

Playcentre

Journal



ISSUE 156

Winter / Hōtoko 2017

Assessment in Playcentre

- Early Maths Explorers – Finding a balance
- Te Whāriki – Sustainability
- Mentoring Circle



Currently Playcentre is at an exciting time of change with the amalgamation very near. I would like to acknowledge the Federation Management Team and Trustee Board for upholding the Mana of whānau tupu ngatahi o Aotearoa. Thank you all for all your Manaakitanga and your continued Kaitiakitanga.

Thank you to those who have written articles for this Journal. I am always keen to receive more so please email them through to me. It would be great to see other centres in the Journal and now it is easier because the photo release form is now on Playcentre Connect to download. Please email them to me at journal@playcentre.org.nz

Stacey Balich

Playcentre Journal Editor

Playcentre Journal Cooperative: Stacey Balich (Tamaki Association), Paia Swanson (Tamaki Playcentre Association), and Anna Anstey (Wellington Association).



Contents

Action Towards Amalgamation	3
Oh no! They're playing Baddies again...	4
Early Maths Te Aho Tukutuku	6
Finding a balance	9
Being Mindful	10
Our most treasured garment	12
Te Whāriki 2017	14
Learning is Child's play	16
Family and Dramatic Play	18
Assessment in Playcentre: Where has it come from? What happens now?	20
Pacific Jewellery is symbolic as well as beautiful	24
Sustainability at Playcentre	26
New Zealand Sign Language at Playcentre	28
The power of Peer Mentoring Circles	29
Introducing Alaine and Clare	32
Once upon a time – myths of Playcentre	34
Book Reviews	35
Mix whakararu	36

If you have an essay, feature story or research on Playcentre related topics that would be appropriate to publish in the Journal we would love to read them!

Guidelines for writing for the Playcentre Journal can be found at <http://www.playcentre.org.nz/journal.php>
Please email your contributions to journal@playcentre.org.nz or post them to:
26/8 Eaglehurst Road, Ellerslie, Auckland 1060
Copy deadline for Issue 157: 30th September 2017
Copy deadline for Issue 158: 1st March 2018
Cover photo: Ellerslie Playcentre

Editorial

Contributions of written pieces, illustrations and photographs are welcome either by post to 26/8 Eaglehurst Road, Ellerslie, Auckland 1060 or by email to journal@playcentre.org.nz; please enclose a self-addressed envelope with any material you would like returned. Digital images should be sent in the highest possible resolution: if the image files are too large to email, they can be burnt to a CD and posted to us. It is the photographer's responsibility to ensure people photographed have given permission, and to send the permission form with the pictures. The Journal was edited by Stacey Balich, who is supported by the Journal cooperative.

Subscriptions and Advertising

Cost is \$25
Order your subscription by sending a cheque or contact us for other payment options:
Federation Secretary, NZ Playcentre Federation, PO Box 218, Whangaparaoa 0943
The subscriptions and advertising email address is: secretary@Playcentre.org.nz
0800 PLAYNZ (0800 752 969) / 09 428 4851

Playcentre

For further information about Playcentre, contact:
Federation Secretary, NZ Playcentre Federation, PO Box 218, Whangaparaoa 0943
Email: secretary@Playcentre.org.nz
Website: www.playcentre.org.nz
Opinions expressed in the Playcentre Journal are the writer's own, and do not necessarily reflect Playcentre philosophy. Neither does advertisement necessarily imply Playcentre endorsement.
Printed by Roe Print, Christchurch.
ISSN 0110-7267

The Playcentre Journal is the official magazine of the New Zealand Playcentre Federation and is published three times a year.



Playcentre Shops

Quality Early Childhood Play Equipment

Educational Toys

Fantastic Prices

Personalised Expert Service

Catering for all Areas of Play

CANTERBURY

17 Buchan Street, Sydenham, Christchurch
Ph 03-377 4354 Fax 03-377 9516
Mon/Tue/Thu/Fri
9am-2pm Wed 9am-4pm
Sat 9am-2pm
www.playcentreshop.co.nz

TAIRĀWHITI

78 Ormond Rd, Whataupoko, Gisborne
Ph/Fax 06-867 0010
Mon-Fri 9am-1pm
taiplay@xtra.co.nz

TARANAKI

46 Matai Street, Inglewood
Ph/Fax 06-756 7570
Mon 1pm-5pm Wed 10am-2pm
Fri 10am-2pm
tpashop@orcon.net.nz

WHY SHOP ANYWHERE ELSE!

Finished with your latest copy of the Playcentre Journal? Spread the word by passing your copy onto a friend or taking to your local doctor's surgery, kindergarten, school reception, Plunket or music group.

Action Towards Amalgamation

“So the change is actually going to happen?” my friend still at centre asks me “because you know it’s been a long time coming and I started after it was meant to be underway!”

We are very close to centres, Associations and Federation amalgamating into one unified entity – Playcentre Aotearoa. In January this year extra staff were hired to join the Federation team to help drive the changes needed, so that by November this year we will have operational Amalgamation. Associations have been working hard to support all the consultation needed with such a huge move, this has meant many additional hours of work from our volunteers. At centres you have probably had to respond to emails, talk about the structure and try and keep track of what is happening.

The motivation for change was varied, falling rolls, more compliance for outside agencies, fewer volunteers available to do more work – due to changing pressures in society like the need to have both parents working. While there may be motivation to change, change also comes with fear and concerns: will we lose our philosophy, how will emergent leadership work with the new structure, will differences between Association be catered for? In May this year we ran a series of road shows to engage with Playcentre members and together work out some of the things that will help balance the need to change, with the concerns that change brings.

As we move towards this new way of being, we will create Guiding Groups to help with a smooth transition – people from Associations working alongside the new Regional Managers, a ‘Friends of Playcentre’ network where people no longer attending centre can still be connected to Playcentre and provide

support such as facilitation, fundraising, role modelling. There will be the opportunity for people to lead outside of centres by running the cluster meetings, volunteering for projects within the Regional Hub, by having national hui and AGM to make the big governance decisions. Most importantly we have the ability to review and refine when an aspect isn’t working as well as we hoped, or where there is a gap. Using the new IT platform PlaycentreConnect we are also able to uncover promising practice and share ideas (much like some people use Facebook now).

Into the future at centres, many things will remain the same. Parents/caregivers and children will still play together in the sandpit. As parents you will still run your centre as a co-operative, with centre officer holders; president/coordinator, treasurer, secretary, enrolments, property, equipment, education or some version of those, with support for Office holders being provided by the Regional team. Centres will have regular visits from a Centre Support Worker, who will assist you to work as a co-operative and to provide high quality sessions. A Centre Admin will assist



you to look after the Admin side. They will ensure your rolls are up to date and they will enter data into ELI (the new system for bulk funding) and also help with things like making sure you have the correct paper work on display. Together these two workers will help you prepare for things like ERO visits or other compliance issues and help your centre navigate any new systems and procedures. These people working for Playcentre will come from Playcentre.

To keep you up to date as we move towards November and operational amalgamation we are producing a newsletter called Change Chat – it comes out every two weeks and will often include attachments of ‘fact sheets’ – documents developed to help us all understand what is happening and what actions we may need to take. All the past copies and attachments are kept in a dropbox for ease of access. To make sure you are on the email list contact Cissy –

Change.mgr@playcentre.org.nz

Cissy Rock
Change Programme Manager



Oh no! They're playing Baddies again...

(UNDERSTANDING 4 YEAR OLD CONFLICT PLAY)

Noticing and responding

A group of 4 year old boys in my centre started to explore play around good versus bad and battles. I didn't feel confident about how to support this play and I saw other members feeling unsure so I choose this for my Course 4 project topic.

I read articles about superhero role play, dramatic play and exclusionary play. I discussed ideas from the articles with centre members and my tutor. I

considered possible reasons behind the play. I used a mind map to look at PLODs (possible lines of direction) this interest could lead. I read our Association's Centre Behaviour Management Toolkit for ways to manage or redirect the play when it didn't follow our 3 Playcentre rules: we care for one another, we care for our equipment, we respect each other's play. A key theme stood out in my research – in order to understand the

children's motivation and interests, support boundaries and consider possible extension I had to consistently be in the play – either actively or silently monitoring.

"It's common for dramatic play to centre around themes of good and bad, friends and enemies, power and vulnerability, particularly as young children work to learn the difference between right and wrong, to understand rules, and to control





their ideas, they both 'sign' their names. Boy 1 carries the contract around showing people afterwards. *Exploration/Mana Aoturoa:* The boys are developing an understanding of behaviour dictated by social rules as well as learning to control impulses while in character as baddies. The observation is available for the boys to read at home with their parents and other duty members. Helpful for adults on session to understand how important this play is to them.

Communication/Mana Reo: This is evident with the boys experiencing symbols of formal culture. Literacy is supported with the boys watching as I wrote and understanding I was writing their 'words' too, then both writing their own names.

Seeing social working theories develop

their impulses. Power play helps them make sense of these confusing issues and gain a better understanding of themselves and their place in the world." (When Good Kids Play the Bad Guy).

Recording and understanding

As I already had established relationships with them I was able to spend a lot of time with these boys on session. Initially I asked questions to get more insight into their working theories. On one session I'm told that 'baddies have a gun and a sword and they fry up birds in a frying pan and goodies are clean and happy and they have friends'. On another session one of the boy asked me 'If someone said you have to go to war what would you say?' – that gave me something to think about!

I wrote observations to record what I was noticing. Here are notes from a couple of the stories with thoughts I unpacked afterwards.

Recognising the importance of the play

1. Two boys are using the climbing structure as a baddie house, when conflict arises I suggest a baddie contract. Both boys are extremely interested and participate, I make wording suggestions but also record

in the sharing of each other's ideas. Boy 3 (another regular participant) arrives and is accepted immediately into the play. When he makes small changes to the play, the boys negotiate and ultimately accept the changes in a calm manner. *Exploration/Mana Aoturoa:* While the boys had this space to be in the moment without interruption they could explore their relationships and a feeling of team work. A good reminder of how 4 year olds need their play to be respected as well as kept to appropriate boundaries. *Communication – Mana Reo* and the principle of Relationships – Ngā Hononga: The idea sharing and calm/friendly/accepting manner of the boys shows they are all exploring the feeling of camaraderie and developing responsive/reciprocal relationships with each other.

Responding and reflecting

After each learning story was published on our Educa site (an online learning story tool our centre had invested in the year before) I received feedback quickly from parents. It was awesome to have such discussion happening about the learning.

Some time has passed since this project and it's interesting to reflect on the knowledge I gained and the awareness my project created in my centre at the time. I noticed other members who may have been unsure previously getting involved. A similar type of play is happening with a new group of older children now, this prompted me to share my learning with other playcentre parents.

Tiso Ross
Hataitai Playcentre



2. Two boys are participating in a long established rope/trap play. They work silently then stop to share long elaborate types of traps for catching people. They are still and captivated

References:

When Good Kids Play the Bad Guy/ Parents / Scholastic.com. <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/creativity-play/when-good-kids-play-bad-guy>

Bibliography:

Chance, M. (1995). Fantasy Play: Exploring the Hero within. *Playcentre Journal*, November 1995
Hancock, S. (2002). Catering For Our Older Boys. *Playcentre Journal*, Spring 2002.
Holden, B. (2015). Exclusionary Play Handout, Wellington Playcentre Association Positive Guidance Workshop 2015.
Stringer, A (2009). To Infinity and Beyond!. *Parenting*, Autumn 09 (p 60-61)
Kei Tua o te Pae Book #13 (The Strands of Te Whāriki: Exploration)

Early Maths Te Aho Tukutuku



Last week my ten year old son told me he hates maths. I panicked and my quality parenting skills went out the window. 'You're not allowed to hate maths! Maths is wonderful!' I insisted. He wasn't convinced. Maths is an emotional topic for me – I believe it isn't just a subject; it's a way of thinking. It is about logic, and accuracy, which are ways of processing the world that I value.

If you start a conversation about maths in your Playcentre, you are likely to find that it is an emotional subject for many of us – we love it or we hate it, we have fond memories of school or still have recurring nightmares, we find it useful every day or insist that we could happily live without it.



