change is the tension that it has created around the issue of group size and how this influences quality in ECE service provision. The down-right bad side is the requirement by the Ministry of Education to visit every centre seeking to amalgamate licenses, whether there is a change to enrolment places or not.

There are plenty of things the sector would like to see change, most of it driven by the desire to focus on improving outcomes for children who participate in ECE. As an aside, it would be entirely reasonable to see this desired outcome as a caveat on all compliance activities instituted by the Ministry. If it has nothing to do with improving outcomes for children participating in ECE, then why is the sector being asked to waste time and resources on it?

Among the list of things the sector would like to see changed are:

- The way the frequent absence rule is administered;
- The way teachers who own their own childcare centre attest for re-registration;
- The way the teacher attestation requirement works (the 15-minute rule);
- The way regulations are monitored for some parts of the sector in more stringent ways than for other parts;
- The way the funding model works – it's complexity and it's failure to focus on encouraging the delivery of high quality ECE services.

These are examples and not an exhaustive list, if my e-mail in-box and the Taskforce Report are any indication.

So what stops change happening? In our sector, in many ways, it comes down to the different perspectives different parties bring to risk management. The Ministry has the role of managing the government's risk associated with the investment of public money. They institute therefore a range of policies and requirements aimed at satisfying themselves and their political masters that all is well – even if the sector's track record is consistently good. This risk-averse approach frequently means that we end up with a range of policies and compliance requirements that take

staff away from children and create blocks to providing quality education and care.

Don't get me wrong. I'm all for accountability. But there's a good argument that much of the compliance activity facing the sector is based on issues that have little to do with providing a great ECE service. That's a good reason to sit around the table to review why we're doing it and what should change.

The ECC continues to work closely with the Ministry in an effort to advance some of these issues. We support the ECE Taskforce Report's recommendations that seek to reduce unnecessary compliance requirements and that will enable the sector to focus more of its time on delivering great outcomes for children. And we will continue to seek change from the Ministry to remove unnecessary compliance requirements while we appreciate the need to remain accountable – to both the government and to parents.

Peter Reynolds
Chief Executive Officer
Early Childhood Council



So you know...

THIS SECTION UPDATES READERS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES RELATED TO THE SECTOR

ECC Conference Dates Announced

25-27 May 2012

Auckland Sky City Convention Centre

Innovation and Courage in ECE

The ECC National Conference is the highlight of the New Zealand early childhood event calendar. Each year we offer hundreds of attendees the opportunity to be inspired, informed and entertained. Put it in your diary now!

ECC Executive Update

At the last ECC Executive there was general endorsement for the ECC's submission to the Ministry of Education regarding the ECE Taskforce Report.

The ECC Executive discussed planning over the remainder of the year leading up to the General Election.

The Executive resolved not to fill the current vacancy for Vice President following the resignation of Jill Oliver. Jill's contribution to the ECC and to ECE in general was again noted.

The Executive also noted the need to clarify the Constitution with regard to proxy voting ahead of the AGM in 2012.

Preliminary planning for the 2012 ECC conference was also endorsed.

Welcome

The following early childhood centres have joined the Early Childhood Council between 1 June and 10 August 2011. Welcome! We trust you will find exceptional value in being a member of the ECC.

- Aoga Amata Preschool, Invercargill
- Bear Park Preschool and Infant/Toddler Centre, Albany
- Heretaunga Park, Upper Hutt
- Country Kidz, Atamuri
- Noah's Ark Learning Centre, Whangarei

In addition, Te Whare Aroha O Nga Mokopuna Early Childhood Centre in Hastings has returned after taking a break from membership to the ECC over the past couple of years. Welcome back!

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www.all-safe.co.nz or sales@all-safe.co.nz

So you know... CONTINUED

Moving Forward

The Early Childhood Council has moved into the 21st century! You can now find us on Facebook and Twitter. For hot-of-the-press information on government funding, budgets, and everything else ECE-related make sure you find us online.

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/early.childhood.council

Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/ecc_nz



Children's Artwork Raises Money for Canterbury Centres

In conjunction with our art competition finalists, the Early Childhood Council raised \$451.50 to assist our Canterbury centres in need.

Thank you to Capital City Preschool, Queenstown Preschool and Nursery, Pitter Patter Education Centre, and Renwick Preschool and Childcare Centre who donated their winning murals.

Thanks also to Irene van Dyk who designed and signed a plate from Art on a Plate for the auction.

Measles Outbreak

Measles is a highly infectious disease and is more serious than many people realise. Symptoms include fever, rash, cough, red eyes and a runny nose, and then a rash which develops after about 3 days. Complications include middle ear infections, pneumonia, and, more rarely, encephalitis or brain inflammation. About one in ten people need to be hospitalised.

If a child becomes unwell with possible measles while at your service, ensure that they are kept separate from other children while waiting to be taken home. This helps minimise the risk of measles spreading.

A child or teacher with measles should stay away from ECE services for seven days from the appearance of the rash or until recovery, depending on the advice of the medical officer of health.

Unimmunised children, or those with no immunity to measles, who have been in close contact with a measles case during the infectious stages should be excluded from the ECE service for 14 days from their last contact, again depending on the advice of the medical officer of health.

Information from the Ministry of Education

- From 1 July 2011 changes to centre size regulations raise the maximum centre size that ECE services or hospital-based education and care services can be licensed for - from 50 to 150 licensed child places. Currently around 460 ECE services cater for over 50 children and to do so they have previously been required to hold multiple licences.
- The Ministry of Education recently reviewed the licensing and certification criteria related to the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 for ECE services and playgroups.

The changes will provide clarification and help ECE service providers and playgroups understand what is required of them in order to comply with the ECE regulations. Wording of the criteria has been amended to improve consistency across ECE service types. There have been no changes made to the purpose or intent of the existing criteria. The changes are effective from 22 July 2011 and were published in the New Zealand Gazette on 21 July 2011.



Considering selling your centre?

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HOW CAN WE DO A BETTER JOB *of caring for our children?*

High quality early childhood centres are a vital part of a vast team of people in New Zealand who love, care for and educate the youngest members of society. There is new research on the human brain showing how extraordinarily important this work is for our children now and for the future of our whole society.

From the moment of conception to three years of age, our babies' brains are developing at a rapid pace. Scientists now say that the quality of love and care babies receive has a major impact on how their brains develop. On top of this, we also now know that the roots of major adult diseases such as heart conditions and obesity stem from early childhood experiences.

Scientists are also discovering the contribution that very young children make to our society. They bring us together, soften us, connect us with each other, take us outside ourselves to thinking about others. If you have ever seen a baby in an old people's home you will know that the child's presence lifts the whole atmosphere – giving older people joy, hope and freshness.

We need our little ones as much as they need us.

The government's Green Paper on Children focuses on our most vulnerable children. The Paper outlines ideas the government has and asks what you think of these. Submissions are open until February so do lots of ideas sharing before you make a submission.

The Green Paper in brief

The focus chosen by government is: 'Children who thrive, belong and achieve'.

Major questions are:

- How can we improve leadership?
- What policies should we change?
- What programmes should we change?
- How should we best spend available funds?

Government wants to know what it should keep doing and what it should change – both in its policies and programmes.

Here are the questions most relevant to early childhood services:

- What can you do in your community to support or initiate community-led actions to support vulnerable children and their families and whanau?
- How do we get the best results for vulnerable children?
- Do you think the Government should provide more targeted services for vulnerable children? If yes, from where should funding be taken to do so?
- Should the Government reprioritise spending to provide more early intervention?

Information-sharing

- Who should monitor vulnerable children and under what circumstances?
- How can the possible negative consequences of increased monitoring be minimised?
- What information should professionals be able, or required, to share about vulnerable children?
- Under what circumstances should they share information?
- Who should be able to share information, and with whom?
- What else can the Government do to make sure professionals and services have all the information they need to make the best decisions about services for vulnerable children and their families and whanau?

Improving the workforce for children

- What can be done to improve or promote collaboration between professionals and services?
- What principles, competencies or quality standards should be included in the minimum standards for a workforce for children?
- Who should be included in a workforce for children?
- What other changes could be made to increase the effectiveness of those who work with vulnerable children?



Better connecting vulnerable children to services

- How can the Government's frontline services better connect vulnerable children and their families and whanau with the services they need?
- What services could be included in this action to better connect vulnerable children to the services they need?
- What other changes do you think could be made to ensure vulnerable children are connected to the services from which they would benefit?

Improving service delivery

- How could early education centres and schools be better used as sites for the delivery of a wider range of services?
- What services could be better connected and how?
- What other opportunities exist to deliver services more effectively for vulnerable children and their families and whanau?

Discuss these with parents, staff and other professionals who work with the children you care for. And make a submission or share your ideas with the Early Childhood Council. We can submit on your behalf.

Healthy children lead to healthy societies. All of us who work to keep our children healthy and learning are helping our current and our future society to be more healthy. Let's work together to find ways to do a better job.

RECOGNISING *child abuse*

Child abuse is the 'harming (whether physically, emotionally or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person' (Children and Young Persons Act 1989).

A child seldom walks in and says 'my daddy hit me'. We rely on watching for signs. Some children are well cared for physically but suffer emotional or sexual abuse. Some suffer neglect and some are physically abused. You can find lists of indicators of abuse on the websites included here. These signs tell you to look further as there can be different explanations - for example, the child may be disturbed by major life changes such as a separation or a death in the family.

Possible signs of abuse in the child:

- Bruises, burns etc that are not consistent with explanation given
- Repeated injuries over time
- Flinching if touched unexpectedly
- Overly compliant
- Often very tired
- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Itching or bruises on or around the genital area
- Age-inappropriate sexual play, drawings or descriptions
- Displays extreme attention seeking behaviours
- Displays extreme inhibition in play
- When at play, behaviour may model or copy negative behaviour and language used at home.

Possible signs in adults:

- Calls the child names, labels the child or publicly humiliates the child
- Continually threatens the child with physical harm
- Have unrealistic expectations of the child.

Why act?

Abuse destroys a child's potential, if not their life. Abused children are more likely to self harm, commit suicide, have accidents,

and to fail to reach their potential. Children are dependent on adults. The faster we act, the less damage is done.

What to do

- Observe and listen carefully to both the adult and the child
- If a parent is struggling, offer support
- If you are not sure what to do you can get advice from Plunketline - a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week service on 0800 933 922 or Barnados 0800 227 627.
- Ring Child, Youth and Family on 0508 326 459.
- If it is an emergency or a crime has been committed against the child, ring the Police.
- It is not your job to establish abuse has occurred. That is CYF's job.

Centre requirements

Every centre must:

- Be familiar with the Ministry of Education's requirements about reporting suspected child abuse;
- Have a process for the prevention of and a procedure, for responding to suspected child abuse.

Ensuring the safety of the child is paramount.

