

Swings Roundabouts

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Autumn 2012

MEET THE MINISTER

Hon Hekia Parata, Minister of Education, answers questions from the ECE community

A FIRST TIMERS VIEW

Debbie Marson talks about her first experience at an ECC Conference

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Editor

Trudi Sutcliffe

Editorial Enquiries

information@ecc.org.nz

Advertising Enquiries

Evaon Watkins
A-Mark Publishing
PO Box 1879, Christchurch 8140, NZ
Phone: +64 3 982 4293
Email: evaon@mediapublications.co.nz

Production Co-ordinator

Katie Bolt

Graphic Designer

Vanessa Karabassis

Subscription Enquiries

Early Childhood Council
PO Box 5649, Lambton Quay, Wellington 6145
Phone: 0800 742 742
Email: admin@ecc.org.nz
www.ecc.org.nz

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FROM THE *Editor*



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Being the new editor of Swings & Roundabouts has certainly lived up to it's name, over the last few weeks it's kept me busy but rewarded by reading many thought provoking articles submitted for publication, especially since I come from an early childhood teaching background myself.

One of our main themes is "Helping children succeed". But where do you start? There are so many factors in how we as people evolve and succeed, so what gives children the greatest start in life? We have some interesting articles in how literacy makes a difference and how educators can provide a successful literacy programme, plus articles on touch and resilience.

We as educators often work with colleagues and families who all have a different view on what is quality early childhood education and coordinating these often mixed values is hard work. So how do you do it. As several articles suggest under the Focussing on Continuous Improvement theme it's often about open communication. Is your centre listening to all its stakeholders?

Another article of interest is: "To review or not review...that is the question". This article looks at the recent suggestion of reviewing Te Whāriki. Have a read. What do you think? Is it time for a change in New Zealand's Early Childhood Curriculum?

Plus meet our new Education Minister Hekia Parata and read her answers to questions from some of ECC's members. You can hear more from Minister Parata at ECC's 2012 Conference in May where she is a keynote speaker. Also we have more information on ECC's upcoming conference and an article from a first time attendee at last year's conference.

Over the next few months I'm looking for stories under these themes:

- Community Hubs
- Public versus Private ECE – the-age-old debate
- The Pikler Approach – raising healthy babies
- Are we pampering our children too much in ECE?

If you or your centre has a story to share about any of these themes or any other burning ECE issue please email me at info@ecc.org.nz

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this month's Swings & Roundabouts. Enjoy.

Trudi Sutcliffe
Editor

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CEO's Message



As the first quarter of 2012 comes to an end, what events and outcomes can we see for early childhood education (ECE) for the remainder of 2012 and the next few years? This article is devoted to a summary of the events and issues that are likely to have some impact on the ECE sector.

Political

Government has signalled a strong interest in outcomes and performance measurement. There is a desire to understand what children are achieving through their ECE participation, whether this is preparing children for their primary school education journey appropriately and whether the level of achievement represents good value for money.

Some in the sector fear that this drive for 'value for money' heralds the introduction of 'National Standards' such as those imposed on primary schools. Others see it as an opportunity for the sector to demonstrate the great things being achieved by children every day.

The government has also introduced, in pre-election policy, the goal of achieving 98% participation in quality ECE. This is likely to be a major focus this term. Problems exist with this goal, however. Some parents will see it as removing the choice to educate children at home and outside the Te Whāriki curriculum. Others remain concerned that the money required to drive the initiative will come, in the current economic climate, from further revenue cuts to existing services.

The Ministry of Education's Briefing to the Incoming Minister highlighted the following as immediate priorities.

- Implementation of existing community-level initiatives to improve participation in ECE, with new policy and money required to meet also the Government's target of 98% ECE participation by 2015.

- Work on improved funding and information systems, with key funding policy decisions due in mid-2012.
- Policy development on improved interventions in poorly-performing ECE services. (Terms of Reference for the ECE Quality Advisory Group proposed by the Minister and yet to be announced)
- Policy development to improve the quality of care that under-two-year-olds receive in ECE. (Terms of Reference for the ECE Under Two Advisory Group proposed by the Minister)
- Improving the uptake of ECE by children of beneficiaries, in line with welfare reforms (in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development).
- Ensuring continuity of learning between ECE and school.
- Evaluating, during 2012, the national ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki (the project to be led by ERO).
- The creation of interactive web tools to help parents choose the right ECE service for them. (Another ERO-led development to occur in 2012.)

Finally, the issue of political stability has to feature in our predictions for 2012. The government has a tenuous relationship with the Maori Party. It remains to be seen whether this relationship will stand the test of time. Issues over the proposed sale of assets have already proved testing. Additional pressures on government from a stronger Green Party; and the re-emergence of New Zealand First on the political landscape, will both add to a potentially unstable three years.

Economic

Treasury correctly points to the continuing effects of the Global Financial Crisis. Recent turmoil in Greece, Italy and France combined with violent revolts in Egypt and Syria, and the stand-off involving Iran all combine to create significant political and financial uncertainty.

The Treasury briefing to the Minister of Finance points to these environmental factors contributing to a period of uncertainty for some time to come. Such uncertainty creates nervousness in global financial markets, making the cost of international finance higher, driving up interest rates, oil costs and so on. These factors impact New Zealand. Treasury indicates reduced government expenditure as the main means of response to this situation. Thus, the current call for cuts to public service expenditure and to the number of public servants. This myopic view has led to the call by Treasury for further cuts to ECE revenue. Whether the Ministers of Finance and Education accept this advice remains to be seen. But there is great concern within our sector awaiting the Government Budget in May.

The ECE Taskforce recommended no funding cuts, but a new funding system that incentivises quality, and removes some of the perverse incentives that exist currently.

Social

The government's drive for a performance-focussed ECE sector has led to the decision to establish a post-ECE Taskforce, Quality Advisory Group. The focus in the Terms of Reference is, unfortunately, toward performance management, or 'how big to make the stick and when to use it', rather than a focus on quality improvement and encouragement. Both sides of the coin need to be developed at present, but the immediate focus solely on the negative is worrying.

There is also a growing call for a review of the ECE Curriculum, Te Whāriki. Not because any cogent argument has been presented suggesting it is flawed, but because the curriculum was introduced in 1996 and much has changed since.

The ECE Taskforce called for a review of the implementation of Te Whāriki, recognising that its implementation has varied.

In the view of the ECC, this Taskforce recommendation doesn't go far enough. To maintain a World-class ECE curriculum we should be looking to review content also.

There is also increasing focus on the role of ECE services to offer more to parents and children than traditional education and care. 'Community Hubs', ECE services that co-habit with other social and/or health services aimed at families, are increasingly important, particularly for families living in lower socio-economic communities.

Technological

The government is driving the development of a new enrolment system for ECE. This is needed to enable government to identify all children participating in ECE, the ECE services in which they are participating,

and their ultimate transition to primary school. This ELI system (Early Learning Information) promises to reduce the current reporting requirements on ECE services, such as RS7s. Time will tell if it does.

Recent advances in on-line portfolio management systems have already signalled growth in this area, giving parents (in particular) increased involvement in their child's experience of ECE, as well as an indication of how their child is achieving against the outcomes and goals of Te Whāriki.

Summary

The biggest of the above issues to face the ECE sector in the next three years is likely to be the 98% goal. It will force the reallocation of funding away from middle class families and towards poorer families. While the review of the ECE funding model

is well overdue and welcomed by the sector, it will, I suspect, be the principal mechanism of this change, with the Ministry of Education, ECE centres and other players then being forced to change in response to this reallocation.

Does all of this bode well for ECE services for the next few years? The only true prediction is that change is inevitable. Knowing how to respond to change, plan around it, put up a fight where it appears unreasonable, and taking advantage of opportunities where they arise – is the trick! The ECC, along with other representative bodies in the ECE sector, will continue to push the clear message that quality ECE services should be available and affordable for the majority of New Zealand families and that one part of our community should not be disadvantaged to increase service provision for another part of our community.

So you know...

Welcome

The following early childhood centres have joined the Early Childhood council between November 2012 and January 2012.

- Playhouse Parliamentary Childcare Centre, Wellington
- Little Kiwis Playhouse Early Learning Centre, Three Kings,
- Happy Times Childcare, Te Puke.
- Headstart Childcare, Hobsonville
- West Melton Learning Centre, Christchurch.

New Zealand Teachers Council Update

Guidelines for Induction and mentoring and mentor teachers

Following a very successful national programme of workshops to introduce these guidelines we are now planning a final opportunity for professional leaders and senior mentors to attend a further round. These are being planned for March and will be advertised through Kaimānga and on our website.

Renewing registration for ECE service owners/managers

Following discussions with ECC the Teachers Council has recently posted further advice for centre owners or managers who do not have an employing body appraising their teaching practice. The guidelines are accessible at:

<http://www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz/rtc/index/stm>.

Overarching Registration Policy

The Teachers Council has developed an overarching registration policy, which is effective from January 2012. Most requirements for becoming and remaining registered will remain the same. The policy clarifies how the Council will interpret the legislative requirements for granting registration and issuing practising certificates and positions the Registered Teacher Criteria as the central requirement for gaining and maintaining full registration.

Key changes include limiting the duration of provisional registration, an expanded definition of a teaching position for registration purposes, and a new definition of satisfactory recent teaching service for maintaining full registration. For more information, visit the Teachers Council's website www.teacherscouncil.govt.nz.

Education Review Office

Thank you to everyone who completed the surveys about the way ERO reviews early childhood services. We had a great response with over 1400 surveys submitted in October and November 2011.

An initial scan of the feedback shows that there are parts of our review process that people like and parts that people would like to see improved. ERO has been looking closely at the information provided as part of the review of the methodology for reviews in early childhood services.

The revised methodology is likely to focus on the following areas:

- Complementary evaluation - ERO's external review process will make greater use of services' self review. An important part of this process involves early childhood services giving ERO information about how they ensure the quality of education and care for children.
- Improved outcomes for Māori, Pacific and vulnerable children. We want to ensure that all children are given opportunities to succeed in their learning.
- Review reports that are clearer for all audiences. Reports will also be more focussed on service performance and outcomes for children.

Please contact info@ero.govt.nz for more information or if you would like any of our publications.

MEET THE Minister



Hon Hekia Parata Minister of Education

I hope you've all had a wonderful summer break, and have returned fresh and focused for 2012. There is much for all of us to do!

I have read and reflected, and caught up with friends and whanau, and I return honoured by my appointment to Minister of Education and excited at the possibilities that lie ahead in the next three years.

While there is much to do, and we all have different but complementary roles to play, I believe we are united in our common commitment to see our students achieve, go on to meaningful employment opportunities, and contribute to the quality of life in Aotearoa New Zealand. I look forward to working with you to do this.

Our Government's key objective is to ensure every child has the opportunity to succeed. Currently four in five students leave school with a qualification that will allow them to move to the next step. But we are an aspirational Government and we want all students to have that possibility and to have the skills needed to survive in modern society.

Early and continuing education has been the springboard for my professional choices, and I believe successful education experiences transform the lives of individuals, their families, their communities – and their nation.

So to tell you a little bit about myself. I come from Ruatoria on the East Coast – which has a population of less than 1000.

I am Ngati Porou and Ngai Tahu and (English, Irish, and Scottish too) and am one of eight children brought up by parents in a community where our aunts and uncles, our cousins, our grandparents, our grand aunts, our grand uncles, and everyone was part of our whanau, who encouraged and supported us to be successful.

Good quality education has long been a conviction and a commitment in my family. My mother was involved in play centre, kohanga reo then kura kaupapa, my father was a secondary school teacher of history, geography and common sense. I also have two sisters who are or have been principals and policy makers, and whanau in every facet of education in many places around the country.

I have worked for 30 years in both the public and private sector in New Zealand and overseas, before coming to Parliament in 2008.

Public service and the pursuit of quality citizenship for every New Zealander have been key drivers in my trip through life and I am keen to achieve good results in my Education and Pacific Island portfolios.

As the new Minister of Education I commit to you my energy, my hard work and my

absolute focus on how, together, we can raise achievement for all our students.

Questions from ECC members

Q: Why, if Primary Teachers are qualified and responsible enough to look after five year old children, are they not allowed to be 'persons responsible' at an Early Childhood Centre?

A: The Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 require the person responsible for an ECE centre to hold an early childhood teaching qualification recognised by the New Zealand Teachers Council for registration purposes. The requirement for an early childhood teaching qualification recognises that particular skills and knowledge are required for the education and care of children aged less than five years. This policy also reflects that it is important for the person responsible to have a qualification that includes study of the early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki.

Q: I was at a Futures Meeting with CORE Education in Christchurch, and a representative from a centre brought up that when they were audited recently, they were told they are required to pay back a substantial amount of funding, as parents are not turning up at their booked times. Signing the attestation form is not sufficient. After four months they should change the booked times to what the parent wants - even if it is not a

session that they offer! This is a concern, as services run sessions so they can have an educational programme. Very few provide care on an hourly basis, as this turns it into a babysitting service, not an educational one. The owner of a second centre said she was recently required to repay \$5000 for the same reason - not as much as the \$90,000 mentioned by the first centre but still significant, particularly in Christchurch with reduced rolls, and cuts to the funding bands. Does the new Minister of Education regard this situation as fair, and if not, what does she intend to do about it?

A: The Government funds early childhood education (ECE) services for the hours children are enrolled. To ensure the Government is paying only for hours children attend, ECE services have to make sure there is a match between the hours a child is enrolled for and the hours they attend. ECE services have three months to do this before they must stop claiming funding for hours a child is enrolled for but not attending. I am confident this is a fair way to ensure ECE services and parents have the opportunity to work out what works for the child, the family and the service.

Q: I spend too much time form filling and not enough time working to improve the quality of care in my centre. The Ministry will not fund the time we spend away from children off the floor, but expects these forms to be filled in or they cut our funding. What is the Minister going to do to reduce all this Government-generated paper work?

A: I consider there should be a balance between accountability and compliance burdens on ECE providers. The review of the funding policy and system - which is underway - will look at ways to reduce unnecessary compliance.

The ECE funding subsidy is paid for up to 30 hours per child place per week. In general terms, this subsidy is not intended to meet the full cost of providing ECE. In addition, the funding subsidy is paid from taxpayers' funds, and it is reasonable that ECE services are accountable for the use of this money.

Q: Currently New Zealand's male ECE teachers are not much more than 1% of total ECE teachers. As a male teacher I can attest to the direct yet unintentional impact this has on boys, a beginning that can set some behind for the duration

of their education. What are you going to do about improving numbers of male teaching staff in ECE?

A: The scarcity of men in ECE teaching positions is an international issue and not just one affecting ECE teaching in New Zealand. This is mainly related to social and cultural perceptions of men in ECE settings, and the status of teaching as a career.

While men currently make up 1.75% of the ECE workforce, the proportion of men enrolled in tertiary ECE teaching courses is around 2.7% of total enrolments. TeachNZ currently runs promotional campaigns encouraging men to pursue a career in ECE teaching. These campaigns typically feature positive male role-models in ECE teaching. We will continue to promote ECE teaching as a career choice for men. As I hope you will, too!

Q: There seems to be little respect for what we do at Primary Schools. And it is frustrating to watch much of our work lost in the process of transition from our centres. What will Minister Parata do to improve in Primary Schools the understanding of what we are doing in ECE centres?

