

# Playcentre

Journal



**ISSUE 157**

Winter / Hōtoke 2018

Being a co-operative – Science at Playcentre,  
Growth Mindset – They are first a child



Emma Quigan, Talking Matters, has written a great article about the importance of the first three years for building the capacity to love, learn, think and communicate. Emma has shared some great tips to support us all to have rich conversations with our child. Cissy Rock, Change Manager, has written some fabulous articles for this Journal. My favourite article from Cissy is about Playcentre being a co-operative and sharing the importance of welcoming new members. Tara Fagan has kindly shared her thesis on the nature of children's interactions in a mixed age setting.

I'm sure you will all enjoy this Journal, happy reading.

**Stacey Balich**

**Playcentre Journal Editor**

Playcentre Journal Cooperative: Stacey Balich (Auckland Region), Cynthia Murray (Easter Bay of Plenty Central North Island) and Anna Anstey (Wellington Region).



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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!

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## 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](mailto: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.

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# Playcentre Conference 2017

## Friday 24th – Sunday 26th November



To mark 70 years of Playcentre in Aotearoa, the 2017 conference was opened with words from Beverly Morris, a lifetime Playcentre member now in her 90's. Beverly spoke fondly of her own experience on session and reflected on the core values of Playcentre that have stood the test of time.

The Playcentre conference is the main decision making meeting of the year, and a very important event in the Playcentre calendar. Conference is hosted at a different venue each year around Aotearoa, and is a chance for us as an organisation to think nationally as opposed to locally (as it has been in the past.) The 2017 schedule ran over three days, and although a very busy weekend, packing so much in meant many great discussions and good decision making for the year ahead. Having everybody involved in a particular decision in the same room at the same time meant for a much smoother and more enjoyable process,

as well as a lot of time saved.

Although the majority of the time over the weekend was spent making the strategic decisions for the coming year – governance and budgeting decisions and the selection of the trustee board, there is also a strong networking and social aspect to Conference. The opportunity to connect with each other face to face rather than just over the phone or email, being able to put faces to names and meeting new people, was enjoyed by those who attended.

Conference is a valuable opportunity for people to come together, to be heard and to give input for the coming year. Everyone involved had value and

a say in the making of these strategic decisions. The 2017 venue, the Waipuna Conference centre in Auckland, provided a comfortable backdrop for those attending, with a range of facilities available for debriefing and relaxing.

The highlight for many was the disco on Saturday night, a chance to put work aside for a few hours to relax and have a boogie with friends. The first Friends of Playcentre dinner, held during conference, was also a great success.

Veronica Pitt and  
Antoinette McLean

## Co-presidents Opening message for Conference 2017

Tihei mauri ora  
E tipu e rea ka tipu koe hei tangata.

*Grow up oh little one, so you may  
become a strong person*

Kia kotahi ai, te whānau, te hapū,  
me te iwi e

*So that you will bring together our  
families, our wider families, our people*

As we were putting together this opening speech, thinking about the purpose of this meeting, we realised we are fearful for the future of Playcentre but together we have changed that fear into courage and now we ask you, the movers and shakers/our members what can we do with the gifts we have, our principals and values; our compassion, respect, integrity, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and maramatanga. These will help us all work together for the future of Playcentre, for the children and the adults in the sandpit.

As we reflected on our own recent experiences, when Alaine's moko asked "Are you coming to session tomorrow Nan ... You won't do adult stuff eh Nan."

Susan visited her friends on session, where it felt so natural to sit in the sandpit listening to the adults and

children singing the wheels on the bus in te reo māori while everybody joined in, in their own way.

From Rabbi Lorde Jonathon we share: *When we have too much of the "I" and too little of the "we," we can find ourselves vulnerable, fearful and alone.*

So we think the simplest way of safeguarding the future "you" is to strengthen the future "us" in four dimensions: the us of relationship, the us of identity, the us of responsibility, and of course, the us that is Playcentre.

So for the sake of the future "you", together let us strengthen the future "us."

As we work together this weekend, we'd like to you keep in mind what Playcentre means to you, and remember that this will remain with you, where ever life takes you. Life is a journey, and Playcentre has been part of all our life journeys so far, and we think you would all agree that we are all here to do what we can to enable Playcentre to continue to be around for future NZ parents and their tamariki.

Also keep in mind, your Treaty partner in Playcentre. In 1989 Playcentre made the commitment to biculturalism and publicly endorsed the Treaty of

Waitangi – in 1994 the Constitution was amended to read "The NZ Playcentre Federation acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa, New Zealand". Since then, we have been working out how that looks and how it can work for us, as Playcentre. We are still learning, and we will continue to learn, and grow, as individuals, as members of Playcentre, and as a co-operative organisation.

As we work together over this weekend, continuing to build the future for Playcentre, look towards the future for all members of Playcentre. We need to consider our responsibilities to each other, and the relationships we will create, the partnerships we can sustain, and acknowledge the journey that each one of us has had and is having.

We, your Trustees, don't know everything. We are doing the best we can, with what we've got – we need your help and continued support, to get Playcentre through this time of change. We can get through this together, unified, we are stronger...

Alaine Tamati-Aubrey and  
Susan Bailey

# Rainbow Wall

**River Downs Playcentre needed to increase its visual impact as our building looked like a large community hall or residential building. Potential members had difficulty finding us because we were only allowed a single small sign. Hamilton City Council bylaws prevented us from having another sign or any words written on the building. We felt hamstrung about increasing our signage as a resource consent process to appeal the bylaw would have cost us a minimum of \$2,000 with no guarantee of a positive outcome for us.**

One of our members saw a Facebook page of Pinehaven Playcentre's new rainbow wall in Upper Hutt. I contacted them to ask for the colour codes and they very generously donated us their left over paint. Christine Mackenzie, Darin Attwood, Monica Holt, and Jill and Stephen Bergin then prepped and applied two coats of paint to create a feature Rainbow Wall at the

end of December 2016. Passers-by complimented us as they walked/drove by. Our FB page got lots of totally positive hits mostly from non-Playcentre people.

As a result you can't miss our Playcentre. Our tamariki love it and know that they have arrived at Playcentre. We have provided an interesting visual addition to our



community. Our building looks like an early childhood education centre. We can direct new people to us by telling them to find the Rainbow Wall. In the year since we painted our Rainbow Wall we can directly correlate a marked increase in enquiries, visitors and eventual enrolments to the Rainbow Wall. Our increased roll has effectively paid for the cost of painting the wall.

We know that brand and branding are important in reaching out to the community to publicise who we are. I wonder if a feature Rainbow Wall (one wall only) should become part of our Playcentre branding whenever a Playcentre is about to repaint its exterior.

**Jill Bergin**  
**River Downs Playcentre, Hamilton**



# Friends of Playcentre

Although they may have left behind their time at Playcentre, many parents continue to carry with them skills learned during this time and the values that Playcentre represents. Until now, there has not been a formal way of maintaining contact, gathering us all together or communicating as a group. So as part of the recent amalgamation into Playcentre Aotearoa, we have established a formal post Playcentre network, Friends of Playcentre. Any parents who are no longer active Playcentre members are welcome to join Friends of Playcentre, whether you have just left or not been on session for 20 years. At this moment, it is made up of a growing number of members who have registered through our database. Friends of Playcentre members will receive regular newsletter updates, as well as an invitation to the Friends of Playcentre dinner, which is held during the annual Playcentre conference. Conference is held each year in a different part of Aotearoa, so there will be opportunities for different areas of Friends of Playcentre to attend.

Like anything newly established, there is plenty of room for growth and refinement, space to develop into something that works across Aotearoa. Although Friends of Playcentre is nationwide, there is plenty of scope within it for people to organise their own informal Friends of Playcentre events in their local communities. We are happy to assist with this by spreading the word through our Friends of Playcentre networks and on our Facebook page. The Friends of Playcentre network will grow over time and we welcome your ideas on new

ways to connect throughout Aotearoa.