Further information

- www.ecc.org.nz
- www.childmatters.org.nz
- www.cyf.govt.nz/keeping-kids-safe/if-you-are-worried/looking-out-for-at-risk-children-and-families.html
- <http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/ManagementInformation/GoverningAndManaging/ReportingSuspectedChildAbuseAndNeglectProtocol2010.aspx>

Important Phone Numbers

Child, Youth
and Family

0508 326 459

Barnados

0800 227 627

Plunketline

0800 933 922

**If it is an emergency or a crime
has been committed against a
child, ring the Police**



Q&A WITH *Dr Russell Wills*



Prior to being appointed a five-year term as Children's Commissioner on 1 July 2011, Dr Russell Wills spent many years at the frontline of child health and protection.

Prior to taking on the role as Commissioner, Dr Wills was Head of Paediatrics at the Hawke's Bay District Health Board (HBDHB), where he was clinical leader for child and adolescent health, family violence and child protection.

At HBDHB he has led the Family Violence Intervention Programme, Before-School Check Programme and Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee. He was also involved in the Ministry of Education Positive Behaviour for Learning Programme implementation, Incredible Years strategic group and Youth to Men governance group in Hawke's Bay.

Dr Wills' clinical interests are general paediatrics, child protection and children with severe behaviour disturbances. He sees many children with autism, ADHD, foetal alcohol effects and the behavioural and developmental effects of abuse and neglect.

Previous roles held include National Paediatrician for the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society, Royal Australasian College of Physicians Fellow and Senior Lecturer,

Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the Wellington School of Medicine. Dr Wills also led research into B4 School health checks evaluation, family violence intervention and Child, Youth and Family foster care support.

Dr Wills has co-authored papers on drug allergy in cystic fibrosis, detection of family violence and the Before-School Check and presented at many national and international medical conferences on these topics.

The Commissioner lives in Hastings with his wife and two sons. He will continue to work part-time as a general and community paediatrician at the DHB while carrying out his role as Children's Commissioner, also on a part-time basis.

Dr Wills was kind enough to take some time to answer a few questions for our readers.

What do you think are the strengths of the early childhood education sector at present?

There's a lot to be proud of in New Zealand's early childhood sector. Our curriculum is recognised worldwide as a quality programme – which means we have a great base to work from. New Zealand meets a number of UNICEF's (2008) benchmarks including the percentage of qualified

teachers, staff-child ratios and subsidised and accredited education for 80 percent of four-year-olds. We have good participation rates for the over-threes, with the majority enrolled in some form of early childhood education. Of course, we are also fortunate to have many bright, committed and passionate people working in the sector – people dedicated to quality education and care of our youngest children.

As the Children's Commissioner what changes would you like to see in the early childhood education sector?

There needs to be a continued emphasis on maintaining quality and continued efforts to increase access for Maori and Pacific children. Enrolment is not, however, the same as participation. It is important that participation data is collected and monitored to ensure that children and their families and whanau are gaining the very best from their early childhood experience.

UNICEF (2008) noted that public expenditure in New Zealand is relatively low in comparison with other OECD countries. Given the strong evidence that quality early childhood education can make a significant difference for vulnerable children, this is an area that needs to be addressed.

B4 School health checks are a hotly debated topic among the Early Childhood Council membership, as is child health in general. Do you value B4 School health checks in their present form? What do you think the future should hold for B4 School checks? (and what do you think the future does hold for B4 School checks?)

Before-school checks offer us the best opportunity we've ever seen to promote collaboration between Health and ECE. B4SC uses the best available evidence-based tools to identify children with developmental, behavioural, vision, hearing, oral and physical health issues that are likely to interfere with their ability to learn and make friends at school. When accompanied by clear local referral pathways and quality mechanisms that ensure high access for children who most need the checks, high-quality referrals and mechanisms to ensure

attendance (as we have in Hawke's Bay), the impact on children is enormous. A few DHBs have implemented B4SC in this way and are seeing the impacts expected. More recently, access for the hard to reach has improved and efforts are underway to improve the quality of the assessments. There will be an increased emphasis on quality in the B4SC programme in the next 12 months and I expect to see this have a significant impact on children's readiness for school.

Finally, what will be your over-arching goal or focus during your five-year period as the Children's Commissioner?

So many things to do! Until February our emphasis will be on the Green Paper. This is a genuine and significant opportunity for us to influence public policy and practice for the most vulnerable children in New Zealand, so it is vital that professional groups like early childhood educators make their voices

heard in this process. Our office will be working with a wide variety of professional and community groups to support their contributions to the process. Children and young people's voices must also be heard and we will be working hard towards this.

Quality in early childhood education and access for the most vulnerable children are important and we've just released a paper on this. I hope to see progress made on these areas.

Child poverty is a major issue and we will support efforts to reduce this. Our teen suicide rate is a national disgrace and I expect to see movement on this also. Child abuse and neglect remain important issues for my office and we will continue to work with Child, Youth and Family to improve our practice in this area. Children with disabilities have particular needs and I'm hopeful that we'll be able to make some progress there.

What does Jim Heckman have to do with New Zealand Early Childhood Education?

We have become accustomed to the idea that early childhood education is an efficient investment. It's been re-iterated in a number of publications that by investing \$1 per individual at preschool age, the state can prevent an expenditure of \$8 later in life.

However education has not always been viewed as an investment. Liberal educators, such as Clarence Beebey, saw education as a public good; freely available like water and air. Education thus tended to be taken for granted. In the mid 1980s, however, there was a change in this perception.

In the mid 1980s a new discourse of education emerged. Ideas from the Chicago School of Economics were discussed and debated in this country. At an Early Childhood Convention in Christchurch in 1979, economist Brian Easton spoke of the need to value what happened in the home, as a measure of economics. He spoke of Human Capital Theory. New Zealand Treasury officials published a 1984 briefing to the incoming Labour Government called Government Management. The authors used the ideas of the Chicago School of Economics to argue that, rather than viewing education as a public good, it should be seen as a private one. Several new constructs of education were adopted by the Fourth Labour Government which remain embedded in ideas and legislation today.

The new construction of the individual saw education as benefiting individuals. As people

trained, and enskilled themselves, they were, the discourse argued, able to compete on the employment market, to sell their skills for a good return. When education is viewed as a private good individuals do not need state assistance to gain a qualification. Actuarial investments made when young, will pay dividends in later life, the theory went. Using loans, students can borrow against their predicted future earnings to finance their studies.

A second creation was an education market-place. The 1989 Education Act and later Amendment constructed educational institutions such as early childhood services as compete for clients as firms do. Firms have CEOs who govern and manage their institutions, setting out short and long term strategic plans. They also brand themselves, to ensure the clients understand their values and niche. In the marketplace, price theory creates winners and losers.

Jim Heckman, 2000 Nobel Prize winner, was an early advocate of Human Capital Theory. Along with others he constructed education as a private, actuarial investment. Comparing discreet groupings of the population, they were able to show that there are winners and losers in the employment market. Children from black and immigrant populations can be found in the tail of statistical disadvantage.

Using data from the 'gold-standard' Weikart research at Ypsalanti-Perry Preschools, Heckman successfully argued that early

education is the best state use of education funding. Early investments will save the state expensive outlays on teen-parent units, or youth incarceration.

Heckman's ideas have been widely disseminated and used in international publications. Furthermore, quality preschool education enables children to learn skills and dispositions that are required of workers

Such ideas are now accepted as economic truths and ideas such as Heckman's are accepted uncritically in Aotearoa New Zealand. Econometric measures set out different outcomes for children of Maori, Pasifika and others. Human Capital ideas have underpinned the early childhood monies invested by the Labour Coalition Government, 1999-2008. They also underpin the 2011 Agenda for Amazing Children.

In a society where unemployment is rising, where the accepted economic truths are being sorely tested, should we not question this 'truth' also?

About the Author

Margaret Stuart is a PhD student at Auckland Institute of Technology who has worked in a range of ECE roles over the past thirty years. This is a synopsis of the presentation she made in July 2011 at the Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa NZ Childcare Association conference.



Magic bullet FOR SOCIETY'S ILLS

The past few months have seen an influx on reports being released on child well-being. From the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the ECE Taskforce, An Agenda for Amazing Children and, by Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, Improving the Transition, Reducing Social and Psychological Morbidity During Adolescence. All can be found on-line. There has also been publicity on a teenage death after a school ball, the inquest into the alleged killing of the Kahui twins and the controversial publication of a book by their mother. There are clearly some ills in our society which need addressing. The reports advocate:

- quality early childhood education for all children especially those in dysfunctional, abusive families – the least likely to access it
- continued spending in early childhood education particularly in targeted areas where pre-schools should act as 'community hubs'
- those parents who can afford to pay more may have to under a proposed new funding scheme
- '20 hours' will not be scrapped and may be extended
- the emphasis will be on quality with rewards to encourage good pre-schools and efforts to raise the standards of those deemed to be of poor quality
- an overhaul of home-based care particularly regarding parity with other sectors of staff qualifications
- the new funding system, if adopted, will be simpler and will put all teacher-led care on an equal playing field
- programmes such as PAFT must be stringently evaluated.

As a former probation officer, who has written thousands of court reports on the troubled youth Professor Gluckman's group considered, I found myself wondering whether 100% attendance at quality pre-schools would indeed prove to be the hoped for magic bullet.

One imagines probation reports of the future reciting the old mantra with two additional words, 'His/her attendance at school and pre-school was poor and he/she dropped out of both earlyresulting in the escalating offending which now brings him/her before

the court. A gloomy picture as, having failed to benefit from school which is free and compulsory, how can we expect these children from the same communities to benefit from pre-school? I asked myself, thinking of my many former probationers, 'Would attendance at a quality preschool have made any difference? I doubt it. So in the face of overwhelming academic research, I conducted my own research.

Firstly I contemplated my younger sister's and my experience. She attended kindergarten. She is disciplined, focussed and determined, academically brilliant, many-talented. I, who lacked a pre-school experience, am, alas, none of these things. I then interviewed my granddaughter, Rosie, (19) who at three months commenced pre-school.

Clearly social skills and a moral sense are important to learn early on. If the home is not the environment to foster these skills can a good pre-school do better?

While Rosie enjoyed pre-school and valued the caring, loving teachers she felt it would be better 'to be home-schooled until four or five provided your mother could teach you. It would be more one-on-one in a comfortable, familiar environment. Your mother could teach you the necessary curriculum: ABC, counting, numbers, learning to talk and a sense of right and wrong but she would have to give you the opportunity to socialise with neighbourhood kids'. Rosie knew an 'awesome guy who was home-schooled until he was thirteen, but he felt outcast for two years at high-school'. She agreed pre-school helped her to become robust and resilient but felt that regardless of pre-school after a year at school everyone would be on a level footing.

With my research subject apparently dismissing the benefits of her regular pre-school experience we moved on to the possible advantages of Montessori. Rosie felt that had she had Montessori at pre-schooling like her brother it would have helped her. Finally I asked whether Rosie thought the effects of a dysfunctional, abusive family life would be over-ridden by the effects of excellent pre-school or schools. 'Not unless the child had found a

way to detach themselves from the family's inner workings - which may not necessarily be a good thing,' she replied.