A: We know from both research and common sense that successful transitions at different life stages are critical to positive ongoing engagement. Te Whāriki anticipates that all children will experience a strong transition to school. I intend to have a focus on the transitions children face, both between early childhood and primary school, between primary and secondary school, and between secondary and tertiary pathways.

Q: Teachers are being hit and more, but there is very limited access to support for teachers and centres. What is available, you have to jump through hoops to get and it takes forever to access. What is the Minister of Education planning to do about the worsening behavioural issues in centres?

A: Violence in schools is absolutely unacceptable. In 2010 our Government invested in the implementation of the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Plan. This five year plan is being led by the Ministry of Education and is a major shift in the management of disruptive behaviour in the education system. The plan provides programmes and initiatives for parents, teachers and schools and has two early intervention programmes that are currently being implemented.

PB4L Incredible Years Parent programme is a 14-18 session programme for parents of children aged 3-8, which provides parents with skills to better manage children with behavioural problems, creating a home environment that is conducive to positive social and educational outcomes. The Ministry is on track to meet its target of 8,000 parents to have participated in an Incredible Years programme by the end of 2014.

PB4L Incredible Years Teacher programme provides teachers of children aged 3-8 years with approaches to help turn disruptive behaviour around and create a more positive learning environment for their students. During the programme teachers develop their own behaviour plan for individual children in their classes or centres. They are given tools to consider the underlying causes of behaviour so they can then find the right strategies to address this behaviour and improve learning. The Ministry's target is for 7,240 teachers to have participated in a programme by 30 June 2015 with at least one third of this target being early childhood educators.

Continued on next page...

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Q: Why is the government not providing more money to support children with special needs? We have been waiting many months for help for four children with very difficult behavioural needs. Our parent community is forced to put time and energy into fundraising, not for educational equipment for their children or an improved playground, but to pay for the two teacher aides that Group Special Education agree we need but cannot help us with because they have so many other equally deserving cases on their books. We have teachers being kicked, spat at, hit with large building blocks, hit with hammers... We struggle to provide a safe and beneficial learning environment for these children and the others in our care, and also to keep our staff safe. If children with special needs are not given the help they need now, they will cost the taxpayer and society so much more later - in the compulsory education sector, with health costs, and with justice, correction and police costs. What is Hekia Parata going to do to put this right?

A: Through the Ministry of Education Special Education invests over \$30 million in Early Intervention services and provides specialist support (early intervention teachers, psychologists, advisers for deaf children, speech-language therapists) to around 12,000 children (4% of the birth to school entry population) each year. Of the \$30m around \$4m is spent on paraprofessional support into ECE Centres. The Ministry has a guideline for identifying and prioritising those children with the highest level of developmental or behavioural need. The majority of children who are referred to Ministry Early Intervention Services do receive services from the Ministry, ranging

from advice and guidance to comprehensive interventions, depending on need.

In addition to direct services the Government provides the Incredible Years Parent programmes to support the development of pro-social behaviour in children. A large number of early childhood teachers are also participating in the Incredible Years Teacher programme and are using the skills and knowledge learned in those programmes to plan more effectively for children with difficulties and proactively manage and help children to learn behaviour.

The Ministry works closely with health providers, for example, B4 School check personnel to ensure that interventions happen as early as possible in a child's life. The wider Ministry of Education Early Childhood teams also support centres through advice and professional learning and development, which would help address some of the challenges centres might have around managing children's behaviour. Challenging behaviour is not always related to special needs, and may be more of a systemic behaviour management issues within centres.

Having said all of the above, the point to make is that we are part of a system funded by taxpayers, and tax funds all government services whether education, health, justice, social housing and so on. The way to meet all these needs is to increase productivity through skills and jobs. Our Government is working hard on all these areas.

Q: Some teacher graduates are of unacceptably low quality. Many lack the practical skills required to be effective with children. I would like to know how such people get to graduate with a teaching qualification. Surely there should be some quality control here. Is there anything the Minister can do about this?

A: The Government has committed to an immediate start to the review of the New Zealand Teachers Council, so that our plan to reform and strengthen the Council can be completed as quickly as possible. This will contribute to higher standards for teachers and improved practice.

From 2013, all initial teacher education (ITE) providers will be required to have implemented the New Zealand Teachers Council's final approval, review and monitoring processes and requirements for Initial Teacher Education programmes.

These requirements have a major focus on encouraging strong partnerships between teacher educators and expert teacher practitioners, and have been informed by national and international research and close consultation with the teaching profession.

Providers who are offering a new ITE programme, or those who have a New Zealand Teachers Council programme review in 2012, will have to meet these requirements at that time.

Q: We are very worried the new Government is going to bring in more funding cuts. Are they?

A: Our Government is funding around \$1.5 billion into ECE - the highest ever. We are showing our understanding of how critical this sector is, and the work of the Early Childhood Taskforce, with the ongoing streams of work it has produced is further indication of that. While the challenges of the global recession, and here at home of Canterbury, have pressed heavily on our own economy, in each Budget of our Government education has continued to increase its share of what is available. As Minister I will continue to fight for that.

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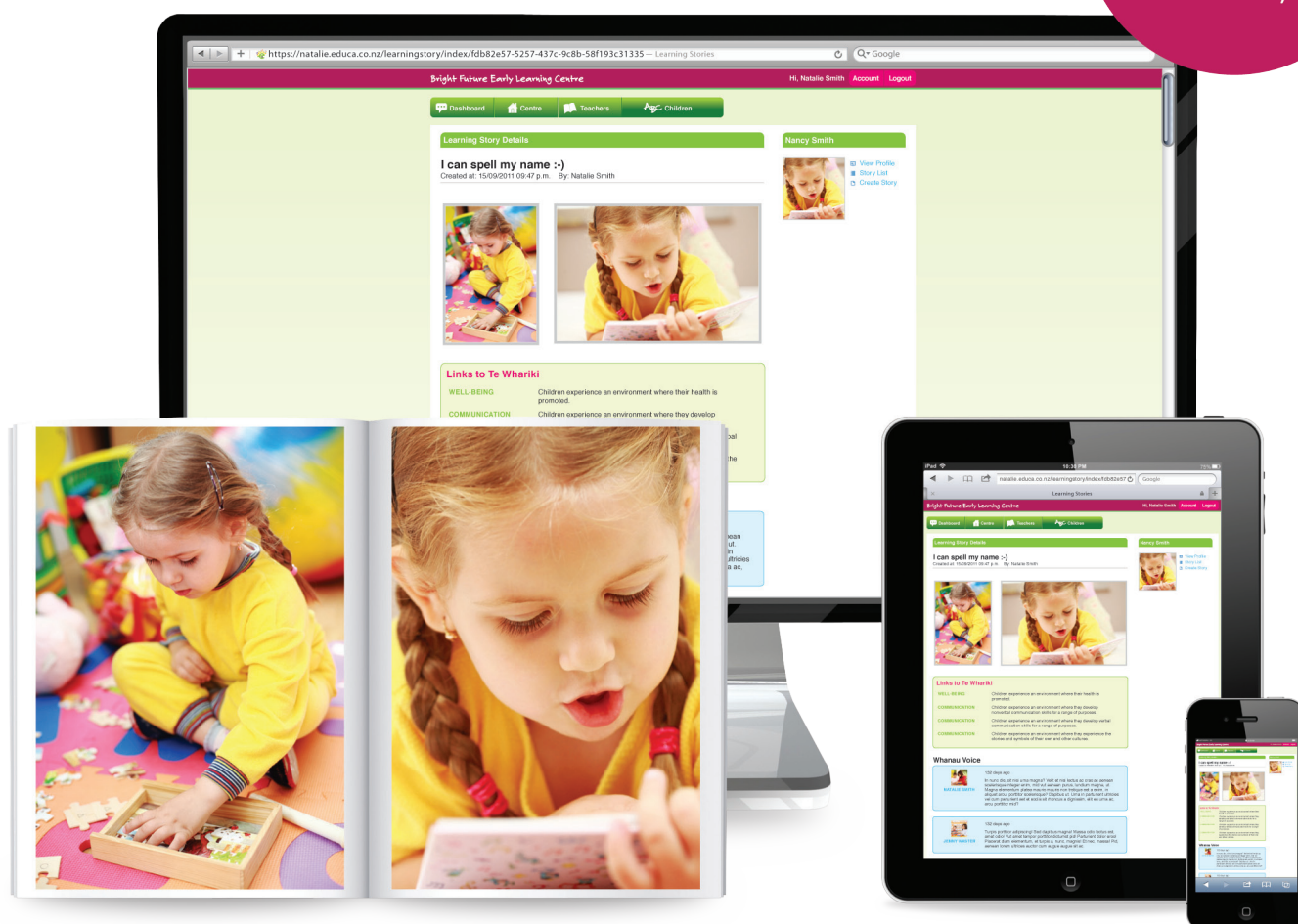
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What is a quality literacy environment and how can I get one?



A recent review of literacy in 353 early childhood settings by the Education Review Office (2011) found that although most services provided opportunities for literacy, the quality of practices differed across services. In most services, there was a policy for literacy, consistent shared practices and opportunities to extend and promote literacy learning. By contrast, 25% of centres used inappropriate practices, had no literacy policy, little leadership, and missed opportunities for extending children's literacy learning. ERO recommended further guidance and professional development to improve literacy teaching. We don't yet know if the Ministry will act on ERO's recommendations, but literacy remains of strategic interest to government because of New Zealand's significant difficulties with reading failure, so it may happen. In the meantime, what can centres do to make sure they support literacy learning? I have some simple suggestions!

For starters, think about two issues: structural and process quality. In Vygotsky's (1978) theory, this involves both access to a literacy environment and mediation by competent others. Research suggests both are important. For structural quality, do a simple review of your literacy environment. Does it have the following important features?

- Qualified teachers, low ratios and stable staffing.
- A well-resourced literacy centre, with a table, chairs, writing materials and a reading chair.
- A print-rich environment and literacy materials throughout the centre.
- At least 5-8 books per child, a rotating display and a range of levels and genres.
- Puppets, posters and soft toys related to books.

- Headphones, stories on tapes and/or e-books on a computer.
- Lots of opportunities for symbolic and socio-dramatic play – not too many routines that interrupt play.
- A library system or library visits.

Although staffing issues are long term projects, the remainder can be achieved by reorganising the environment, thinking about routines and planning what literacy resources are needed.

Process quality is harder, as this concerns the quality of interactions. Effective mediation involves teachers having strong understandings of how language develops, knowing the key predictors of literacy acquisition and being able to translate knowledge into teaching practice. According to the National Early Literacy Panel (2009), there are six key predictors and five other important things teachers need to know. The six predictors are:

1. *alphabet knowledge (AK)*: knowledge of the names and sounds associated with printed letters.
2. *phonological awareness (PA)*: the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyse the sound of spoken language.
3. *rapid automatic naming (RAN) of letters or digits*: ability to rapidly name a sequence of letters or digits.
4. *RAN of objects or colours*: ability to rapidly name a sequence of pictures of objects or colours.
5. *writing or writing name*: the ability to write letters in isolation or to write own name.
6. *phonological memory*: the ability to remember spoken information for a short period of time.

The five important things include:

1. *Concepts about print*: knowing what print is and how books work.

2. *Print knowledge*: knowing the relationship between letters and their printed form.
3. *Reading readiness*: includes awareness of letters and sounds, vocabulary and short term memory.
4. *Oral language*: the ability to talk and understand spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar.
5. *Visual processing*: the ability to match or discriminate symbols such as letters, numbers or signs.

Teachers can promote these predictors of literacy through providing a literacy rich environment, lots of verbal interaction and skilful choice of story books and games that focus on children's awareness of alphabet, rhythm, rhyme and sounds in words and new vocabulary. These are important because they help children learn the *alphabetic principle*, the understanding that speech sounds in words are represented by letters in print and increased vocabulary helps children with comprehension. Note that children should have no more than 10-15 minutes of direct teaching in one day; it is better to teach through play or small group story reading.

Teachers also need to know about the literacy social practices and experiences children have at home and in their community. A teacher's role is to build on what children already know, as Te Whāriki suggests, but also to help children to learn new things about literacy. Stuart McNaughton (2002) suggests

that the curriculum must be wide enough to incorporate the familiar, while unlocking the unfamiliar. Susan Neuman (2007, p. 157) provides a clear explanation how adults can support co-construction of new literacy knowledge, using scaffolding and guided participation, in four steps:

- *Get set* – entice child's interest or involvement;
- *Gives meaning* – help understanding, demonstrate, model, label things, add further information;
- *Builds bridges* – make connections to past learning; and
- *Step back* – give child strategies for completion and mastery of a task.

In summary, providing a high quality literacy environment is easy, as long as you know what you are trying to achieve. Think about these simple principles:

1. Find out what literacy experiences children have at home and build on these in ECE. Help children use literacy resources they haven't experienced.
2. Make good choices about literacy

resources, focussing specifically on their language aspects.

3. Use a range of teaching strategies and the language of literacy, so that children learn the words (e.g. *I am writing....*).
4. 'Notice, recognise and respond' to everyday literacy opportunities. Maximise 'teachable moments' and extend children's current knowledge and skills through meaningful play. Avoid boring skill and drill activities and long dull mat sessions!
5. Make sure you document when the child uses literacy skills, so when you revisit portfolios you can compare if the child's literacy has strengthened. Be specific – talk about children's attempts at reading, writing and spelling. Often teachers talk about "making" and "doing" rather than naming the literacy learning that is happening. Make literacy visible!

Finally, I hope that you find ways to support young learners on their pathway to literacy. The evidence is overwhelming that effective teachers of literacy in early childhood make

an immeasurable difference to children's ability to become literate and to have lifelong choices about who they become.

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About the Author

Claire McLachlan is an Associate Professor for Early Years Education at Massey University College of Education.

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Literacy in Early Childhood Services

By Sally Aitken, from Education Review Office

In early childhood children develop their speaking skills and their enthusiasm for reading and writing.

The Education Review Office's recent reports: *Literacy in Early Childhood Services: Teaching and Learning* and *Literacy in Early Childhood Services: Good Practice* highlight the importance of early literacy as the foundation for children's later learning. Early literacy begins in the home and is grown and enriched through high quality early childhood education.

In its review of early childhood teaching and learning literacy practices, ERO asked 353 services how they promoted literacy learning and how they knew their literacy teaching had been beneficial for children.

Literacy in Early Childhood Services: Teaching and Learning reports the findings of this review. ERO found that early literacy teaching in most early childhood services was rich and varied. Teachers created a diverse range of oral, written and visual activities for children to enjoy.

Good leadership and ongoing self review were key factors in services with successful early literacy programmes. In these services, leaders and educators could describe the value of literacy learning—and the importance of literacy learning was evident in their philosophy and strategic goals.

ERO further explored examples of quality literacy practice in the complementary report, *Literacy in Early Childhood Services: Good Practice*.

The report focuses on 13 early childhood services identified as having aspects of high quality literacy teaching and learning. These services promote a holistic approach to literacy where children's literacy experiences are part of purposeful play, and are attuned to their interests.

Through the examples, the report provides useful information and ideas about literacy teaching and learning in early childhood services.

Two copies of each report have been sent to all early childhood services.

Both reports are on ERO's website: www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/

Email info@ero.govt.nz for more information and more copies of these and other national reports.