The Ministry of Education and ERO prioritise mathematical learning

They believe that early maths competency is very important for future academic success. The ERO book, *Early Mathematics: A guide for Improving Teaching and Learning*, has some thoughts about how we can lay the foundations well with children. It concludes that poor practice in Early Learning centres is often due to low levels of maths content knowledge and confidence in adults. It states that in some centres adults may be unaware of the need to cater for children's maths learning, miss opportunities to support maths learning as it arises in play, and take a narrow view of maths, seeing it purely as numeracy.

Key ideas from *Early Mathematics, A guide for Improving Teaching and Learning*, ERO

- All children can be powerful mathematics learners.
- Children have their own purpose for activities.
- Children's involvement in mathematical learning experiences depends on interest.
- Mathematics learning experiences should be both planned and informal/spontaneous.
- Everyday activities and play situations provide a wealth of mathematical experiences.
- Teachers can extend the child-initiated activities by scaffolding, thematic instruction, or instruction.
- Content matter is important.





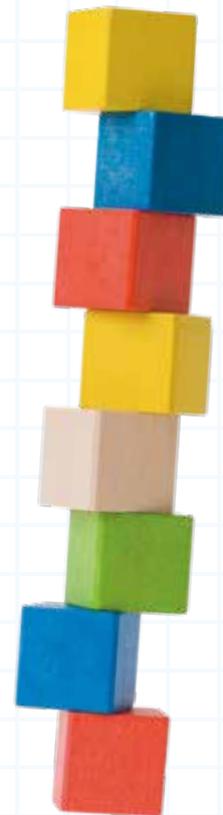
What does this mean for us in Playcentres?

I believe there is a legitimate concern about an academic 'push down' into early childhood education. Playcentres should not look like schools, and in fact it would probably be much better if we advocated for schools to be more like Playcentres. I would go as far as saying 'if you would see it in a primary school classroom, don't do it at Playcentre.' Play is important, and children's right to play needs to be defended against government policy that is narrowly focused on maths, literacy and creating economically productive citizens, and concerned parents who worry that children will be 'behind' when they start school. At a recent Playcentre Professional development facilitator meeting, we talked about ourselves as 'play warriors', advocating for children's rights to just play, and this is a term that I would love to see spread.

Extensive free time for unstructured play of all kinds is necessary in early childhood to develop dispositions, strong foundational skills, emotional and social skills, and strengthen crucial brain connections for later formal learning. Research has suggested that an academic early childhood programme does not give children a lasting academic advantage, and can even cause social and emotional problems. Nathan Mikaere Wallis, from the Brainwave trust, says that international research shows that emphasizing cognitive skills at all in ECE is inappropriate. He says that 'under seven it doesn't really matter one iota how much you know.' (Radio interview, May 2017). The early years are too important to treat as simply preparation for school.

Some researchers suggest that there is a problem with adults attempting to 'educationalise' play, and in the process warp it into something more like work. Elizabeth Wood argues that ECE practitioners must defend against 'diminished versions of play' that are designed to meet educational outcomes. Just because children learn through play does not mean it is easy or desirable for adults to co-opt play and try to teach through it.

But I do not think that being play warriors means we need to entirely ignore maths. Maths is play too, and children often spontaneously use maths concepts in their play, and many aspects of the ERO book that fit easily with Playcentre philosophy. I do not believe that maths should dominate our programme, but I think we should recognise and respond to children's mathematical interests as we would to their other interests. If you are laughing hysterically at the idea that maths can be play, it is possible that you have some bad experiences of your own with the subject, and thinking about it differently might help.



Te Kakano framework

The Te Kakano framework, as used in Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars Book 18 Mathematics Pāngarau divides Maths into six areas- sorting, patterns, shapes, counting, measuring, locating.

Sometimes knowing this can be reassuring for adults who think of themselves as 'bad at maths'. Generally people are strong in at least one of these areas. Also, you don't need to be great at maths to teach it to small children. For a start, it is very likely that even the least mathematical adult in the centre knows more than the children. But even more important than that, we are not 'teachers' in the sense of imparting all of our wisdom and knowledge to fill up little minds, we are coexplorers and learners. Wondering about mathematical concepts, asking questions, trying to think of ways to find out, not knowing the answers, and being wrong sometimes, are important things for us to be doing with children.

What is really interesting is that often childrens' uses for maths do not match adult uses

Children sometimes see numbers as powerful indicators of status – being older, being a bigger number, means you are more important. Children learning to count often have interesting sequences. My son used to count '1, 2 lots of them, lots of them'. Many children consistently leave out the same numbers when they count. They may have working theories about maths which can be fun to talk about. What do they think is the biggest number in the world? How long do they think a day is? Correct information is much less important than the process of thinking.

It is really important that we follow children's lead, and do not hijack their play to insert extra maths learning. My daughter shuddered when I suggested including more maths in Playcentre. She said 'I can just imagine some little child doing a painting and an adult comes over and says 'oooh you have just painted a lovely parabolic arch' and the child is thinking 'no, it's a rainbow.' So – don't do that.

It's also important not to ask children testing questions. A good basic rule is – don't ask a question if you know the answer – e.g. how many cows are there?' instead of testing what children know, use your time to help them to know more.

Should we set up deliberate maths experiences?

How does this fit with our ideas about free, child initiated play? I am a bit on the fence about this – and different centres will have different ways of interpreting Playcentre philosophy. I have increasingly become a fan of the concept of 'invitations to play', which, as the name suggests, are interesting and optional play set ups. These can still be very child centred as long as we start the plan with the child's current mathematical interests and abilities, rather than starting with assumptions about what they 'should' know. ERO are certainly not advocating worksheets and mat time, and are very clear that maths has to be in a meaningful and interesting context for children. They are simply suggesting that we should create those contexts sometimes, and not just rely on them arising spontaneously.

Think about the six areas of maths

What play invitations could you set up that relate well to children's current interests? What language could you use to support mathematical thinking?

For example – Measurement. We can measure length, weight, volume, area, time, speed, temperature. We can estimate, compare, use string or sticks, or body parts as comparison tools, use general terms such as long, short, tall, small, heavy, light, full, empty, or specific measurements with tape measures and measuring jugs. We can use precise terms such as mls, metres, and cups, or imprecise measures like 'dollop' or 'smidgeon'. We can use clocks, rulers, thermometers and stop watches. Sometimes children will notice some of the numbers on the measuring implements, sometimes they won't. Their joy of the process is the important thing. If you brainstorm each of the six areas, you will have a huge list of possible mathematical play, and should be able to easily identify some that will appeal to your children.

Creating a disposition for mathematical learning

The ERO report talks about 'creating a disposition for mathematical learning' in children. We can foster the belief that everyone is capable, that maths is for everyone, everyday. We can encourage curiosity about maths, and perseverance in problem solving. We can notice maths when we see it, and talk and listen to the children's ideas, and all within a child initiated programme that values play over inappropriately academic teaching. I love maths, and hope to spread the love. (But obviously, if your child does happen to tell you they hate maths, show empathy and understanding and say 'let's get through it together', rather than telling them their feelings are wrong!)

Carolyn Hogg
Federation Professional Development Team

Referencing

Bennett, J. (2005). Curriculum issues in national policy-making. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 13(2), 5-23. DOI: 10.1080/13502930585209641

ERO. (2016). *Early mathematics: a guide for improving teaching and learning*. Wellington, New Zealand: Education Review Office. <http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/early-mathematics-a-guide-for-improving-teaching-and-learning/>

Mikaere Wallis, N. (18th May 2017). Does NZ education policy align with recognised research? Nine to Noon. Radio NZ <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetonoon/audio/201844291/does-nz-education-policy-align-with-recognised-research>

Wood, E. (2013). *Play, Learning and the Early Childhood Curriculum*, 3rd edition, London, England; Sage Publications.

Finding a balance

Being a parent means you've often got so much to do with a relatively unstructured schedule that needs to be both proactive and reactive. Before children, we may have felt we had things under control, been organised and had some me time. Then with a blink of the eye we are thrown in the deep end with a seemingly demanding baby and then we join Playcentre. So how as a parent do we determine when we put the washing on, when we will tidy up, what extra activities we will do with our children, how many play dates we will do, when we will check our emails, let alone how we can fit in a social life without being completely exhausted and becoming burned out? Maintaining a healthy balance between being a mum, a partner, pursuing interests, Playcentre training and down time is not easy and requires not only good time management skills but also some self care skills.

Time Management



- **Stop multi-tasking**
 - Focus on one task.
 - Focus on what matters.
- **Only take on what you can finish**
- **Take a step back**
 - Prioritise your tasks by 'must do, should, want'.
 - Group together similar tasks.
 - Break big tasks into small pieces.
 - Remember it is healthy to say "no".
 - Set reasonable goals.
 - Know your limits.
- **Remove distractions**
 - Silence your phone.
 - Only check your email/phone once you have finished what you need to get done.
 - Only have the tab/document you are working on open on your screen.
- **Brain dump your thoughts**
 - Have a spare piece of paper to write down distractions that you remember for later.
- **Manage energy levels**
 - Take breaks.
 - Make progress visible and celebrate completions.
 - Keep a 'done' list.
 - Listen to music.
- **Support**
 - "Can this only be done by me?," if not than ask for help.
- **Schedule time for you**
 - You're valued, resourceful, a thinker and important... look after yourself.

Self care



- **Creativity**
 - Creativity is a powerful anti-stress endeavor. When you are on session get involved with dancing and singing. At home you could draw, paint or make a really nice meal.
- **Nature**
 - Spending time outdoors is a natural antidepressant. Enjoy the natural scents and sights.
- **Ask for support**
 - Staying busy generates feelings of significance and contribution and it can easily get addictive. Some of us find it hard to ask for help, it is okay.
- **Communication**
 - Try and find time with people in your life that keep the right things in perspective. Getting a friend's perspective on the stressful situation can help tackle the matter in a new way.
 - Be honest with those closest to you and tell them how you are feeling.
- **Have a balance**
 - Eat healthy foods, exercise, get fresh air and connect with friends.
 - Give yourself permission to make mistakes and cry.
 - Try and get some 'me' time.
 - Have a good laugh whether it is chatting with friends or watching a funny film.
 - Slow down and enjoy the moment you are in.
- **Sleep**
 - Sleep is a rare treat with preschoolers but sleep is essential for our bodies. Try and take naps when you can get some free time. If you have trouble zoning out explore meditation.
- **Go off grid**
 - The current culture is that we are continually in information overload. Try some time away from all technology.

Being Mindful



Three mindful tips

Mindfulness is the latest buzzword in our ongoing search for more balanced and happier lives. There's a certain irony about adding a new technique or idea to our already busy lives, in order to simplify them, but Mindfulness encourages shifts in the actual infrastructure of your brain.

Take a few minutes to notice

For most parents busy is normal. But a busy brain is only one step away from a stressed brain: that full nappy smell just as you're about to leave the house, a series of red traffic lights or a firm 'no' from your child, and your system can be flooded with the stress hormone cortisol. You can't see it but you definitely feel it, and it can easily lead to reactions you may regret.

It's surprisingly simple to protect your brain from stress and stay calm for longer, so that it takes far more to tip the balance. A simple Mindfulness exercise for 2-3 minutes on a daily basis begins to make significant changes to your brain. The best way I can describe it is that it feels like cushioning or suspension.

One way to do this is by consciously paying attention to the sights and sounds of your environment. For example, every morning I make a coffee and instead of thinking of my To Do list, I focus on the sounds, smells, taste and sensations of those few minutes. You can do it in the shower, in the car on the way to Playcentre, or just sitting still. Each time I stop and pay attention like

this, I feel my brain relax. And the great news is its not just a momentary effect, it is cumulative. Within 6-8 weeks your brain will be noticeably slower to shift into the stress response throughout the day.

Be present

Part of the joy of choosing to stay home with your children during their early years is that you get to spend time with them. But it is possible to spend a whole day with your children without actually being present. Our minds are often so busy rushing through the day, making sure they get down for that nap so they'll be fresh for the friend they're off to play with, while getting the shopping list done so we can whizz round the supermarket in that precious two child-free hours.