Clearly social skills and a moral sense are important to learn early on. If the home is not the environment to foster these skills can a good pre-school do better? Head-start programme research showed massive fade-out of early gains when the programmes ended and the intensive input into the families ceased.

Rather than investing in what may prove to be poorly attended community hub preschools in disadvantaged areas I believe factories and employment opportunities should be established in targeted areas even if the goods produced and wages are subsidised from taxes. It is debatable whether community hubs will be able to ameliorate the effects of dysfunctional families or prevent teenagers drinking themselves to death or committing suicide. Little has been learned from the myriads of reports including the 1987 New Zealand Committee of Enquiry into Violence (Roper) report. Several expensive social experiments: PAFT, kohanga reo and Pacifica nests have been tried. Tertiary courses catering to the unskilled and unemployed have virtually been wiped out by funding cuts. Social agencies struggle for funds. Now pre-school teachers are being asked to be social workers too.

Trade skills and apprenticeship training, factories and workshops in the targeted areas are needed before another expensive social experiment. Yet despite this need labour contracts go off-shore leaving workers unemployed in target areas.

In my view, a loving mum or dad at home with their under twos in a financially secure and stress-free home is better than the best pre-school in the world and plentiful primary schools in target communities are better than bigger schools/community hubs further away from the children's homes. Passionate as I am about quality pre-school education I fear that unless there are really good inducements such as jobs, simply establishing excellent preschools/community hubs in target areas will not guarantee the children's attendance nor provide a panacea for society's ills.

By Ann Barrowclough

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Is it any wonder, therefore, that we care deeply about how our children see their environment and the values they develop in terms of environmental protection and sustainability? Beyond this, we also accept our responsibility to ensure that our premises and play areas are clean and healthy and that children attending our centres are healthy and stay safe. Simple things like the toys children play with, the carpets and mats they lie on, the air they breathe and the food they eat – all reflect the environmental policies we adopt in the early childhood setting.

So, why go green?

We go green because children in our care are entitled to the healthiest environment possible while in our care. We go green because our children suffer from asthma, allergies and sensitivities – more today than ever before. We go green because we have a social conscience and because we recognise that we have a responsibility to educate our wee ones on the importance of looking after where we live. We go green because it's our way of supporting families to understand the link between our environment and giving children the best possible start.

Going green simply means being safe, healthy, sustainable in our approach to the environment and aware of the environment around us and how we impact on it.

Te Whaariki weaves together a number of principles and strands that, when combined, provide the best opportunity for our children to be safe and to grow and learn. While not explicit, the environment and that way in which we all interact with it plays a significant role in achieving the goals of our curriculum. Achieving well-being (Mana Atua) requires that children's health is promoted; that their well-being is nurtured and that they are kept safe from

harm. Belonging (Mana Whenua) requires that children and their families experience a safe environment with a strong sense of belonging. Contribution (Mana Tangata) requires us all to provide children with the opportunity to learn and value the child's contribution to their world. Communication (Mana Reo) requires us to help children find effective ways to communicate, express themselves and develop. And Exploration (Mana Aoturoa) requires us to guide the child to explore and understand their environment. These strands reflect the nature of our world and the value of exposing the child to it in a safe way.

What is going green?

Going green simply means being safe, healthy, sustainable in our approach to the environment and aware of the environment around us and how we impact on it. For childcare centres it's about having values, processes and actions that support the maintenance of a healthy and sustainable environment, and helping children and families do the same.

'Safe' in an environmental context means eliminating or minimising exposure to toxins, pesticides, pollutants and known health challenges (such as respiratory irritants and allergens).

Sustainable means we use the resources around us in a responsible and efficient manner, recycling whatever we can and not using or limiting use of resources that cannot be safely recycled.

How do we go green?

There is extensive support for early childhood centres to adopt increasingly green practices and promote a green message to children and families. This includes audits that enable the centre to assess its own pro-green practices and policies – enhancing the extent to which children are safe and healthy in the centre environment. It includes adopting pro-green lesson plans incorporating messages and promoting behaviours that support environmental sustainability – everything from litter campaigns to recycling projects to thinking about how we live at home and how we think about our world.

Being practical about this, the steps your centre should take, if it hasn't already, include:

- Getting the agreement of the whole team to become 'green'
- Having a clear set of goals
- Conducting an audit or check of how green your centre is already
- Looking at the overall values of your centre
- Your use of cleaners and disinfectants
- Body-care and personal hygiene products
- Air quality management
- Exposure to chemicals and other toxins
- Management of your internal and external environment
- The supplies and materials you use, including food, stationery and so on
- The way you involve children and their families
- Your use of resources like electricity, food, water and other materials and supplies.
- Having a plan to address the areas your centre still needs to work on
- Ensuring the whole team buys into implementing the plan and monitoring progress.

This audit might include:

- An assessment of your administration systems

The ECC has recently published an audit tool for its members to use to support environmental sustainability and 'going green'. An abridged version on this is available on the following page.



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GOING GREEN

Checklist

The Going Green Checklist enables Early Childhood Education Centres to conduct their own assessment of the extent to which they are environmentally-friendly and environmentally-focussed. The checklist provides a comprehensive view of all areas of the centre and should be used as a precursor to the development of a centre 'Green' plan identifying areas requiring attention and the actions required to address them.

This is an abridged version of the Going Green Checklist for Early Childhood Centres. The checklist was adapted by the ECC from the 'Go Green Rating Scale for Early Childhood Settings' by Phil Boise (2010, Redleaf Press).

The full checklist is available to Early Childhood Council Members free of charge, by logging in to the members'

portal at www.ecc.org.nz

The scoring system uses a simple 5-point scale where '1' means the centre does not do this; and '5' means the centre has this area under good control.



	1	2	3	4	5
We have a Green Plan for our centre that details our goals and actions and all staff receive training on these					
Green is a permanent item on the agenda for our team meetings					
We reduce purchasing and packaging, reuse materials and recycle to the greatest extent possible					
All consumables (art supplies, cleaning products, stationery etc) are non-toxic and environmentally-friendly					
All toys and other purchased materials are made with non-toxic and environmentally-friendly materials					
We use electronic communication methods and processes wherever possible to minimise paper waste					
We ensure any hazardous products we use are properly disposed of (light bulbs, cleaners and pesticides, computer consumables)					
We use washable plates, cups and utensils and discourage the use of single-use containers					
All water bottles used by children are stainless steel or BPA-free plastic					
Excess food is reused (e.g. fed to animals), or composted so as not to attract pests					
Organic and GE-free food is used wherever possible					
We conserve all water used in our centre and harvest rainwater for use in the garden					
We use low energy light fittings and electronic equipment					
We undertake an annual energy audit					
We maintain a high level of energy efficiency, including (but not limited to) weather stripping around doors and windows; signs on switches and power points; motion-sensor lighting; ceiling fans to re-circulate warm air or keep things cool; programmable thermostats; energy star certified appliances; double-glazing					
We have measured our carbon footprint and have a plan to reduce it					
Children are involved in our Green campaign					
We promote our Green campaign to families, suppliers, colleagues, staff and others					
We use fresh air or a filtered ventilation system with a fresh air exchange					
Ventilation systems are well-maintained with regular filter changes as specified					
There is no smoking in or near our centre					
We check pollen counts during known pollen seasons					
We ensure separation between feathered or furry animals and children with sensitivities					
We use hyper-allergenic materials wherever possible					
We wash/laundry soft toys, bedding and other material items children come into regular contact with, regularly					
We regularly monitor for mould and mildew					
We use carbon monoxide alarms					
We prohibit the use of leaf blowers around our centre while children are present					
We have no asbestos products in our centre					
We maintain a "no-idle" zone near all doors and opening windows at our centre for vehicles and provide signage to support this policy					
We have rough door mats at each entrance					
We do not use fertilisers in children's gathering or play areas					



Let's not poison the children

Ammonia

Ammonia is a gas with an extremely sharp, irritating odor. In larger quantities, such as those found in cleaning products, ammonia fumes can pose an immediate hazard to the lungs and skin. Ammonia can cause even greater damage if it is mixed with chlorine bleach (or cleaners containing bleach). This mixture forms highly poisonous chloramine gas that causes coughing, choking and lung damage. Ammonia fumes can also react with nitrates in the environment to form ammonium nitrate particles, which can linger in dust, carpets, curtains and upholstery.

Children with asthma may be particularly sensitive to ammonia fumes. If swallowed or inhaled (sniffed or breathed in) ammonia is highly toxic.

Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde can be found in numerous products that surround us every day. Some of these harmful products include building materials, carpet, insulation, cleaning products, glue, lotions, baby wipes, sunblock, soaps and cosmetics.

The dangers of using products containing formaldehyde include watery and burning eyes, nose and throat, asthma attacks, skin irritation, headaches and nausea, there is also the possibility of cancer and leukemia.

Phosphates

Phosphates are water softening and stain removing ingredients added to laundry and dishwasher detergents. While not directly harmful to humans it has harmful effects on the environment as phosphates in waste water are a primary nutrient of algae.

Chlorine bleach

Chlorine bleach is often found in dishwashing detergents, toilet cleaners, disinfectants and mould and mildew removers.

Inhaling the fumes of cleaners containing chlorine can irritate the lungs. This is particularly dangerous for people suffering from heart conditions, asthma or emphysema. Chlorine is also highly corrosive, capable of damaging skin, eyes, and other membranes. Dishwashers are the worst culprits, releasing chemicals in a steamy mist when the door is opened after washing. In a clothes washer, chlorine mixes with the dirt in clothes to generate airborne, toxic chlorinated organic chemicals.



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TURNING TRASH INTO *Treasure*

Adam Buckingham, author of *Turning Trash Into Treasure For Young Children*, shares ideas on what can be incorporated from waste materials, and the home environment, to inspire young children's learning in an early childhood centre.

Sustainability is an important issue within the community and the education sector. I enjoy finding creative ways to reuse waste. The innovative equipment I have designed and made for young children is predominantly made from waste materials. It is about transforming someone else's rubbish into learnin young children. This is meaningful both to the children and their communities. The project has linked people from the wider community to the early childhood environment, knowing they are contributing their waste to be transformed into something useful. The equipment provides an opportunity for young children to manipulate and explore real world objects. Items are incorporated from the home environment and the wider world – to inspire and enrich young children's learning.

Play, curiosity and wonder

As young scientists and engineers come together to dismantle a lawnmower engine, they are talking excitedly, using real tools to do a real job, putting themselves firmly in the role of competent and fully engaged learner. This seemingly simple play creates a valuable vehicle for social and physical development, language acquisition and self expression, a sense of accomplishment and high self esteem, and rewards the life skills of curiosity and wonder.

Young actors and playwrights create fantasy worlds revolving around real life props like steering wheels, padlocks, switches, knobs and chains. These wonderful assemblages provide opportunities for open ended cooperative play, involve little or no financial outlay, are a great way for fathers and extended whanau to contribute in a way in which they feel comfortable, and are a very real example for children of materials being given a new life through recycling.