Little Schools Literacy Programme

Reading, writing, listening and talking are all parts of early literacy learning and they are all connected.

Early experiences are essential for children's development of a variety of important literacy skills, such as concepts of print and phonological awareness (IRA & NAEYC 1998; Green, Peterson & Lewis 2007).

Little Schools are private preschools for children aged 2 - 5 years. At Little School we have a strong Educational Focus. Our aim is to offer children a learning environment which is planned with exciting and challenging activities. The days will be fun and positive providing a great foundation for their success at school.

Our philosophy is to lay sound foundations for lifelong learning – to develop a 'love of learning' in each child. We aim to make children's transition to school as smooth as possible – preparing children both

socially and educationally for the next steps in their journey. We also aim to provide skills for life that that will develop children's knowledge, independence and creativity, through educationally planning an appropriate range of activities that will cater for the learning and developmental needs of each child.

Little School will plan activities that are appropriate, challenging, educational and of interest, to extend children's learning and development. Teachers will work closely with children developing child initiated discussions and extending children's ideas and interests.

In the UK there has been a research based transformation in phonic approaches to the early reading debate. Researchers have demonstrated powerful connections between young pre-school children's phonological awareness and their early success in reading. (Bryant & Bradley, 1985)



Little Schools Programme incorporates Jolly Phonics. This programme was developed in the UK for preschool children. Jolly phonics is kinaesthetic learning movement that provides a foundation for reading and writing. We believe Phonemic awareness is crucial for early reading success.

Phonics alone is not enough – children must build up a considerable sight vocabulary in the course of enjoyable reading and writing activities and gradually have their attention drawn to letter-sound relationships, the sounds in words and their letter symbols and reading for meaning.

Only significant and rewarding encounters with language and literature can sustain



young children through the complexities of literature. It is important that children do not lose their taste for literature – as the most important lesson about reading is that we do it for pleasure.

Little School has an individualised reading programme for children aged 4-5 years. This programme enables children to

continue to be associated with letters, sounds, and print.

At Little School we encourage children to –

- Predict and imagine
- We include a variety of language structures, including story, rhyme, and poetry
- We create a print enriched environment
- Books and reading are enjoyed and valued
- We share books on a regular basis, encouraging children to participate, answer questions and predict outcomes
- We increase children's confidence in reading familiar words
- We encourage children to recognise use of print in the environment

- Recognise specifics around book orientation
- Understand that pictures and print contain meaning.

The use of a literacy programme within early childhood centres continues the development of oral language skills, concepts of print, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness and word recognition.

Little School strongly values a well-balanced Literacy programme. We believe an early start to literacy activities is "crucial to laying the foundation for achievement for all children. To delay reading and writing until they are perceived to be 'ready' only increases the disparities between children in the development of school literacy – related skills". (Ministry of Education Ready to Read)

For Parents: Reading with your child

Parents are the most important people in children's lives. But parenting has become a fraught business in busy lives. Most of us parent by unconsciously acting the way our parents acted towards us. When we do this we don't always like the results.

We are lucky to live at a time where we are learning ways of parenting that work better – both immediately and long term. Parenting is not just about whether you hit your child or not. Parenting is a relationship where parents have a responsibility to not only respect their children but to nurture them.

So often we think we own our children and we have to make them behave. But children are full human beings. They are small and vulnerable and they think differently. We have to watch and listen carefully to understand what they are telling us. Doing this is hugely rewarding. Not only do you not have behaviour problems, you can really enjoy the very special bond that usually exists.

A new programme in the US called 'Reading Together' supports parents to enjoy this relationship while also helping the child learn skills that are vital in today's societies. The programme taught parents to:

- Pick books that are right for their child

- Read books, use rhymes and sing songs
- Stimulate the child's interest in reading
- Ask questions that helped the child understand the words.

Reading and writing are skills that develop slowly. But they are skills that children are interested in from a very young age. A foetus reacts to the mother singing. Babies that see adults reading pick up books and turn pages. Four year olds want to write their name. My granddaughter was used to me taking endless notes in my diary. She often mimicked me by writing pages of made up symbols from left to right on lined pages. This is a writing skill.

These are the sorts of things that give children the ability to read and write. When they have learnt these things by the time they start school, research shows they tend to do better at school, are less likely to need special education support and do better in life.

The best thing about this is that all you need to do to support them is to take a few minutes to really enjoy cuddling up with them to read a book. You can sing with them as you cook a meal and make up rhymes as you drive them to childcare. Doing this is not only good for developing literacy skills. It makes you both feel good, strengthens

your relationship and reduces your need to give negative disciplinary messages.

Parents who are not confident about reading or singing are unlikely to have read this far. However, early childhood educators can support parents by

- Educating parents about suitable books for their child
- Lending books or getting books donated to families with minimal access to books (ensure that pictures and language reflect the child's home life)
- Encouraging parents to 'sit in' when a teacher is reading or singing to children so they can learn skills of book selection, reading techniques and questioning
- Encourage parents to read to children while at the centre and give constructive feedback.

Article: Sukhram, D.P. & Hsu, A. (2012). Developing reading partnerships between parents and children: a reflection on the Reading Together Program. *Early Childhood Education Journal* DOI 10.1007/s10643-011-0500-y.

People need resilience to navigate life's *ups and downs!*



Thought leader for early childhood learning theory and practice, Rosalie Ardagh, of Christchurch's "The Nurtury", discusses how we can encourage resilience in our children and introduces how a free movement philosophy and the virtues project can help you and your colleagues encourage and nurture resilience in your children.

Understanding how resilience is developed in children's character is vital for those taking care of children in early childhood services today.

Resilience is needed to ensure that children reach their full potential and can live life to the fullest.

Children's experience in the foundation years, maps their brain development and this formation lasts forever.

Developing resilience all starts with nurture and movement. Right from the beginning it is essential that parents and educators develop an understanding and reflect upon what children are learning when we:

- interrupt them
- save them from harm
- rescue them
- just make it easier for them

Too much support or too little can make the difference in how resilient children become.

Learning to move has been described as learning to learn. A Free Movement philosophy; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magda_Gerber trusts that babies can learn to move without help. The struggle to gain mastery over their body is the beginning of children learning to withstand adversity and hardship.

Free Movement requires a policy of never putting a child into a position they cannot get into or out of themselves. Nurturing respectful adults will not interrupt, even at the earliest stage of a child's development, the desire to roll over, sit or crawl. 'I can do it myself'. Adults need to refrain from rescuing a child who is frustrated because they are struggling to reach their goal. The struggle allows the child to learn to endure and become resilient.

The Virtues Project™; <http://www.virtuesproject.com/>, describes resilience as **the strength of spirit to recover from adversity**. Let's look at how the virtues support children to develop resilience.

How can children develop resilience in their character if we remove obstacles or experiences of disappointment, loss or tragedy? Struggling to succeed is where children learn to find the hope and courage to carry on.

- With **Hope** children find the confidence to try and try again.
- **Courage** transforms fear into determination.

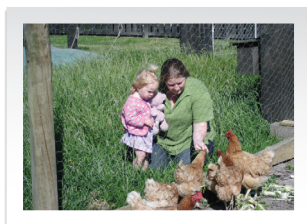
Children must be allowed to have opportunities where they must reach deep within to gain the strength to accept the truth and to pick themselves up after a mistake, ready to make amends and try again.

The Virtue of **Endurance** is called upon to learn to persevere and be patient when obstacles arise. Frustration and determination to reach the desired outcome will teach them how to try and try again no matter what the challenge. Children learn to 'practice' by trying again and again, over and over because they are responding to the desire within. Children who are trusted to work it out for themselves become strong and confident within themselves. How do children learn to cope in times of trouble if we remove all the obstacles in life?

Endurance gives us the strength to stay the course and leads to resilience.

How can children learn to finish what they started if they are continually interrupted and redirected by parents and teachers because of more important things like routines? **Let children manage themselves.**

Perseverance is the will to carry on. With a strong sense of purpose and given the time to patiently pursue our goals and remain steadfast and focused, free of imposed interruptions children will learn what it takes to finish what they started. They will experience the joy of success from the determination to persist until the task is completed. With this experience children will know what it takes to finish what is started. Opportunities to persevere are required to become resilient.



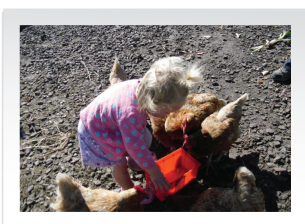
NURTURE



SUPPORT



CONFIDENCE



INDEPENDENCE

AWAKENS RESILIENCE

Patience helps us to endure things we cannot control with a peaceful heart. We receive as a gift the lesson that comes through waiting.

By allowing children to struggle with their challenges and remain true to their purpose, no matter what happens, allows the virtue of steadfastness to grow stronger within their character. Being steadfast contributes to our resilience.

How do children develop the will to act with resolve, to focus their energy on a purpose and persevere until they meet their goal? The virtue of **determination** is the commitment to follow through until we accomplish our purpose.

Listen to 4 year old Ethan's Story.

Ethan set himself the goal of sawing through a piece of timber 4 x 2. I know this, because he shared it with me one day as I was doing what I do, passing back and forward through our centre.

At first he called out to me with a warm friendly greeting "Look Rosalie, I am going to cut through this piece of wood". I stopped and noticed how focused he was.

On my return he was still going, I stopped to ask him how he was progressing, "I'm getting tired and my hands are sore but I am not stopping until I finish! This is when I really started to pay attention. "Good for you Ethan".

On my way past again, Ethan shares he is going to take a break for lunch but he will be back. "Good idea" I say, "enjoy your lunch!". Much later in the afternoon I am on my way past again and Ethan is still at the carpentry table focused on reaching his goal of sawing through this piece of timber. It took Ethan all day to cut through the timber.

I was so pleased to see him succeed in reaching his goal. He held up the timber in his hands and jumped for joy. "I did it!" He was so excited and proud of his achievement.

We shared the story with his mother and suggested that this piece of timber should become a trophy to acknowledge Ethan's determination to succeed. He set himself the goal; he managed himself by taking time for lunch and persevered through the challenges of being tired and sore.

Ethan demonstrated the quality of resilience. He was able to do this because the adults allowed him the autonomy to follow his interest, gave him the time he needed to complete the task (all day!) without interruption and they allowed him to make decisions by trusting him to manage himself. He ate at a time that suited him. With the support of competent educators he achieved what he set out to do.

Developing resilience in our children requires an understanding of what is too much support.

About the Author

In 2012 Rosalie is launching her consulting service to inspire and guide parents and educators to excel as facilitators of children's learning by providing Virtues Project workshops.

For more information you may contact Rosalie by email Rosalie@thenurtury.co.nz



Building Resilience

What can early childhood centres in New Zealand teach themselves and their children/families about resilience? The Christchurch earthquakes, floods, ash clouds and tornadoes remind us all that life can change suddenly and dramatically. How do we deal with change and with trauma?

People have different reactions ranging from falling apart to feeling anxious and depressed for a bit then recovering, to those who feel anxious for a bit but learn from the trauma and come out better than they were before. Professor of Psychology, Martin Seligman, says that we can learn to be amongst the group who come out better.

The American army helps their soldiers in Iraq cope with trauma with Seligman's programme based on positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. The soldiers love the programme. Here are some tips for early childhood centres:

- After trauma, pay attention to emotional, family, social and spiritual wellbeing
- Pay attention to other's emotions. This helps us empathise with them.
- Develop self awareness, self motivation and social awareness
- Renew your appreciation of being alive
- Act on new possibilities
- Build mental toughness by doing things like imagining the worst, best and most likely outcomes of what has happened
- Build your personal strengths – you can find these out by doing the free online survey found at <http://www.viacharacter.org/Surveys/SurveyCenter.aspx>
- Focus on improving your relationships by being active and constructive in responding to others.

Following trauma:

- Understand that anxiety and depression are NORMAL responses arising from shattered beliefs about yourself and how the world is
- Use any techniques you know for reducing anxiety or get help to do this
- Tell others your story – bottling up trauma makes it worse
- Make a story for yourself and others that shows both the bad stuff that has happened and the good stuff you have learnt from it. Notice what personal strengths have helped you.
- Talk about your life principles.

From Seligman, Martin E.P. (2011). What business can learn from a pioneering army program for fostering post-traumatic growth. *Harvard Business Review*. April: 100-106.

Can touch make a difference?

In the recently released Green Paper the Prime Minister John Key said :

"I'm very concerned that in the past 10 years, despite hundreds of millions of dollars extra being invested across health, education, the benefit system, Child, Youth and Family and the justice system, public services have too often failed the children who need them most.

We need to break the viscous circle of abuse going from generation to generation."

My name is Eva Scherer and I share this concern!

My "Child Connection" registered charity stands for the universal rights of closeness and belonging for all children. The best manifestation of this is through positive touch that helps prevent child abuse, depression, suicide and family violence.

The New Zealand Government's vision for children is that every child thrives, belongs, and achieves. The Green Paper states *"About 15 per cent of New Zealand children are at risk of not doing well."* Children are most vulnerable when they

are young (under 5 years) because of their developing brain and their dependence on caring adults to provide their basic needs.

Developing children need food and shelter and love. The word "love" means nothing. But touch, cuddling, smiling, holding, singing and interacting, mean everything. Combine all these elements that comprise the expression of "love" and you end up with what the psychologists call "Secure Attachment".

What happens if this is missing?

- Addiction to sensory stimulation in adulthood (sexual abuse, drug use, crime)
- Depressive and autistic behaviour
- Violent and aggressive behaviour
- Difficulty recognising feelings in others
- Trouble recognising own feelings
- Impaired social maturity

(Data British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, 1981, Fahlberg, London)

Maria Montessori claimed that humankind abandoned in the early formative period becomes the worst threat to its own survival. To neglect this essential need for

being nurtured such as experiencing touch and body contact, results in increasing numbers of juvenile and adult males who batter, abuse and rape.

Allan N. Schore, Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry and Bio-behavioural sciences at UCLA Medical School reports:

In the first two years a baby is building the foundation that will dictate behaviour through adulthood. The quality of growth and development is dependent upon emotional, close interaction with parent and/or primary caregiver.

Being loved, nurtured and cared for provides the foundation for balanced emotional development, stability and is the foundation of intelligence. This is because the emotional limbic brain develops first. Emotions are fundamental to the way in which everything else (including the ability to learn facts and skills follow) is built.

Research conducted by Allan N. Shore provides a detailed explanation of broken attachment bonds and the development of right brain processes responsible for feelings of self-esteem, self-reflective awareness, and empathy in the right hemisphere of the brain is involved. (<http://allanschore.com/pdf/SchoreIMHJAttachment.pdf>)

A child will remember a story well under the following circumstances: *There needs to be emotional connection with the topic and with the reading process itself, plus the child needs to be sitting on your lap in the safe, warm cradle of your arm surrounded by the smell of your body and feeling the vibration of your voice. The attachment process involves all the senses and touch is the leading one.*

During activities that involve all the senses, young people's/children's limbic/emotional brain produces endorphins – hormones of happiness which in a growing



brain influence the formation of Rewards Pathways. (<http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/addiction/reward/>)

These Reward Pathways are the foundation for proper mental, emotional, spiritual and physical development. If the Rewards Pathways is not properly set up in early childhood then a "band-aid" is often applied later, with antidepressants being one management tool. Prozac has been demonstrated to have suicidal effect on children and youths (*Columbine school shooting the child was on Prozac for several years*). New Zealand suicide statistics tell us that 11 people die from suicide every week, that 10 per cent of the deaths of New Zealand 10-14 year olds are suicide and our rates of youth suicide are not only the highest in the developed world, but double those of the United States and Australia and five times more than the UK. (<http://kate-raue.blogspot.co.nz/2011/01/casper-suicide-prevention-strategy.html>)

With social and economical changes, many working parents simply have no time for their children or for themselves, let alone investigating why their children need a simple hug! The "three generational family fabric" has almost disappeared. The only thing that has not changed is the universal law of attachment - children still need to be loved and attached. And here is an opportunity for mainstream education to be involved in helping with the problem.