Friends of Playcentre is about creating opportunities for people who have been impacted positively by Playcentre to remain connected, both with others and to the organisation as a whole. It's catching up with friends, but its also having the opportunity to still be involved. Whether it is doing a one off piece of facilitation, helping with Annual Planning, or looking for inspiring ways to deliver info talks. There are lots of ways that Friends of Playcentre can support sessions across Aotearoa, and lots of ways we can support each other.

It is reconnecting with friends and helping out, with shared values and a similar outlook on life. That is Friends of Playcentre.

To register as a Friend of Playcentre, email us at [friendsofplaycentre.org.nz](mailto:friendsofplaycentre.org.nz) or register via our website [playcentre.org/friendsofplaycentre](http://playcentre.org/friendsofplaycentre).

Each registration will receive a Friends of Playcentre 'heart still in Playcentre' badge.

Cissy Rock  
Change Manager



# Carpentry: It's the process not the product



The words 'woodworking' in early childhood would have many educators cringing as they imagine children running wild with hammers and saws and having to deal with sore little fingers. The reality of a well-planned carpentry area is in fact quite the opposite. Just like any other area children can be encouraged to respect the carpentry area and learn how to use the tools carefully and appropriately.

Carpentry offers a rich learning experience for young children. It gives them opportunity to explore what they are interested in whilst encouraging numerous learning and development skills, many of which are encompassed in Te Whāriki.

## Carpentry supports:

- Developing self-esteem and build confidence. By having the responsibility of using real tools and accomplishing a task they may have found challenging to begin with, and by being proud of their creations.
- Developing physically. Hand eye coordination, fine motor skills (holding nails, twisting in screws), gross motor skills (hammering, sawing) and muscle development are all improved as they learn to use the different tools correctly.
- Investigating science and mathematical concepts such as shapes, measuring, size, balance, length and force.
- Developing communication and language skills through working with others, sharing and co-operating. Learning the names of the different tools. Expressing their ideas, frustrations and successes.
- Expressing their creativity and engage their imagination by allowing them to design and build their own creations, come up with new ideas, problem solve and role play.

## Carpentry area in your centre?

To get started you will need to invest in some good quality tools that are fit for the job. Inappropriate tools will make the tasks more difficult and lead to frustration so choosing the right size and type of tools is essential. Don't be tempted to use plastic play tools as these are not designed for real carpentry.

If introducing carpentry to younger children start them off with materials such as pumice, golf tees and a rubber mallet. Let them hone their skills with these before moving on to the real tools and harder wood. With practice comes necessary co-ordination and understanding to work safely. So long as you teach the children how to use the tools correctly and have clear safety rules you will find that they tend to have a much greater respect for real tools compared to their plastic counter parts.

## Introducing children to carpentry:

When introducing children to carpentry start off with the basics. Show them how to hold a hammer in the middle of the handle rather than up close to the head and show them which end to hit with. Explain the importance of keeping their eyes on the spot they are hitting and how important it is not to distract other children who are woodworking. Pounding nails into a big block of wood or the end of a log is a great way to learn the initial skill of hammering because they don't have to worry about the wood moving about.

When introducing the saw start off by showing the children how sharp the teeth are. You can let them gently feel the teeth and imagine how much it would hurt if they cut themselves. Make a rule that when sawing, the piece of wood must be held firmly in the vice and the hand that is not holding the saw must stay behind their back well out of the way. Getting the cut started is the trickiest part. It is easiest to start off with a few little back strokes to create the initial groove. Explain that it is important to keep the saw in a straight line otherwise it can jam. To help with this you could draw a straight line on the piece of wood for them to follow. Once the cut is started they can use the traditional back and forward motion to cut through. It is important to have 1:1 supervision with children who are sawing and to maintain a wide "no go zone" so that other children don't get in the way of the end of the saw.

# Tools

**Hammers:** 8oz ones are an ideal weight for children. Look for hammers with a short handle, good grip and full size hitting surface. Stubby hammers are also a good option for little hands.

**Saws:** Choose proper adult hand saws designed for cutting timber. Saws come in a range of different sizes. Ones with a blade length of around 350mm tend to be a good size for the children to manage.

**Nails:** Avoid getting nails that are too big or too small. If they are too big then the children won't have the power necessary to be able to hammer the nail into the wood and they will cause the timber to split. Nails that are too long will go right through the timber and into the work bench. On the flip side, nails that are too small will bend easily and be too fiddly for the children to hold safely. A variety of types and sizes creates extra challenges and keeps things interesting. A good tip to save little (and big) fingers from getting squashed is to use combs, clothes pegs or pliers to hold the nails at a safe distance.

**Screws:** Make sure they are suitable for woodworking (some screws are designed for metal and concrete rather than wood so check the packet for what they are designed for). Have a variety of lengths available that match your screw driver heads (Phillips and flatheads are most common).

**Screwdrivers:** A selection of different sized screwdrivers with both flat heads and cross (Phillips) heads. Again, stubby screwdrivers are great for little hands to manipulate and are readily available from hardware stores.

**Hand drill:** A couple of good metal hand drills are a great addition. Have a good stock of replacement drill bits in a variety of sizes as these can break easily. Use the drill to make small pilot holes in the wood to help get nails and screws started and to prevent the wood from splitting.

**Other Hardware:** To bring even more interest to the carpentry area you can introduce nuts, bolts, washers, screw hooks etc. You can then add spanners, wrenches and larger drill bits to the tool box for using with them. Assorted hardware also makes for great decoration.

**Bench Vice:** As children do not have enough strength to hold on to a piece of wood firmly enough to saw with the other hand a vice should always be used to hold the wood steady. Also consider getting some G clamps which can be moved about the table and are a good option when working with larger pieces of timber.

**Safety gear:** Child size safety glasses and ear muffs.

**Why not also add:** Measuring tapes or rulers, sandpaper in different grades, PVA glue, hot glue guns, pliers, builders level, builders aprons, hard hats, pencils and paper for them to plan out their designs. A large magnet can also be fun to pick up stray nails with.

## Our toanga

Tell the children stories about Tāne Mahuta and Papatūanuku. Sharing the importance of our forests and looking after our land. Peter Gossage and written and illustrated some great books to help with the story telling.

You can extend carpentry into the real world by investigating the wood itself. Where does it come from? How does it grow? Look at different types of trees and the different parts of the tree. What are some things around us that are made of wood? Does wood float or sink? How about burning some wood or even planting a tree?

### About the author:

Lisa McGlashan is a strong advocate for carpentry in the preschool years. Noticing that teachers often struggled to source a constant supply of suitable craft wood she founded Preschool Carpentry Wood Supplies – a small business that focuses on supplying wood, nails and hardware to early childhood centres throughout the North Island. Lisa also has a Facebook page dedicated to carpentry with young ones where she shares valuable ideas, enjoys being able to offer advice to educators and loves seeing pictures of your kids latest wood creations.

### You can contact Lisa at:

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**Here are some basic essentials. Consider involving the children in the rule making process too.**

### Safety Rules: The essentials

- Have a maximum number of children working in the carpentry area at one time. This will be dictated by the size of your work bench and the required student/teacher ratio.
- Everyone in the carpentry area must wear shoes.
  - Safety glasses to be worn at all times.
- Every tool has its own special purpose and should only be used for that purpose.
- No tools should be lifted above head height
  - When sawing, timber must be held securely in a vice.
  - Walk only when holding tools.
  - All tools must stay in the carpentry area.

# The GROW Coaching Model

Being a friend on session often we find ourselves supporting and also being supported by others whether it is about toilet training our toddler, documenting learning or completing coursework. Then there are the more trickier discussions that are more emotional and we can find it harder to support. When supporting others with more challenging situations it is important to empower them rather than to fix it for them. The GROW Model is a simple model that can be used to coach and mentor others. You use the model by going through the four different stages: discussing the goal, looking at what is currently happening, what are the various options and then the way forward.