A spin off from this work has been the involvement of parents, and in particular

it has encouraged a rapport with men. Through helping to obtain resources or make equipment fathers engage with the centre, and these kinds of activities make early childhood education and care more attractive for male professionals.

Concrete tips to make one man's rubbish another man's treasure

- Have fun sourcing the materials and getting people on board to help
- Improvise with the materials, observe how children use them and then adapt your ideas
- Display resources in an orderly manner and make it look inviting for children to explore – keep it simple
- Give children the time and freedom to explore, discover, manipulate and practice how real objects work
- Think about things such as the physical space, location, organisation, storage and maintenance of equipment
- Use the correct names for all objects

1



The steel case of a discarded top loading washing machine provides an ideal wall against which to attach magnets. Manipulating the magnets is another opportunity for children to develop their fine motor skills. Using familiar objects provides a link between the centre and home environment. I have cut the case in half, horizontally, using an angle grinder, and placed a wooden top on it to make a table at child's height, so that this fully utilises the available space. It can also be used for magnetic stories.

2



Where can children play with springs? When using the 'rods' children have an opportunity to manipulate springs in ways they would not normally be able to. In this equipment four steel rods (from a washing machine) stand vertically in a wooden timber frame. Each rod contains an increasing number of objects with a hole, such as tap washers, nuts, rings, hair ties and springs. The children enjoy sliding the springs up the rods, then watching them fall and bounce up and down. The timber frame is made from off-cuts and all the objects were diverted from landfill.

3



Bungee bike tube: Tie the tube down low near the ground, so it will fly low (as it may hit legs rather than the face). Use motorbike tube or weave two bicycle tubes together to make it stronger. Cut off the valve. Draw lines on the ground with different coloured chalk, or use cones, to see how far they can pull it back. This is a good challenge to develop gross motor skills and can promote mathematical conversations.

4



The trainer wheels of the old bike are up on blocks, with the back wheel over a container of water. There is another block of wood behind the front wheel to keep the bike in place. For safety the children need to wear shoes and stay away from all moving parts. I draw a line around the back of the bike, and the rules are: 'stay behind the line' and 'no touching the wheel'. This activity needs to be supervised. Hold up a separate chain and cog so you can show the children how it moves, and so they can feel the chain. You can add colour with dye and detergent in the water, to highlight the movement of water. In the right light you can see cool little rainbows on sunny days. Note that the bike does not have a mudguard.

This is an 'activity centre', it contains a tap, caster wheel, light switch, door handle, nut and bolt and bungee cord or similar objects. Inside there are peep holes, a Perspex mirror and cell phone. One end is open and the opposite end has a shape cut out of it. The children explore the objects using their senses (sight, touch, taste and hearing) and by observing others. They develop spatial understanding of size and shape, develop their fine motor skills, hand- eye co-ordination, and gain control of their bodies. The objects also trigger imaginative play. The 'activity centres' provide a link between the centre and home with familiar objects. I have smoothed over sharp and rough edges and always consider the height of the objects with regard to eyes, and make sure the objects are fitted well. A finger could become entrapped up a tap; however taps are commonplace in all centres, so this is not a new problem. The tap and door handle have been placed in a low position to prevent it being pulled over. I have been conscientious when

5



making all the activities to ensure that they are as safe as possible. Through observing how the children used the activity centres I redesigned the main activity centre to make this simplified version. It is made from MDF-melamine so it is washable and easy to move, and there is room to add more objects.



About the Author

Adam Buckingham

Adam started off as a truck driver. Then about ten years ago, was floored by a serious illness brought on by exposure to methyl bromide being used to fumigate a container. That put paid to truck driving, and Adam cast around for a new career.

Adam liked the idea of working with young people so enrolled at AUT to study early childhood education, obtaining a Bachelor of Education. He is now one of only a handful of male early childhood education teachers in New Zealand.

"My passion is teaching" says Adam. "I enjoy helping children to extend their knowledge. Being a teacher gives me the opportunity to help children understand new meanings, concepts and facts. I provide a male influence for children who might not otherwise have one"

"As a male teacher I am more physically active and boisterous, and more involved in outdoor play. I run around outside with the children and they like to play touch rugby with me."

Adam has even made camp fires for the children to make toast and sometimes grows a beard to show the boys how men shave.

Adam is also a qualified Montessori teacher. Dr. Maria Montessori was the first early childhood teacher, who in the early 1900's developed the philosophy that education was not so much about handing on knowledge, but that children constructed their knowledge from experiences in the world. Adam has built on this concept with his activity centres.

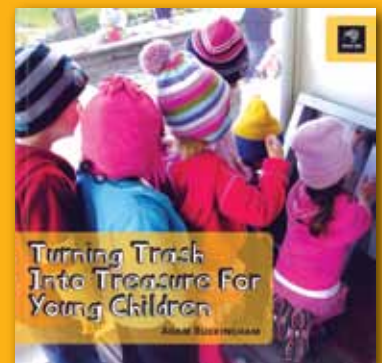
Adam runs workshops on engaging fathers and male teachers working in early

childhood. Speaking engagements keep Adam busy in New Zealand and the USA.

Turning Trash Into Treasure For Young Children

Adam's book contains over 200 ideas and colour pictures from around New Zealand. It is intended to inspire and provide ideas on what can be incorporated from solid waste materials, and the home environment, into the environment of an early childhood centre.

For more details visit
www.reuse.schoolnet.co.nz



DOIN' IT *Well*

Tawa Montessori Preschool and Little Earth Montessori in Kapiti are both committed to building a sustainable community. They introduce young children to a sense of simplicity and show them ways to share, respect and conserve nature's resources.

Both enviro preschools aim to operate in harmony with the natural environment. They make use of recycled and recyclable materials, and operate in a sustainable manner, as much as possible. Their enviro-nature curriculum is a living curriculum, integrated into the Montessori/Te Whaariki curricula.

Owner/Manager, Anja Geelen had an amazing childhood.

"Free-range and unplugged, I remember spending hours a day with my friends in the fields and forests around our home. We would fish, climb trees, play, run, tumble, jump, chase or just sit still, dream and do nothing," she says.

Today, many children are destined to create childhood memories in the early childhood centres they attend, sometimes for up to 60 hours per week and often with no access to a natural environment.

Research has shown that exposure to the natural world is essential for the healthy development of our children. Not only that, it is also during the early childhood period that the basis is laid for the construction of personality, the values and attitudes that will guide thoughts, feelings and behaviour of human beings for the rest of their life.

Anja agrees. "If we want a more sustainable and peaceful future, we have to start at the grassroots, with our children. A passion for the outdoors, for Papatuanuku and for our tamariki, inspired me to open our two enviro nature preschools."

"They are magical places where our real environmental stakeholders, the children, can not only create precious memories, but be active agents in creating a sustainable future."

Striving for a toxin-free environment

Staff, children and families of these enviro-centres strive to reduce the toxins they omit into the environment and to be conscious of their carbon footprint.

Little Earth was built in 2009 utilising, as much as possible, toxin-free and low-toxin materials. Rammed earth walls, untreated timber, low voc wall coverings and formaldehyde-free floor coverings contribute to a healthier environment for children and teachers.

They use environmentally friendly, alternative cleaners where possible which sometimes involves research, trial and error, seeking advice and thinking outside the square.

Anja says, "Parents are very supportive of our practices and give us ideas for alternatives. We are all on the same journey towards a more sustainable community."

Energy Efficiency

Tawa Montessori is situated in an old weatherboard house, like so many built in the fifties. While it has character, and natural materials like weatherboards and wooden floors, it is not the most energy efficient building. A heat pump is used to warm it in the winter.

Little Earth was designed with passive heating/cooling in mind and, for winter, they have under-floor heating powered by a hot water heat pump.

Both centres are fitted with energy-efficient appliances.

Rainwater Collection

Rainwater is collected from the roof of each centre and used to water the garden. At Little Earth rainwater is also used for flushing toilets.

Waste Reduction

Anja says they do not collect a huge amount of waste - "no more than one rubbish bin per fortnight at each preschool."

They collect organic waste for their worm farm and composting, with food scraps



"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.

- Albert Einstein



going to the chickens or guinea pigs. Egg shells get crushed by the children to feed to the chickens.

The children make their own paper for classroom use, made from their own paper waste.

Plastic milk bottles are re-used for collecting the worm 'juice' from the worm farm and for growing plants in. Plastic yoghurt containers are used as seedling planters and both glass jars and tin cans are used in the classroom for storage or pencil jars.

Even used coffee grinds are made good use of! They are a good source of nitrogen for the compost, garden or worm farm and a natural deterrent for snails and slugs. But coffee grounds can also be used as a natural component to make 'play dough' and life-like fossils!

Caring for Animals

Caring for animals fosters a sense of responsibility and compassion. It encourages a respect and reverence for life and other living beings. The children have a huge role in the daily care of the chickens, guinea pigs, birds, frog, turtles, fish and pet cat.

Anja says the children become very protective of the animals and show a lot of responsibility.

"They take ownership as they feed and care for them, including cleaning their shelters. They experience birth and death close up, the cycle of life. They collect the eggs daily, and we use these eggs in our baking and food preparation."

Having animals and gardens has created more opportunities for parents and whanau to be involved at these preschools. Along with the staff, they help during holidays, visiting the preschools on a roster to feed and care for the animals and garden.

Future Improvements

Tawa Montessori Preschool has been on their enviro journey for several years. The staff and families love sharing ideas and

researching new ideas, and are always looking at ways to improve or introduce new things.

Little Earth is still young, a baby who is thoroughly enjoying its childhood and there are a number of additional initiatives in the pipelines already. The children are given space and time to take ownership of Little Earth, being involved with all new activities.

Anja is also introducing a range of information seminars and training to parents at Little Earth. Upcoming classes introduce parents to a more mindful and greener way of parenting.

At national and international level Anja shares her knowledge, skills and experiences with the wider community through presentations at conferences and through the internet. Their blog, www.eyesonnature.blogspot.com, shares the journey of creating a sustainable community and reconnecting young children with nature.

"We hope that by sharing our journey and experiences with the wider community, we inspire others to look beyond practices, and make a mind-shift," says Anja.

Coffee Grind Fossils



1. Mix 1 cup of used coffee grounds, 1/2 cup of water, 1 cup of flour and 1/2 cup of salt together in a large bowl
2. Roll the mixture out onto a flat surface, over some wax paper
3. Press shells, leaves, hands, (anything you can think of really!) into the 'dough' to make imprints
4. Allow them to dry overnight
5. The coffee grind fossils look like real rocks when finished

SUSTAINABLE consumables

Preferred Suppliers of the Early Childhood Council, OfficeMax are pleased to offer sustainable products for everyday use in your centre. Cleaning products and recycled paper are just two of the many environmentally friendly product choices they have available.