Ironically the planning is often for our children, but in doing it we miss the moment.

The present is actually all we ever have – a secret our children know and we've forgotten.

Becoming present is as simple as making eye-contact with your child and listening or watching with curiosity, with no agenda or expectation of what should be said or done. It can be anytime anyway.

Validate all emotions

Emotions are probably the biggest challenge for us as parents – both our children's and our own. Emotions are often inconvenient, badly timed and seemingly out of proportion.

Reflecting back a child's emotions before trying to solve them lets them know that it is ok to feel angry, sad or scared. It often comes as a surprise to people that validation is the key to calming down, but imagine coming home from an upsetting day at work to a partner who tells you it's really not a big deal and to calm down, or tries to fix the situation, rather than listening and acknowledging how important your feelings are. It's both invalidating and infuriating.

With our children it sounds as simple as "I can see you're pretty upset about having to go home now. That makes sense you've had such fun playing." "Eating the good stuff first is hard. It's hard doing what you don't want to do." It doesn't change the fact you're leaving, or not offering dessert just yet, but open-heartedly validates the feelings that go with it for your child.

As a mum of five I use all these techniques and many more every day of my life, and they have transformed my family. I now teach Mindful Parenting courses and love watching other parents discover how to slow down and connect more deeply, both with themselves and with their children.

Shirley Pastiroff is a counsellor, mindfulness trainer and mum of five. Shirley runs six week Mindful Parenting courses in Auckland. For more information go to <http://renewyourmind.co.nz/mindful-parenting/>

Children's Mindfulness exercise ideas —

- 1. The Squish & Relax Meditation:** While the children are lying down with their eyes closed, have them squeeze every muscle in their bodies as tightly as they can. Tell them to squish their toes and feet, tighten the muscles in their legs, suck in their bellies, squeeze their hands into fists and raise their shoulders up to their heads. Have them hold themselves in their squished up positions for a few seconds, and then fully release and relax. This is a great, fun activity for “loosening up” the body and mind, and is a totally accessible way to get children to understand the art of “being present.”
- 2. Smell & Tell:** Pass something fragrant out to each child, such as a piece of fresh orange peel, a sprig of lavender or a jasmine flower. Ask them to close their eyes and breathe in the scent, focusing all of their attention only on the smell of that object.
- 3. The Art Of Touch:** Give each child an object to touch, such as a ball, a feather, a soft toy, a stone, etc. Ask them to close their eyes and describe what the object feels like. Both this exercise and the previous one are simple, but compelling, ways to teach the children the practice of isolating their senses from one another, and tuning into distinct experiences.
- 4. The Heartbeat Exercise:** Ask the children to jump up and down in place for one minute. Then have them sit back down and place their hands on their hearts. Tell them to close their eyes and feel their heartbeats, their breath, and see what else they notice about their bodies.
- 5. Glitter jar:** This is a great way to show children what happens to us all when our mind gets too busy or worried about something and is a great visual illustration for showing how using another activity can help calm the mind.
- 6. Counting Colours:** A way to get children to breathe through times of frustration. Get him/her to spot 5 red things. It is important to acknowledge the feelings (it is important to recognise how one is feeling, but that doesn't mean you have to give those feelings permission to take over – important lesson for both adults and children). Label the emotions, use the distraction and at a calmer time talk more about emotions, the physical response the body might use as a warning signal and ways to calm before they get beyond it. Another example could be to listen for 3 sounds, what can you smell, find 5 things that feel soft.
- 7. Sniff the flower, blow out the candle:** A mindful calming breathing alternative that of course adults can use too.



Compiled by Anna Anstey from www.mindbodygreen.com

Our most treasured garment

The story behind *Mana-Wai*, the cloak to represent Toko Playcentre, our tamariki, whānau and wider community.

In 2015, Toko Playcentre was in search of a garment for our tamariki to celebrate their graduation of Playcentre and to give them strength and Mana to propel them forward to their next step of their educational journey. A Korowai was chosen because it is the most prized garment of the Māori culture and it is a symbol of prestige and honour i.e. Mana. Sharon Beckett (our Playcentre patron) was commissioned to create a Korowai that represented our centre.

Sharon lovingly selected the materials and handmade the Korowai to best represent Toko Playcentre. The top trim is red, white and black to represent the Māori story of creation, the black represents "Te Po" the darkness, the red represents the blood that was spilt and the white represents "Te Ao Marama" – the light. This was specifically chosen to reflect our commitment to bi-culturalism. Along the front of the Korowai are tassels meticulously and individually tied on to add elegance and to represent flax tassels that were woven onto traditional Korowai. She selected feathers along the top of the Korowai to represent warmth and protection as well as to add stunning beauty. On the inside of the Korowai she used purple, yellow and green panels, each of which represent the colours of New Zealand Playcentre. The size of the Korowai was chosen to specifically fit the shoulders of

tamariki 6 years and younger. It is designed to drape over the tamariki shoulders and to cover their arms to represent being protected in battle as Toko Playcentre has protected each tamariki in their early education journey as they explored the world they live in.

Upon graduation from Toko Playcentre, each tamariki selects a ribbon of either purple, green or yellow. They are invited to write their name or leave their mark on the ribbon, which is then pinned onto the outside of the Korowai to create the appearance of feathers. Each new ribbon that is placed onto the Korowai represents the Mana and honour of our tamariki that are woven into the fibres of the Korowai to be felt and experienced by future generations. Our Korowai was completed in December 2015 and has now become a rich tradition at Toko Playcentre and an item of great pride. Our Korowai is our most treasured garment and is a symbol of Mana –

Mikayla Johnston
"I felt really good when I wore the korowai".



Sharon
"It was happy"

Reese Johnston
"It was pretty cool wearing the Korowai but I will miss Playcentre".



prestige and honour. It is proudly displayed on our wall to be admired and appreciated by all and something for our tamariki to aspire to one day wear upon their shoulders. Our Korowai represents our past, present and our future at Toko Playcentre and is an taonga – heirloom to be proudly passed down from generation to generation.



Caitlin O'Sullivan
 "I was sorta happy and sorta sad wearing the cloak cause it was fun at Playcentre and I wanted to stay!"



Ruby and Lexi Howells said
 "when they wore it they felt good."



Shila Jannings
 made me feel
 special and special."



Conrads mum Kate (me)
 "Seeing Conrad with Mana-Wai on his shoulders was very heartwarming and I could see the mana on his face as he proudly wore it in front of the other tamariki."



Shilas mum Kristin said
 "It made me feel proud seeing Shila wearing the korowai."



Mana-Wai

The name Mana-Wai was gifted to us by Char Martin (Puriri Whakamaru o Taranaki). The name holds significance to Toko Playcentre and tells the story of our past. Toko was once an area of wetlands and beneath these wetlands were lush fertile soils. When Toko was settled after 1890 the area was drained to utilise the rich soils to nourish and sustain the ancestors who lived there. The area was drained into the Toko Stream which runs past Toko Playcentre and then tributaries into the Waiwiri and Manawaiwiri Streams which then flow into the Patea River. The name Mana-Wai has come from the name Manawaiwiri as its name describes the drilling and making of the stream to drain the area (Mana-prestige, power, status, Wai- Water, Riri- shaking, drilling). Mana-Wai was then chosen as it upholds the status to what Toko once was and what it has become. We decided that this name



fitted our Korowai and what it means to us because it is all about strength, prestige and great importance, which is something we work to instil into each of

our tamariki during their time with us at Toko Playcentre.

Kate Kowalewski
Toko Playcentre

Te Whāriki 2017

The Whāriki is underpinned by a vision for children who are competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society.



of Education has contracted CORE Education and Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust to provide professional learning and development (PLD) for teachers, kaiako and educators.

- CORE Education have been delivering introductory workshops across the country and are in the process of developing a workshop video tailored for an online audience for those who have been unable to attend in person.
- Recruitment of 24 curriculum champions is currently underway. These experienced early learning leaders will be responsible for mentoring pedagogical leaders around the country.
- Curriculum Champions will lead networks of pedagogical leaders focused on the implementation of *Te Whāriki* 2017. CORE Education is now recruiting for pedagogical leaders from early learning services to participate in the networks across New Zealand. The programme runs from July 2017 – June 2018.
- CORE have also been contracted to develop website portals for *Te Whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa Early childhood curriculum* and *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo*. A variety of resources, including webinars will be available on both portals in the future.

Te Whāriki changes

- The 2017 *Te Whāriki* has been updated to reflect changes to context, theory and practice since 1996. The Ministry of Education appointed a team of writers to undertake the update and engaged the original writers of *Te Whāriki* as advisors, to provide guidance at each stage of development.
- *Te Whāriki* 2017 includes a specific pathway for kōhanga reo: *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga*. *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo* is not a translation of *Te Whāriki*: early childhood curriculum, nor is the reverse the case. The two pathways are closely aligned but *Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo* is specifically designed to support the unique indigenous pedagogy of kōhanga reo.
- One of the key changes has been to review and condense the over 100 learning outcomes of the older framework to 20 in the updated curriculum. The aim of this is to make it easier for services to engage with the learning outcomes at a deeper level.
- *Te Whāriki* provides a basis for services to create a local curriculum which takes into consideration the aspirations and learning priorities of hapū, iwi and community and gives all children an equitable opportunity to learn and develop.
- Services can weave a local curriculum from the strands, goals and learning outcomes to reflect their own priorities. Each service will need to look at the curriculum as a whole and determine how best to support children to develop their capabilities across the learning outcomes, over time.
- *Te Whāriki* also emphasises the importance of recognising, affirming every child's identity, language and culture. Services will be expected to weave a curriculum which ensures that children see their own culture as being valued. To achieve this they will need to engage with parents and whānau and incorporate their cultural knowledge into the curriculum.
- To support the implementation of *Te Whāriki* the Ministry

Hannah Boast,

Senior Adviser, Early Learning, Ministry of Education

What does this mean for Playcentre?

I had read the new curriculum in the way that I do, not cover to cover but in the way that I usually use it and that's flicking through to find what I need. As I worked through, I couldn't help but stop as I noticed a word or a phrase that caught my eye. I felt a few sighs of relief and some wohoos moments as I became transfixed by the beauty and reality that is *Te Whāriki*, a promise to all mokopuna in Aotearoa that all Early Childhood services charged with their care and education would provide them with real environments and experiences that would help them to reach their fullest potential in the early years and prepare them for their next journey in life.

For Playcentre the vision to not only provide a bicultural environment, but to live it, breath it and believe in it is clearly supported throughout the document te ao māori is thoughtfully weaved into the curriculum giving a natural presence to our dual heritage. *Te Whāriki* to me feels as though it was written with parents in mind, knowing that parents are massive funds of knowledge about their own tamariki, and engagement in the services in a responsive and reciprocal way is expected as we move forward to implement the new curriculum.

While the Principles and strands have not changed the way they are referenced is strengthened. The Principles of *Te Whāriki* serve as touchstones to bring back and overall focus. The main changes in the document relate to language and context which reflects the world in which we currently live in, stronger identity, language and culture and inclusion. There are fewer learning outcomes and they a broader allowing for services to think deeply about the opportunities, experiences and environment they are providing for tamariki considering "What matters here".

Learning is Child's play

Written by: Keryn O'Neill, MA PGCertEdPsych Brainwave Trust Senior Researcher

The message that the first few years of life are extremely important for brain development is becoming more widely known.



What may be less clear is how to put this knowledge into practise. Parents wanting to give their child the best start are faced with a huge variety of choice and much commercially-driven pressure to ensure that their child makes the most of this developmental opportunity.

The bewildering number of toys and activities currently available for our babies and young children is enough to send parents' cortisol levels into orbit. And that's before the credit card bill arrives.

Children need stimulation, but as with many things, moderation is key. More is not necessarily better. Many children today are at risk of being over-stimulated or over-scheduled and this can actually impede rather than encourage their optimal brain development.

During the first years of a child's life it is play, not scheduled instruction, that contributes the most to brain development (Frost, 1998). We don't need to formally "teach" our young children in order for them to learn.

Children have their own interests and by being supported to follow these they are likely to be getting the stimulation that they need.