## GROW stands for:

### Goal

- What would you like to happen with...?
- What do you really want?
- What result are you trying to achieve?
- What will it look, feel and sound like?

### Reality

- What is happening now?
- How would you describe what you did?
- What progress have you made so far?
- What is working well right now?
- What do you think was really happening?
- What did you learn from ....?
- What have you already tried?
- If you asked ....., what would they say about ....?

### Options

- What are your options?
- What do you think you could do next?
- What could be your first step?
- Who else might be able to help?
- What is the hardest part for you?
- What could you do differently?
- If anything was possible, what would you do?
- If you had more time what would you try?
- What else?

### Will

- What do you think you need to do right now?
- Is there anything else you can do?
- Is there anything missing?
- When are you going to start?

# Great friendships are made at Playcentre

Sometimes becoming a parent in a small community can be daunting, but Playcentre is where both parents and children can learn and grow together in a supportive environment. Paroa Playcentre on the South Island's West Coast is the Greymouth area's only licensed Playcentre and has families travelling up to 40kms to attend. It is the only early childhood education centre in the suburb of Paroa and is surrounded by many natural resources to support our tamariki's learning. We currently have 24 enrolled children which for a small community is very positive and are open 2 sessions a week on Monday and Thursday mornings. We have an extensive outside area that includes a new mud kitchen, sandpit, a whare, tyre mound, movable climbing equipment and a musical area. Inside the children can explore the play kitchen, play dough, craft or relax in our centre library with puzzles and books. Paroa Playcentre has recently had a self review process of making the most of the scenic area we live in and incorporating this into our Playcentre sessions. A rearrangement of our under 2 area has seen us replace many plastic toys with wooden and the development of a nature table with driftwood, sand, stones and other natural resources. This change has given our tamariki more of a sense of belonging to the wild West Coast community which has much to offer. Paroa Playcentre is very lucky to have the beach directly behind our centre that provides a wonderful natural playground. Bordering the beach is the West Coast wilderness cycle trail where our tamariki like to spend time



bug hunting and gathering "goodies" to take back to centre. There are also many bushwalks suitable for young children around our community and our children love the "adventures" these walks create.

Paroa Playcentre has had some challenging years when our old centre flooded a few years ago. This resulted in a new Playcentre being built which is a fantastic asset to the local community but hasn't been without its problems. A shortage of money to complete this build meant our centre became totally volunteer (no paid staff) and through a dedicated group of families our centre has come out the other end and we have a Playcentre we can be very proud of. Being fully volunteer has brought a closeness between our families and everyone contributes to the day to day running of our session. We have much support from our life members and past Playcentre families and the money saved from not paying staff is more money we can spend on resources and experiences for our tamariki. We are now in a stable financial situation and can now enjoy the benefits of the hard work of our families over the past few years.

For the past 2 years we have run a very successful SPACE programme and this has brought many first time parents into our centre. Many have continued on to join our Playcentre sessions after completion of this programme. This programme has been very beneficial to us. Attracting new families can be challenging and being able to run a programme for babies has enabled us to show new parents the benefits of Playcentre as well as providing a much needed support programme for new parents in our community.

Planning and self review are always in discussion at our centre. We are always looking at ways to improve and are open to new ideas. Currently for our everyday session planning we are asking three questions; Today we are going to... This session our tamariki loved... and next time let's...

The rising sun is what we are planning to do this session, the full sun is what our tamariki enjoyed this session and the third sun is what we can do next time to extend their play and keep



building on themes that emerge during the day.

The suns can be moved around every session and a photograph is taken. We currently have our centre support from federation in Canterbury meeting with us twice a term to help us with planning and self review.

We are well supported by the local West Coast community and are proud of our Playcentre. Our tamariki are confident learners who participate in a range of activities and as a small town Playcentre we are confident that our tamariki have the same opportunities of our bigger city peers. The West Coast has much to offer children and families and at Paroa Playcentre we embrace our environment and all it has to offer.

Tena Koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

**Shannon Ilton**  
**Paroa Playcentre President**

# “Where shall we put the piano?”

## Considering the effects of Playcentre layout on children’s play.

Changing the furniture in Playcentre can be a haphazard process. Some centres never move the furniture, others shift everything around regularly. I come from a centre that has had seemingly never-ending conversations about where to put the piano. It takes up a lot of wall space – so should we use it as a partition to divide off the room? Or put it on the deck out of the way? In my centre, the block play and the baby area were the same place for about a decade. It makes a sort of sense – block play needs a comfy carpet space, baby play need a comfy carpet space... what’s the problem?

Last year, by a happy coincidence, I was casting around trying to find a research project for a university paper and at the same time my centre decided it was time to get the babies out of the block corner. I wondered if we could take a more academic approach to furniture moving, and was surprised to find out that there are actually many books and articles about how to lay out Early Childhood Centres. What would it be like to take an evidence-based, child-centred approach to furniture layout? Unfortunately I will never find out – my essay only need me to plan a research project, not carry it out, and my centre had shifted everything around before I was finished writing. But I did learn some interesting things that I thought might be helpful to other centres.

Your layout matters more than you might think. The physical environment affects children’s behaviour, play, and development in multiple ways (David & Weinstein, 1987; Greenman, 2005). Spaces with



obvious pathways, and distinct, well-organised activity areas increase children’s cooperation and depth of engagement in play. Conversely, poorly-defined areas, and lack of consideration to pathways result in disruption and conflict and reduce opportunities for focused play (Kritchevsky, Prescott & Walling, 1969; Harms & Clifford, 1982; Olds, 2001). For example, attempts to build elaborate block towers can be

foiled if the block space is next to a busy transit area where unsteady toddlers are pushing trolleys.

Or actually, come to think of it, if someone is always putting their baby down on the lovely clear piece of carpet. A lot of other environmental features affect play. One interesting study found that when children were in semi-confined spaces that made them feel big, they persisted with sociodramatic play for longer. (Tegano, Moran, DeLong, Brickey, & Ramassini, 1996.) Open spaces invite children to run.

If you strategically arrange the furniture to create meandering pathways you will probably not need to remind children to walk inside. And of course people stay and play longer in spaces that are physically comfortable.

There is also research into children’s perspectives of their own environments. These studies often find that child and adult priorities are at cross purposes; children prefer privacy while adults prefer open space for easy supervision. (Millei & Gallagher, 2011; Smith & Barker, 2000).

## Some key pointers if you are having a shift around

- Observe the children for a few weeks. Are there areas they avoid? Areas they flit through? Any places where conflict happens regularly? Why? Too crowded? Too dark? The resources they need are not in a convenient place? Are some areas too squished for the amount of children who want to play there?
- Ask the children what they like best. Get them to show you their favourite place and ask why it's their favourite.
- Notice your main transit zones. Do people move too quickly? Walk over each other?
- Think about WHY you are moving things. What is causing problems? Write down every problem you can think of. Will your new plan solve that problem? Could your new plan unintentionally create new problems?
- What goes with what? Blocks go best on carpet—it's more comfortable for sitting and kneeling. Playdough, on the other hand, goes best far away from carpet. Collage and carpentry work well near power points so you can use hot glue guns. Resources should be near creation stations – if people have to walk too far from the easel to the paper supply, it is unlikely to be replenished regularly enough for enthusiastic painters.
- Think about zones – it can help to divide your centre into quiet zones and noisy zones, messy zones and clean zones.
- Think about compatible areas of play – junk goes well with carpentry and collage, dress ups go well with family play and music.
- Think about your adult chairs and couches. It helps to spread them around the centre rather than have them in one place. Having adult seating in the library will encourage reading. A quiet, semi-private area may be appreciated for breastfeeding.
- Look at pictures of other centres to get inspiration  
And most important of all – have fun! If it doesn't work you can always change it all back again.