Sustainable Cleaning

Many cleaning products are made with chemicals from the petroleum industry. OfficeMax stocks the Green Earth Solutions range of natural and Environmental Choice accredited cleaning detergents. These detergents are manufactured from natural and renewable raw materials and because they are 100% natural, they are better for the environment as well. The Green Earth range of natural cleaning detergents delivers outstanding performance for industrial and institutional cleaners with excellent, cleaning, solubilising and emulsification properties.

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- No VOCs
- No Phosphates
- No Petroleum
- Non Corrosive

The range is colour coded for easy identification and the 750ML spray bottle

is fitted with a commercial quality industrial trigger sprayer which is also colour coded.

The Green Earth range of cleaning products carries the Environmental Choice license as your proof that the products really are better for the environment. Their exacting green regulations are recognised world wide. Environmental Choice is an initiative of the New Zealand Governments Ministry for the Environment.

Why you should use Green Earth Products...

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Our 100% Recycled paper is manufactured in Germany and comes with both the Blue Angel and Nordic Swan accreditation. The Blue Angel label is one of the oldest Type 1 labels in the world and known for its high standards. The Nordic Swan is a Scandinavian Type 1 Ecolabel. The certification sets stringent environmental standards focused on limiting the detrimental impact of the manufacturing process by reducing emissions, raw material usage and energy consumption. The



Manufacturers Credentials are EMAS, ISO14001 and the German President Sustainability Award.

Our 50% Recycled paper is manufactured in Austria and comes with FSC accreditation. This ensures that the forest fibre used in the production of this paper is from responsible sources. This means the environmental and social benefits are maintained. It also has the EU-Ecolabel. The European Ecolabel distinguishes products that meet high standards of both performance and environmental quality. To be awarded the European Ecolabel this product had to pass rigorous environmental fitness trials, with results verified by an independent body. The manufacturers accreditation are also extremely high with ISO14001, FTSE4GOOD and No 1 in WWF Paper Sustainability Index.

Both our Recycled Copy Papers are produced without the use of any chlorine. The ream wrappers are made from BOPP wrappers (Biaxially Orientated Polypropylene) a thin, clear, flexible plastic film which has a wide range of applications for the packaging of stationery, tapes and labels, as well as decorative markets and are recyclable. They do not use any chlorinated or halogenated plastics.

If there is one negative, using recycled material does mean a higher price than papers that are solely manufactured from forest fibres (sustainable forestry).



GOING GREEN *at home*

Whether you're a diehard recycler who shops with canvas bags and keeps a compost bin in the corner of your backyard, or a busy parent looking for some quick tips on sorting glass from plastic, it's easy to get your family on the path to greener living.

But the best earth-friendly practices require the co-operation of everyone in the household. So, how do parents get kids invested in recycling, reusing, reducing, and the other basics of environmental responsibility?

As with most good habits, the best way to teach them is to be a good role model yourself. By showing that you care about and respect the environment, your children will do the same.

Engaging children in this way will get them to start thinking about how their individual efforts affect the world they live in, and how little changes can - and will - make a difference.



It's a Family Affair

- Teach respect for the outdoors. This can start in your own backyard. Help children plant a garden or tree. Set up bird feeders, a birdbath, and birdhouses.

A day at the beach can offer plenty of opportunities to point out and discuss the plants and animals you see and why it's important to protect their habitats. Or maybe a summer trip to a local park or wildlife sanctuary appeals to your adventurous clan.

- Recycle. Recycling is easy. Check with your local Council and be sure you know all the rules. Some communities allow co-mingling - all recyclables can be placed in one container - while others require sorting into separate containers. You may need bins for each type of recyclable: One for plastic, one for glass, one for paper, and one for cans. Children can sort (and rinse, if necessary) items, place them in the correct bins, and take the containers out to the curb for collection. After the bins have been emptied, ask your children to rinse them out (if they're dirty) and bring them back into the house or garage.
- Drink your own water. Bottled water is expensive and, experts say, not any cleaner or safer than tap water. In fact, much bottled water is actually tap water that has been filtered. The water that comes out of home spigots in most parts of New Zealand is extremely safe. Local water supplies are monitored constantly and the test results made public. And, unless they're recycled, the plastic bottles - most commonly made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is derived from crude oil - can end up in landfills. So have your children tote water from the tap (you can add a filter to improve its taste) in reusable bottles.
- Clean green. Many natural products can replace commercial - and possibly hazardous - cleaning preparations. Just a few examples: to deodorize carpets, sprinkle them with baking soda, wait 15 minutes and then vacuum; use vinegar and baking soda for everything from oven

cleaning and drain clearing to stain removal and metal polishing.

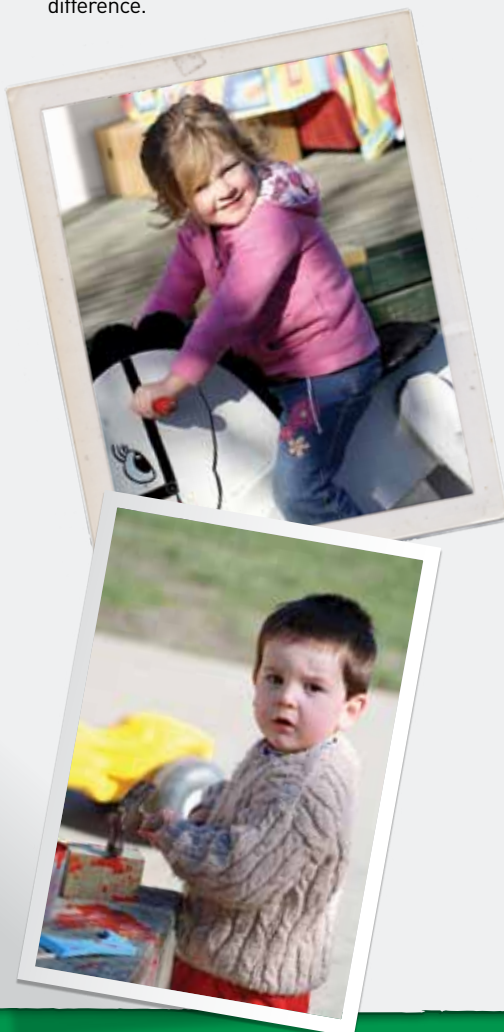
- Lend a hand. Many communities organise green activities, like pitching in to help clean up a local park or playground.

Getting Children to "Go Green"

In their own day-to-day activities, encourage children to find ways to limit waste, cut down on electricity and reuse items that they already have. Here's how:

- Conserve energy. Remind children to turn off lights when they're not in use, power down computers, turn off the TV when nobody's watching, and resist lingering in front of the refrigerator with the door open.
- Hoof it. If children can safely ride a bike or walk to school or to visit friends rather than catch a ride from parents, encourage it! Or if safety is a concern, consider organising a "walking school bus" - this activity allows children to walk or bike to and from school under the supervision of an adult.
- Let there be (more) light. Older children can help replace regular light bulbs with energy-efficient ones. Compact fluorescent light bulbs provide about the same light output as incandescent bulbs, but last much longer and use a fraction of the energy.
- Reuse and recharge. Buy rechargeable batteries for electronic toys and teach children how to care for and recharge them. This reduces garbage and keeps toxic metals out of landfills.
- Pass it on. Ask children to gather toys, books, clothes, and other goods that they no longer use or want for donation to local charities. Have them ride along for the drop-off so they can see how groups such as the Salvation Army use donations to help others.

These tips are just some ways to get your family to become more earth-friendly. Once you get everyone on board with conservation, challenge your children to come up with new and interesting ways of going green.



Connecting Children with Nature

Research Summaries

These recommended research briefs have been grouped into four categories to make finding what you need as easy as possible. This is a sample of the growing body of research on the problem of children's disconnection from the natural world, and the benefits of increased connection. The goal is to provide easy access to key research that can be used in advocacy presentations or to share with colleagues.

1. Cognitive Benefits of Connecting with Nature

Children have a positive relationship with nature

Young children see nature as including family, friends, insects and animals.

Kalvaitis, D. & Monhardt, R. (2011). *The architecture of children's relationships with nature: a phenomenographic investigation seen through drawings and written narratives of elementary students. Environmental Education Research 2011.*

Time in nature increases observation and creativity

Appropriate interactions with nature help children develop powers of observation and creativity.

Crain, William (2001). *How nature helps children develop. Montessori Life, Summer 2001*

Play in natural environments fosters language development and collaborative skills

Children's play in natural environments contains more imaginative and creative components that foster language and collaborative skills.

Fjortoft, I. And J. Sageie (2000). *The natural environment as a playground for children: Landscape description and analysis of a natural landscape. Landscape and Urban Planning, 48(1/2) 83-97*

Faber Taylor, A., Wiley, A., Kuo, F.E., & Sullivan, W.C. (1998). *Growing up in the inner city: Green spaces as places to grow. Environment & Behavior, 30(1)*

Nature connections increase children's skills in multiple domains

Children who spend time in well-designed nature-filled outdoor spaces with nurturing adults develop valuable skills across all learning domains.

Miller, D.L. (2007). *The seeds of learning: Young children develop important skills through their gardening experiences at a Midwestern early education program. Applied Environmental Education and Communication, 6(2)*

Early experiences with the natural world have been positively linked with the development of imagination and a sense of wonder. A sense of wonder is an important motivator for life-long learning.

Louv, Richard (1991). *Childhood's Future*, New York, Doubleday

Wilson, Ruth A. (1997). *The Wonders of Nature: Honoring Children's Ways of Knowing, Early Childhood News, 6(19)*

Nature connections increase children's skills in multiple domains

When children engage in authentic play in nature-based outdoor spaces, they develop skills in a variety of domains simultaneously.

Miller, D.L., Tichota, K., White, J. (2009). *Young children Learn Through Authentic Play. Accessed from www.dimensionsfoundation.org/research/authenticplay.pdf*

2. Mental Health Benefits of Connecting with Nature

Nature helps buffer stress

Nature alleviates the impact of life stress on children and helps them deal with adversity. The greater the amount of nature exposure, the greater the benefits.

Wells, Nancy M. & Evans, Gary W. (2003). *Nearby nature: A buffer of life stress among rural children. Environment and Behavior, 35(3), 311-330*

Roger Ulrich has produced a generous body of research on this topic, and this study in particular, conducted with others, looks at stress recovery in natural environments.

Accessed at www.uns.ethz.ch/edu/teach/masters/ebcdm/readings/Ulrich_R_1991.pdf

Time in nature helps children with Attention Deficit Disorder

A study by University of Illinois researchers Andrea Faber Taylor, Frances Kuo and William Sullivan has revealed that the symptoms of children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are relieved after contact with nature. The greener the setting, the more the relief. Children actually perform better on schoolwork after those experiences.

By comparison, activities indoors such as watching TV, or outdoors in paved, non-green areas leave children with ADD functioning worse. Maintaining trees and greenery near home and encouraging children with ADD to go out and play may be a compelling approach to helping them cope.

Taylor, A., Kuo, F. & Sullivan, W. (2001). *Coping With ADD: The Surprising Connection to Green Play Settings. Environment and Behavior, 33 (1), 54-77*

Nature enhances positive feelings about others

Children who play together in nature have more positive feelings about each other.