Touch Research Institute (TRI) – an institution solely devoted to the study of touch and massage has divided countries into 2 categories: low touch culture countries and high touch culture countries. In 1996 they conducted research simultaneously in Paris (France is a high touch culture country) and in Miami (US is a low touch culture country). Researchers observed couples in coffee shops. They were counting how many times within half an hour they touched each other: whether by holding hands, touching cheeks, leg to leg under the table or sitting on the lap. In Paris on average couples touched each other 130 times, in Miami 4 times! The Touch Research Institute ranks different countries depending on how "touchy" they are: Italy is at the very top and New Zealand, unfortunately, at the very bottom.

Yes, we are not a very "touchy" culture.

Kiwis are also believed to have one of the largest personal spaces in the world! They have a large distance around them to keep safe and prevent touch.

This does not help build secure attachment, which is the main factor in proper brain development. Securely attached children do not become vulnerable children.

Daniel Goleman suggests in his book *"Emotional Intelligence"* that we can shape our emotional habits – how adept or how inept we become in these areas can be shaped particularly in early childhood. The world-wide trend for the present generation of children to be more troubled emotionally, more lonely and depressed, more angry and unruly, more nervous and prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive is most disturbing.

Children of depressed, cold, violent mothers, the neglected children – whose nanny is often the TV set – don't have their emotional brain – the limbic brain – properly formed.

There is however a chance to change their behaviour, by providing new, positive experiences at school, kindergarten or other educational establishments. Children who practice massage in the classroom will be better for their own kids when they grow up. The vicious circle can be broken.



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The Professional Learning Journey

By Deborah Wansbrough, Policy Adviser: ECE, New Zealand Teachers Council

Being involved in education means that we are always learning, it is a never ending journey. While teacher registration has always had an expectation that teachers could attest to being involved in ongoing learning this is now enshrined in the *Registered Teacher Criteria* where criterion four expects teachers to "demonstrate commitment to ongoing professional learning and development of personal professional practice" and criterion 12 requires among other things that professional literature will be used "to reflect on and refine practice".

In the present climate of strained finances for early childhood education (ECE) services it can be tempting to make the professional learning and development budget a prime candidate for skinning. Indeed, it has been reported that for some services this is the case.

Given these reactions it is important to reassess what we consider is professional learning and development. Possibly professional learning and development has been associated with one-off courses that an individual might identify as the thing that will give them the added fillip to reinvigorate teaching practice. Some attend these courses as passive participants, enjoying the lunch provided and often rating the course according to the number of resources or handouts they get to take back to their service. The accountability for their learning is to present to their colleagues all the materials acquired and depending on their confidence a brief report may be given (hopefully not just about the venue and the lunch!). Just how this alone could make a difference for children's learning is debatable.

In fact when the Teachers Council takes an interest in a teacher's ongoing professional learning and development (usually when a provisionally registered teacher is applying to move to full registration) it is to know how their professional development has impacted on children's learning, i.e. why was it effective professional learning; the reflective practice generated; what children learned as a result of new approaches, new resources, new ways of talking, etc.

Since July 2011 when the Ministry of Education funding for provisionally registered teachers was no longer so freely available a number of people have made enquiries to the Teachers Council as to how they were expected to provide an induction and mentoring programme without the funding. One of the main concerns about the lack of funding has to do with no longer being able to attend the courses described above (which not only have the attendance

fees but also the reliever costs, and perhaps travel as well!). However there has always been a broader view of professional learning and development and one-off courses shouldn't be seen as the main focus.

Indeed in a PRT's induction and mentoring programme their professional development will come from many sources, in-depth discussions with colleagues, revisiting books and readings from their teacher education programme, talking with former class/online student mates about teaching practices, engaging in rigorous analysis of what children are learning with their mentor or at staff meetings, and developing the ability to articulate what children are learning from their teaching. With all of these opportunities there needs to be time to discuss with mentors, colleagues how this happens in practice and the impact on children's learning.

For fully registered teachers the professional learning journey also continues. Annually (or more frequently) at their appraisal meetings there needs to be conversations about criterion four and 12. Their journey may have been composed of 'in-centre' professional learning as part of their professional learning community's focus on a priority topic such as literacy learning; it might be their own reading through educational journals or online information; it may be attending networks of other interested ECE people such as OMEP (Organisation Mondiale pour l'Education Prescolaire), Reggio Emilia groups, and NZEI networks. So it doesn't have to be a one day course or a conference but it does have to engage one to think about teaching and learning.

Our professional learning journey will take us many places. Sometimes it takes us to the position of expert where we can be an itinerant music specialist, or an Enviro Schools facilitator. Who knows where we might end up when we follow our passion for learning as we teach and learn forever.



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Using The Blue Book

Have you heard about the Blue Book? This resource was originally published by the Early Childhood Council (ECC) in 2003 and was designed to assist provisionally registered teachers to become registered. It made the otherwise daunting process straightforward and practical. This resource meets the needs of the early childhood sector and in 2010 was revised by a small working party of early childhood teachers to reflect the New Zealand Teacher's Council's (NZTC) new Teacher Registration Criteria (RTC). Feedback on the new Blue Book was gathered from centre managers, the ECC Council and the NZTC before reprinting this valuable resource.

The Blue Book is for all early childhood teachers working at all levels of teacher registration – provisionally registered, subject to confirmation and fully registered teachers seeking re-registration. It is also for mentor teachers and centre managers. The new version of the Blue Book provides a format which enables the process of working with the RTC to be manageable and straightforward. It contains: guidelines to help early childhood teachers use the resource effectively, guidance on the goals of the Registered Teacher Criteria, details on each of the RTC, an example of a RTC teacher/mentor agreement, additional reflective questions, where to go for more help and information about ECC.

The Blue Book is designed as a planning tool for individuals and professional development. Each section for the RTC enables early childhood teachers to file evidence of how they are meeting each of the criteria through documentation, professional dialogue, reflections and observations. In addition, the Blue Book is a tool for early childhood teachers to document their teaching journey and to record their individual strengths, goals and objectives.

To support the NZTC vision and value of reflection, reflective questions have been adapted from a range of sources and included for each of the indicators for each RTC. These reflective questions build on the NZTC reflection question for each criteria within the RTC. The additional reflective questions within the Blue Book are an essential tool to assist teachers of all registration categories and provide further scope for critical self-reflection and for the reviewing of teaching practices in-depth.

The Blue Book is not designed to be worked through from Criteria 1 to Criteria 12 but to be used holistically, with evidence gathered and then linked to corresponding Criteria, rather than using it chronologically. Importantly, the Blue Book has been designed to not only help individual teachers with their registration approach but also to assist both the teacher and their mentor engage in the mentoring process and for centre managers to use with individual performance review/appraisal, goal setting and planning.

If you would like to learn more about how the Blue Book can support your teaching registration journey please refer to the ECC website (www.ecc.org.nz) for details on the 4 hour workshops. Also attend ECC's 2012 Conference this coming May where a Blue Book workshop is being held. The Conference workshop will provide an opportunity for delegates to revisit and also for delegates to explore what the Blue Book can offer. Additionally, both the presenters will be available at the ECC desk at the Conference to provide further information and clarity over the course of the Conference weekend.



Cathy Wilson

Upcoming workshops: 9 March in Christchurch for \$95+gst (members); \$110+gst (non-members)

About the authors

Cathy Wilson is the Assistant Principal at Wa Ora Montessori School in Lower Hutt, which caters for children from birth to 18 years. She has been involved with Montessori for the last 17 years and currently leads a teaching team of over 13 full and part-time staff in the preschool division of the school. Cathy travelled to Thailand four times over 18 months completing her Association Montessori Internationale qualification in 2010. She is a tutor for Aperfield Montessori Trust, on the working party for the Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand (MANZ) Montessori Journey to Excellence project and on the MANZ Council.

Jane Warnock has been teaching for 32 years in the early childhood sector, ranging from home based care to early childhood centres and is now firmly ensconced at her current employment 'Tui Early Learners' in Palmerston North, where she has been for four years. This family business has five centres in Palmerston North and Jane's role as the Educational Leader involves being a mentor teacher for registering and fully registered teachers, supporting teachers-in-training, co-facilitating professional learning as well as ensuring her teaching practices are kept at the forefront by regularly being with and alongside children.

To buy the Blue Book go to: www.ecc.org.nz



Jane Warnock





Early Childhood Council

National Conference 2012 'Innovation and Courage in ECE'

5 – 27 May 2012 | Auckland SkyCity Convention Centre

Programme

Friday 25 May: Day One

Morning from 7:30am	Registration desk opens for delegate arrivals				
9:15 – 10:00am	Pre-conference workshops – Choose from:				
Turning the Statistics Around - Protecting New Zealand's Vulnerable Children	Home-Based Childcare – Supporting Innovation in Participation	The teacher's calling: Courageous stories of hope, passion and commitment	Modelling & the ECE Teacher	Bodies Grow Brains – The Musical Way	
10:00am – 10:30	Morning tea served in exhibition area (30 mins)				
11:00am – 12:00pm	Official Opening by Maria Johnson, ECC President Key Note 1: ECE – the year in retrospect and the challenges going forward Peter Reynolds, ECC Chief Executive Officer				
12:00 – 1:00pm	Lunch served in exhibition area (1 hr)				
1:00 – 1:45pm	 Key Note 2: Hon Hekia Parata, Minister of Education: Key themes for ECE in the year ahead				
Transition time (5mins)					
1:55 – 2:40pm	Workshops – Choose from:				
Bodies Grow Brains – The Musical Way	Modelling & the ECE Teacher	A Strategy for the Implementation of Te Reo Maori	Turning Trash into Treasure	How to Lobby your Local MP	Puppets, Props, Stories & Songs
2:40 – 3:25pm	Afternoon tea served in exhibition area (45 mins)				
3:25 – 5:00pm	 Key Note 3: Nigel Latta – Raising Courageous Kids – “The lost art of clod fighting” For the last few decades we've been told that the best way to help children is to solve all their problems, to fix everything that's wrong, to make sure they are never bored, never unhappy, and always challenged, entertained, and engaged in meaningful activities. Current thinking would generally be that clod fighting and falling off stuff is very bad. But is it? Are we helping our kids with all this stuff? And how might the early childhood sector respond in the coming years.				
5:00 – 5:30pm	ECC Annual General Meeting				
5:30 – 7:00pm	Welcome reception for all Full Conference Delegates, in exhibition area				

Programme

Saturday 26 May: Day Two

8.30 – 8.50am	Introduction to the Day and Spot Prizes				
8:50 – 9:45am	<div></div> <div>Key Note 4: Gordon Dryden – How innovation can shape ECE Gordon has spent the last 20 years searching the world for new learning and education breakthroughs, including early childhood and parenting education. His research has taken him to a wide range of early childhood and parenting centres from China to Mexico. He is currently working with educational psychologists in Mexico to produce a new online parenting programmeGordon has also produced 24 television programmes on education, and is co-author of “The Learning Revolution” which has been translated into 21 languages and sold 10 million copies in China alone</div>				
Transition time (5 mins)					
9:50 – 10:35am	Workshops – Choose from:				
Gordon Dryden workshop Continuing an interactive discussion with his keynote theme	Innovation in infant and toddler curriculum	Resiliency with Infants and Toddlers: The Outdoor Experiences	Strengthening Learning Foundations in ECE through Inclusive Practice	A strategy for the implementation of Te Reo Maori, in an early childhood	Turning Trash into Treasure for Young Children
10:35 – 11:00am	Morning tea served in exhibition area (25 mins)				
11:00 – 11:45am	Workshops – Choose from:				
Top 10 ICT tools and software to make your centre hum	iPossibilities – Utilising iPods and iPads to support teaching and learning in ECE	Beginning with Books	‘Green Sticker, Green/Blue Land... our centre’s colours of Christchurch’	How to lobby your local MP	Puppets, Props, Stories & Songs
Transition time (5mins)					
11:50 – 12:35pm	Workshops – Choose from:				
Engaging Community Through Digital Storytelling	‘Oh the places you’ll go’: New professional learning/ development opportunities in a digital world.	Is this place fair for us? Advocating for young children’s rights in early childhood settings	Support! Too Much, Too Little? Virtues: A tool to Build Resilience	Modelling and the Early Childhood Teacher	Bodies Grow Brains – The Musical Way
12:35 – 1:50pm	Lunch served in exhibition area (55 mins)				
1:50 – 2:50pm	<div></div> <div>Key Note 5: Associate Professor Martin Devlin - Quality Improvement Professor Devlin has a lengthy academic career involved in management, quality improvement and innovation. He was fundamental in the establishment of Massey University’s MBA programme. Professor Devlin will be approaching the quality issue in the ECE sector from the outside-in, exploring the following questions in his address: What is quality in the early childhood sector? How do commercial concepts like productivity and reliability and customer-focus relate to early childhood centres? What could the early childhood World look like and how might we get there?</div>				
Transition time (5mins)					
2:55 – 3:40pm	Workshops – Choose from:				
Martin Devlin workshop Continuing an interactive discussion with his keynote theme	Quality Improvement & ECE Incorporating the ‘FISH’ Philosophy	Lessons from the Participation Projects	Engaging Male Carers in ECE	Engaging Male Carers in ECE	Puppets, Props, Stories & Songs
3:40 – 4:10pm	Afternoon tea served in exhibition area (30 mins)				

For more information about Keynote Speakers, Workshops and Workshop Presenters and to register for the conference go to: www.ecc.org.nz. Don't miss out on this premier early childhood education event.



Programme

Saturday 26 May: Day Two Cont....