**Carolyn Hogg**  
Federation Professional Development

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# Set a child up for life - talk more and talk differently

By Emma Quigan, Project Manager, Talking Matters NZ

**The research is clear. Children's early experiences shape their overall development and ability to learn. The first three years are particularly important for building the capacity to love, learn, think and communicate. Interaction and talk help shape a child's brain architecture and influences their social, emotional and intellectual capabilities throughout their lives.**

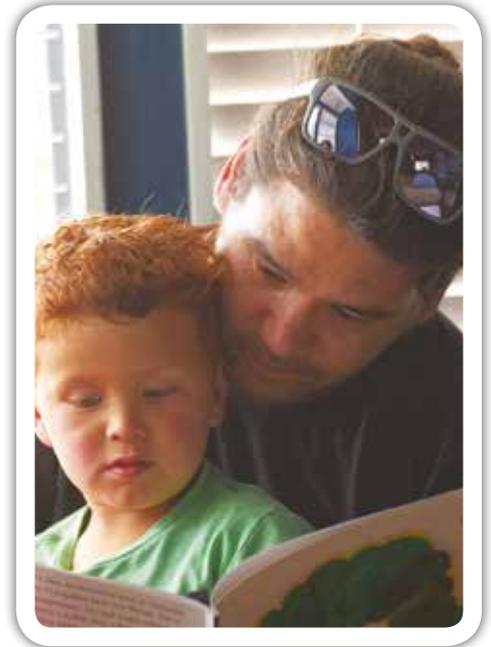
Talk is important in whatever languages families use – it doesn't have to be in English! For babies and toddlers, the language/s of their family matter most. Being bilingual is amazing. Sometimes parents don't know whether they are optimising these early days with their children, or what they could do to make things even better.

*"Those we see doing well at school are strong in their first language. A successful bilingual, biliterate person – isn't that what we want for our children?" Dr Rae Si'ilata, University of Auckland.*

Functional talk – the talk of everyday wants and needs – may be loving but it is not enough on its own to grow and expand a child's understanding and expressive power in deep and meaningful ways. Children who don't experience a lot of interaction and talk may not grow a wide vocabulary, may struggle to express themselves and have limited access to complex ideas and thinking. In turn, this affects their thinking, creativity and problem-solving and ability to form relationships. They may struggle to read and write.

*"Experiences, in the context of safe and loving relationships, of being told stories, sung to, spoken with and read to right from the moment a child is born, builds a rich base for language and future learning." Wendy Nelson, the Brainwave Trust Aotearoa.*

Dr Janie van Hees of the University



of Auckland's Marie Clay Research Centre has found that the oral language children have when they start school directly impacts on their ability to think and to learn. Some children are starting school in New Zealand with 6,000 words in their expressive vocabulary. Those children are more likely to be able to build relationships, ask for help, express their ideas and opinions and absorb new knowledge and experiences. This



is the optimum start. Other children may start only able to use about 3,000 words. Those children may struggle to express themselves and may find the transition to school more challenging. Along with a lack of vocabulary, they will lack confidence and verbal fluency.

*“Among the 7000 children in our study, there’s at least a 12 per cent difference in language between the affluent and poorer children at 2 years and widening by 4 years. It might not sound like much but that’s thousands of children every year falling behind by age 2. And it’s widening by the age of 4. If you’ve got a language gap, you’re also more likely to have more problems with health and behaviour. The language gap is a proxy for a whole cluster of emerging problems. It’s telling us how important those first 2 years are.” Associate Professor Susan Morton, Director, the Growing Up in NZ Study.*

A slow start can have significant negative consequences. Children who are not reading fluently by about the age of eight are at higher risk of disengaging early from education. About 40 per cent of the adult population struggle to read to the level society demands. Parents who are not confident readers may not be sure of how to read to their children and may be anxious about reading in case they make mistakes. Some homes have few books and not all families or cultures have a history of reading to children. Families may believe that learning to read is something that only happens when a child starts school. Parental time and work pressure, and the amount of screen time children experience (from TV, phones and computers), may also be having an impact on how much and in what ways parents talk to their children.

As a caregiver, you have so much more to offer than a screen or an app. But that doesn’t mean you need to feel guilty about using them. Being realistic, as parents we are going to use technology to look after our kids at some point. Great if it’s so you can have a conversation with them about what they’re seeing or hearing. If it’s so you can do the washing, that’s also great. It’s about balance and realizing that technology can play an important role in positive talk and interaction with babies and toddlers.

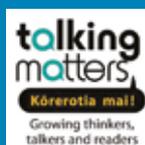
[www.Playcentre.org.nz](http://www.Playcentre.org.nz)



## Things you can do

**A few tips to help you have rich conversations with your child. Use the language you are most comfortable with:**

- 1 Talk with your baby – even if it feels odd. We can describe the environment to babies from the day they are born. It’s not boring for them. The world is a new place!
- 2 Respond to your baby or child’s ways of communicating with you. It might not always be words. When your baby points at something, they are telling you something. When they start babbling, they are also talking to you. As adults we can interpret their body language, smiles and sounds and gift them the words at just the right time. We can say those words as they would if they could.
- 3 Wait before moving onto the next topic or idea and give your child a chance to respond. While children learn from hearing us adults talk, they benefit even more from being able to take a turn. Sometimes this means waiting and giving them space and time to think
- 4 Gift juicy words. It can be tempting to simplify our language for young children in an effort to help them understand. Children will pick up everyday words – because they hear them every day. We could describe something as big or we chose words like giant, enormous or massive
- 5 Read books with your baby – it’s never too early. A great thing about books is that they can introduce words, ideas and concepts that we don’t come across all the time. They can open up new worlds to us. Books don’t always need to be read cover to cover in one go. Pausing to chat about the pictures can extend what children know. Why not link the story to your child’s experience e.g. “There’s a fluffy dog. He’s a bit like the friendly one we saw at the park.”



Talking Matters NZ is an initiative of COMET Auckland and the NEXT Foundation to get parents, whānau and communities talking more and differently to babies and toddlers. For more information or to join us, go to [www.talkingmatters.org.nz](http://www.talkingmatters.org.nz) or on Facebook @TalkingMattersNZ



# Playcentre

## – Being a co-operative

**As the biggest co-operative in Aotearoa, Playcentre holds a very important place in the fabric of New Zealand society, and is an organisation many of us hold close to our hearts. For the last 70 years Playcentre has seen groups of parents coming together to make decisions about things that matter, influencing the things they care about and working together in ways that create opportunities for the whole. These are values that have been around since Playcentre's inception, and are ones we still care deeply about in 2018.**

It is incredible to think that for many of us, our time as Playcentre parents has provided us with skills that we have carried through to many other aspects of our lives, long after we have left our time on session. These are leadership skills, the ability to get along in a group, and the skills to make decisions that are long lasting and satisfying to everyone.

I think that Playcentre training on a resume is a strong indicator of an awareness of what it means to be a team player, an understanding of how to look after the emotional wellbeing of a group and the ability to hold a process and reach decisions.

We do understand that being part of a co-operative takes time, energy and commitment and that at times there

seem to be more meetings and talking than decisions. But we also believe that through this process, when these decisions are made, they are effective and long lasting ones.

One of the things that has stood out for me in my Playcentre training is the idea that within a co-operative, every time a new person joins or leaves you become a new group. A group in a constant state of forming and change requires a collective generosity and an adaptability. There needs to be space for the newest member to be visible, as well as space held for the more established members. This requires patience, because there will be times where you will be going over old ground again. It also requires

risk, the willingness to put faith in the relationships you have with others, and an ability to trust and work with their ideas.

It is these sorts of things that are magical, and ones that go far beyond Playcentre life. So long live the co-operative, and the skills, values and principles that Playcentre has so sophisticatedly woven into our everyday existence. May we celebrate these as we take them into our communities, our places of work and other organisations, spreading the joy that only being part of a co-operative can bring.