Moore, Robin (1996). *Compact nature: The role of playing and learning gardens on children's lives. Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture, 8, 72-82*

3. Physical Health Benefits of Connecting with Nature

Positive nature experiences improve coordination, balance and agility

Children who regularly have positive personal experiences with the natural world show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility.

Fjortoft, I. (2001). *The natural environment as a playground for children: The impact of outdoor play activities in pre-primary school children. Early Childhood Education Journal, 29(2): 111-117*

Grahn, P., Martensson, F., Lindblad, B., Nilsson, P., & Ekman, A., (1997). *UTE pa DAGIS, Stad & Land nr. 93/1991 Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, Alnarp*

Appropriate risk in outdoor play can minimize accidents

Almon explains that people freely admit they are afraid of accidents in play and want to minimize risk. Yet playgrounds that offer genuine risk tend to have fewer accidents than traditional playgrounds. "Give children real risk and they rise to it; they learn how to handle it. Give them sanitized play spaces, and children often are less conscious of risk and have accidents, or take outlandish risks for the sheer excitement of it all."

Almon, Joan. (2009). *The fear of play. Exchange, March/April, 42-44*

4. Adverse Effects of Disconnection from Nature

Fears about nature are growing

Cohen and D. Horm-Wingerd contend that children's unfounded fears and misconceptions about the natural environment develop when they have very little actual contact with living things and obtain most of their attitudes through the electronic media.

Cohen, S. & Horm-Wingerd, D. (1993). Children and the environment: Ecological awareness among preschool children. Environment and Behavior, 25 (1), 103-120.S.

Screen time reduces outdoor time

The first two years of life are considered a critical time for brain development. TV and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing outdoors, and interacting with parents and others, all critical activities for learning and healthy physical and social development. As children get older, too much screen time can interfere with activities such as being physically active outdoors, reading, doing homework, playing with friends, and spending time with family.

Kidshealth.org website September 2010

Too much time indoors leads to health issues

There is a high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency ('the sunshine vitamin') among infants, children, and adolescents worldwide. Too much time spent indoors keeps children from enough exposure to sunshine. Vitamin D deficiency is a risk factor for rickets and may be a risk factor for development of cardiovascular diseases, cancer or autoimmune conditions.

Huh S, Gordon CM. Vitamin D deficiency in children and adolescents: Epidemiology, impact and treatment. Rev Endocr Metab Disord. 2008 Jun;9(2):161-70

AND FINALLY:

You can monitor your centre's ecological footprint

Food, transport and energy consumption have the largest footprints in the early childhood centre involved in this study.

McNicol, H., Davis, J. & O'Brien, K. (2011). An ecological footprint for an early learning centre: identifying opportunities for early childhood sustainability education through interdisciplinary research. Environmental Education Research July 2011.



Green Earth

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Product information and OfficeMax product codes available on page 753 of the new Education catalogue.

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RESOURCE *Reviews*



The Very Hungry Caterpillar

By Eric Carle

Puffin

ISBN 9780141339672 (giftpack)

ISBN 9780141338484 (big board book)

The Very Hungry Caterpillar has been enchanting generations of toddlers for over forty years. Now there are two new ways you can share this enchanting story, in your centre.

Big Board Book

This large format board book makes sharing Eric Carle's enchanting story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar even more rewarding!

Board Book and Block Set

A great way to read and explore this classic picture book. This interactive set combines

the bestselling board book (standard size) with colourful number and picture blocks which can be used to:

- Tell the story of the very hungry caterpillar
- Count along from 1 -10
- Match numbers and colours with all the things he eats
- Build picture puzzles of the very hungry caterpillar and the beautiful butterfly he becomes
- Show the life cycle sequence of a caterpillar and a butterfly



My First Car Was Red

By Peter Schossow

Gecko Press

ISBN 9781877467691 (paperback)

ISBN 9781877467684 (hardback)

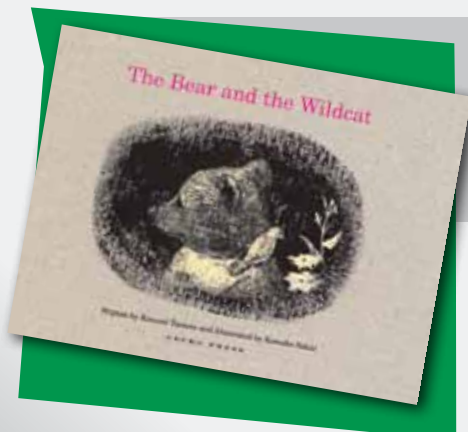
'Diesel or gas?' I asked Grandpa.

'Sweat,' he said.

Aimed towards boys more-so than girls, this book will delight anyone who loves adventures! Punctuated with image of road signs, this story takes you on a journey as a

boy and his Grandpa restore a pedal car, learn to drive it and explore the town – not without incident!

Humorous and beautifully illustrated this is a must-have – especially if your bookshelf is a bit light of books for the older boys (aged 4+)



The Bear and the Wildcat

Written by Kazumi Yumoto

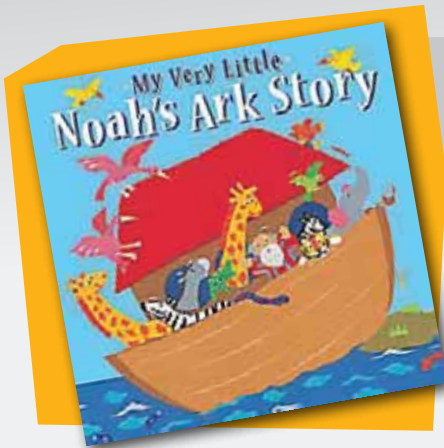
Illustrated by Komako Sakai

Gecko Press

ISBN 9781877467707 (hardback)

This is an astute and sensitive 'guide to grieving' in picture book form, suitable for any age. I wiped away a tear as I read about Bear's friend Bird dying and felt Bear's sadness.

Full of grief, Bear locks himself away in isolation. He ventures out when the fresh spring breeze calls to him and meets Wildcat, finally sharing his grief with someone. Wildcat plays the violin as Bear remembers all the good times he had with Bird.



My Very Little Noah's Ark Story

Lion Hudson

ISBN 9780745963181 (board book)

This book is a lovely size for little hands at just 8cm square, but far too small for group reading. The story is short and illustrated in bright colours but there is something lacking in the text. This book contains a number of

rhymes so when reading aloud I was trying to find a beat or some rhythm to put into it but none seemed to exist. This isn't a book I'd choose to read a second time.



Baby's First Prayers

Compiled by Christina Goodings

Lion Hudson

ISBN 9780745962658

A cute, colourful board book with simple pictures and short prayers for young children.



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Gall

Gary Collins
Managing Director



SAFE BOTTLES
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SPRINGTIME *Activity*

It's Springtime and apart from new growth, warmer weather and baby animals, the seasonal icon that most of us associate with Spring is the good old daffodil.

As beautiful as they are by themselves, daffodils can be made to look quite different and provide a fun learning experience for kids and adults alike.

All you need is food colouring (except yellow or orange of course!) and one or more freshly cut daffodils.

1. Place a few centimetres of water in a jar or similar vessel (glass won't stain) and drip food colouring into the water. Make sure it's

quite well coloured and not too transparent or weak.

2. Take a freshly cut daffodil and cut the stem to a maximum of 20cm (the shorter the length, the faster the result).
3. Place the daffodil in the jar of water and over the next couple of days the flower will drink up the coloured water.

The tips of the bloom will change first and then the veins - which shows children how a flower gets nourished.

Check out the photo below for a typical result. Try dark colours for the best looking daffodils!



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*Programme under development. Subject to approval processes late 2011.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

Many readers will remember a time when computers weren't the norm. Administration was done using a pen and paper and calculators were a common desk top object. These days calculators are scarcely seen but often carried – as part of a cellphone, laptop or tablet – and that is just the beginning.

If you're in the business of early childhood education you have customers you need to interact with in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Due to advancements in technology, the way we deliver our products, ideas and messages has changed dramatically. As a result many of us feel like we are losing touch and being left behind. We are left wondering what ongoing impact this will have on our business.

New products such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs are now big players in the marketing world. Gone are the days of newspaper advertising and letterbox drops. Customers don't want to be 'talked at' anymore – the rules have changed and the new rule is 'quality engagement'.

Businesses are now able to engage with existing and potential customers in a way they are familiar with. Facebook, Twitter and blogs provide simple, convenient ways of keeping people updated and informed.

Online accounting software such as Xero and MYOB Live Accounts allow managers, accountants, treasurers, board members and owners to access financial information from wherever in the world they may be. Programmes like Google Docs enable users to share documents and edit simultaneously, collating ideas effortlessly and without travel costs – a gem for community based centres.

If you're not keeping up with recent advancements in technology it is important that you take a look at why. Some common barriers might include:

Fear – This is something you need to get over. Technology is not going to stop and wait for you so jump on the wagon before it gets even harder to face.

Time restrictions – Just as you make time for staff meetings and preparing budgets, you need to schedule time for this too. It might even save you time in the long run.

Ability – There are loads of cost-effective training options available for all levels of experience. Night classes are often held at local schools or polytechnics. Consider online training too. Webinars are often low-cost or even free.

Cost – Crunch the numbers and you might be surprised with how cost-effective it can be. You might even save money. Besides that, the cost of being left behind is likely to be much greater than the cost of adopting the new ways of the world.

You don't know what you don't know

– The articles on the following pages will help with this.

Be sure to talk to your staff about the use of technology in your centre. They will have ideas on how you can make the most of the opportunities these advancements provide you with.

Whether you like it or not the future is now. Seize the opportunities it presents and make sure your business isn't left behind.



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MAKING THE Switch

ECC Treasurer, Lonnie Parker owns Bright Sparks Childcare in Auckland and recently moved the two centres to a different child-management programme. Lonnie kindly wrote this article in hope of helping others who might be considering doing the same.

Are you looking at changing your child management software? Or perhaps you are setting up a new centre? Want to save time and replace that paper-based system? I have just been through the process of changing our child management software. It was a major undertaking but worth it in the end.

We had made a mistake using our previous software programme – a simple mistake that proved to be expensive and time-consuming to rectify. Although no system is fool proof this was the catalyst that instigated the change. The same error is less likely to happen in the new software.

Another reason for our change was that we have two centres with five licenses between them and wanted a system that could give us the group view, the centre view and of course, for Ministry, the license view.

In addition, we were clumsily trying to reinvent the wheel in trying to provide online access to parents through our own website. Our new system provides the facility to do this in a relatively simple way.

Once we had selected our new system, sorted paperwork, payment and staff training we undertook a parallel run, using both systems for the month of May 2011. We extracted the enrolment records from the old system and then entered the daily sign-in sheets, staff timesheets and accounts into both systems for one month. As you can imagine this doubled the data entry workload but enabled us to compare the RS7's for the month of May to check everything was running smoothly. We were ready to start the new system at the beginning of a funding period.