Play provides a wonderful opportunity for parent and child to have fun together, deepening their relationship. Children also need opportunities for some play on their own, this provides many opportunities to develop their imagination, problem-solve and develop other skills that are less likely to develop in adult-directed play.

At times, boredom may provide the impetus for the child to make their own discoveries and create their own fun, fantastic life skills and great stimulation for a growing brain.

Simple toys that allow children to use their imagination and creativity have many benefits over the endless plastic creations currently available (Ginsburg, 2007). Blocks, play dough, a sandpit, versatile dress-ups (as opposed to Disney inspired ones), crayons and paper provide endless options.

Household objects such as boxes, blankets, pots and pans can also provide many hours of fun and learning. The toys and activities that offer the most stimulation for a growing brain often don't have the "educational" label on them!

Learning and brain development is not limited to toys and activities specifically created for children,





but also by following their interests in participating in the real world. Household activities that most adults consider work are also rich with opportunities for learning. Hanging out the washing, baking, grocery shopping and weeding the garden provide many opportunities for exploration and learning – and while the task inevitably takes longer, it can be much more fun for the adult too.

Everyday life is full of naturally occurring learning opportunities.

Watching the rubbish truck, road works, rain going down the drain, or a rainbow, can capture the interest of a child when shared with a parent. Take time to stop, observe, and talk with your child about the things happening around them, and when possible

move on only when your child's interest is waning.

Be confident in the knowledge that you have just provided them with the stimulation they need, and it didn't cost a cent!

Rich sensory experiences that are so vital for optimal brain development are readily available in nature. Playing with the sand at the beach, feeling the bark on trees, smelling flowers, or listening to birds singing, enjoyed with a loving parent all provide stimulation prompting brain connections to form. Sensory experiences can be a messy business and children benefit from being able to enjoy such experiences fully, without anyone worrying about the washing!

Playful, creative children who have

had plenty of unscheduled, non-screen (TV, computer etc) time for play throughout their early years, are more likely to arrive at school with their natural curiosity intact, and a strong desire to learn that will benefit them more than those whose infancy and pre-school years have been filled with scheduled activities and little time for play.

References:

- Fancourt, R. (2000) *Brainy Babies*. Penguin: NZ.
- Farquhar, S.E. (2005) *The role of Parents and Family in Children's Early Education*. Keynote presented to the International HIPPPY Symposium, Auckland 22nd September 2005. Available at www.childforum.com. Accessed 28/04/09.
- Frost, J.L. (1998) *Neuroscience, play and child development*. Paper presented at the IPA/USA Triennial National Conference, June 1998. Available at www.eric.ed.gov. Accessed 28/04/09.
- Ginsburg, K.R. (2007) *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds*. *Pediatrics*, Vol 119, Number 1, January 2007. Available at <http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/>. Accessed 3/05/09.
- Perry, B.D. (Date unknown) *The Importance of Pleasure in Play*. Available at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/pleasure.htm>. Accessed 28/04/09.
- Perry, B.D., Hogan, L. & Marlin, S.J. (2000) *Curiosity, Pleasure and Play: A Neurodevelopmental Perspective*. Available at www.childtrauma.org/ctamaterials/curiosity.asp. Accessed 1/05/09.
- Perry, B.D. & Szalavitz, M. (2006) *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*. Basic Books: New York.



Family and I

Family Play and Schemas

Family and dramatic play provides ample opportunities for children to play out their schemas.



Example: Transporting

Simply moving our furniture to a new area piqued the interest of these girls, who then set about transporting the play food and dolls into the area and role-playing morning tea.



Example: Transforming

This three year old arrives at Playcentre every morning and heads straight to the wardrobe area, transforming her look. Providing a wide selection of easily accessible costumes allows children to use their imagination and transform themselves into whatever they wish.

Numeracy and Literacy in Family Play

Numeracy and literacy happen in the context of everyday life, and in the course of play. Below are some examples of numeracy and literacy occurring in family play.



Numeracy

Providing a shop and associated equipment allows children to practice their literacy by role-playing buying and selling behaviour. This two year old girl is selling a pot of honey for \$14, and completing the transaction by swiping a pretend EFTPOS card. This girl's fascination with the cost of items, continued across sessions and into her home environment too.

You could add complexity by adding price labels to the shopping for children to recognise and count.

Literacy

This play started as the girls just sat and chatted in a cosy area we set up for the children to relax in. We added complexity by providing a range of books for them. The children brought family play into the scene, by bringing the dolls in to enjoy the collective reading.

Clipboards, paper and pens are really handy for children to use to make shopping lists or food orders, especially when they are on the move.



Dramatic Play

Invitations to Play

Whilst family and dramatic play is an area in itself, it also easily incorporates into other areas, enriching those play opportunities. Here are some examples of setting up some invitations to play, that incorporate other areas.



After the children enjoyed a morning of baking scones, we took a table outside and set it up as high tea, serving their scones with iced tea.



At the beginning of session, we set up the family play table with play food and items from the collage area, to spark the children's imagination and learning.

Using Te Reo

- Counting – tahi, rua, toru, whā, rima, ono, whitu, waru, iwa, tekau
- Huarākau fruit – āporo apple, rōpere strawberry, pea pear, pānana banana
- Parakuihi breakfast – miraka milk, fī tea, parāoa bread
- Tina lunch – inu wai water, pihikete biscuit, hanawiti sandwich
- Whanaungatanga people and relationships – tāne man, wahine women, kōhungahunga/ piripoho baby, mātua parents, tamariki children, tama boy, kōtiro/ kōhine
- Exploring their Pepeha

Family Play and Tikanga



Out of respect for tikanga Māori, we encourage our tamariki to leave the dolls dressed when they have finished playing. We do this by role modelling dressing the dolls, and talking to the children about why we are doing it.

Te Whāriki in Family Play

Contribution / Mana Tangata

Baking has been very popular at our centre this year, it uses a range of strategies and skills to learn with others, which meets one of the goals of contribution – they are encouraged to learn with and alongside others.



Wellbeing / Mana Atua

Washing and understanding of hygiene is all part of a child's wellbeing. By giving our children the opportunity to bath and care for dolls, we are allowing them to show a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others.



Belonging / Mana Whenua

By setting up the playdough and the shop together, we allowed the children to explore making connections between people, places and things in their world. They connected their experiences of home life (eg. Visiting a cafe or purchasing goods from a store), to their play and learning.



Melanie Cooper and
Pennie O'Connor
Whitford Playcentre

Assessment in Playcentres: Where has it come from? What happens now?

By Sue Stover and Lia de Vocht

When Playcentre was getting started in the decades following World War II, its main goal for very young children was their wellbeing: in other words that they be psychologically healthy.

To encourage this to happen, the adults needed to understand the children. Sustained opportunities for self-chosen play for children would reveal to the observing adult what it was that really mattered to children. In response to what they saw, adults in Playcentre were encouraged to see the child as moving through a (usually) predictable series of stages. As the child's body became more and more co-ordinated, the child's thinking and personality would become increasingly evident in their social interaction and especially in the complexity of their play. This perspective was deeply influenced by the thinking of Jean Piaget whose theories also foregrounded the active participation of children in constructing their own learning. The widespread acceptance of Piaget's theories helped Playcentre to advocate for learning through play.

During this time, observations – deliberate focusing on a child (or occasionally a group of children) – tended to occur as part of Playcentre training but was not a requirement for

parent. It was literally eye-opening for parents. As an early Playcentre textbook says, "Observation changes our relationships", (Grey, 1958, p. 20).

However, the lack of emphasis on assessment was the norm: the requirement to assess children in early childhood services started in 1998, and as recent as 2006, a national study of quality indicators in parent-led early childhood did not include assessment or documentation as indicators of quality (Mitchell, Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, 2006).

The arrival of Learning Stories

In the same year as the assessment became compulsory, 'Learning stories' were developed by Margaret Carr and her colleagues at University of Waikato. With funding from the surplus generated by the 5th Early Childhood Convention in 1995, Learning Stories were publicised and promoted throughout the early childhood sector as a 'positive' (not 'deficit') way to recognise children's learning. Piloted at a number of services, including Playcentres, 'Learning Stories' provided a system that was easy to understand in its simplest forms, but which also had scope for complex engagement with, and documentation of, children's dispositions for learning.

Piaget's stages – which had provided a framework for understanding children's development and advocacy for children to learn through play – was critiqued as having created universal 'norms' which did not reflect the diversity of possibilities that exist for how young children learn and grow.

In addition, a major change occurred in how the assessor (the observing 'adult' in Playcentre) was positioned. The existing wisdom about 'observation' was that the observer attempted to strip away personal perspective and to try to accurately see what was happening, to describe what was happening in a way that anyone seeing the same event would be able to say, 'that is what happened. I saw it too'.

However Learning Stories position the assessor as part of the assessment documentation, thus instead of trying for objectivity, those writing Learning Stories are seen as writing from their own perspective of events.

This is a movement away from 'objectivity' and towards 'subjectivity; away from the intentional 'detachment' of the observer and towards intentional recognition of 'the child learning and growing through relationships in context'. The assessor is part of the learning context; the assessor is enmeshed in relationships with the children being assessed. Pleasure, respect and even affection can be part of a Learning Story. This emphasis on relationships and on the sociocultural context of learning is broadly supported by theorists like Urie Bronfenner and Lev Vygotsky.

Although the emphasis is new, this recognition of the importance of the relationship is part of what has guided Playcentres for generations before learning stories were introduced. Pleasure in the company of children is basic to assessing them. As Lex Grey, one of the great formulators of Playcentre philosophy of learning, said, 'Understanding young people means enjoying them' (Stover, 2011, p. 9).

The normalising of Learning Stories in Playcentre

In the intervening years since 1998, narrative assessment in the form of 'Learning Stories' have become the assessment method of choice throughout the early childhood sector, despite recent critiques (Cameron, McLachlan, & Rawlins, 2016).

How did Playcentre parents learn about Learning Stories? Looking back through 15 years of *Playcentre Journals* gives some ideas of how they were introduced and developed in Playcentre. There is a recurring theme of trying to introduce change to Playcentres, while also affirming the underlying Playcentre philosophy and principles.

funding, nor were portfolios required to document children's learning. Learning to observe children was basic to the task and role of being a Playcentre



The first *Playcentre Journal* article about Learning Stories appeared in 2002. This was written by Robyn Reid. Her introduction of Learning Stories emphasises both the familiarity of storytelling and the value of the traditions of intentional observations, as well as encouragement (even requirement) to move away from summative judgements of developmental achievements. Instead the focus was more on how an individual child learns – that is, to focus on a child’s dispositions for learning. These dispositions, she maintained, should be determined by Playcentres individually, as valued dispositions were context-specific. However, the five strands of *Te Whāriki* are offered as dispositions.

Alongside this article is an account from Renwick Playcentre, which had introduced ‘profiles’ – effectively scrapbooks – initially “as a place to put our documentation, photos and children’s artwork” which were made available to children and families to access and to contribute to. An outcome noted was that the profile books appeared to have helped enhance a sense of belonging, “by parents, as well as children” (Naus, 2002, p. 22).

Across the next decade, the articles on assessment tend to be reports on ‘new’ ways of seeing children’s learning. Amongst the first ‘Centres of Innovation’, Wilton Playcentre

researchers explored schemas (see for example Cubey, 2007). In Canterbury, TLRI (a Ministry of Education scheme) funded a study into young children’s ‘working theories’. This research produced a collection of case studies in which Playcentre parents had opportunity to consider how to enable children’s ideas to be more thoughtfully brought into visibility and documented through story telling (Davis & Peters, 2010; Davis, Peters, & Duff, 2010).

In 2012, Jill Farr revisited two Playcentres who had been several years earlier been part of a large professional development contract on sociocultural assessment using the Ministry of Education’s resource *Kei tua o te pae* (Ministry of Education, 2004/2007/2009). Her goal was to find out if the planning and assessment changes were sustainable. She found that key to sustained capacity to assess using Learning Stories was support for parents getting started on the process, and building capacity in writing narratives; as well as ensuring ongoing access to and engagement with children’s portfolios. Importantly, Learning Stories often were best started on a child’s first day at Playcentre.