Cissy Rock  
Change Manager

# The nature of children's interactions in a mixed-age setting

**Mixed-age settings have their own uniqueness and provide new opportunities for the development of a sense of social responsibility and togetherness. As part of a Masters of Education thesis, time was spent in one Playcentre setting observing children's interactions. Small scaled and not a comparison study, this study drew heavily on existing research into mixed-age setting and young children's social interactions.**

The study provided some interesting details into the interactions that the study children had within this one Playcentre including that age made a difference to:

- who spent time observing and imitating others
- who was observed and imitated
- the techniques and strategies that children used to engage others
- the preferred partner that children engaged with
- the perceived leaders of the centre

## Mixed-Age learning

A key component of Playcentre Philosophy is that mixed-age settings are beneficial for children's learning. Now more than ever young children have reduced opportunity to engage with peers from differing ages due to societal changes such as it being unsafe to play in the street, organised care and increased after school activities. Yet there is much learning from interacting with peers across the years. Research (Evangelou, 1989, Katz, 1995) shows that pro-social behaviours seem to flourish more in a mixed-age environment and that cognitively, peer tutoring and working within the zone of proximal

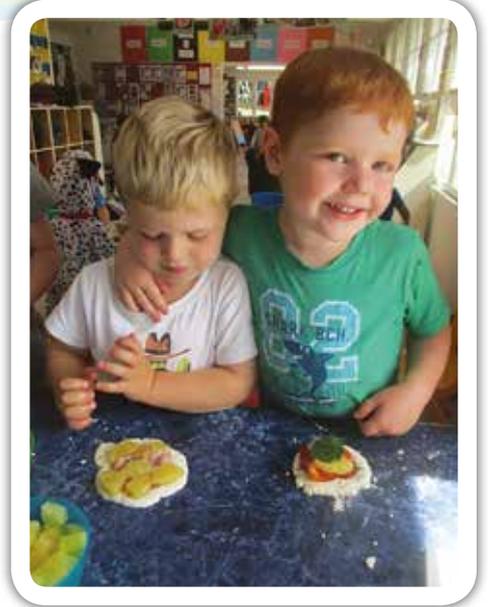


development seem to occur more readily. Older children tend to take on a leadership role while younger children have the opportunity to observe more advanced practices.

## Watching to learn – observation and imitation

Watching others is one way of learning about the world; children and adults regularly observe others to learn. Through observation young infants gain knowledge and skill which support their interactions with the cultural context that surrounds them. In this study, younger children were drawn to older children when choosing a peer to observe or interact with. Often, even when engaged in solitary play, infants and toddlers will be watching the interactions of those around them. However, it was just not the infants and toddlers drawn to observing others. Observation of older peers occurred for all the children involved in the study with the three year olds being drawn to observing the older four year olds at play. The older four year olds were drawn to watching the school children at the school next door or observing older children when they attended Playcentre sessions with their wh nau. Overall, in terms of time spent watching others, it was the younger children that spent the most time observing their older peers.

Imitation of others actions would often occur as a result of this observation as children copy, internalise actions and repeat what they have observed others to do. Imitation is not always immediate in occurrence with children often replicating this at a later period of time. At the Playcentre where the research was conducted, it was the youngest children that most often engaged in more immediate imitation of others, often copying the actions of others while alongside them. This imitation supported younger children's learning. An example of this is when an 18 month old female spent time



observing a group of 3+ year olds at a sponge painting activity watching as one child used a different technique to the others at the table as he dipped the sponge into paint and make shapes on the paper. Later on during the session, she returned to the paint activity and imitated the actions she had observed earlier to make a painting. As noted, older children were the ones selected to be observed and imitated and while there were times they were aware of being watched by younger children, this did not interrupt their play. It would seem that in this context, observing and being observed was part of the life in the centre.

## Engaging with others

The aspect of age was further highlighted when considering how children engaged with each other. Again, older children were the preferred partner to engage with. As would be expected, strategies used to initiate play increased with age. For younger children with developing vocabulary, objects were often used as a way to initiate play such as the passing of an item to another in an attempt to engage in play. Overtime, this changed to verbal requests to engage with

another. Children of all ages seemed to accept the different approaches made by other children including much younger children.

Engaging with others can occur on many different levels such as; how to engage with an individual, how to enter into existing group play, how to exit group play – all important life skills. It also extends to how to protect play and in this study, protection of play was only observed by the older 4+ year olds. Protection of play enables existing play to continue even when interrupted by other children or adults and involved a range of learned strategies (ignoring, saying 'no' or 'we're friends') so that the existing play is maintained. While there were instances the older children did protect their play and not allow newcomers to enter into it, there were also times that they did welcome newcomers into the play. Given that the oldest children in this study received the most play engagement requests from others, it may be that the protection of play strategies were used to abate some of these attempts for engagement and enable the continuation of sustained play.

### Friendship

A friendship is a relationship between two children and as children develop and age, the quality of friendship deepens, cultivating in a special friendship which often children call 'best friends'. During this study, the oldest of the children observed had a special friendship which occurred with another child of the same gender and similar age. The special friendship was denoted by a number of actions such as greeting each other upon arrival, playing together, conspiring together, conflict and sharing an on-going connection. While all of these aspects are important and not to be undervalued, it is conflict that often causes concern to educators and parents. Conflict is essential for peer development and children need to learn how to re-engage with a friend after a disagreement, which involve a range of problem solving skills. Special friendships support the development of conflict resolution skills as the two friends find ways to work through the disagreement. Adults do need to be ever watchful to ensure safety is never compromised while affording children the opportunity to resolve disagreements themselves.

### Conclusion

Mixed-age settings have their own uniqueness. This study found that such a setting provides opportunities for the development of social responsibility. Being in a mixed-age Playcentre, meant that the younger children had the opportunity to observe, imitate, interact with and practice engaging older, more experienced others in the centre environment. There were opportunities to contribute to the social rules and responsibilities and their non-verbal communication was often responded to by older children. For older children, being in a mixed-age setting enabled them to develop and strengthen a range of strategies and skills to enter into play with others and engage in play with their 'special friend' as well as with others. Being the subject of younger children's observation and imitation, meant that the older children often took on the Tuakana (more experienced) role to the younger children's Teina (less experienced). Sometimes, this tuakana role was intentional and the older children knew they were helping, other times the older children either weren't aware of it or did not demonstrate an awareness. The older children were accepting of the non-verbal approaches by the younger children and did not seem to object to being the focus of these children's attention from time-to-time. The older children also demonstrated this awareness by using different approaches to engage with others depending on the age of the child – often a more nurturing approach with younger members of the centre community and more direct approaches with older or same-age peers. Overall, it seemed that the older children naturally carried a leadership role and previous research into mixed-age settings also found this noting facilitative leadership is more evident in a mixed-age setting when compared to a same-age setting (Katz, Evangelou & Hartman, 1990).

The nature of children's interactions were empowering for each individual as they provided opportunities for the younger to learn from the older, while the older and more experienced were leaders of the group. This study also found that all children were safe in the mixed-age environment – younger children were not in danger from older children, nor was the older children's play disrupted by the younger children. In fact, often the older children would

signal to adults if they perceived a danger for the younger children e.g. asking an adult to put away a saw from the carpentry table when an 18th month old was nearby.

The study indicates that it is important that there is a balance in the make-up of the mixed-age setting to ensure that there are children of different ages within the setting as well as children of similar ages as this provides the opportunity for special friendships to develop and ensures that there is a range of peers to interact with, observe and to lead.