The Good

- It was a great opportunity to review our processes – rather extreme approach for self-review but take the opportunities when they arise!
- The new software is web-based, we can access it from anywhere - home or centres. This is cloud computing! It makes it easier to provide support too, when everyone can access the same information at the same time regardless of where they are.
- Processing the bank statement daily is more efficient, providing our parents with up-to-date information. Completing the RS61s seemed a lot smoother this year.



Lonnie Parker

Some Pitfalls Encountered...

- Running two systems for a month was a huge undertaking
- Remember the old acronym GIGO - Garbage In equals Garbage Out. We may have been better to enter the children's enrolment from scratch rather than taking the information from the old system – the systems store information differently and record different information.
- Changing phone companies and internet providers, while moving to a web-based system, was not such a great idea. If the internet is down you don't have access to your records.

While we have gained a lot of extra functionality we have had to compromise in some other areas – especially around staff timesheets and having combined family accounts. Having separate accounts for each individual child with no link to brothers or sisters can present difficulties when families make single payments covering all children, and perhaps not for the full amount so you need to agree the account split with the family. In the scheme of things though, the upside of additional functionality gained far outweighs the downside.

A change in system presents challenges, especially when staff have been working with the previous system for so long. Taking it slowly and investing in training helps manage these challenges.

Where to from here?

We have achieved the basic implementation – child enrolments, daily sign-in and accounts. This essentially covers the administrative side of things. We are in the process of rolling out the Parent Portal, allowing our parents access to portfolios and their account, and implementing the system in each room for Lead Teachers to access the information directly.

We have been extremely lucky in having understanding and patient families supporting us while putting the new system in and getting used to how it works. This has been a key factor in making the project a success.



A PARENTS' PORTAL, *the simple way*

KidzOnline is one of the most innovative software applications available to early childhood services and parents and is a world first - made here in New Zealand!

KidzOnline is one of the modules the 3B Network integrates with child, staff and activity planning databases, but it can also be used independently.

Initially KidzOnline was simply a system which enabled staff to upload photos and learning stories via a computer to a website which could be shared with parents. A history of the child's activities and related photos was built up and parents were provided secure access and automatic email notification of new records. It's a popular feature of subscriber early childhood services and forms part of parent communication and child assessment requirements.

The latest development has simplified and sped up the process: KidzOnline has added an iTouch/iPhone/iPad app (application), which allows teachers to take photos and text as well as a link to activity programme information and send instantly to parents during or after an activity session. Teachers can use the same photos and text to send to multiple parents and parents can immediately view these online and send a comment back to teachers. One of the key benefits of this innovation is that there is no need to upload photos to or use a computer: the iTouch sends the photo and text via the wireless network to the KidzOnline remote server.

Security is important and is ensured by issuing passwords only to your authorised staff who can add and edit records for their location; and for parents, only for viewing and giving feedback comments on their child's records. There is no public access.

Simplicity of design and ease of use for staff is a key driver for KidzOnline. Pull down menus, predictive text, selectable options and minimal screen clutter make it user-friendly. It's easy to re-use group photos and text for other child records, saving time and multiplying the benefits. KidzOnline is easy for staff to use, provides valued ongoing contact with parents and stores evidence of activity planning and child assessment. It's a valuable method of staff reflection and stored

memories and demonstrates regulatory compliance.

Subscribers can download a child's history to DVD to use as a 'graduation' gift - and it's all so simple the children can be included in the process!

The system has been trialled in a group of Auckland centres for the past 4 months and is being launched officially on 1 October 2011.

Subscription provides your organisation with full access to your child KidzOnline records and ability to invite parents and their authorised contacts to join.

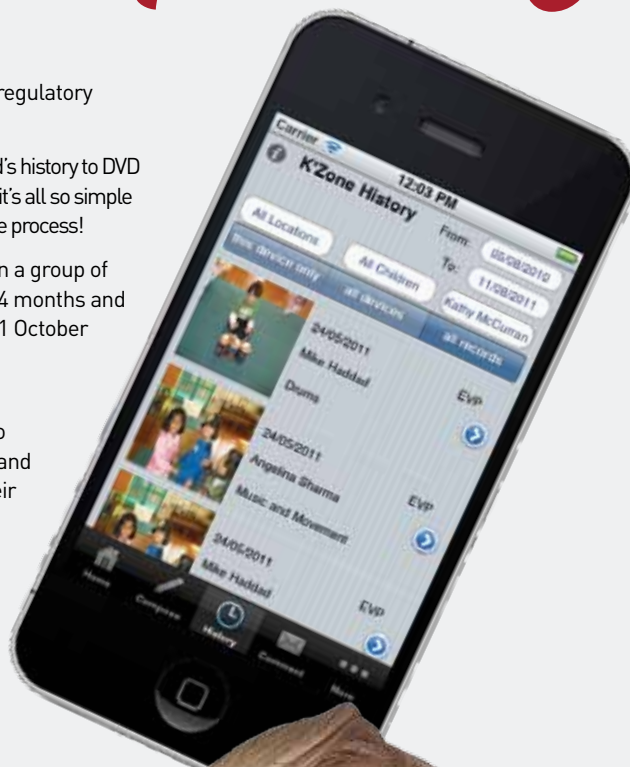
The database is safely and securely stored on a powerful remote server with daily backups.

ECE Providers pay a monthly subscription to use the system. Initial registration is \$600. Subscriptions which include use, support and upgrades for the KidzOnline module are based on number of child records at \$0.50cents per child per week.

Before you can access KidzOnline you need to have access to a computer, a current web browser and broadband web access. Organisations may have either digital camera or iTouch device.

For more information visit www.3b.co.nz or email admin@3b.co.nz.

Once the paperwork and initial payment are received you can have it up and running in a day!



Child Portfolios

How we are doing it.

A brief look at the I.C.T. tools used for child portfolios in New Zealand

In the past decade, a significant effort has been made to increase the use of information communication technology (ICT) in New Zealand's early childhood sector. E-portfolios and digitalised learning stories have become a common topic, often highlighted during industry conferences and training workshops. The summary below shows how ECE centres in New Zealand utilise ICT to manage children's e-portfolios and learning stories. This is a result of interviewing 20 early learning centres and various conversations with ECE educators at industry events.



Email is the most commonly used communication tool. ECE centres use email to send newsletters and notify parents of upcoming events. As

far as e-portfolio goes, most centres attach children's learning stories to emails and send them to each family individually. The advantage of email is it's easy to start a conversation amongst teachers and parents and most families have access to email. The challenge of email communication is that it is inefficient and difficult to keep track of conversations. For example sending 30 individualised learning stories requires 30 different emails. It takes a lot of time. Also, people use email for other purposes, so identifying the learning records of a particular child can be a painful experience. If educators want to reflect continuity in children's learning, email isn't the best tool in this regard.



Microsoft Office Suite, Apple iWork, ComicLife etc. The majority of centres are familiar with one or more of these software programmes. Teachers often write learning stories using Word (or Publisher), then print out the written stories and file the paper copy in children's profile book. The hard copy profile book is then shared with parents. As far as e-portfolios are concerned, teachers manage one folder for

each child on a computer. If a child left the centre, teachers would have the option of making a CD with all the learning stories

of the child. The advantage is that Office software has been around for nearly a decade and most people have experience using it. The rich graphic capability means teachers could design or layout very beautiful learning stories. The challenge is that it is hard to organise documents at the centre level. It is also difficult for parents to access the hard copy profile book. The turnaround time of parent feedback is longer and there is little chance of overseas grandparents seeing the books. Also consider that the profile book could get lost. Last but not least, the overall cost of admin, printing, paper, software licensing, upgrades and maintenance can be high.



Google Docs is a range of internet browser based document editing software. It's a relatively new concept and has been improved over the past few years. Although

it doesn't provide the rich functionalities of traditional document editing software, it provides easy access to documents because all files are stored on the internet. Some centres use Google Docs to create learning stories then share the document with children's family members. One advantage of Google Docs is that it's free. It centralises all children's learning stories in one single place and makes it easy for early learning centres to organise their documents. The downside is that there is no continuous software support. The entire product category is designed for general public rather than specifically for ECE centres. It's not intuitive and takes time and training for teachers to become fluent.

Dropbox is primarily designed for document storage and provides easy document access without location boundary. Some

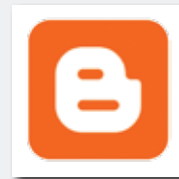


centres use Dropbox to store children's learning stories and share these between teachers within the same centre. Most commonly the teacher

creates one file per child which holds all learning stories for that child. The advantage of Dropbox is universal access to the same document everywhere. Teachers could write a learning story on one computer in the centre and access it on another at home. The disadvantage is that Dropbox is designed to be used by an individual or a small group of people. As soon as it is shared with a large number of people it becomes very cumbersome

to manage and track. It is also very challenging to share learning stories with an individual parent in a secure manner. A recent Dropbox security breach allowed anyone to access anyone's documents library without any password, which is extremely dangerous.

Blogger was introduced to 60 early learning centres around the country as part of Ministry of Education ICT initiative in 2005. It



is originally designed as a self-publishing platform. Over the years, it evolved to support multimedia which centres could use to record children's

learning outcomes, photos and videos. The good side of Blogger is that it's online software where information recorded is easily accessible by parents. It is free for some users. The primary concern is that, by default, all information uploaded is available to public. There are very limited guidelines on data privacy which concerns many parents. As it's primarily designed as a publishing platform, it can't be used by ECE centres without substantial setup process. The knowledge required to make the blog secure and undertake on-going maintenance is huge.

So those are just five of the many tools available for e-portfolio management. The key question to ask when evaluating the right tools for your centre is: Does the software do what you want?

1. Does it keep your records in a safe and reliable place?
2. How easy is it to share with parents and get feedback?
3. How easy is the software to use? And how long will it take staff and parents to adopt it?
4. How much does it cost, to buy and to operate? Does it require a fixed contract? Free doesn't mean the best. It's a balance with convenience.
5. How much maintenance is required from your centre? I would look for software that is maintained and upgraded with no extra outlay by the centre.
6. Be sure to consider the emerging Web based products especially for early childhood education centres they tend to be reliable and intuitive, and increasingly meet the above requirements.



Simplify e-portfolio and learning story management

- ✓ Increase engagement with parents
- ✓ Boost your teacher's job satisfaction
- ✓ Store all of your children's records in one place



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Online tools FOR YOUR BUSINESS



When Maria Salt, owner of Natural Steps needs to recruit a new teacher her first port of call is putting the word out on Facebook. As she has plenty of connections already in ECE it means she has a targeted group of people to share out the news. With the latest number of Facebook profiles in New Zealand hovering over the two million mark, and posts easier than ever to spread and share, it makes sense to use it to find staff, share information and interact with parents and staff.

Social media gets a large amount of attention for its new tools and methods of connection. Avid social media users can often become almost fanatical in their desire to get everyone on Twitter, Google+, or Linked In. People can become addicted to using it to share every part of their day, and it can begin to overtake face to face interactions.