4:10 – 4:55pm	Workshops – Choose from:			
Learning Environments: Attractive and fun, or philosophically focused?	Improving quality through internal and external evaluation	Effective mentoring of PRTs in education and care settings: What we can learn from the research?	Putting together the pieces - strategic and annual planning, appraisal, professional learning	How to lobby your local MP
7:30 – 12:00am	Conference Gala Dinner – Theme: Night of the Stars! Dinner Speaker: Dr John Trimble - US communications, change management and innovations expert, author, businessman and a top-rated speaker and best-selling author. Band: Uncle Monkey			

Programme

Sunday 27 May: Day Three

8.30 – 8.50am	Introduction to the Day and Spot Prizes				
8:50 – 9:50am	<div></div> <div>Key Note 6: Sir Ray Avery - Innovation and Great Leadership in ECE</div> <div>New Zealand scientist, inventor and entrepreneur, Sir Ray won the 2010 New Zealander of the Year award for his invention of technology to produce low cost intraocular lenses. Sir Ray Avery will discuss how leadership and Innovation in the context of early childhood education together with improved social anthropological profiling may lead to better education and social outcomes.</div>				
Transition time (5 mins)					
9:55 – 10:40am	Workshops – Choose from:				
Sir Ray Avery workshop Continuing an interactive discussion on his keynote theme	Governance & Strategic Planning in ECE – a practical guide	Braving the HR Battlefield	The Blue Book – one year on	Adult participation and child learning outcomes: What is the golden thread?	Turning Trash into Treasure for Young Children
10:40 – 11:20am	Morning tea served in exhibition area				
11:20 – 12:05pm	Workshops – Choose from:				
Newly qualified ECE teachers are being promoted into positions of leadership quickly. How does this impact on positive outcomes for children?	Great Leadership in ECE - A panel discussion (Maria Johnson, Tanya Harvey, Roseanne Saluni Russell Little)	“Reggio in Drag”	1,000 Days to Get it Right for every child	A strategy for the implementation of Te Reo Maori, in an early childhood environment.	
Transition time (5 mins)					
12.10 – 12.30pm	Awards and Prizes				
12:30 – 1:10pm	<div></div> <div>Closing Key Note: Julie Woods – that blind woman!</div> <div>Known as ‘that blind woman’, Julie Woods has got two small words that took her off the couch after she went blind in 1997 that have led her to walk seven half marathons, write her own book, go to Paris for Louis Braille’s bi-centennial celebrations, referee a game of nude touch rugby as well as her latest adventure of walking on the Great Wall of China. Discover those two small words that help this fun, inspiring woman tick!</div>				
1:10 – 1:25pm	2013 Conference Announcement, Peter Reynolds, ECC Chief Executive Officer Official Close by the Incoming ECC President				
1:25 – 2:00pm	Lunch - buffet and takeaway options available				

My first experience at an ECC conference

By Debbie Marson



As a first year adult student at Manukau Institute of Technology, a mother of two and employed at Trinity Kindergarten, I had the privilege of attending my very first early childhood conference. I thought that the workshops to choose from provided a range to cover many areas and levels of experience in early childhood teaching. I enjoyed, learnt and was inspired by every workshop I attended. It was obvious to me that the conference provided opportunities to increase knowledge, refresh passions, thoughts and ideas, as well as keep us in touch with the world of early childhood today. I have learnt that being a life time learner as an early childhood teacher is vital in order to provide the best possible learning experiences for our children. The conference definitely extended me as a teacher who is constantly learning.

The Wellington Convention Centre was a great venue and I thought the set up and effort that goes into this event was amazing. The agenda was full, interesting and motivating, with a great range of guest speakers. I really enjoyed Professor Sir Peter Gluckman speaking about the high rate of teenage suicide and the important role he believes ECE plays in assisting to reduce these numbers. He expressed that the skills and characteristics ECE provides will help to build a stronger and more resilient youth of tomorrow. It reiterated for so many the life differences we can make when providing a professional, nurturing ECE experience. I continued listening to Peter Gluckman in his following workshop. It too was thought provoking and we were also given a chance to ask questions.

I thoroughly enjoyed my workshops with Rachel Goodchild and her fun, insightful presentations which left me with new understanding and knowledge to take away. They included "Working with boys",

"Managing challenging behaviour" and "The budget conscious teacher". I got creative with mask making with Anna Dixon (Office Max), and learnt new songs and actions to share on my mat times with Janet Channon (Kids Music Company). Other workshops I attended were "Playscapes from the Fringe", which just fascinated me seeing the different playscapes around the world and their creations. It made me want to be a kid again. Another workshop was "Communicating in a Crisis" with Anthony Keesing (Media and Communications Adviser, Early Childhood Council). This provided me with a whole different avenue to think about. I found it very interesting and learnt that there is a process and plan which needs to be put in place, when communicating with parents and the media in a crisis. The last of my workshops was "Supporting Infant and Toddlers Development with ICT" held by Jessica Moselen. As I haven't been involved with computer technology over the past few years, I found the thought of ICT daunting but this was also the reason I chose this workshop. I saw wonderful ways to share those milestone moments of children's development with parents and where technology is taking us and it is amazing.

The other guest speakers throughout the conference provoked thoughts and emotions as they covered a range of areas, with an emphasis on the future of ECE. It gave me more insight into the government policies and I was interested to hear from the different political parties and their presentations. The opportunity for questions showed me how passionate and committed the people attending the ECE conference were about what they do and it also showed that their priority was to be there for the children and to do their very best for them.

The breaks between workshops and guest speakers offered appetising food and the opportunity to stroll around the trade stands. The stands were educational and fun, providing time to ask questions about the products seen in the workshops as well as other ranges available. There were lots of goodies given out, draws to enter and prizes to win.

The conference dinner brought with it amazing costumes, great food, a time to catch up and some fancy moves on the dance floor. It was a nice time to meet other people in the industry and to share thoughts and interests. It provided team building with lots of well-deserved fun and laughter.

For me personally, one of the many highlights of the conference was listening to the guest speaker Irene van Dyke. It was so refreshing and inspiring to end with, as she shared her story as a mother, Primary School Teacher and Netball superstar. She talked about teamwork and shared her experiences of setting and achieving goals. It was very motivating. There was lots of laughter as Irene shared her funny moments along the way but all the time showing her passion, commitment and love for all areas of her life. She just oozes enthusiasm and I could see the amazing teacher she would be and the difference she must make to so many young lives.

My first experience of an annual conference was one that I thoroughly enjoyed. It provided me with inspiration, knowledge and insight. It confirmed for me my passion for ECE and my commitment to become a professional early childhood teacher. I certainly look forward to the opportunity of attending the next annual conference and hope that it will be a first for many others.

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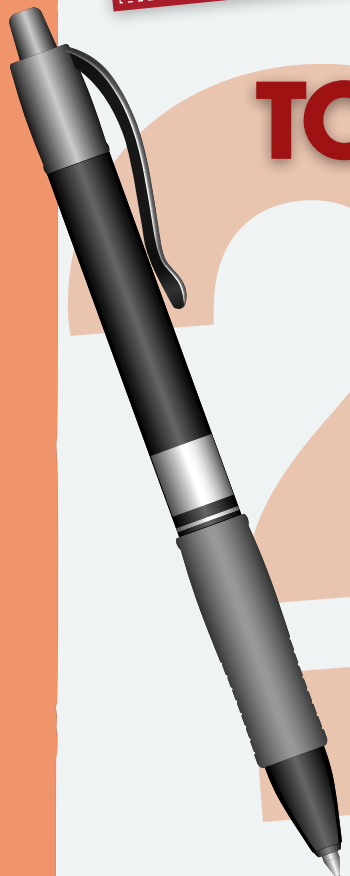


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TO REVIEW OR NOT TO REVIEW – *that is the question*



Lots has happened since Te Whaariki became New Zealand's first national early childhood curriculum in 1996. Last year, the Early Childhood Taskforce recommended that it be reviewed because of variability in implementation.

Te Whaariki is a learning programme that reflects widely agreed ambitions for our children. It is a descriptive curriculum that leaves ample space for interpretation so that teachers can work with the uniqueness of each child, can design activities and an environment that reflects local conditions and aspirations, and can build relationships suitable for their particular people.

It is widely acclaimed – by New Zealand teachers and parents, by education specialists and by the international community. There has been very little critique of it. Why then would we bother to review it? It's not broken so why fix it?

Things change

Curriculum documents always reflect the political, social and cultural context in which they were written (Alvested et al. 2009). New Zealand has seen major changes since 1996.

New Zealand's population has diversified rapidly in the last 15 years. This is most evident in the 0 – 5 year age group where Maori, Pasifika, Asian and other ethnicities are the fastest growing groups. In early

childhood centres, European and Asian children are the most likely to attend. While most children in early childhood centres were European New Zealanders or Maori in the 1980s, children now are as likely to be from a first generation Korean family or a Somali refugee family as from a Maori or European family.

Te Whaariki was designed for European and Maori. How well does it work for Asian, Pasifika and for families who have immigrated to New Zealand recently from a wide range of very diverse countries? People from different countries have different aspirations. How well does Te Whaariki reflect these aspirations?

The recent economic recessions and climate change, together with more natural disasters such as the Christchurch earthquake, change our perceptions of our children's future. What are the most important building blocks for our youngest children in a world faced with so much change and uncertainty?

Changes in political leadership determine funding levels, national policies and priorities for the early childhood sector. The current government strongly emphasises national standards with an accompanying 'back to basics' rhetoric that is impacting on early childhood. How does the curriculum reflect the changing political priorities? Do we need more specific, measurable outcomes in particular areas as suggested by Ken Blaiklock – one of the few critics of Te Whaariki?

Our knowledge of how young children develop and the impact of early development on life outcomes has also taken a major leap forward since Te Whaariki was instituted. Does the curriculum reflect the latest thinking?

For instance, Iris Duhn questions the concept of the child that is embedded in Te Whaariki.

The primary school curriculum has changed since the 1980s. How well does this curriculum flow on from Te Whaariki? Can children make a smooth transition or do the differences create learning barriers?

Another area of change is around how we parent. The change to the Crimes Act that brought penalties for hurting children into line with penalties for hurting adults and animals triggered a major public debate on parenting styles. It also triggered a need for parenting education that teaches positive discipline.

Public opinion surveys over the last five years show that parental attitudes and practices are changing. There is also increasing evidence that the best results for children are obtained when parents and professionals collaborate. In relation to Te Whaariki, what does this mean? Can the curriculum accommodate these shifts or are changes needed?

Another huge change is the massive increase in the numbers of babies, toddlers and children in early childhood care and education for longer hours. When Te Whaariki was written, early childhood centres were full of three and four year olds. The Children's Commissioner's 2011 report on the care of under two year olds in formal care suggested a significant need to improve the quality of care for this age group. How well does Te Whaariki incorporate the needs of our youngest children?

There are many other changes that also impact on the relevance of the curriculum to today's world. But let's move on and think about the use of Te Whaariki.

Levels of implementation

How well is Te Whaariki implemented? Reports from the Education Review Office

suggest that implementation is patchy. As the number of trained teachers continues to rise, implementation should increase – as long as these teachers are influencing the shaping of the programme. However, the shaping of a programme in an early childhood centre is not influenced only by Te Whaariki. It depends on the ownership and management of the centre, what parents want and the philosophy of the centre. For example, Montessori and Steiner kindergartens have particular philosophies which sometimes clash with aspects of Te Whaariki.

Alvested et al suggest that there is an over reliance on the principles and strands of Te Whaariki amongst New Zealand teachers and that this 'this reliance on the Principles and Strands can run the risk of teachers simply repeating and reinforcing their traditional practice'. They point out that implementing a curriculum is a complex process requiring a high level of skill. New Zealand has vastly increased its number of trained teachers in the last ten years. We

now have over 67% of teachers trained. This does not mean they all have the experience or the position within their workplace to ensure Te Whaariki is fully implemented.

The question we can ask is 'What processes need to be in place to show parents, funders and ERO how well Te Whaariki is being implemented in any centre'?

Impact on children's learning

Then there is the most important aspect – what difference is Te Whaariki making to our children – individually and collectively? And how do we know this? We know that high quality centres make the most difference and we know some of the characteristics of a high quality centre. What do we know about Te Whaariki's role in this?

Conclusion

Any learning programme needs to remain relevant to the social conditions of the time. The learning programme document

only works to the degree of skill of its interpreters and implementers. It should be based on the best information we have.

As we learn how extraordinarily important the early years are, it becomes even more important that we constantly monitor how effectively we make these first years the best years for all our children. Te Whaariki is a major part of this. We owe it to our children to make sure Te Whaariki remains a global leader.

One final question: who should review Te Whaariki?

A learning programme needs to reflect shared aspirations of communities as well as valuing the differences amongst communities. The only way to ensure a programme does this is to involve those most affected in its construction.

A major reason for Te Whaariki's success is the level of involvement by those concerned in its construction. Let's repeat what worked while maintaining freshness by involving new people.

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Global Trends in Early Childhood Education

There are two major global trends in early childhood education – trends that are directly contrary.

The first trend is the increasing focus on the significance of early childhood years amongst researchers, international bodies and early childhood workers.

Focusing on the early years

The latest research on children, particularly in the area of brain development, tells us that the first 1000 days of a child's life play a major role in shaping the child's future. While we have known this for a long time, what we did not know was that optimal brain development depends significantly on

the quality of the relationships a child has with significant others. A poor relationship with a parent can lead, amongst other things, to low achievement in school, low self esteem and less income as an adult.

This understanding leads to a greater emphasis on parenting styles and suggests that a major focus of early childhood educators should be on the quality of relationships with children. A new report on the quality of early childhood education centres in Australia gives centres a poor rating overall because of the inadequate nature of relationships.

Our increasing knowledge of the importance of the first three years of a child's life has also brought an increasing focus on early intervention.

'Intervention in the early years has the potential to affect negative trends and to provide young children with more opportunities and better outcomes in terms of access to education, quality of learning, physical growth and health, and eventually productivity. ...these interventions are among the most cost-effective investments a country can make in the human development and capital formation of its people.'

Programmes such as the Incredible Years programme are designed to get children on track, thus avoiding major issues such as mental illness and youth suicide.

There is also more recognition that children are part of families and communities. If we want to change outcomes for children, policies and practices must target whole families and communities. This recognition is leading to calls for more integrated and holistic approaches. Community hubs are one such approach being used in Australia and the UK.

In the theoretical world there are opposing trends with poststructural theorists developing contextualised and constantly evolving approaches to early childhood education while neo-liberalists want to

take children back into the world of treating our youngest children like school children with highly structured programmes around skills such as reading and writing. Neo-liberalist theorists are supported by parents who are concerned about the increasing difficulties their children will face in our future world. This type of anxiety expresses itself in fundamentalist thinking about how to teach their children to cope. Sadly research evidence is that children's resilience is built, not by narrowing down what they learn and how they learn it, but by widening their experience, helping them be competent cross-culturally, building strong relationships and building flexibility.

Devaluing early childhood

The second trend is the trend amongst wealthier governments to devaluing early childhood education – putting it back into the babysitting era. One common governmental agenda is getting all parents into the paid workforce. This devalues the role of parenting by creating enormous pressures in households to scatter their members in different directions every day. There is no time for that morning cuddle, a walk to school and little energy after work to give children full attention.

While developing countries are educating their populations about the importance of early childhood education and searching



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for funds to support parent and child education, wealthier countries that increased early childhood care and education provision, and improved teacher training and standards in the 1990s, are now narrowing their focus and whittling away universal support.

There has always been a gap between government rhetoric and practice in relation to early childhood education. In a recent overview of global trends, two researchers found there was 'no direct correlation between countries where public recognition of the value of early childhood services is high and the funding of those services is high'. Neither did they find there was a correlation between the wealth of nations and the quality of their child care services. Even in countries such as New Zealand and Canada, where early childhood services have been deemed 'high quality', there are drops in funding.

Part of the reason for this is that the care and education of young children

has traditionally been left to the child's family, and in more collectivist societies, the community. Greater levels of individualisation, more women in the workforce and smaller families have all contributed to pushing young children's care and education into the political arena. Where governments encourage people to work rather than stay home and look after children, there is great pressure to ensure that children's care and education is safe and of high quality. However, this pressure is being counteracted by pressure from financial recessions and climate change costs, exposing again the hollowness of governmental commitment to caring for our youngest children.