*Tara Fagan is an advocate for mixed-age learning which lead to her researching her Masters of Education thesis on the topic. Tara attended Rakaia Playcentre as a child and her three children attended Johnsonville Playcentre. Inspired by her learning through the Adult Education Programme at Playcentre, Tara went onto further study completing a Bachelor of Education (ECE) and then a MEd. Tara is currently Project Director of Raranga Matihiko | Weaving Digital Futures at Te Papa Tongarewa. Tara's full thesis can be accessed at: <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/1057>*

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My child's first friend was 4 years old, my child was 13 months. That friendship wouldn't have been possible, if she hadn't met him in a place where people of varying ages have equal access to the environment. They wouldn't even have met anywhere but Playcentre, nowhere else did she meet a variety of ages of children. They were good friends, they loved exploring the same schemas together, they shared humour and kindness and asked each other to visit.

He was the youngest child of three and liked being bigger and more able and knowledgeable. She liked that together they could achieve things she wasn't coordinated or strong enough to do by herself. Mostly they liked that they had interests and humour in common.

My daughter has kept on liking company of different ages, she's now 15 and is on the u24 Mixed team that next year will represent New Zealand in Ultimate (an athletic dream sport played with a frisbee). I doubt she would be able to fit so beautifully into a team of people who are mostly over 20 if respectful mixed age play hadn't been such a big part of her early life.

Susan Harper (Wilton Playcentre 2002-2009)

## Tuakana – Teina, and the benefit of mixed age sessions... Taking the fear out of being the last one standing.

Building the principles of Nga Hononga "Relationships" in the kaupapa of mixed age sessions at Playcentre can be clearly seen in the tuakana-teina relationships that are built between older and younger children.

We often worry that if there are not tamariki the same age that this will have a detrimental effect on our children's social skills and overall development. I have experienced this now for 21 years and each time as my tamariki have got older that being the oldest child with not many younger ones has not made any difference to the social skills of any of my tamariki, they have all transitioned into the school environment fairly seamlessly.

If well supported when there is a lack of older children in a Playcentre it could have a very positive flow on effect, the younger children benefit from the nurturing qualities of the older child and the older child can benefit from either having concentrated adult time or more freedom to explore without interruption from adults involving themselves in their play because they are more focused on the smaller tamariki.

Older children have opportunities to take responsibility for their own independence and their own learning when they are given the space to be able to make independent choices. Older children can be excellent role models, we know our younger children well and when we are with them we can support the older children to interact with them in the ways in which we know our children will respond.

We as kaiako need to be aware of the older tamariki and if we notice that their behaviour has become not so positive then have we considered if we are providing them with the opportunities to make positive choices and are we interacting with them enough to know that they are receiving a good balance of attention and independent play.

Younger tamariki learn what they see others do, by providing opportunities for positive interaction and trying new things strengthens the younger child's real life experiences and gives them the ability to practice these skills with the older tamariki.

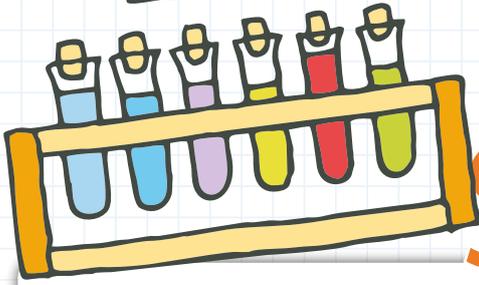
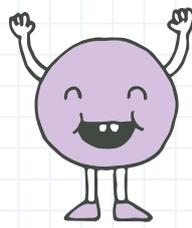
When an older child asks, "would you like to play with me" it helps cement in a younger child's language and social database and positive skills for interaction.

Pip Brunn

Terrance End Playcentre, Life Members Centre Districts Playcentre Association



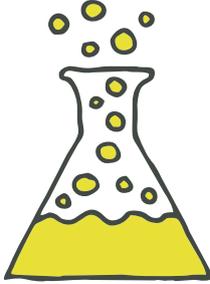
$$E = mc^2$$



# SCIENCE AT

## What learning can we see in the science area?

- Cause and effect
- Sensory
- Observation skills
- Making connections
- Questioning
- Problem-solving
- Language
- Practical life skills
- Categorisation



Science is often an area of play that is utilised, yet can be the most fascinating and which provides a diverse range of learning opportunities.

## What tikanga do we need to be aware of?

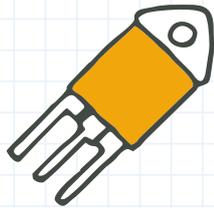
**Kaitiakitanga** – we are the guardians of our land, each other and animals.

**Manaakitanga** – we show care for others and the resources we use.

**Rangatiratanga** – it is important that we support our tamariki by empowering them to be leaders and explorers.

## A tip!

The internet is your friend! If a child asks a question you don't know the answer to, find out! And then find out if there's any child-friendly experiments related to it!



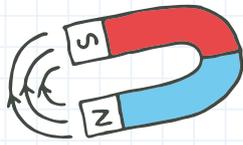
## Some simple experiments - give them a go!

- **Static electricity:** simply put some polystyrene balls into a bottle and rub on the carpet!
- **Salt Effects:** freeze blocks of ice with toy insects/bugs/dinosaurs frozen inside and then have the children sprinkle salt on top and used pipettes
- **Explore fire:** simply blow out a candle and ask where they think the flame went and to extend it... put coloured water into a dish, float a tea light candle in it, put a jar over the top and watch what happens. Discuss the risks of fire with children.
- **Eggs:** make dinosaur, kiwi or tuatara eggs with a mix of sand, flour, mud and coffee granules for children to smash open with a hammer, chisel away at, use the brushes etc
- **Rainbow cabbage water:** boil outer unusable red cabbage leaves to make purple liquid, add vinegar and it turns pink, then add baking soda and it turns blue and then green and then it fizzes
- **Magnet explorer bottles:** fill plastic bottles with various objects (eg. pins, nails, marbles, wood, fabric) and let the children discover which items are magnetic
- **Carbon dioxide gas:** the classic way to make carbon dioxide gas is in the sandpit making volcanos using baking soda and coloured vinegar. Another way is to freeze vinegar and sprinkling over some baking soda, the reaction is a lot slower.
- **Make a sundial:** plant a stake in the ground, and mark the shadow it creates. Check the shadow on a regular basis, talking about the sun's movement, daytime etc.
- **Sink or swim:** add a selection of floatables and sinkables items into a bowl, one by one and hypothesise whether it will sink or float
- **Preparing and cooking food:** is a great activity for all ages to enjoy and taking part in. The children can touch, see, smell and taste what they are making.

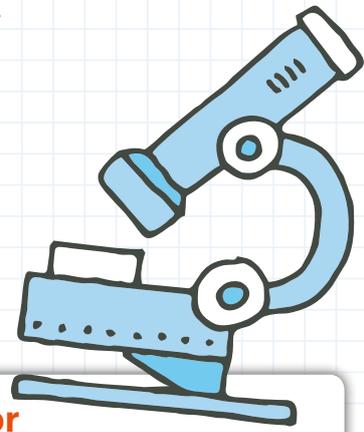


## Recommended books

- The Kitchen Science Cookbook by Nanogirl (Dr Michelle Dickinson)
- Quarto Education Science in Action series (including electricity, light and dark and the five senses)



By Pennie O'Connor  
Whitford Playcentre  
Auckland Region



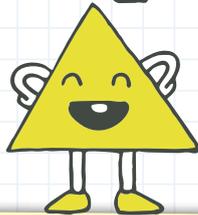
# PLAYCENTRE

that is under-resourced and under-  
stimulating (for children and adults)  
range of learning opportunities.