Studying Learning Stories in Playcentres

In 2016, having recognised that Learning Stories are now widely used in Playcentres, but with little research as to what this means in practice, we

(two former Playcentre parents turned university academics) decided to find out more about what is ‘normal’ as regards Learning Stories in Playcentres. And the rest of this article considers that research.

Seeking permission to research how narrative assessment (i.e. ‘Learning Stories’) contributes to children’s learning in Playcentre, we approached two Playcentre associations – one in the South Island and one in the North Island. With their agreement and ethical permission from Auckland University of Technology, the University of Canterbury plus the New Zealand Playcentre Federation, two ‘forums’ were held in each association.

Those attending the forums volunteered to participate having heard about the research at an introductory talk given at an Association meeting. All of those who participated in the forums were active in Playcentres and had achieved (or were working on) at least Course 3.

The first forums focused on processes – what templates are available, what normally happens in centres, how parents are introduced to writing Learning Stories, how Learning Stories influence planning. The second forums focused on portfolios and considered more of the detail of the Learning Stories – what was documented, how learning was analysed, how they were presented, and what difference they made for children’s learning.

Research findings:

- **Valued** – all Playcentre participants indicated that they valued Learning Stories and curated these as part of portfolios documenting a child’s learning and growth both at Playcentre and at home. Participants with experience of ‘other’ early childhood services indicated that they felt that in Playcentre, Learning Stories were more authentic, showing a deep knowledge of the child.
- **Original** – While the Learning Stories tended to include a photograph alongside a written account of what the child had been doing or saying, the Learning Stories did not necessarily follow any particular template. There was a preference for handwritten Learning Stories and none of the participants reported using online platforms for creating, analysing or sharing Learning Stories.
- **Participation** – While all participants

had written Learning Stories for 'other people's children', there was significant input from parents about their own children.

- **Belonging** – All participants recognised that engaging with Learning Stories as an important aspect of parents' journeys through Playcentre. This could be understood as 'parent education' but it also reflected how the parents developed a sense of belonging as part of a Playcentre community. Of particular importance for new parents was recognising what was meaningful for their own and other people's children.
- **Positive relationships** – With only occasional exceptions, Learning Stories written 'for other people's children' were an important way to not only come to understand (and plan for) that child, but also to build a positive a relationship with the parents. Writing a Learning Story for someone's child was seen as positively encouraging a relationship between those parents and could, for example, prompt the 'other' parent to reciprocate.
- **How** – Parents tended to learn the 'how' of Learning Stories in stages; initially supported by informal mentoring during Playcentre sessions with subsequent in-depth consideration of the theory and practice of Learning Stories tending to occur at Course 3.



parents would not be frightened to attempt to write one. There were several examples of Learning Stories written in languages other than English. As one participant said, parents should be encouraged to write in their home language, but, if possible to include a sentence in English about what the Learning Story was about.

- **Communication** – How carefully a Learning Story is analysed remains a variable with some Learning Stories thoughtfully reflecting an understanding of Te Whāriki's strands or goals. But other Learning Stories were seen principally as communicating with the child. With this emphasis, in-depth theorising or analysis was not seen as desirable.
- **Child input** – Judgement was rarely passed on the quality of Learning Stories; if there was judgement, it was in the form of feedback as part of Playcentre coursework. During the second forum, when they considered Learning Stories critically, participants said that they recognised that the best Learning Stories included direct input from the child (what they were saying, for example, or how the child responded when they read or reread a Learning Story).
- **Growth** – Participants recognised that Learning Stories (especially when curated into a portfolio) provided the child with a narrative about their

own growth and learning as part of a community, hence the child's metacognition was encouraged.

- **Relationships** – For some Playcentres, Learning Stories are used in formal planning meetings. But in other Playcentres, the Learning Stories have rarely fed into deliberate planning. Participants instead saw a deepening of relationships between the assessor and the assessed. When a Playcentre parent writes up a Learning Story, the relationship between writer and child deepens.
- **Enjoyment** – There was agreement that even if Learning Stories were not required that these Playcentre parents would continue to use them.

Discussion

A number of important themes are evident in this small piece of research. While there are major changes in how observation and assessing happens in Playcentres now, compared with say the 1950s, there are also patterns that continue to reflect the challenges and discoveries of parents learning alongside their children.

As has happened for generations, Playcentre provides space for parents to learn about themselves, about how children learn and about how communities learn and grow. Looking more specifically at the 15 years or so of Learning Stories in Playcentres, the intentional documentation and curating



- **Home language** – Some participants suggested that the Learning Stories had to be simple enough that new

of children's learning continues to help build a sense of belonging for parents and children. This would also be the case in a well-run early childhood centre.

However, a key characteristic of Learning Stories in Playcentre is the vital role of parents in assessing their own children – and this is generally not the case in the vast majority of early childhood centres (see, for example, Hunt, 2016). Because of the co-operative nature of Playcentres, and the ongoing involving and enabling of new parents, there is a continuous adult learning project imbedded in the writing of Learning Stories.

When considered as an indicator of 'quality' in Playcentre, Learning Stories are seen as building relationships. But the quality of Learning Stories in Playcentre does not necessarily show a strong understanding of *Te Whāriki*, or of sociocultural theory (which is the underpinning theory of *Te Whāriki*).

The intriguing thing here is that Playcentre parents may not use, and may not recognise, sociocultural theories of learning, but Playcentres have for more than half a century shown the power of sociocultural learning. Playcentre's historic and current approach to learning and growing is inherently grounded in the child's sociocultural context: the presence of the both the parent and the child at Playcentre brings home and centre much closer than is possible in any teacher-led early childhood service.

The sociocultural nature of the Playcentres themselves means that Playcentres tend to reflect the nature of their communities – which means that Playcentres, one by one, have to adapt as their communities change. Where neighbourhoods have a transient population, parents will likely move through Playcentre quickly. In the resulting high turnover of families at a Playcentre, relationships suffer. Institutional knowledge is also lost. A centre's capacity to build up capacity in writing Learning Stories and assessing children is likely to reflect closely how well parents are supported, how much training has been achieved and how stable the centre families are.

Much of what is learned in Playcentre is 'caught' rather than 'taught' and 'practical wisdom' builds up over years of active participation. In addition while Playcentre parents may curtail their training after say Course 2, the in-depth

teaching/learning about Learning Stories may be missed.

These scenarios reflect what is problematic about Playcentre trying to meet review requirements.

As we conclude this article, we find ourselves reflecting on how Playcentre has been working over the last decade to fit into the regulatory requirements that are imposed on it. And having sat and listened to Playcentre parents talk about how they engage with Learning Stories, we are now wondering:

Is assessment in Playcentre fundamentally different from what happens in other early childhood settings, particularly teacher-led services?

Evidence – that the answer could be Yes – would include the positioning of a parent in the role of assessor. While Learning Stories are celebratedly 'subjective', they are still written in most early childhood settings by an outsider looking in on the child's reality, their family, their thinking. While 'intersubjectivity' is understood to recognise the 'shared space' between two subjects (such as a teacher and child; or between a parent and child), the unconditional and lifelong intersubjective relationship between parent and child is manifestly different from what occurs in teacher-led early childhood services. Parents are a part of the 'we' that shapes the child's most basic identity.

We can argue that while they may not reach high standard of analysis (e.g. extensive use of *Te Whāriki*), but Playcentre's Learning Stories draw their authenticity and energy from the most important of learning relationships. That is, they draw their authenticity from the relationship between parents and children.

The emphasis on the 'we' (the child/parent dyad) is fundamentally different from the 'we' (teacher-child dyad) that exists in professionally run early childhood services.

We know that the Playcentre child's story is – to a large extent – the Playcentre parent's story. The collective assessment of the Playcentre child still has to consider the feelings, understandings of – the presence of the parents.

We can argue that the power of the home-centre link is fundamentally more influential in children's growth and learning than, say, professional intentions in planning and interventions

on session within a teacher-led service.

But how could this be proved or tested? Perhaps this is the realm of what Lex Grey spoke of in 1962 when he described what makes Playcentre work: "Playcentre has only one magic quality about it – the enthusiasm of parents for the welfare of their children. The rest is sound common sense" (Grey, 1962, p. 53).

'Sound common sense' includes that minimum requirements for licensing and funding are met. Sound common sense also includes recognising when Playcentre can claim a way of reaching quality outcomes for families that reflects different pathways than for those early childhood services whose magic is grounded elsewhere.

We're still thinking about all this. We hope you are too.

References:

- Cameron, M., McLachlan, C., & Rawlins, P. (2016). "Assessment in ECE is overwhelming at times": Uncovering the challenges of assessing four year old children's learning. *Early Education*, 60, 12-16.
- Cubey, P. (2007). Schemas and learning stories: The two are compatible and complementary. *Playcentre Journal*(128), 20-22.
- Davis, K., & Peters, S. (2010). From fact to fiction, from animal expert to story teller. *Playcentre Journal*(138), 20-23.
- Davis, K., Peters, S., & Duff, A. (2010). *Playcentre Journal*, Working theories in action(139).
- Farr, J. (2012). Playcentre parents, noticing, recognising and responding to their children's interests! *Playcentre Journal*(145), 30-33.
- Grey, A. L. (1958). *Children at play*. Auckland, New Zealand: New Zealand Playcentre Federation.
- Grey, A. L. (1962). Play Centres in Māori communities. *Te Ao Hou*, 41, 51-53.
- Hunt, L. (2016). Learning snapshots: Enriching assessment by investigating child and family perspectives about learning. *Early Education*, 60, 17-21.
- Ministry of Education. (2004/2007/2009). *Kei tua o te pae: Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Mitchell, L., Tangaere, A. R., Mara, D., & Wylie, C. (2006). Quality in parent/whānau led services, and the factors that support it. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research & Te Kohanga Reo National Trust.
- Naus, C. (2002). Documenting children's learning: The Renwick experience. *Playcentre Journal*(113), 22.
- Reid, R. (2002). Learning stories: Narrative observations and learning dispositions. *Playcentre Journal*(113), 20-21.
- Stover, S. (2011). *Play's progress? Locating play in the educationalisation of early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand*. (PhD), AUT University, Auckland. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/2864>



Pacific Jewellery is symbolic as well as beautiful

Over the years the different Pacific Island cultures have shared their jewellery and body ornament designs. These designs have naturally diversified and developed to meet the needs and desires of the new cultures in their new environments.

Pacific Islanders decorate and enhance their bodies to convey a wide range of messages to members of their community as well as the outside world. Jewellery not only symbolises wealth and status it is also a way of projecting the personal, social and ethnic identity of the wearer. Ultimately jewellery enhances self-esteem and reflects the social position of the person who wears it.

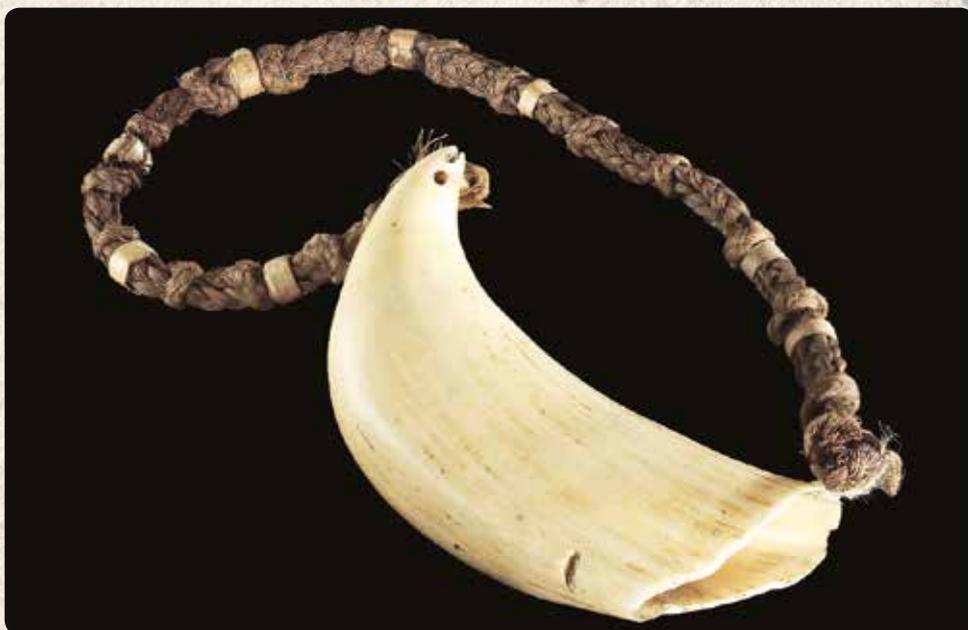
Almost any natural material from the local environment is useful for making jewellery, with each item having its own unique value and beauty. In the past gathering of materials sometimes involved physical effort, trading, traveling and even danger. For example egg-cowries which is a species of sea snail was transported from Tonga to Fiji across 600kms of open ocean in large double canoes where they

were called bulileka and regarded as fertility symbols. Tongan sailors also transported the treasured red feathers of the Fijian lory and parrot across to Samoa where they were incorporated into valuable fine mats and other ornaments.