Other trends

Focus: While countries such as Serbia and Nigeria focus on preparing their young children for school, other countries focus on caring well for their children as they are. However, the language of investment focuses early childhood education on 'becoming' rather than 'being'. This is partly what brings structured learning and literacy skills to the fore while 'play' takes a back seat.

Teacher training: European countries continue to emphasise teacher training and developing national curricula and policies. In Singapore, teacher training time requirements have doubled.

Children's plans and cross-party accords: The trend towards national plans continues, although acting on them has slowed.

Environmental issues: There is a trend towards more environmentally sustainable practices in early childhood centres and increased awareness of children's need to experience and develop an appreciation of nature.

Information Technology: Is growing in significance.

Global citizens: with continuing migration patterns, a vast mix of the world's ethnicities are showing up in early childhood centres in a very wide range of countries.

In 2011, Jonathan Bradshaw wrote that 'overall changes for children [in the UK] are moving in the right direction'. This trend is in danger of reversing unless governments 'walk the talk', even in times of recession.

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BECOMING ONE

Teacher Sharon Hewett shares the journey her centre took when Fantails Childcare Centre changed from being a same-age centre to a mixed-age centre.

In 2010 Fantails was purchased by new owners and shortly after a manager appointed, they felt the importance of a mixed age centre was a more valuable learning tool, the rationale behind this decision being:

- The physical structure of the building suited a mixed age structure.
- Ministry of education had concerns re under resourcing, and over staffing.

Therefore the walls separating the age groups had to come down. This meant toddler teachers became mixed-age teachers and the young child teachers became mixed age teachers.

There were considerations that the dedicated Fantails teachers addressed such as:

- How the toddlers would cope, would their needs still be met, was it going to be too busy?
- How did the parents feel about this, what were our transitions going to look like?
- How were we going to plan and implement a mixed-age curriculum?
- Who was going to do this?

All these questions were addressed at specialist staff meetings, and were nipped out. From these meetings we put some plans into action which also had a flow effect on current policies.

Here are some of the adjustments:

- Teaching teams and team leader
- Rosters for routines and planning
- Creating a nanny to look after toddlers care needs
- Combined day books (day book for whole group and recordings of inside and outside activities)
- Buddy teacher for transitioning children; this includes new children with their family/whānau
- Specialist age related group learning such as a school readiness programme called Fantail Flyers
- Child developmental characteristics
- Learning outcomes/expectations
- Importance of play
- Connecting with family/whānau
- Responding to learning in supportive ways so these can be celebrated and recorded and best future actions
- Recognising, responding, relevant learning experiences and recording learning
- Professional development
- Inclusive practices

Late last year I made a confidential survey for parents, staff, and management to comment on these changes. Here are the findings from 24 responses: 50% of replies had a positive response to the change; 16% had a mixed or unsure response to

the change; 30% of replies had a negative response to the change.

Within the replies many said they liked how the children were able to play alongside each other and their children were happy. They liked the idea of interacting with all the teachers. People loved the new visually welcoming environment feeling more like a home. People loved the idea of older children looking after the younger children and younger children being up skilled by their older friends, just like "brother and sister" would do at home.

People also commented on what happens to children's learning now they are all together.

- How does this affect their strengths and interests?
- How are children's emotional and physical developments being facilitated now they are in a larger and varied group of children?
- How does their child/children shine in such a busy environment?
- How is their learning extended and recorded within a large team of teachers?
- How does my child get that special one on one time especially when going to school, and who are these teachers when this is explored?
- How will my child be looked after when transitioning into the mixed-age room and will their needs be met?

The results reflected how important communication was for parents. They still wanted to know their children were enjoying their day and expressed their trust and respect for the Fantails teachers in making the change more informative and less confusing for them.



Here are some parent's voice/views. Names are not real for confidentiality:

Margret wrote

"I'd be really interested in the teachers' comments as they are the ones that get to see the dynamics. Communication about how it works for my child is valuable in terms of putting our trust in you"

Betty wrote

I don't mind the change in the walls going down it definitely looks more inviting and bigger, just more concerned over the learning, understanding, nurturing environment between the age groups. I'm still confused over who are the main teachers for each area; however I think the teachers at Fantails do a fantastic job. I would like to see all changes by written notification on the white board.

Felicity wrote

I think that having all the children combined has been a fantastic idea. You can see the older kids playing and helping the younger ones which is great to see. I know that K has come out of her shell more because she has got to know more of the other teachers as well, and I think she is learning more by watching the older kid's. All and all it's a great idea.

Kate wrote

Having experienced the centre in both combinations (separated and mixed) our preference is for mixed age. It is great that the younger children are able to interact more with the older children and it is also good that the older children are able to tolerate the younger children, who may not yet have mastered the same motor and social skills.

Mixed-age grouping is not a new fallacy, it has been around for decades so it is no surprise there was a lot of articles written about the subject, all asking the same questions as ours and celebrating the benefits that we have also experienced.

"The multi-age concept is based on the assumption that children learn best in active ways through the interaction with the environment and with different people" (Aina, O, 2001). This allows children to feel there is "less competition ... because they are all at different levels and have different expectations set for themselves and those children who get to spend more than one year in a class have more time to develop caring relationships with other classmates and their teachers" (Aina, O, 2001).

In our experience at Fantails this is definitely true, children I would usually say goodbye to at the age of three are now staying in my care up till the time they go to school, I have deeper understandings with these children and have been able to co-construct a deeper knowledge on topics that interest them. This would never been possible in a same-age class.

Mounting evidence shows that the multi-age class room can have the following benefits:

- Optimal learning occurs in nurturing environments that foster self-esteem, risk taking, and decision-making.

- Activities accommodate individual differences in learning rates and styles.
- Learning is holistic and includes social, emotional and intellectual development of the child.
- Children construct their own knowledge.
- Children learn best when they interact with people and the environment, with greater flexibility.
- Teachers tailor activities to the way that children really learn (Aina, O, 2001).

Aina, O, 2001, writes about a common question found in our survey "in a new programme parents want to know the benefits to their child. Will my child learn more or less? Multage settings are actually more natural and educationally more beneficial ... children are expected and encouraged to learn at different levels. This process can greatly reduce stress and pressures on young children therefore reducing academic failure".

Multi-age classes encourages intellectual development in a large variety of tasks, projects, and other activities, the teacher can use cross-age interaction to promote a range of intellectual and cognitive benefits. For example the older and more experienced children can take on more complex tasks such as writing, binding, cutting, making labels, graphs,

and pictures. Older children also benefit reading to younger children (story-telling on the basis of the pictures in the book), the appreciation-if not admiration- expressed by the younger listener may strengthen the readers motivation (Katz, L, 1989).

Family/whānau have commented to management on the calmness of the new environment, the natural flow and all children seem content.

We at Fantails, see ourselves as a large extended family embracing parents, whānau, educators, children and community where values of people from different cultures and different abilities are accepted and respected.

Our goal is to provide quality education that will have a significant and lasting impact on children's overall development. Our aim is that when children leave our centre they will be more competent learners, confident and secure in their sense of belonging and have a love of learning that will continue throughout their lives.



Leadership and Quality Service in Early Childhood Settings



Great leaders in Early Childhood Education (ECE) do what is necessary to meet or exceed quality standards. By focusing on quality, innovation, and the smallest aspects of a service, a successful early childhood centre is a great example of how an excellent service emerges, not only through effective strategic planning, but through leadership at operational level paying attention on the quality of every aspect of the organisation's programmes, services, and processes.

Not only are early childhood leaders encouraged to enhance their knowledge and skills in the areas of quality management of an early childhood service, but also the expectation that early childhood leaders need to incorporate the traditional administration of the sector with a market-approach to education. Therefore leaders in ECE need to make a point of listening and responding to the market and the ideas and feedbacks of consumers of early childhood service, not only academic experts but parents, children, teachers, and the wider community.

The trend of market-based approach to early childhood business and administration expects early childhood leaders to advocate an education-as-business brand building approach that appreciates a wide range of issues, such as creating and marketing a shared organisational vision to its employees and customers, and developing an organisational culture that strives to personalise relationships by treating people in a way that leaves everyone feeling unique and special – whether they are customers, experts, or staff members. This in turn affects the setting's philosophy, charter, policies, and classroom practice.

A shared organisational vision

A shared vision is the means by which leaders, customers and staff members work together to nurture and consolidate a greater sense of common purpose that provides all stakeholders with an opportunity to overcome challenge, respect differences and recognise similarities. Bloom (2004) suggests that a shared

vision should be clear and simple, based on principles shared by all stakeholders. Goal setting, decision making, curriculum planning, and policy development should all be based on this shared vision.

In order to develop a shared vision, ECE leaders should provide opportunities for discussion, self-review, and reflection. This process not only encourages all staff members to bring the service's vision into everyday tasks, but also provides an opportunity for leaders to encourage customers at all levels to pour their creative energy and dedication into the centre's operation and development.

A shared vision can give staff members and customers a sense of hope and purpose and is identified as one of key characteristics to high quality education and service in early childhood settings.

A learning organisational culture

The quality of the service in an early childhood setting is hugely influenced by the culture of the organisation, as the organisational culture is often the 'first impression' customers notice, such as the way staff members communicate with customers, the physical environment of the service, the ability and willingness to learn, and the attitude to change.

In order to establish a high quality early education service for all customers, Kinkner, Riley, and Roach (2005) assert the important role of leaders in crafting and managing a learning organisational culture in early childhood services by emphasising educational training programmes to encourage their team to deliver quality service, not only at the knowledge of children's behaviours and development, but also in responsibility and ownership at operational level in the business.

It is important for leaders to give staff the opportunity to facilitate discussion and regular reflection. This can result in higher level of job satisfaction and encourage all stakeholders to look for new ways to deliver quality education and extraordinary

experiences. Kinkner, Riley, and Roach (2005) also add that on-going training and educational programmes help leadership and staff members to become supportive to others, and more likely to communicate at a professional level with respect, sensitivity, open mindedness, and self awareness, which is critical in the provision of quality early childhood education.

On-going training and educational programmes also encourage and nurture a recognition culture, helping staff to achieve personal and professional goals. When leaders value and practise recognition and appreciation, a positive and collaborative environment is developed and all stakeholders are motivated to learn and help each other. In a learning organisational culture, the learning opportunities challenge leaders and staff members to use sound knowledge and judgment, and enhance their problem-solving abilities.

To sum up, effective leadership helps us to understand what we stand for as individuals, and what the organisation stands for as a whole, and the difference we intend to make. An understanding of the principles and practices of a market-approach to great service for staff and customers will help early childhood leaders to take on the challenge on the provision of unique and extraordinary education and service in ECE.

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About the Author

Ye Du from Koru Early Learning Centre.

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Creating a safe space for effective self-review



How safe do you feel through the self review process?

Do you or your team:

- Fear being blamed or blame others if challenges arise, or find yourself or others justifying actions?
- Participate fully in centre meetings?
- Feel appreciated, understood and valued?
- Feel your colleagues value your ideas?
- Feel confident to speak up about new ideas or offer questions?
- Feel supported by your colleagues?
- Feel comfortable receiving feedback and critique from each other?

The biggest contributory factor to the lack of enthusiasm, contribution or understanding of the self review process is fear. Fear of being criticised, of getting it wrong or being blamed if things are not right. This fear often results in centres focussing on gathering evidence to prove we are "getting it right" or justification, rather than seeking open honest feedback. This fear of failure is a barrier to success. We cannot learn something new unless we try something different nor will we be open to possibility if our focus is on justifying our actions. If we do not feel safe to take risks and make mistakes, we will not discover, create or learn something new.

We need to create learning and teaching environments where children and teachers can make mistakes without fear of judgement, where there are no wrong or right answers, simply solutions to problems where we accept the solution either works or doesn't. By not applying judgement we foster creativity. Dissatisfaction often brings out our creative streak; through the creative process we imagine different scenarios or potential outcomes. It is a process whereby many different ideas will be tried (conceptually or physically) and mistakes made in the process. If a person feels they will be judged as being "wrong" then they will not persist and lose the opportunity to succeed.

We want to create an environment where everyone is given the opportunity to succeed.

Albert Einstein said "The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination".

If we can create a culture within our practice, whereby no idea is a bad idea and we do not judge people, ideas, processes or outcome, then we are fostering a creative environment for both teachers and children. We must promote a culture of experimentation, whereby children and teachers alike are free to experience both success and failure without fear.

"There are no failures, just experiences and your reaction to them". Tom Krause

It is through the contrast of experiences and interactions with others we learn more about ourselves. We must promote a culture within our centres whereby, instead of being critical of the weaknesses of others see opportunities to utilise their strengths to compensate for your weaknesses. The success of the team is dependent on 100% inclusion, where everyone feels safe to participate, where each member has a voice and is heard, where challenges are faced collectively, where no blame is apportioned or judgement placed, and we work collaboratively to find creative solutions.

What can you do collectively? Maybe start by carrying out a review on how safe you feel as a team through the review process. This could include individual or centre wide reviews. Also share the load, let each team member choose a part of the review to be responsible for. Evidence you could include:

- Team questionnaire (you could use the questions at the beginning of the article as a starting point)
- Asses the level of contribution from the team at:
 - Team meetings
 - Centre events
 - Curriculum planning

- Learning stories
- Self review process etc.

- Evidence gathered for the Registered Teacher Criteria eg. Are reflections open and honest and does the individual respond positively to constructive feedback.

The first step to effective review is creating a safe space. What can you do to promote a positive and safe environment? I suggest, as Mahatma Ghandi would say "be the change you wish to see in the world". If you wish to participate in a safe space, create it!

For a great You Tube clip demonstrating this idea visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGyutkBvN2s>

Some useful resources:

Nga Arohaehae Whai Hua, Self-Review Guidelines for Early Childhood Education

Quality in Action, available on the Ministry of Education website

About the author

Angela Stead and her business partner Stacey Clyde operate a consultancy/ professional development business, Meadows Space and two childcare centres. Discovery Care and Learning in Milson, Palmerston North and Bright Sparks Care and Learning soon to open in Buick Street, Petone, Lower Hutt. Together they have in excess of 40 years experience in the industry ranging from teaching, centre leadership and management to business development and quality assessment.

Meadows Space, offers leadership training and support, mentorship programmes and in-house whole team workshops. Meadows Space has achieved much success in transforming centres, improving both outcomes both for children and for business sustainability and profitability. We believe that in order to achieve the best outcomes for our children we must support, empower, inspire and motivate our teaching teams.



Nine Reasons You Must Facebook

If you want to increase parent involvement with your center and their child during the day; but don't want to spend time or money doing so, then read on.

As a mother with six children (including twins and triplets), I experienced three types of early childhood education in the 1990's: private part time daycare; playcentre and kindergarten. All were a wonderful experience. I only wish that some of the modern communication

channels we have now were available then. I would have loved to have had a better feel for their day and better communication with the centre.

Things are different now. At your centre you are probably using email and sms (text) messaging regularly with your parents. But what about Facebook? In 2011/2012 it is an item essential for you. Not only for the promotion of your business (perhaps a subject of a future article), but an absolute

must for parent/centre communication. It's FREASY (free and easy) and I would guarantee that at least 90% of your parents/caregivers use Facebook regularly. So go where they are.