## Science Is Great For Language Development

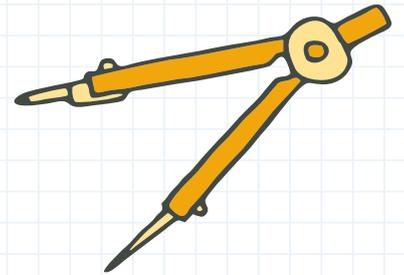
The science area is a great opportunity to really support children's language, often to introduce new specialised words:

- Encourage children to share their thinking
- Introduce new vocabulary in context
- Model correct grammar (eg. a child says, "I builded it", respond with "yes, you built it")
- Describe what you're doing as you're doing it
- Narrate the child's play
- Notice and name the learning



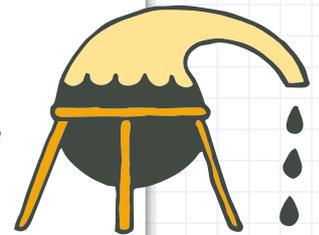
### A tip!

Books are fantastic provocations. Have a look to see what science books you have in your science area such as New Zealand wildlife, animals, life cycles, atlas, how things works, electricity and other sciences.



## Making a start

Talking and asking questions can support children to explore their interests further. For example, a child looking up at the clouds says "what is a cloud"? To support the child's interest the educator takes the child to the library and reads a book about clouds and weather, other children come to listen. One child asks "can we make a cloud?" Back at centre the educator sets up a simple experiment using water in a glass jar, shaving foam and dye in pipettes. Children eagerly participate and new children join in. The discussion turns to how the colours are mixing, moving and changing. An educator brings over some paper for the children to capture the creativity on paper.



### A tip!

When documenting the learning taking place leave a section to capture the child's voice, ask them what they enjoyed and to describe what they saw plus what they would like to do next and write it down to follow up on.

## Small Worlds

Small world setups are a great way to extend interests, particularly in nature. These could include things such as hiding bugs in the garden, Jurassic Park in the sandpit, setting up a micro habitat for cicada shells, or terrariums. Insect kingdoms can be set up with natural items and sawdust.

The best place to start is to ask "What are the children interested in?" and then consider what types of materials would provoke their thinking and curiosity.



# Embracing diversity at our centre

Wakatipu Playcentre, located in Queenstown, has families from many diverse ethnic backgrounds with around half of our parents born overseas. Four years ago (in 2015) we were lucky enough to have a parent join who had lived in Japan for many years and spoke Japanese fluently. Queenstown has a large Japanese population and many Japanese families have joined our Playcentre. To make the Japanese families feel welcomed we offered Course 1 and induction tours in Japanese, and also shared and learnt a few Japanese songs. In the Spring of that year, Tamara (the parent who had spent many years in Japan) remembered fondly picnics under the Cherry Trees in Japan, and decided to organise a "Sakura" Cherry Blossom Picnic for our Playcentre under the Cherry Tree by Lake Wakatipu. This was a great success and has become an annual tradition for our Playcentre.



## Expanding our celebrations

Last year we expanded on this by celebrating some of the other cultures at our centre with a Matariki evening, Family Curry Night supported by our local Indian family and good old Kiwi BBQ for our AGM. All these evenings and get togethers have been a great success and have really brought us together as a community and helped us to learn about each other and celebrate our differences.



## Celebrating our diversity visually

Visually at our centre we have celebrated our diversity through our Whānau Tree and Pepeha wall and Map of the world.

## AWARENESS DAYS 2018

<b>FEB</b>	Waitangi Day 6th February
	Chinese New Year 16th February
<b>APRIL</b>	ANZAC Day 25th April
<b>MAY</b>	Samoan Language Week 27th May – 2nd June
<b>JUNE</b>	Matariki 15th June
<b>JULY</b>	Cook Islands Language Week 29th July – 4th August
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	Tongan Language Week 2nd September – 8th September
	Māori Language Week 10th – 16th September
	Tuvaluan Language Week 30th September – 6th October
<b>OCTOBER</b>	Fijian Language Week 7th October – 13th October
	Niuean Language Week 14th – 20th October
	Tokelauan Language Week 21st October – 27th October
<b>NOVEMBER</b>	Diwali 6th–10th November

These are suggestions only, reach out to your families and whānau to find out what other days might be good to celebrate.

Amanda Russell  
Wakatipu Playcentre, located in Queenstown



## Nestled amongst the people

**Attending Kōhanga Reo was a little more than simply playing, learning and experiencing things in the Māori language. Ultimately for some of us, it was a place where our values about life began to form, while for others again, they were simply reinforced and solidified further.**

The type of upbringing most of us enjoyed can be found in the word “kōhanga” or “nest”. It was a safe place, a place of nurturing and development. We were nourished like young chooks, new to the world and all that it has to offer. We were protected, those around us saw value in our growth.

We learnt to take care of each other as our fundamental attitudes about relationships and the way we behave toward other human-beings and the world around us began to take root.

We learnt about the importance of relationships with our natural environment and that no living thing in existence can be fully understood in isolation from the context which conceived it. We learnt about connectivity and synergy – it wasn’t until later in life when we became adults did we find the words and language we needed to express and articulate our childhood experiences and what those experiences taught us.

Te Reo Māori was our language of learning and connectivity – it taught us a way of seeing the world.

### **Language: A Window into Worldview**

Now able to recognise the more obvious aspects of language differences, many people think that a language is simply a means of communication – different words which

sound different, spoken by another people. To be frank – this is simply packaging.

The true value of a language can be found in the worldview that it attempts to articulate and project out onto the world – we use our words to name and define the reality of the human experience and as a result, different peoples over time have come to define their realities with a noticeably distinct thought-process that underpins a language they have developed to communicate that view from its own cultural standing-point.

That thought process, among many things, is heavily influenced by the contextual background of that people which has evolved since time immemorial. It is this key difference that makes language unique.

### **Recreating the World of our Ancestors through Language**

One of the first values one can expect to learn at Kōhanga is the concept of ‘aroha’. Each and every child is a community investment monitored by all and this in itself is a form of love.

Beyond simply ‘believing’ in these things, are the behaviours we are taught, which give practical effect to these concepts and values so that they are brought to life into our everyday realities.

It is for this reason why you are taught to ‘aro’ to the ‘hā’ of one another – that is ‘to observe’ and be ‘attentive’ to the ‘breath of life’ of another human-being and to have a compassionate regard to the gift of the breath of life inherited by us all and which exists in our fellow humankind.

If language has an innate ability to reflect our worldviews back at us, such an intrigue should beg the question: “What else can we learn from this language that we already speak and how much does it tell us about ourselves, this interpretation of reality we’ve inherited through our language and our own attempts to convert our words into the actions of our everyday life?”

The very existence of kōhanga Reo asks us this key philosophical question, indeed, the purpose of Kōhanga was to create a nest dedicated to the survival of the Māori way of thinking and seeing – Te Reo Māori was just an obvious starting place.

### **Ngaa Rauira Puumanawawhiti**

*Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Kahungunu, Tūhoe, Ngā Rauru-Kii-Tahi, Muriwhenua*

### **Cultural Market Manager**

Te Puia | New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute

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# In memory of Robbie Burke

**My name is Di Banks, I am from the Wairarapa, and I have the privilege of trying to paint a picture of Robbie as I knew her in Playcentre where she outlasted me at both ends of her career. I talked with a number of people but in particular, Joy Andersen who was National President immediately prior to Robbie, and Barbara Chapman who is one of the wisest women I know. Both send their love to the Burke family.**



Robbie was a woman who was not an extrovert, she did not seek the spotlight and was a reluctant star. However, she was a star with many, many facets. For at least a portion of its life, a star shines. Other characteristics of a star, including diameter and temperature, change over its life, while the star's environment affects its rotation and movement.

I first met Robbie in the late 1980's. She had already been a parent at Cashmere Playcentre for a number of years in almost every role, and part of the Canterbury Association exec for several years. When I met her, she had risen to the position of Federation Property Convenor. She came to the Wairarapa to open a new centre, and I remember someone had made her fingerless gloves which she was thrilled

with, and from there a friendship was born. Property was Robbie's natural place. Her knowledge was astounding and the Ministry of Education put her on a number of working parties because they soon realised that she knew more than they did – and with Robbie it was always better to include her from the start rather than have her point out the inefficiencies and inconsistencies later.