In Pacific Island society, some objects have a spiritual value that far outweighs their market value.

Tabua (ceremonial whale tooth)

Tabua are pierced and braided whales' teeth, originally taken from the lower jaw of sperm whales found stranded on Fijian beaches. Whale teeth are highly valued because whales strandings are relatively rare. Fijians consider tabua to be kavakaturanga (chiefly items). They are not worn, but are presented at important ceremonies, including weddings, births, and funerals. Tabua used to be the most effective way to give weight to an apology or atonement. The occasion that tabua are presented at also determines their spiritual value.



Mulianga High Chief Malietoa Party Samoa

Man is dressed in tuiga (headdress), necklace, bark skirt and bark anklets. He holds a steel serated sword like implement.



Thinking women

Portrait of an unidentified Samoan woman wearing a cloak type garment, many strands of beads and a ring on the little finger. She is wearing a selu tuiga (headcomb) in her short hair, and an ili (fan) in her lap.



Exploring further Sharing pictures

Research images of different Pacific wealth and share these at centre. Talk about why they are important and their significance in different contexts and environments. Some examples could be tapa cloth, head combs, costume, necklace and ornaments.

Treasurers from home

Bring in your treasures (or a photo if that is not possible) to share with others at centre. Share with others why they are important to you and what makes them special.

Gather natural materials

Take the children on a trip and collect natural materials from your local environment. You could take with you extra resources for the children to make necklaces or bracelets.

Speak the language

For new speakers it might be as simple as using greetings such as 'hello'

Samoa – Talofa

Cook Islands – Kia orana

Tongan – Mālō e lelei

Tuvalu – Tālofa

Fiji – Bula

Nuie – Fakaalofa

Tokelau – Malo ni

(For more phrases please see Issue 154 page 20-21)

Celebrate language weeks

Tonga Sunday 3 September

– Saturday 9 September 2017

Tuvalu Sunday 1 October

– Saturday 7 October 2017

Fiji Sunday 8 October

– Saturday 14 October 2017

Niue Sunday 15 October

– Saturday 21 October 2017

Tokelau Monday 23 October

– Sunday 29 October 2017

Books

Source different books for the children's library that

References:

Pacific Jewellery and Adornment, Roger Neich and Fuli Pereira.

<http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz>

<http://www.childrenofthepacific.co.nz>

<http://www.wheelers.co.nz/browse/search/>

results/?query=tongan&status=local

&audience=all&author=collis&view

=gallery&sort=rank&page=1

Sustainability at Playcentre

Why are sustainability issues important for Playcentre?

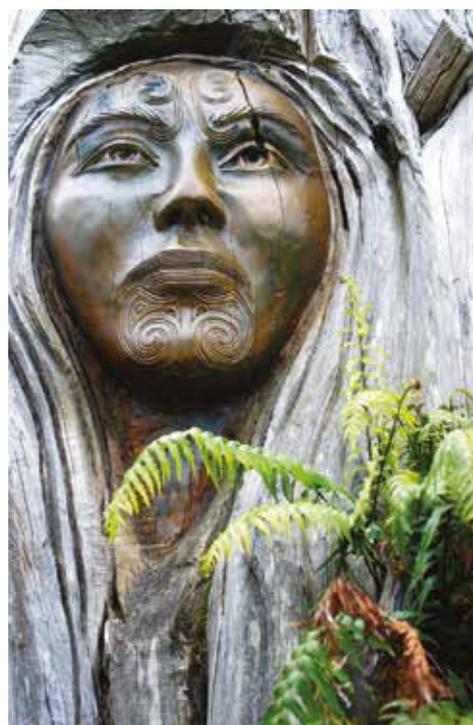
Education for sustainability is about learning to think and act in ways that will safeguard the future wellbeing of people and our planet (Ministry of Education). The lessons learnt from planting seeds and recycling encompasses so many different areas of learning and is so valuable. The idea of sustainability can be broadened so that we include all aspects in the running of Playcentre. The aspects are economic, social/ cultural and environment.

Empowering kaitiakitanga

Strengthening our childrens understanding about our environment and how we connect and depend upon it empowers our children to become kaitiaki and take an active role in nurturing all living things. This empowerment is the key to learning for sustainability, where children gain the confidence and skills to create positive change and become guardians, kaitiakitanga.

All strands of Te Whāriki are supported when children are empowered to explore the environment.

Mana Reo Communication Māori legends



Discuss how we can become kaitiaki for our planet and what it means, encouraging the idea of caring for and nurturing living things. Papatūānuku is our living mother and gives us life. We need to respect her and all living creatures. Ranginui our sky father gives us rain so the plants and trees can grow.

Scrapbooking

Go for a walk around Playcentre or out on a trip and collect interesting materials that nature doesn't need anymore for a scrapbook. Encourage children to take photos of what they see such as native plants, tree and birds.

Dance

Explore different cultures through the playing of musical instruments and participating in dance.

Mana Aoturoa Exploration Scavenger hunts

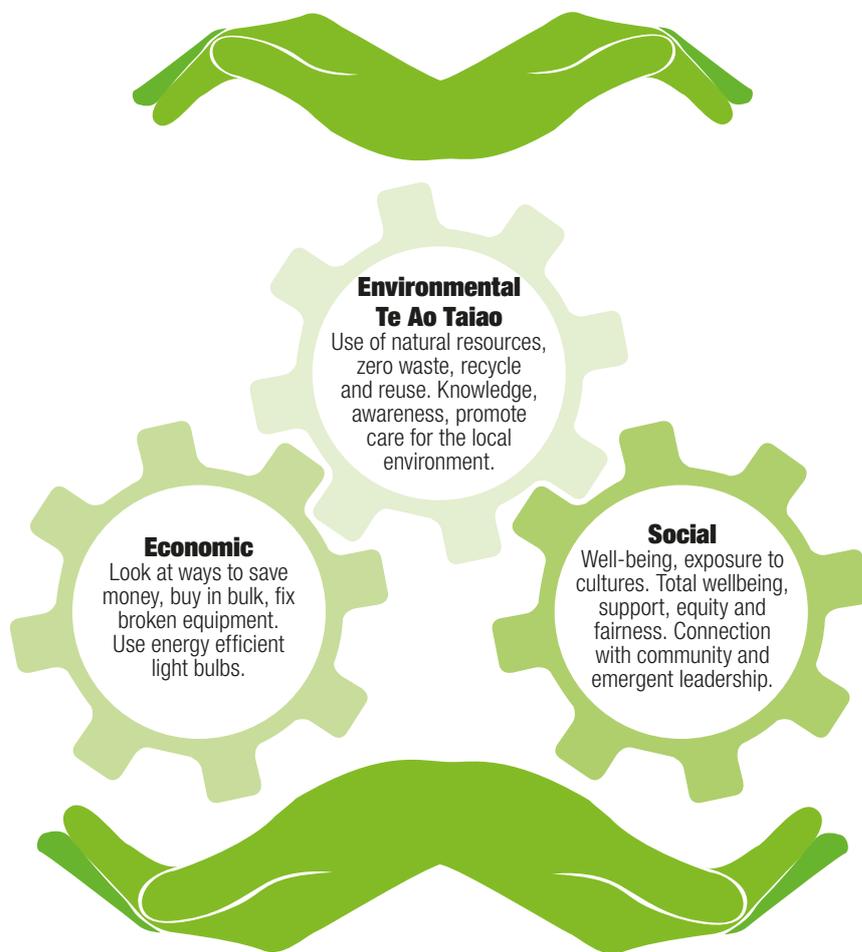
Put together hunts for the children around the centre or for when you go out on trips to the forest or beach. The hunts could include looking for insects, different shaped leaves, different colours and different noises. Collect and sort feathers, shells and stones and discuss where they may have come from.

Life cycles

Discuss the different life cycles such as butterflies, cicada's and ladybirds. Plant seeds and watch them grow and discuss how they grow, what does the seed need to grow.

Demonstrate energy

Show the children the different types of energy. You could demonstrate with a windmill, solar shower and waterwheel.



"Mō tātou te taiao ko te atawhai, mō tātou te taiao ko te oranga"

"It is for us to care for and look after the environment to ensure its wellbeing, in doing so we ensure our own wellbeing and that of our future generations"

Experiments

Research different experiments. For example a great decomposing experiment is bury plastic lunch wrap, paper wrap and food waste in 3 different holes. Dig them up 3 months later and discuss what you can see.

Mana Atua Well-being Trips



Encourage awareness of surroundings. Go on trips out in the local community and provide opportunities where environment vocabulary is used so children can see their place in the land. Name your local parks, mountains (maunga), rivers (awa), sea (moana) and lakes. Explore different habitats and ecosystems. Find where the nearest recycling centre is or community gardens. Promotion of local tree planting events or rubbish clean up.

Planting

Plant gardens to attract butterflies, native birds, skinks and snails.

Mana Tangata Contribution Waste free lunch boxes



Promotion of waste free lunch boxes by encouraging reusable containers.

Reuse material

They are many ways to reuse material cut off such make cloth bags and encourage the children to paint on their own bag to reuse to replace plastic bags. You could also make bee wax wraps. Even make puppets.

Reuse resources

So many items we discard such as cardboard boxes, plastic lids, cotton reels could be reused. These could be displayed with the collage or carpentry.

Mana Whenua Belonging Harvesting



Grow food from seed and encourage the children to water and care for them. The children can help to collect it, cook it and eat it. Collect the seeds from what you have picked and plant them.

Involve the children

Encourage the children to fill the recycling bins, feeding the worms and emptying the compost bin.

Weather

Discuss the different weather and seasons through keeping a photo journal. Look at the clouds and their shapes.

Greener alternatives

Beeswax wraps – a zero waste alternative to plastic cling film



We have seen an exponential growth in the use of plastic for everyday purposes. It wasn't that long ago sandwiches were wrapped in paper. It's not too surprising given how inexpensive and durable plastic is. It is frightening to think that EVERY single piece of plastic made still exists and it is now found in every corner of the globe.

However, the tide is turning and we are now seeing a movement back to the 'good ole days' away from using single use plastics like shopping bags and plastic cling film to reusable natural alternatives. A beautiful natural alternative to plastic cling film are reusable beeswax food wraps which are great for wrapping snacks and sandwiches and covering leftovers in your fridge. They are practical, make your food last longer, you can use them again and again and they look amazing! They are also biodegradable and compostable (only if made from

Current initiatives already being used in Playcentres

- Worm farm, Bokashi, composting
- Recycling
- Planting fruit trees, vegetable and herb gardens
- Using water tank
- Using eco friendly products
- Encouraging waste free lunch boxes
- Using natural materials in play
- Running outdoor sessions
- Encouraging a reduction in plastic
- Using flannels instead of paper towels. The flannels are washed and re used.
- Promotion of toy and book libraries to families
- Encouraging swapping toys and clothes

Some ideas to look into

- Solar power
- Grants for greener living
- Audit your waste
- Playcentre Sustainability Facebook Group

natural fibre fabric – cotton/linen) so at the end of your wrap's useful life you can cut the wrap into strips and add to your compost heap.