If you haven't already dabbled in using Facebook – let me give you a nine reasons why it's a good idea, and how to use it as one of your communication channels.

Freasy – It's absolutely free and very easy to set up an account. You don't need prior knowledge Facebook walks you through the whole procedure. That is the easy bit. By free, I mean there is no domain, hosting, web design, or maintenance costs in setting it up or maintaining it.

Three types of Facebook pages – You might just be familiar with personal profiles. You can liken them to private visual online chat rooms. Only your 'friends' can see and interact with your profile. This is NOT what you want for your centre. You can add a Facebook business page for your centre <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php>. Business pages can be viewed by anyone. They're searched by Google and people become 'fans' to receive your updates and comment.

One problem for centres is privacy. You don't want your parent/child communications open to the world. This where the third type of Facebook page comes in – Groups. <http://www.facebook.com/groups/create.php> You can create a Secret Group. This means that you can have one that is for your centre only. Membership to the group is by invitation only – i.e. your parents/caregivers. Only members can view the content and nothing will appear in any search or profile feeds.

Parents There – Centre parents are the prime demographic users of Facebook – young women.

Smartphone or computer – After the initial set up on a computer, you can use a smartphone with the Facebook Application (free) and if you have wireless internet at your centre- all uploads/downloads are free too.

Integrated Email – if you select a Facebook group as the vehicle to use, one of the benefits is you can email the members.

Videos – Using a smartphone, you can have staff video kids at play, at rest, participating in activities or a video message to a parent and upload it.

Chat – parents can use the chat mechanism to talk with their older children.

Online meetings – using the (real time) status updates you can conduct a form of online meeting with a parent – talking aback and forth and also uploading photos at the same time to illustrate points or show their child's work.

Communication Content – What can you post online?

- Notices – Use Facebook as an additional notice board for parents keeping them updated with your centre activities, important information
- Pictures of kids; projects; artwork
- Videos of children – singularly or in groups
- Visual portfolios
- Promotion of space availability/ openings
- Centre newsletter – you can upload the centre newsletter to the notes page

When you consider all these benefits, it makes sense to add Facebook to your communication channels, doesn't it?

About the Author

Debbie Mayo-Smith is an International Speaker and best selling author. For more tips, over 500 how-to articles visit Debbie's website www.debbiespeaks.co.nz

What's the word on the street about your Centre?



- Do your families feel they are the most important customer?
- How important is this?
- Maximising your occupancy through customer service?

Have you ever been to a shop and have waited for some time to have someone come and ask you "Would you like some assistance?" Have you ever been through a bad customer service experience when you feel that you have not gotten what you have paid for? I am sure that we can all say 'yes' to this.

So why is this different in childcare?
Why are our customers not always seen as important?

Regardless if you are in childcare or any other industry; customer service is vital to any businesses success.

The important question here is "Who is customer?"

If you ask many staff in the Early Childhood Education sector "who are your customers?" the common responses will be children, followed by parents and then staff. All three responses are true and correct; however your core customer is the parent. Parents are the ones that make the final decision to use you or not to use you and parents are the ones paying your fees, either in total or in addition to 20 Hours. Happy staff with high morale will support you and praise the Centre they work with; unhappy staff will tell their families and friends negative experiences they are having.

Happy staff = happy children = happy parents

Why are parents your core customers? As previously stated they ultimately decide to use you or one of your competitor's. Parents are the ones that pay the accounts; parents are the ones that decide which early childhood education centre they would like for their child; the environment they would like their child in; the type of staff to care for their child.

I am not saying that children and staff are not important, they most definitely are, but predominately parents are the customers

that build occupancy, a centre's word of mouth, the centre's reputation and, most of all, make the business profitable and viable or on the downside non-profitable and not-sustainable.

So the underlying question is: "is Customer service important?"

The simple and straight answer is **YES**, most definitely.

Did you know that 90% of your enquires are from word of mouth?

This is a very large percentage and just take the time to step back and think.....90% of word of mouth from your existing clients is what is going to build and sustain strong occupancy for you..... **Are your existing families happy with the care and service being provided at your centre?**

It is much more expensive to find new customers rather than retain the ones that you have, because the ones that you have are customers that are going to build your centre's word of mouth.

It's about revenue, because a lost customer means lost revenue and an unhappy customer can damage your reputation.

How can we ensure that we have consistent, positive and outstanding Customer Service?

Take your rose coloured glasses off and start to think outside the box. It is human nature to slip into a comfortable state in your work environment and become accustomed to your surroundings and your service delivery; as we get caught up with all the day-to-day tasks in running a childcare business.

Take off your rose coloured glasses and start to look around and see what parents see, ask and find out what do your customers want? Really, it's not that hard; all parents want is to feel like they are the only parent in the centre. Is this hard to achieve? Is it hard to put into practice? Is it difficult to maintain?

Most definitely not!!! Simple and cost

effective strategies are the ones that are going to make every parent feel that they are the only parent in the centre.

Here are some strategies you could use:

- Do a welcome letter before children start, addressed to the child. The child will be the first to open this and families will appreciate that their child has been welcomed into the centre with a lot of excitement that little Johnny maybe got his very first letter in the mail off you!
- Ring families after 20 minutes with a new child or upset child. Why do we wait for families to ring us? Imagine how the family would feel that you have taken two minutes out to let them know that their child is fine and has settled in well? How comforting is it to the parent that they know you care about them and are assisting them and their child to settle into your centre!
- Follow up on all your enquiries. When parents first choose childcare they often will visit all in the area so you need to be the one that stands out.
- Follow up on all parent concerns and questions within 24 hours. Parents appreciate and feel special when you have taken the time to answer their questions. There is nothing worse than telling them "sure I will call you back....I will follow up on this" and then this does not happen. That parent feels unappreciated and that their questions or concerns are not relevant or important to you.
- Do a first-day letter with a photo. E-mail this to the family at their work or address, families again will feel that they are not forgotten about and that they are the only parent in the world at your centre.
- Know all your parents by their first name. It is not only respectful to the family but it shows the family that you acknowledge them and their child as an individual to the centre.
- Get your staff to know all families by their first name.

- Acknowledge parents' involvement and assistance in your newsletter and foyer areas. Families dedicate their time and assistance to the centre so let's take five minutes out to say thank you in your newsletter. We all love acknowledgement and praise after all.
- Make an effort to welcome every family and child, every day. There is nothing worse than families walking into the centre and not one staff member greets the family good morning or even in the afternoon to say good night. Is this good customer service? Most definitely not and it is these experiences that families will remember. Remember they are the families that build that 90% of word of mouth.
- Record and remember special days, anniversaries, child and parent birthdays, etc. Give parents birthday cards made by their child. Buy or make child birthday cakes (don't forget to tell the parents you do it either).
- Ring Families. What is the most common trend in childcare? Ring the family when the child is sick or unhappy. Why? Let's do the opposite – ring or e-mail families to let them know that their child has had a good day. The few cents the call costs will go a million miles.

What are some important aspects of effective customer service?

- Knowing your customers' needs – the key is to know what your families want and this is quite common when families decide to choose childcare. High quality care, safe and clean environment, healthy and nutritious meals, but most important to feel that they and their children are important. You can bet that your centre may be clean, well presented and provide high quality care but does this incorporate superior customer service? Does this involve training your staff on superior services for families, making them feel important and special each and every day.
- Identifying your key service activities. What makes your customer service stand out from the rest? Have this written down? Give staff key customer service points they can always refer to. Why are you unique in a world that is highly regulated and controlled?
- In a competitive marketplace it makes sense to aim to provide superior service. Customers base their purchasing decisions on the service they receive, not just price, quality and availability. We all know that childcare

is a competitive market so you need to stand out from the rest.

- Promoting your service is not about spending lots of money on advertising. It is about the superior customer service that you provide because existing families are who spread the positive word of mouth and reputation about your centre. What better testimonial from someone who uses your service.
- Research shows that 90% of your Centre's enquiries come through word of mouth recommendations from current parents. This is written again because it is something you should never forget. How are you making your current parents happy?

Remember word of mouth can make you or break you!

Are your parents happy?

So we can see that although customer service is imperative to your business there are very simple, cost effective ways that you can implement to ensure that your customer service is superior and you are providing all families with the sense of being the only family at the centre.

As the saying goes "A happy customer is a customer for life".

Increase Occupancy at Your Centre

Independent international research within the sector tells us that only 10 per cent of centres actually ask phone and drop-in enquiries for family's crucial details such as name, address, phone numbers, email address, child's name and age and how they heard about the centre.

Are you one of the 90 per cent of centres that don't collect this information? Are you aware that this is the most important and crucial factor in maintaining and increasing your occupancy.

Without this information you are unable to stay in contact with families who are interested in moving from their existing centre or who are preparing to start their journey in childcare.

We all know the majority of movement occurs at the end of the year; families are

10 times more likely to leave their childcare centre at the end of the year if they are unhappy compared to the middle of the year. It is also likely that families who are unhappy will ring centres throughout the year to compare prices and services. Imagine if you kept in constant contact with these families, who do you think they will contact first? A centre that they have previously enquired about and had no further contact with or a centre that continually maintains contact with them via phone calls, emails, newsletters and invites to the centre? I know where I would go first; the centre that I already have a relationship with.

Just imagine if you collected every single enquiry that contacted you via phone or dropped in. Imagine sending them a letter to invite them to enrol next year. You have

at least 200 leads from your enquiry book you wouldn't have had if you didn't keep this information. I guarantee you if you did this you will convert past enquiries. A simple strategy that just makes sense.

Imagine if you continue to not keep an enquiry book; that's 200 new families you have to try even harder to get in your doors to fill your vacancies from exiting children next year. Not only is it hard work; it is costing you more money in time and marketing your centre. Don't be another typical centre that leaves everything to the last minute and ends up competing with all the other centres in your community whilst you all scramble for enrolments in the same panic and in the same way.

ECC Member Benefit Schemes

The following Preferred Suppliers offer exclusive deals to ECC members, potentially saving you thousands each year. Contact them now to discuss how you can start saving and benefit from the special relationship ECC members enjoy.

Accuro

Need health insurance for you or your staff, talk to Bob at Accuro.

NZ Childcare Finance

Exclusive to ECC Members, NZ Childcare Finance can bring forward a portion of your next bulk funding payment so that you can use it to pay everyday expenses and wages.

Childproof Insurance

Make huge savings on insurance for your centre with our ECC members-only insurance scheme.

Christmas Gouwland

Offering an on-line financial audit designed to comply with the Ministry of Education's requirements – saving you significant time and cost

ECE Astute

Receive competitive and exclusive rates for sales and consulting services, including due diligence, greenfield purchasing, childcare centre finance, equity partnerships and childcare sales through ECE Astute's association with Astute Real Estate MREINZ.

Educa

Offering an on-line child portfolio model. Its easy to use, easy for parents to contribute to; and a great way to record a child's learning and activities at your centre.

EzyPay

Get special rates on Ezypay's direct debit services, helping you to regulate your cash flow and revenue collection, while taking the hassle out of collecting fees.

GSB

With GSB, ECC Members can save money on fuel, food and beverages, cleaning products, bathroom supplies, motor vehicles, and much more.

OfficeMax

Get special ECC Member pricing on the huge range of office and teaching supplies, cleaning products and much, much more!

Sharp

Buy or lease photocopiers and electronic equipment at special ECC Member prices.



**Early Childhood
Council**



Emily inspects her catch

Adventuring into a New Beginning

I'm first to admit that I rely heavily on technology. I love my laptop, my cellphone replaced my hand many years ago and as for my i-Pad – words can't describe the feelings I have for that! So it was with trepidation that I headed south for a fortnight holiday in Marlborough Sounds.

Staying in the batch of hubby's childhood holidays, I was dreading this 'holiday'. We've stayed there before – but that was in our child-free years when it didn't matter if dinner consistent of a bag of chips and a few warm beers. Now we have other responsibilities – and a two-year old's nutrition is just the beginning. Our daughter, Emily has a skin disorder called Epidermolysis Bullosa – E.B. for short, and often referred to as 'butterfly skin' (because the skin on E.B. sufferers is as fragile as a butterfly's wing). And here we were roughing it. No electricity, no bath and no hospital. This was to be a true test of resilience and to top it off, Emily stripped the skin off the inside of one hand the day before we departed home – so infection control was high on our list of priorities (in hindsight it seems so irresponsible that we went at all!)

My lovely in-laws (I'm not being sarcastic – I'm one of the lucky few in the world who are crazy about their in-laws) dropped us off at the batch in Hitaua Bay by boat – the batch isn't accessible by car. After a bout of motion sickness, Emily and I both needed a clean-up and I was pleased to discover a solar panel had been installed so we had lukewarm water, rather than the ice-cold I was expecting.

A late supper of cold meat and salads (prepared before leaving home) and an early night were in order, and the adventures of 'tomorrow' were eagerly awaited by all.

We adapted pretty well to not having electricity – Emily stopped asking for 'toons' after the first day – and I had my trusted laptop which saw us through one animated DVD on the second rainy day.

As for cooking, we made great meals using two gas-rings and a BBQ. The solar panels never really made the water hot but ensured it was never freezing cold like it had been in the past – and even sleeping in the same room as Emily wasn't too bad once she realised it didn't entitle her to an all-night party (it took about three nights for her to understand).

Our days sped by in a whirl of swimming, fishing, kayaking and exploring the area. The experiences Emily had are among some of her greatest yet – watching fish swim in rivers, "fish!" she exclaimed – watching them swim in a bucket, "circle!" she shouted. Later, watching the big fish be filleted for dinner "yum yum yum", she grinned – where she learnt that I'll never know but she was right – it was delicious!

Emily's skin was fine throughout the trip. She had her usual amount of blisters and wounds but healing seemed to happen faster than usual – We can only assume that was because we spent so much time in the sea.

And as for my reliance on technology, I can honestly say I'm over it. In fact, it took me

three days to turn my cell-phone on when we got home and the 120-odd emails I had in my personal account all got deleted without being read (I have a somewhat naive view that if a message is important enough the sender will contact me again).

As our holiday ended we started talking about the weeks and months to come. I've resigned from my position at the Early Childhood Council and will be studying this year. I've loved working with the teachers, Centre Managers and Directors and have been inspired by you all. In fact so inspired... I'm training to teach ECE! By the end of 2012 I will have completed a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (ECE) at Victoria University and who knows – if you're in the Wellington area I might even turn up at your centre on placement.

Amy Cook worked at the Early Childhood Council as Information Officer then Publications Coordinator. Trudi Sutcliffe will be extending her position to cover Amy's duties.

For more information on Epidermolysis Bullosa visit www.debra.org.nz



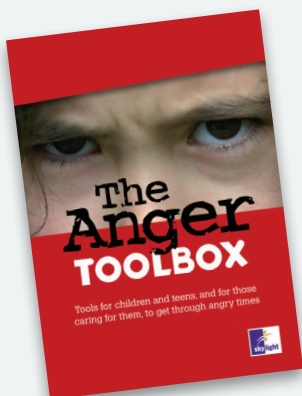
The ingredients for play-dough travel well and provide hours of entertainment for people of all ages

Resource Reviews

Reviewed by Anne Barrowclough, Elizabeth Clements and Trudi Sutcliffe

Book reviews in this section focus on supporting young children to deal with traumatic situations and difficult emotions. All the books are available from Skylight – a national agency supporting children, young people, adults and their families and whanau to build their resilience through tough times of change, loss, trauma and grief.

www.skylight.org.nz 0800 299 100



The Anger Toolbox

Tools for children and teens, and for those caring for them, to get through angry times.