Is there a place for social media in an ECE setting? Yes. It's all about locating the tools that most suit you, and developing strategies around them. Using social media well can help you improve your connectedness with staff and parents, and provide you with tools to help promote your centre online.

What should you consider?

Foursquare

This is a location based social media tool. It's a good idea to list your ECE centre on Foursquare. This is a tool that can record where people have been and what they are doing. However it's also great to be listed, simply because new families into the area with a smart phone loving parent is more likely to find you're the closest centre for them.

www.foursquare.com

Linked In

If your parents are professionals or business owners, then they may well be on Linked in. This is sort of a serious Facebook for business, with profiles looking like an online cv.

Encourage all your staff to join, and create a closed group for your team to pop up all your admin and discuss any issues.

Linked In can be a bit clunky and some people may not enjoy using it as much as the other social media tools.

It is a good place to be as a centre owner, or director. It works as an online networking tool, and you can post notes and comments about your business, as well as link to articles that relate to early childhood education.

www.linkedin.com

Facebook

It's far more likely your staff and parents have Facebook pages. It's a good idea to have a chat to all staff about the suggested privacy settings on their profiles for photos and personal information, and whether there is a policy for adding the parents of children at your centre as Facebook friends.

You can create closed groups for staff or for small groups of parents.

Instead of having admin meetings create a closed group and place all the admin news within it. Explain that you expect all staff to read it, then either "like" or comment on it to ensure it's been read and understood. This encourages them to remain accountable to keeping themselves in the loop.

www.facebook.com

Twitter

Twitter is still a small part of NZ's social media lifestyle, but a thriving one. Around fifty thousand people here have accounts, with twenty thousand of those operating active accounts.

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While you can use it like most do, to chat about anything and everything, you can also use it strategically.

With Twitter lists you can collect all the news and industry accounts and collate them together; then skim the updates of these lists each day to catch up with news. This is faster than trawling through Stuff or reading a print newspaper.

You can also use Twitter to information gather, build profile, network and engage.

www.twitter.com

Google+

Google+ is new. It is still continuing to be explored but has great potential for your business.

Whereas Facebook is about putting everyone you know together (your mum with your colleagues and your friends), with Google+ you place all your connections in different circles, according to your relationship with them. You then control what each circle sees and does not see.

You can also create 'huddles' to talk to up to ten people at a time (like a big skype call)

You can use this to have virtual staff meetings, or to network with other centres.

<https://plus.google.com>

Social Media tools can add to the way you operate your ECE centre, making it work more effectively.

Regardless of whether you choose to use any of these tools or not, you should consider working with your staff to create a social media policy that covers your expected outcomes for them in terms of privacy and accountability, and also discuss how you might use it in terms of protecting and growing your brand.

About the author

Rachel Goodchild works in professional development for ECE, and as a consultant to businesses in New Zealand, focussing on social media, team relationships and branding.



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Choosing an ECC-accredited Preferred Supplier means you avoid the hassle of finding your own supplier, or one with an understanding of the early childhood sector, and may mean significant financial and time savings.

Preferred Suppliers have gone through a rigorous selection process to ensure consistency with the goals and philosophies of the Early Childhood Council and to ensure the goods, services and terms they offer our members are attractive.

Preferred Suppliers sign a 12 month agreement with the Early Childhood Council and are evaluated annually based on your feedback.

Preferred suppliers can:

- Offer you a specific range of goods and services at discounted prices
- Offer you terms that reflect the nature of the sector we are in
- Support the activities of the Early Childhood Council

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The agreement is part of Sharp's ongoing dedication to the early education sector in New Zealand.

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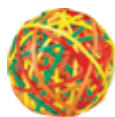
requirements and less work for administrative and accounting staff, with next day delivery of stocked items guaranteed in most areas for orders placed before 5pm, and free delivery for most orders over \$50 + GST (conditions apply).

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Last Laugh

Puns for Educated Minds

1. The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.
4. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
5. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
6. Atheism is a non-prophet organisation.
7. A backward poet writes inverse.
8. In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.
9. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.



Q: Why was the broom late?
A: Because it overswept!

Q: What did the rope say after it got tangled?
A: Oh, no. Knot again!

Q: What do snakes put on their kitchen floors?
A: Rep-tiles.

"There is a theory which states that if ever anybody discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory which states that this has already happened."

- Douglas Adams (Hitch-hikers' Guide to the Galaxy-fame)

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Centre Redesigns

Before and after views of a project that was started on a Friday afternoon and finished ready for the centre to open at 7.00am on Monday morning.

Kitchen Area

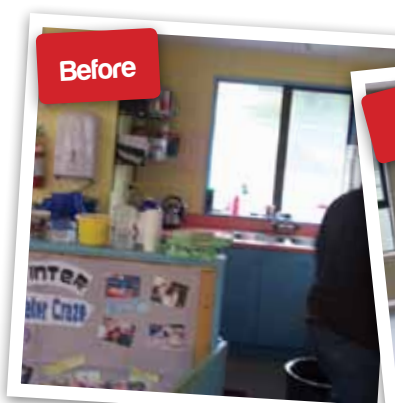
This kitchen has large rubbish and recycling bins and is fitted with quality hardware throughout. All doors and drawers are fitted with a remote control electronic locking system to meet health and safety requirements.

The cupboard units are made from moisture resistant white board and fronts are sprayed in two pack paint to match the décor.

Art Area

The art area has a stainless steel sink bench with raised lip for water containment. The overhead units are designed for extra heavy storage capacity and all units have remote electronic locking system as with the kitchen. The wall behind the sink is covered in Perspex to protect art work from water damage and the area also has storage for large paper and bench space for children.

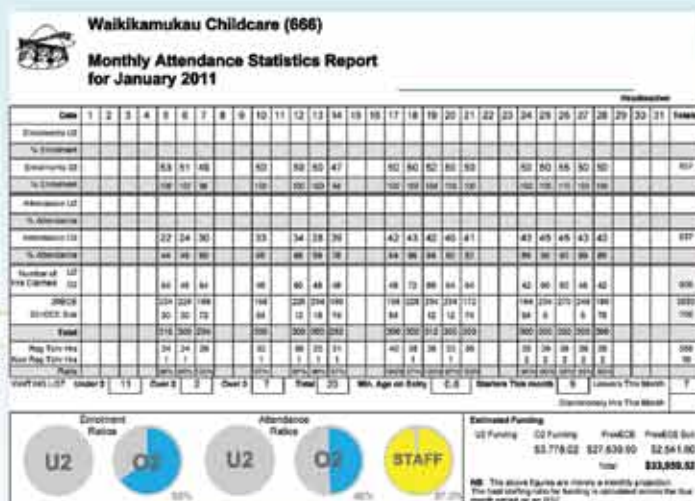
All units are made from moisture resistant white board and the fronts are sprayed in two pack paint to match the décor.



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| Subsidiary Funded Child Hours | | | 39 ECE Funded Child Hours | | | | Staff Hour Count | | | | |
| Under 3 | | Over 3 | 200CE Hours | | Plus 39 Hours | ECE Qualified and Registered | | | | | |
| | | | | | | Yes | No | | | | |
| Jan. 1 | | | Jan. 1 | | | Jan. 1 | | | | | |
| Jan. 2 | | | Jan. 2 | | | Jan. 2 | | | | | |
| Jan. 3 | | | Jan. 3 | | | Jan. 3 | | | | | |
| Jan. 4 | | | Jan. 4 | | | Jan. 4 | | | | | |
| Jan. 5 | | | Jan. 5 | | | Jan. 5 | | | | | |
| Jan. 6 | | | Jan. 6 | | | Jan. 6 | | | | | |
| Jan. 7 | | | Jan. 7 | | | Jan. 7 | | | | | |
| Jan. 8 | | | Jan. 8 | | | Jan. 8 | | | | | |
| Jan. 9 | | | Jan. 9 | | | Jan. 9 | | | | | |
| Jan. 10 | | | Jan. 10 | | | Jan. 10 | | | | | |
| Jan. 11 | | | Jan. 11 | | | Jan. 11 | | | | | |
| Jan. 12 | | | Jan. 12 | | | Jan. 12 | | | | | |
| Jan. 13 | | | Jan. 13 | | | Jan. 13 | | | | | |
| Jan. 14 | | | Jan. 14 | | | Jan. 14 | | | | | |
| Jan. 15 | | | Jan. 15 | | | Jan. 15 | | | | | |
| Jan. 16 | | | Jan. 16 | | | Jan. 16 | | | | | |
| Jan. 17 | | | Jan. 17 | | | Jan. 17 | | | | | |
| Jan. 18 | | | Jan. 18 | | | Jan. 18 | | | | | |
| Jan. 19 | | | Jan. 19 | | | Jan. 19 | | | | | |
| Jan. 20 | | | Jan. 20 | | | Jan. 20 | | | | | |
| Jan. 21 | | | Jan. 21 | | | Jan. 21 | | | | | |
| Jan. 22 | | | Jan. 22 | | | Jan. 22 | | | | | |
| Jan. 23 | | | Jan. 23 | | | Jan. 23 | | | | | |
| Jan. 24 | | | Jan. 24 | | | Jan. 24 | | | | | |
| Jan. 25 | | | Jan. 25 | | | Jan. 25 | | | | | |
| Jan. 26 | | | Jan. 26 | | | Jan. 26 | | | | | |
| Jan. 27 | | | Jan. 27 | | | Jan. 27 | | | | | |
| Jan. 28 | | | Jan. 28 | | | Jan. 28 | | | | | |
| Jan. 29 | | | Jan. 29 | | | Jan. 29 | | | | | |
| Jan. 30 | | | Jan. 30 | | | Jan. 30 | | | | | |
| Jan. 31 | | | Jan. 31 | | | Jan. 31 | | | | | |
| 900 | | | 10320 | | 708 | 968 | 18 | | | | |
- Teacher Registration Targets: Numbers of Teaching Staff**
- This question refers to all teaching staff actually employed in your service to deliver education and care programs during the week Monday, 10 December - Friday, 10th December 2010. This number is used for statistical purposes only and does not impact your funding. You should not put one and a half time teachers, and you should include the Part-time, Registered. You should not count any-to-be teachers, not any staff not directly employed teaching children.
- How many teaching staff (see a number) are:
- | | ECE Qualified | Non ECE Qualified | Total |
|---|---------------|-------------------|-------|
| Registered Teachers? (that is, teachers approved Teaching Certificate) | 5 | 6 | |
| Unregistered Teachers? (that is, are not listed in current Planning Certificate) | | 3 | |
| Total | 5 | 9 | |
- Number of Children**
- How many children claimed in your service during the week of Mon 6 December 2010 to Fri 10 December 2010. Only count each child once during this week.
- | Under 2 | Subsidiary Funding | | 39 Hours ECE | | |
|---------|--------------------------------|----|--------------|---------|---------|
| | 2 & Over Non-registered 39 ECE | 18 | 3 Years | 4 Years | 5 Years |
| | | | | | |



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