You can now buy beeswax wraps from a number of specialty providers. You can also get DIY kits from provider 'Let's Make It Green'.

Free collection programmes

TerraCycle provides free waste collection programmes for hard to recycle materials. They turn the waste into affordable green products and as well having a monetary reward scheme for the amount collected.

www.terracycle.co.nz

USEFUL WEBSITES

Enviroschools website: www.enviroschools.org.nz
Kiwi Conservation Club: www.kcc.org.nz
World WildLife Fund: www.wwf.org.nz
Department of Conservation: www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-education/early-childhood/

References:

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-resources/Education-for-sustainability#collapsible1>
Sustainability at Playcentre, Spring 2010, Playcentre Journal 139.



New Zealand Sign Language at Playcentre

Communication: Interacting with children at the playdough table, the sandpit or as they hammer in carpentry, and with the other parents at our end of session evaluation. Communication is in everything we do at Playcentre. Te Whāriki also recognises the importance of communication dedicating an entire strand to this in Strand 4 – Mana Reo.

But what happens if a parent or child at your centre is Deaf or hard of hearing? How would you communicate with them?

As recent as the early 1990's the answer to that question would have been widely accepted as being – teach them to lip read, encourage them to talk and avoid using signs. This is because for the better part of 100 years, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) was banned in the education systems in our country. Oralism was the 'solution' to communication with Deaf children. Of course much time and research later, we now know that teaching New Zealand Sign Language to Deaf children (or hearing for that matter!) actually improves English skills and understanding. So much so, that in 2006 NZSL was made one of New Zealand's official languages, followed a few years later by the establishing of NZSL week.

This year during NZSL week (first week of May every year), some of our Auckland Playcentres took up an offer from Merge NZ to learn NZSL. Over 10 Playcentre sessions in Auckland had parents from various centres learning alongside the children and embracing this beautiful language.

NZSL has it's own grammatical structure making it very different from English, so parents and children learnt to turn off their voices and 'listen' with their eyes.



Victoria, (left), the co-director of Merge NZ, who is also Deaf herself, captivated the children with storytelling in sign, facial expressions and her enthusiasm for teaching her native language.

In the fourth Te Whāriki strand under communication, educators are encouraged to allow children to discover and develop different ways to be creative and expressive, and develop non-verbal communication skills. The children really embraced the language and proudly ran around centre identifying objects that matched the colour that Victoria would sign to them. They even sang the "Ma is white" song in three languages – English, NZSL and Te Reo.

Communication is an integral part of

Playcentre, and a right for all children, hearing or Deaf. NZSL bridges the gaps in communication and provides equality to the Deaf community. How great that Playcentre recognises it's importance and celebrates and shares it's beauty with their tamariki.

Merge NZ is continuing to offer these sessions and also more adult specific teaching Auckland wide. Contact them on info@mergenz.co.nz for more information.

Jaime Brown

The power of Peer Mentoring Circles

A tool for creating powerful and free formal support in your Playcentre Leadership Roles

With big changes happening in the structure and leadership of Playcentre Aotearoa, now is a great time to form a peer mentoring circle to get and give consistent and life-saving support to each other. There is nothing that beats regular, face-to-face communication and most of you have access to technology that enables this – Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc. And if not, you can access most of these platforms by phoning in.



What is a Peer Mentoring Circle?

It is a group of peers that meet regularly either in person or virtually online to get and give support and guidance to each other in their leadership roles.

Simple Steps to Form your Mentoring Circle:

Decide you will organize a peer mentoring circle and some basic logistics:

- **How often you will meet and length of commitment** – I suggest a minimum of once a month for a year as your initial commitment. Decide on a schedule for the year.
- **Session Length:** I suggest 90 minutes.
- **Circle size** – I suggest no more than 6 in total. This will ensure you each get time to contribute, knowing that likely not everyone will be able to make it to every single session – but it's important to make the commitment to do so.

I have a confession to make, when I was elected co-President of Auckland Association (about a million years ago now – ok 9ish), I pretty much had no idea what I was doing. I had a dream for the Association and tons of passion, but I didn't have a whole lot of experience managing million dollar budgets, employees and volunteers and working with the incredibly wide range of views, opinions and needs in Centres – let alone all the endless fires that seemed to need putting out!

We were embarking on a big period of radical change (sound familiar?) and so I decided to take several papers in the not-for-profit leadership program at Unitec to learn about governance and management. There's no doubt the material I learned helped, but what was even more helpful came from a surprising source. For my Management Practicum course we were required to form a 'Peer Mentoring' circle. This group comprised me and 5 other leaders in the not-for-profit sector.

The group turned out to be my lifeline over that first year as President and we all got so much out of the experience that we met formally for another year after our program finished and we remain friends and allies to this day. The model of peer mentoring I learned was so profound and life changing for me that I've gone on to form mentoring groups for myself, both formal and informal as my career in Playcentre and out of Playcentre progressed over the years. This form of support has enabled me to step into leadership roles that I never thought were possible and empowered me to start and grow my own business mentoring and training women leaders from all around the world. It's helped me through some incredibly challenging situations both professional and personal, given me a place to share the highs and lows of leadership and a space to speak about sensitive issues, knowing that I'm in a safe and confidential space.

- **Circle Make-Up:** Aim for diversity in your circle both in experience, opinions culture and location across the country.
- **Use Facebook to organize if you can** – use a secret group to discuss logistics and share between meetings – much easier than emailing back and forth!
- **Meeting Technology** – Google Hangouts, Zoom, Skype are all good platforms – some require a subscription like Zoom but it’s only \$10 a month and you can record sessions for those that can’t attend.

Basic Session Structure

Check in	15 minutes
Reminder of Intentions for Working Together Decide on who will be in hot seats Appoint time keeper for the meeting	5 minutes
Hot Seat Person 1 – Share Issue	5 minutes
Group Discussion/ Feedback	20 minutes
Hot Seat Person 1 – Share key insights from discussion	5 minutes
Hot Seat Person 2 – Share Issue	5 minutes
Group Discussion/ Feedback	20 minutes
Hot Seat Person Person 2 – Share key insights from discussion	5 minutes
Check out	10 minutes

Check in – Invite people to be present

Always do an opening round, similar to what you would do at a Playcentre meeting. You don’t need a formal question, just give each person time to share what they need to share to arrive.

Establish and Agree on your Intentions for Working Together

At your first meeting establish and agree on your group guidelines – the following are the ones I suggest are non-negotiable, you can add others to suit your group and adapt them over time. Always go through them at the start of each session and never assume that everyone knows what they mean,



remind each other of the agreements during the session as needed, especially as related to the two traps below.

Basic Agreements:

- Start and Finish on Time
- Show up
- Minimize distractions – be there for each other, cellphones off, other browser windows closed, have partner or a friend taking care of

children if possible.

- *Be open to feedback – be non-defensive, understand that we can never give ‘the whole story’ be open to an insight emerging.
- I statements, one person speaks at a time
- Confidentiality
- Speak with intention, is what I’m saying adding value? Do I need to say this now?
- NEVER assume that you share the

Finally:

Two Big Traps to watch out for

Be open to feedback: You will notice that you only have 5 minutes to share what's going on when you're in the hot seat. This means you'll never have enough time to give the entire story and that can be tough sometimes – especially when the feedback starts. It can be easy to fall in to the trap of defensiveness – you might hear yourself saying 'no it's not like that, it's like this' or 'well I would have done that if I...' or 'yes well I would have told you that if I had more time'. If you, or the group notice this, gently point it out and remind yourself that telling the whole story isn't the point, to listen for the insights, take what works and leave the rest.

No 'telling' Coach rather than tell: Conversely when the group is giving feedback and discussing the issue never assume you know the full story – you don't, you've heard 5 minutes of a story and you don't know that person's full background, life experience, feelings etc. So don't simply assume you know what's going on based on your own experiences and then 'tell them what to do' – that's a recipe for defensiveness and the person in the hot seat shutting down. Tell a story of a similar experience and how things worked out, Ask clarifying questions if you need to... use phrases like 'I'd like to share this, it may not be how it is, but I hope there's something that resonates' (trust me there ALWAYS is). As you become closer as a group, it can become easier to fall into this trap as you start to think you know each other better and short cuts start – think what it's like in a long-term relationship how often do you assume you know what the person thinks, feels or is going to do before they even do it – and we all know how dangerous assumptions can be! You can use language like – 'I heard you say _____ and I'm imagining that _____ the word 'imagine' can transform your feedback into something that's heard rather than dismissed or defended.

So, what are you waiting for? Give it a go, jump on Facebook and get a group going, I guarantee it will be one of the best things you ever do for your own leadership journey!

same experience or that you 'have the right answer'

- No 'telling' – coach rather than tell: Tell stories and examples rather than telling the person in the hot seat what to do. Ask questions give the hot seat person the opportunity to find their own solution.
- Active listening 'so for you...'
- Before you speak: Is it truthful? Is it necessary? How can I say this in a way that honours me and the other person?
- Notice where you might get triggered, where comments might rub you the wrong way and try to stay non-judgemental about this and see if there is something useful to learn.
- It's ok to have different opinions in the group, consensus is not the goal in this process.

Decide who will be in the 'hot seat'

At each session 2 people are invited to share a current issue or something they need help with. Take turns at each session. Don't worry about deciding this in advance, there will

always be something that emerges and sometimes it might just be one person, or sometimes it will be short.

Hot Seat Person 1 – Share Issue

You have 5 minutes to give a summary of what you'd like help with. Remember it's only 5 minutes so you won't have time to give the entire history, stick to the key things the group needs to know to be able to discuss and share feedback. This may be challenging at first as we're used to downloading our stories in their entirety!

Group Discussion/Feedback

Share stories of similar situations and what worked and what didn't work, ie 'in my centre when we went through something like this here are some of the things we did that worked and here's what we'd wished we'd known'. Empathise – 'that must have been really tough to share'. Offer different perspectives – especially for challenging interpersonal situations 'let's imagine together what might be going on for the other person that is causing them to respond/react/act in

that way'. Remember that you will never have the full story so avoid saying things like 'you should do this or why didn't you do...'

Hot Seat Person – Share key insights from discussion

The person in the hot seat will then have 5 minutes to share key insights, ahas, what was useful, what you'll go away and think about, an action that you'll do as a result. It's also a place to share if some of the feedback was given in a way that wasn't so useful.

Check out

Always take the time to do a closing round: What's one thing you learned about yourself during today's session? If there's no time, you can do a one word check out but never skip it. If the meeting was intense or especially emotional then it's vital to take the time to honour this part of the process so that feelings don't linger after the session.

About Morna Haist

Morna is a life member of Auckland Association and spent 15 years in the Playcentre movement working with Centres and Associations across the country, facilitating national meetings, working on the national restructure and was the founding chair of Ako Books. She credits Playcentre with teaching her almost everything she knows about leadership, facilitation and transformation. She now lives in Canada with her husband and teenage daughters and trains and mentors women changemakers around the world. She is currently building and launching a global online school for women leading positive change in their communities and countries. You can connect to her Facebook community here: <https://www.facebook.com/MornaHaist/> and find out more about her programs at www.mornahaist.com – sign up to hear about and get involved in her work and get in touch to receive a special discount for Playcentre members.



Introducing our Trustee Board Team

Alaine Tamati-Aubrey - Co-President

Ko wai au?
He hōnora, he korōria ki te Atua
He maungārongo ki te mata o te whenua
He whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa

Ko Pukekura te Mauka
Ko KaiTahu, te Iwi
Ko Ruahikihiki te Hapū
Ko Ōtākou te Papakaika

Ka huri taku aro ki Te Tai Hauāuru
Ko Taranaki te Maunga
Ko Mangaoraka te Awa wai-iti, ko Onaero te Awa.
Ko Te Atiawa me Ngāti Mutunga ngā Iwi
Ko Puketapu me Kaitangata ngā Hapū
Ko Muru Raupatu me Wahapakapaka ngā Papakainga

Ka huri taku aro ki Te Tai Tokerau
Ko Ohau Tieke te Maunga
Ko Te Towai te Awa
Ko Ngāpuhi te Iwi
Ko Whānau pani me Kaitangata ngā Hapū
Ko Karangahape te Papakainga

Toko ono he kākano i ruiuria mai ki Te Ao
Toko tekau ma whā ngā manawa mokopuna

Ka puta mai au ki Waitara
E noho ana au ki Waitara
Kua haere au ki te kura ki Waitara, me Camberley, me Flaxmere, me Temple View me Ngāmotu hoki.
Kua haere au ki Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui me Te Wānanga o Raukawa hoki.
I haere au ki te Whare Kura Kori o Waitara.
He Perehitana Takirua au mo Te Whānau Tupu Ngātahi o Aotearoa
Ko Alaine taku ingoa.