By Tricia Irving Henry, John Taylor Smith and Jenny McIntosh
Skylight

We all know about anger. It's red, it's uncomfortable to downright awful, and is hard for the angry person and those around that person. This is a great toolbox for children of all ages, so good for those older siblings as well as children in your care. Beautifully designed, easy to find what you want, easy language - the list goes on. Great photos of angry faces are a useful

resource all by themselves – you could show them to children so they can pick how they are feeling.

The book is a great resource for early childhood teachers. It describes the look, feel and purpose of anger and gives loads of well tested ideas for defusing anger. There is plenty in it for supporting teachers to deal with their own anger as well. There is guidance for 'spotting the clues' as well as 'cooling down' techniques. And there is even a section on bullying – something that exists in early childhood centres as well as schools and workplaces.

A must for all centres.



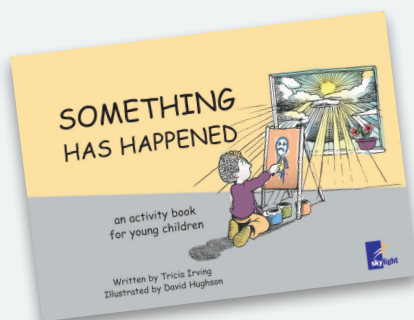
What's Happened To Baby?

By members of SIDS (Wgtn), Sands (Wgtn) and Skylight
Illustrated by Ali Teo
Pelorous Trust

Suitable for 2 to 6 year olds, this valuable New Zealand book supports young children to cope with the death of a baby in their family or whanau. It is rich in advice,

with the advice being given by those who know what it's like. It provides simple explanations of what happens when a baby dies, answers those questions that worry children and gives strategies for dealing with grief.

At the end of the book, there are useful notes for parents and teachers to support them to help children in their care.



Something Has Happened

By Tricia Irving Hendry
Skylight

This is an activity book for 3 – 6 year olds who have had something difficult happen to them. It's a 'workbook' for the child. Each page has a theme, a space for the child to draw pictures on this theme, and with each opposite page containing guidance to adults for supporting the child.

The black and white cartoon illustrations give simple, useful messages to children

and the whole book allows the child to express their experience in their own terms.

The book is about 30 pages long so can be used over a period of time. It is also a great resource for teaching children about feelings and for learning that good and bad things happen and they are ok no matter what.

Another very valuable resource from Skylight.



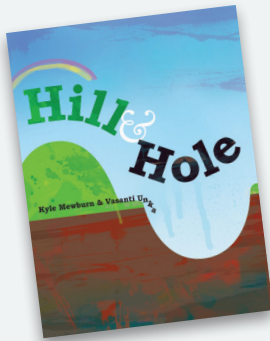
Poo Bum

By Stephanie Blake
Gecko Press

This book will delight any child who adores 'toilet talk' especially 3-4-year old boys. The story is about a little rabbit who could only say one thing... 'Poo bum'. Then one day the little rabbit meets a hungry wolf.

Will his potty mouth get him into trouble? Will he learn a lesson? Maybe. Read this quirky story to find out.

Poo bum is a genuinely funny story with bright bold illustrations. Perfect for reading aloud at mat time, that is if you don't mind a little bit of anarchy, especially with the perfect twist at the end. Aimed at children 3+.



Hill & Hole

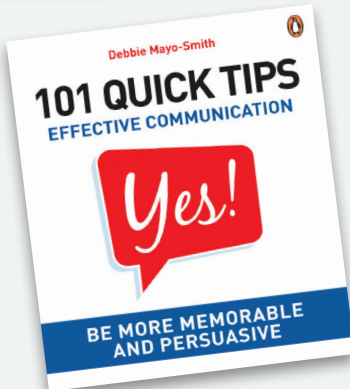
By Kyle Mewburn & Vasanti Unka
Puffin

Hill and Hole are best friends. Hill loves being a hill, but sometimes he wishes he could be a hole and feel the earth breathing beneath him. Hole loves being a hole but just once would love to see the sun rising. So they ask mole if he can help. Pretty soon

Hill is a hole and Hole is a hill. But things aren't always what they seem and what at first seemed wonderful and new turns out not to be so great after all. Can Hill and Hole ever find an answer to their dilemma?

This book has a wistful feel to it with descriptive language that flows when read aloud and illustrations that are deceptively simple but artwork you could hang on your wall. Aimed at children 4+.

Management Resources



101 Quick Tips – Effective Communication

By Debbie Mayo-Smith
Penguin Books

Are you one of those people who cuts snippets out of the paper and magazines? You see some good advice or something that gives you an idea. This book is a compilation of those sorts of snippets. Mayo-Smith has collected up bits of advice from a range of sources and compiled

them into a book of tips aimed at improving business communication.

The first tip is about how to show respect in a conversation. It's good advice – show you're interested in the person if you want them to be interested in what you're saying.

Much of the book is about online interactions such as tips to support your business marketing. The rest is a bit patchy – the tips slide into management of information rather than communication tips.



A PUFFIN PRIZE PACK!

Reader's Competition – 25 books to give away!

Who is Hill's best friend?

Email your contact details and the answer to the question above to info@decc.org.nz by Monday 30 April 2012 and be in to win!

Puffin has kindly donated
**FIVE prize packs, each
containing FIVE books!**

Puffin Competition Winners

Congratulations to the following winners who have just won a pack of five Puffin books each.

Buckle My Shoe Early Learning Centre Ltd,
Alexandra Goodwin, Bell Block Childcare,
Trinity Kindergarten, The Nurtury

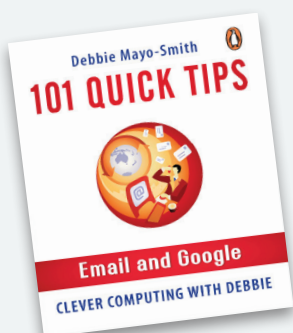
www.puffin.co.nz



early childhood bookshop

www.thebookgarden.co.nz

Telephone 0800 16 16 26 or 04 569 2880 • Email info@thebookgarden.co.nz



101 Quick Tips – Email and Google

By Debbie Mayo-Smith
Penguin Books

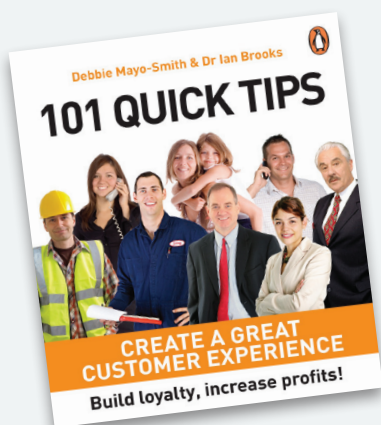
Last summer I got a similar book out of the library and read it – cover to cover. What a mistake! I felt overwhelmed. Although I've used email ever since it was invented, there is always more to learn.

This book is very easy to use. By far the best way to use it is as a reference tool. When you feel frustrated with email or google, look to the book for a clue. It's well

referenced and has simple, clear, easy to follow instructions. And it's small. Keep it next to the computer.

If you want to keep learning, pick a topic each week and incorporate what you learn into your daily use.

If you're like me and like to read cover to cover, pick 3-5 things most relevant to you and start using those tools. You will at least know what's in the book and it gives you a good idea of other ways you could be using email and google.



101 Quick Tips - Create a Great Customer Experience

By Debbie Mayo-Smith & Dr Ian Brooks
Penguin Books

As always Debbie's books are best when it comes to giving good advice about how to use computers to improve your business. For example, she says NEVER write 'Dear Mrs Customer' again. Use Excel to personalise the letters. However, this book does not give you step by step guidance to do this – some of her other books do.

She talks about the importance of image. 'An ounce of image is worth a tonne of performance'. While this may be true in today's world, it is not a great message for

early childhood centres! You may get new families with your image but you will keep them by ensuring their children are well cared for and learning well. This applies to much other advice in the book which is shaped for sales-type businesses.

One piece of advice that is relevant to early childhood services is to 'personalise the customer experience'. Debbie suggests asking them what they like to be called and how they like to be contacted. Families are an important part of the work early childhood centres do so respecting differences amongst families in this way will strengthen relationships and ease communication.

Worth a read.

Last Laugh

Mum: Why do you keep scratching yourself?

Daughter: I'm the only one who knows where it itches.

"John, there were two cookies on the shelf last night. How come there is only one there now?"

"It was so dark, I guess I didn't see the other one."

After much yelling and screaming, a father rushed into his sons' room to find his two sons in the middle of a fist fight.

"Who started this?" asked the father.

"It all started when Kevin hit me back," said the older of the two boys.

A young boy was almost asleep for the night when a sudden electrical storm blew up. His mother thought he might be frightened so she tiptoed into his room to stay with him.

He opened his eyes and said sleepily to his mother, "What's Dad doing to the television set now?"

Four-year-old Tina gave a playmate a tour of the house and then proudly showed her a new bathroom scale.

"What's it for?" asked the friend.

"I don't know, but every time you stand on it, it makes you very mad," replied Tina.



Naturally Wood...

Your partner to convert dreams into reality

Examples of recent dreams fulfilled:



Infant playground with climbing hill with slide, sand pit, a circular path with 7 different tactile finishes and lush green grass.



Artelier with art easels, work benches, storage for work materials and display of children's work and work in progress



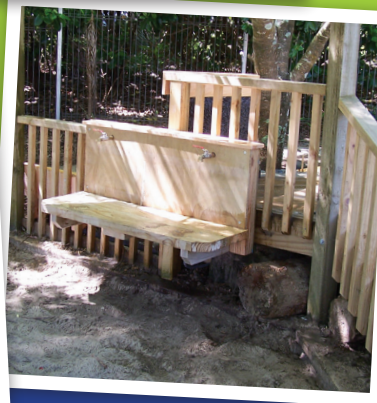
Construction area with drawing board, wood working, collage and clay work benches, lift out tool box, drawing display, art easels and storage for work materials, tools and work in progress



Family Play area with purpose built kitchen which includes stove, sink, oven, microwave cupboard, pantry, side board and work benches



Playground for mildly disabled children which includes a large deck area with 4 different climbing and tactile experiences, a sand pit with water play, and water wall with recycled water trickling down a stone wall



Naturally Wood

your one stop shop for

centre design • classroom layouts
space utilization • centre renovations
kitchens and laundries

centre furniture and fittings: your designs or ours
playgrounds • and more



For further information see our website

Website www.naturallywood.co.nz Phone 09 2352980

Fax 09 2352981 Email naturallywood@paradise.net.nz

FirstBase

Administration Software for NZ Early Childhood

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

- >>> Easy to use
- >>> Keep comprehensive child records
- >>> Store staff records & MoE staff funding data
- >>> Create rolls, sign in lists & general reports easily
- >>> Control invoicing, receipts & debtors
- >>> Produce ministry returns (RS7, RS61, WINZ forms)
- >>> Auto-activation of future enrolment agreements
- >>> Keep medical & vaccination records
- >>> Staffing ratio optimisation

Waikikumukau Childcare (666)

Monthly Attendance Statistics Report for January 2011

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Totals
Enrolments U2																																
% Enrolment																																
Enrolments O2																																
% Enrolment																																
Attendance U2																																
% Attendance																																
Attendance O2																																
% Attendance																																
Number of U2 Hrs Claimed																																
20ECE																																
20+ECE Sub																																
Total																																
Reg Tchr Hrs																																
Non Reg Tchr Hrs																																
Ratio																																

WAITING LIST Under 2 11 Over 2 2 Over 3 7 Total 20 Min. Age on Entry 0.8 Starters This month 9 Leavers This Month 7

Discretionary Hrs This Month

Enrolment Ratios

U2 66% O2 49% STAFF 97.0%

Estimated Funding

U2 Funding \$3,778.02 O2 Funding \$27,639.90 FreeECE \$2,541.60 FreeECE Sub Total \$33,959.52

NB The above figures are merely a monthly projection. The final staffing ratio for funding is calculated across the four month period on an RS7

JANUARY 2011

Service No. 666

Subsidy Funded Child Hours

20-ECE Funded Child Hours

Staff Hour Count

Under 2		Over 2	20ECE Hours	Plus 10 Hours	ECE Qualified and Registered	
					Yes	No
Sat 1		Sat 1			Sat 1	
Sun 2		Sun 2			Sun 2	
Mon 3		Mon 3			Mon 3	
Tue 4		Tue 4			Tue 4	
Wed 5	54	Wed 5	234	30	Wed 5	24
Thu 6	48	Thu 6	228	30	Thu 6	24
Fri 7	54	Fri 7	168	72	Fri 7	26
Sat 8		Sat 8			Sat 8	
Sun 9		Sun 9			Sun 9	
Mon 10	48	Mon 10	158	94	Mon 10	32
Tue 11		Tue 11			Tue 11	
Wed 12	60	Wed 12	228	12	Wed 12	30
Thu 13	48	Thu 13	234	18	Thu 13	25
Fri 14	48	Fri 14	160	74	Fri 14	31
Sat 15		Sat 15			Sat 15	
Sun 16		Sun 16			Sun 16	
Mon 17	48	Mon 17	158	94	Mon 17	40
Tue 18	72	Tue 18	228		Tue 18	38
Wed 19	66	Wed 19	234	12	Wed 19	38
Thu 20	54	Thu 20	234	12	Thu 20	33
Fri 21	54	Fri 21	172	74	Fri 21	36
Sat 22		Sat 22			Sat 22	
Sun 23		Sun 23			Sun 23	
Mon 24	42	Mon 24	164	94	Mon 24	38
Tue 25	60	Tue 25	234	6	Tue 25	39
Wed 26	60	Wed 26	270		Wed 26	38
Thu 27	48	Thu 27	246	6	Thu 27	38
Fri 28	42	Fri 28	180	78	Fri 28	38
Sat 29		Sat 29			Sat 29	
Sun 30		Sun 30			Sun 30	
Mon 31		Mon 31			Mon 31	
906		3530	706		568	18

Teacher Registration Targets: Numbers of Teaching Staff

This question refers to all teaching staff usually employed in your service to deliver education and care programmes during the week Monday, 6th December - Friday, 10th December 2010. This question is used for statistical purposes only and does not impact upon funding. You should count part-time and full-time teachers, and you should include the Person(s) Responsible. You should not count day-to-day relievers, nor any staff not directly involved with teaching children.

How many teaching staff (as a number) are:	ECE Qualified	Non ECE Qualified	Total
Registered Teachers? (that is, holders of current Practising Certificates)	6		6
Unregistered Teachers? (that is, are not holders of current Practising Certificates)		2	2
Total	6	2	

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.

Subsidy Funding	20 Hours ECE	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years
Under 2	14	34	24	2

The software is fully networkable & is available for Windows & Mac users. FirstBase is already in use in hundreds of centres and kindergartens. It maximises your funding, and handles even most taxing setups.

Skagerrak Software

Skagerrak Software
PO Box 52-241 Kingsland
Auckland 1352
0800 367 658
sales@kidbase.co.nz
www.kidbase.co.nz