Ka huri au ki te reo Pākehā

My Playcentre Journey began when I was a child as I attended Waitara Playcentre with my Aunty and cousins.

As a mum, my older children and I attended Ngā Pekanga Te Kōhanga Reo. Our youngest child provided the opportunity for our whānau to return to Waitara Playcentre. My mokopuna have attended other ECE options and Playcentre throughout the country. Our youngest mokopuna has attended Rahotu Playcentre and now attends Waitara Playcentre.

For 10 years I have been whānau of Puriri W'akamaru o Taranaki. I spent time as the Association Public Relations officer and then a year on the Association Board of Governance. I have been a Federation officer since Conference 2009.

I bring to Playcentre my working knowledge and experience in the areas of: He Aronga Māori, Strategic and Governance outlook; Sound communications; Human Resources; Risk Management; Project Planning and Management; Events Management; Promotions and Media, and Marketing and Sponsorship;

My aspiration is that Playcentre will be available as an option for my mokopuna as parents of the future, and their mokopuna.

No reira whānau,

He taonga rongonui te aroha ki te tangata.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, katoa.



Clare Ferguson

Kia Ora koutou,

As I was flying my Boeing 737 through the skies of Europe and New Zealand, avoiding thunderstorms, landing in roaring crosswinds, surviving gruelling simulator sessions where everything either caught fire or broke, or simply enjoying the view from thirty thousand feet, I never would have thought my life-journey would bring me here. But as I have learnt the hard way – you really can't plan every detail, life keeps getting in the way.

My Playcentre journey started about 7 years ago when I heard about SPACE, and my son and I joined my local Playcentre through them – not that I realised it at the time.

I was amazed that there was such a thing as Playcentre and loved that there was somewhere for me to be with my child while we got to grips with each other. My early years were spent in the UK, so I had no idea Playcentre existed, but as soon as I knew, I started to be one of those painful people that kept trying to convince other Mums to try it out.

I kept a pretty low profile to begin with, but after a couple of years a friend got me involved in centre office holdings, encouraged me to do the training, and then participate in the Hutt's strategic vision workshops, and that, as they say, was that – how could I pass up the opportunity to help stabilise Playcentre's position and ensure its survival.

The same friend encouraged me to get involved at association level and I put my name forward for Co-President. This opened my eyes to the world of national meetings, where I regularly asked myself "What have I done?" I was deeply frustrated with the pace of change and became part of the Summer Working Party which developed the picture of what a national organisation could look like.

Eventually the time came for me to put my money where my mouth is and stand for the Trustee Board.

I have really enjoyed being on the Trustee Board; I love the enthusiastic debate, grappling with the big issues, and our shared love for Playcentre and its promising future. The challenges for our organisation are many and varied, and it will be a tough time while we navigate the change process, but I know we will emerge a stronger more dynamic organisation, able to support our tamariki at centres to be the very best they can be.

Clare Ferguson
Trustee Board Member



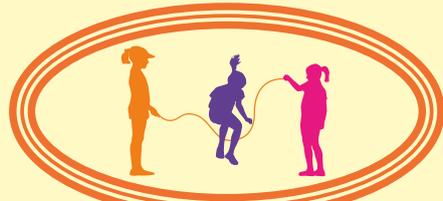
Once upon a time – myths of Playcentre



MYTH 1

We are failing if we don't extend children every session

Children who observe others or are not actively engaged, are still learning. Children need time for quiet reflection and they have the right to choose the time to do so. Often, these periods lead to creativity. Remember, it used to be that doing well as a child was what parents aimed at, not it is "optimal development" that is wanted.



MYTH 2

Playcentre education exists so that centres can receive funds

When Playcentre first began in 1941, those with suitable training, such as kindergarten teachers, were appointed. But our founders always envisioned that adult education would be part of the programme and when mothers themselves showed interest in learning about their children, it was easy to respond. Our own programme started in 1944.

Most importantly, we train to be better parents, but also to get over 'baby brain' and to keep our brain healthy. Training provides good opportunities to meet other parents. Playcentre education gives us a position to reflect on how our own values fit with those of our centre and how we can provide for high quality sessions. It is also a milestone in our lifelong learning process.

The education programme became linked to licensing 1991. Once a Centre is licensed it is eligible for bulk funding.



MYTH 3

Learning moments must be documented, along with a photo

Congratulations on noticing the moment and recognising that learning is occurring. Enjoy being in the moment. The photo opportunity is for someone else. The photo is the icing on the cake and the learning is more important than the photo. We coped without photos ten years ago, we can continue to make learning visible without written pictures.



MYTH 4

The only record of learning is the portfolio

The CHILD is the living record of learning and achievement.



MYTH 5

Playcentre is not a coffee group

Our origins are supporting and empowering women to take some time out to socialise. One of the aims in 1941 was "to provide leisure time for mothers, and opportunities for the social development of the pre-school child through co-operative effort". By role modeling socialising, we teach children to be social and provide opportunities to practice their social skills. But there is a tension between adult socialisation and the aim of making Playcentre a place for children. Good to get a balance on the continuum.



MYTH 6

Are all Centres like mine

Do you find it difficult to drive 15 minutes up the road to attend a workshop? Spare a thought for Playcentre members from Kaikoura who must travel 3 hours to attend a workshop.



MYTH 7

Everyone must do as much as I do

There are 'seasons' for giving – when you have younger children, are pregnant etc.. your contributions to Playcentre might be limited, but when your youngest is four you might take a bigger role. Policies can give guidance in this respect, but can also make things inflexible. Make compassion the guideline for measuring contributions.



MYTH 8

A Playcentre session must have 16 areas of play set up

Well, who decided that there are 16 areas of play and who picked them? Why are there 16? Where is the NZPF approved list? Why are these considered more important than others? Where is the remit that approved these?

This article is a re print from Issue 139, Spring 2010 pg14. Written by Victoria Spagnolo, Suzanne Manning, Glenda Caradus, Gillian Croad, Corina Landon-Lane, Susy Mannall, Dense, A., & Chapman, B. (2000). Learning together: The Playcentre Way. Auckland: New Zealand Playcentre Federation.



MYTH 9

The Federation education team gives you the answers and tell you what to do

We facilitate your ideas and/ or issues as well as externally driven items. We respect that you are the drivers of Playcentre's direction and are the policy makers. We work to give you a safe place to ponder, think, discuss and express your view.

The Best Dad in the World

By Pat Chapman

The Best Dad in the World is a fun and engaging read for families or Playcentres. Each page has a different Dad with his kids and a reason for him being a super dad, such as loving music (the kids are all playing instruments) or wearing the same clothes as his child. This is a kiwi book peppered with recognisable symbols for our kids; red band gumboots, a John Deere hat, a gnarled pohutukawa tree. I love that all the Dads and kids are different ages, heights and ethnicities so kids can find someone to identify with in the book. On the front endpaper there is a space to put a picture of your own dad, and the back endpaper has a small picture of each of the Dads in the book which is a great way to encourage further discussion and engagement when reading to a group of kids. My 3 year old and 1 year old have been enjoying this story on high rotation and it has made it to the "bedtime reading" pile. Celebrates Dads.

Thanks,

Jessicah Win

Collingwood Playcentre

Baby Pip Eats

Amie Harper



Amie Harper is a nutritionist, recipe developer and food stylist who wrote "Baby Pip Eats" after the arrival of her first child. This is a beautiful hardback book with 26 great 'first food' meals for your child to try from the age of 6 months. The meals are wonderfully presented with a full page photo opposite the recipe that also includes the best age to eat it from (with notes such as 'once chewing developed'), what vitamins and minerals it will provide for your child and how many people it will serve. The book is set out in an alphabet format with simple, yet tasty meals like Broccoli au Gratin, Yellow Peach Crunch, Sweet Potato

and Pear Soup and Beef and Mushroom Ragu with Pasta.

The meals are mostly made for the whole family to enjoy rather than just being for baby. I really like this format as life is busy enough with a new baby without also trying to find the time to make a separate meal for them. I also like that the recipes aren't too bland and look to encourage a wide and varied diet. There are no attempts to hide any vegetables instead they are served with tasty accompaniments to tempt the tastebuds. There are handy hints and vegetarian options scattered through out the book as well. This would make a wonderful present for a new parent or grandparent to give them inspiring ideas to make delicious and highly nutritious meals with a simple palate for a young child.

Tonya Bristow

Rangiora Playcentre

The Day The Costumes Stuck

By Toby Morris

Some stories are immediately loveable; others grow on you after your child has pleaded you to read them for a third consecutive time. This story falls into the second category. While the cute fluoro and grey illustrations are certainly hip, they don't particularly endear you to the characters. However, by the third run through the tale, you're starting to feel sorry for the little person stuck inside their monster costume, and are silently cheering him (or her?!) on in the search for a friendly ear. But the real proof that Toby Morris is onto a winner, is the infectious boogie: by the end of the second reading, we were all swaying and rocking along with our unlikely hero, Iggy.

The moral of this modern story isn't obvious at first, but after a couple of goes it's easy for kids and adults alike to recognise a story about being yourself- even if you happen to be stuck in a boogie man costume. Surely, that's a message we can all relate to!

Sarah Bowen

Mosgiel Playcentre

www.Playcentre.org.nz

Tiny Owl on the Ramshackle Farm

Written and Illustrated by Lotte Wotherspoon

This book explores all aspects of farm life from the eyes of Tiny Owl during the night when all should be asleep. The main character was well maintained throughout the book and all images were beautifully illustrated.



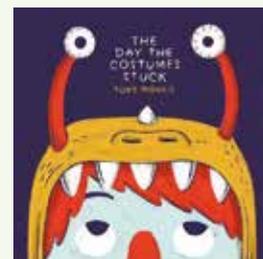
I felt the book would encourage those children with an overactive imagination and feel it didn't flow overly well. It did leave me wondering what may happen on the next page. I don't believe pre-school children would engage with the words very well however, they would love the illustrations.

I would recommend the book to children the age of 4+ and depending on the children that are reading at the time, not for the light hearted (monster cautious kids!)

Regards

Steph Richardson

President, Urenui Playcentre



Mix whakaranu

Mixing, pouring and stirring are fun. All tamariki can take part whether it is playing on their own or with friends.

Ingredients from nature:

- Bark
- Black sand
- Driftwood
- Flower petals
- Herbs – rosemary, mint, lavender, lemongrass
- Leaves (different sizes and colours)
- Mud
- Sand (It can be coloured)
- Sticks

Ingredients from the kitchen:

- Baking soda
- Cornflour
- Ice
- Oil
- Powder paint
- Salt (it can be coloured)
- Vinegar
- Washing up liquid
- Water (can be warm on a cold day)

Equipment:

- Colanders
- Containers
- Empty plastic bottles
- Funnels
- Ladle
- Large bowls
- Large wooden spoons
- Measuring cups
- Muffin trays
- Pipettes
- Sponge
- Squeezy bottles
- Stirrers
- Strainers
- Watering can
- Whisk

Ideas to support play:

- Explore changing the consistency, texture and temperature of liquids
- Explore density of liquids
- Making sure it is safe
- Set it up so all ages can access, explore and enjoy
- Support children to record their recipes for their potion or soup.
- Talk to the children about what is happening



Tamariki learn strategies suggest active exploration, ask questions, classifies, colour recognition, counting, cooperate, curiosity, discover, estimating, experimenting, imagining, invent, investigation, language development, measuring, mixing, observing, pouring, problem solving, reasoning, record, sharing ideas, social skills, sort, test, thinking, wonder...