She always liked to think of herself as a rebel who bucked the system, yet her incredible and intellectual way with words meant that she became a constitutional expert. She could analyse details and always find the right words to help clarify our ideas, when writing. I wonder how many Constitutional documents she wrote/crafted/ edited.

A stunning wordsmith – another facet of her star. Such a contrast – a self-styled rebel who actually thrived on order and process.

This order and process knowledge and interest was not only borne out in her constitution work but in the journey of writing her book in 2011. 'Making Consensus Work' is about reaching decisions in a way that all can live with. The epigraph/dedication at the beginning of the book is a true reflection of Robbie, "May we have the patience to listen and the courage to speak". I have only recently read my copy, I can recommend it, and will use it.

For 13 years she was a Federation office holder, something of a record. She was first in property for 8 years, on the team and convenor, before becoming a member of standing committee and then Federation President from 1995 – 1997. She was President in a difficult time for Playcentre when many different and at times conflicting voices needed to be listened to and heard. After this time, Robbie stayed as an advisor, not because she had nowhere to go but because she believed in Playcentre so much she wanted to support it to thrive.

This service was celebrated when she was made a life member in 2010. She didn't stop there and was still actively booking flights and advising Federation and associations right up until her last weekend when she reluctantly reneged on conference in Auckland.

When I was staying with Robbie and David in recent years, the phone rang often, always a landline, and David would say, that is so-and so, this will take an hour... what I always noticed was that Robbie did a lot of listening in those conversations. It is hard to believe now, with fast internet, google docs, chat and constantly being able to edit, but Robbie and I also used to spend hours on the phone, talking into the wee hours, toll calls were cheaper after 10 o'clock. We would write policy, reports, and fax them back and forth,



also stopping to make a cuppa, never hanging up the phone because then the charges restarted. Then off to meetings in Wellington we would go, meeting with Ministers and Ministries, where she was a brightly shining star, everyone knew her, respected her and listened to what she had to say.

Skit night was always important at Conference and National Exec. Dressing up was essential, as in dress ups, and in true Robbie style she would always be in, dress and all. But on the stage, a reluctant and often hard to see star, never at the front, always in the back, supporting encouraging and coming up with the jokes. Joy said she recently found a photo of us all dressed up in ridiculous outfits at a meeting on the West Coast many years ago. It made her laugh just thinking about it.

These were probably the only times in Robbies life that I've known her to willingly wear a dress. Robbie is a great shopping companion where her star

also shone. She knew where every shop was, and enjoyed all of it. I have had extra baggage when leaving from a number of trips to Christchurch. However, most of us will mostly have seen Robbie in blue jeans and a t shirt – probably blue as well. All of the things I have persuaded her to buy over the years, and there certainly have been a few, are probably at the end of her wardrobe with the tags still on. At Pip's and Sarah's weddings, I became an honorary bridesmothers maid, making sure the MOB was sorted and the blue jeans left behind.

Her family were where her star shone brightest – proud of each and every one of them, including her Mum and Dad, who would have never expected to farewell her. Loving the little rebellions that each had, including her Dad, and so proud of the wonderful people they are.

I found this quote recently and thought it fits Robbie, and found

some comfort in it while celebrating her stardom.

"A star falls from the sky and into your hands. Then it seeps through your veins and swims inside your blood and becomes every part of you. And then you have to put it back into the sky. And it's the most painful thing you'll ever have to do and that you've ever done. But what's yours is yours. Whether it's up in the sky or here in your hands."

I have diverted from Playcentre to friendship and that is the gift of Playcentre. Our Playcentre friends are our friends for life. She was fun to be around, a calming influence when that was wanted, or a pleasure to sit with and just be in the moment. I have lost a great friend and one of the rocks in my life. David and family and the Moore family, my love is with you all.

Hei whakapae ururoa, awhi mai awhi atu, tatou tatou e

# They are

## What every child with autism wants you to know

- Sounds, sights and textures maybe normal to you but they can be painful for them
- They are not ignoring you – they don't understand you
- Give them enough time to understand the information you are sharing and allow time for a response
- They prefer routines because they know what to expect
- They are special in their own way
- It is hard for them to tell you what they need because they don't yet know the words
- Be patient and consistent
- Everyone is different and has different needs
- Focus on what they can do rather than what they can't do
- There is no single presentation of autism
- They can be amazingly perceptive
- Repetitive behaviours might be a coping mechanism and therefore should be respected
- To connect you don't need to talk or even touch, you can communicate by the way you look, tone of voice and body language

## How can we support on session

- Ask their parent/ carer what they need as a parent
- Active listening requires an understanding of someone if deep in your own emotions and feelings
- Asking questions without judgement you (and the other parent) can make the choice to find out the child's

## Supporting the child through play:

- Children may find it difficult to choose what to do, be patient
- They may prefer repetitive play focused on their interest
- They may prefer to play by themselves rather than with other children
- They may want to play with other children but do not know how
- They may play with objects differently for example spinning the wheels of a toy car rather than pushing the car around on the floor
- Speak clearly and use simple language
- Be aware of what may trigger a meltdown

# first a child

"I now realise that even the smallest tension can become a big issue since B struggles to work through the feeling of rejection and I've realised that I need to know about all these "happenings" so that I understand if we have resulting behaviour I can support her through and hopefully resolve the problem. She doesn't really discuss these feelings at all and will just look normal or maybe tired. I recently finished B's portfolio. 20 photos were taken in the same timeline and I printed and used them all. There was one particular one that I showed what was really going on inside for her. For me and her dad it's obvious (he spotted it straight away too), but it's not an obvious display of emotions."  
Anon

"Judgement is an issue – there's no look to autism, so when a child is screaming at Playcentre because he can't see me at clean up time other parents who know nothing may think he's naughty and needs discipline or something - in his mind he's freaking out that i've gone and left him behind because time is very hard for him to understand."  
Tracey

## Support our whānau mission:

at support they might need  
ent/ carer  
n open mind. You can't help  
mind you are judging their  
d behaviours  
out interrupting can help  
/ carer) better understand  
allenges  
sensory sensitivities

### Specific behaviour

### Underlying reasons

- Reduced understanding of social rules
- Developing communication skills
- Unaware of others' feeling
- Oversensitive to noise and tone
- Oversensitive to activity
- Anxiety to crowds
- Anxiety to change
- Developing social interaction skills
- Overloaded sensory stimuli
- Challenges with social interaction

# Introducing our Trustee Regional Managers

I asked the Regional Managers to answer some questions:  
What is/was your favourite play area at Playcentre? What has been the most valuable advice you have received from another Playcentre parent? What did you want to be when you grew up? What do you do for fun? What skill would you like to learn? Where you would like to go on holiday, anywhere in the world?



## Jeanette Bell, Northern Region

Tēnā koutou  
Ko Jenette tōku ingoa  
Ko Taupiri tōku maunga  
Ko Kaukapakapa tōku awa

Nō Waikato ōku tipuna  
I tupu ake ahau kei Papakura  
Kei Waitoki tōku kāinga ināinei

Ko Margaret tōku whaea  
Ko Brian tōku matua  
Ko Brent tōku tungāne  
Ko Wayne tōku tungāne  
Ko Clifford tōku tungāne  
Ko Greg tōku tungāne  
Ko Stephen tōku Hoa Tāne  
Ko Connor tōku tama  
Ko Jaime tōku Tamāhine

No reira  
Tēnā Kotou  
Tēnā Kotou  
Tēnā Kotou katoa



Our happy place was the sandpit – my son loved digging in there and our centre kaukapakapa was amazing at volcanoes so we had many happy hours in the sandpit/volcanic island. Later when my daughter was around and moving she was immersed in fantasy play so our sandpit was full of animals and bits of greenery as we created jungles and farms.

The most valuable advice was “It is what it is” – sometimes you just have to accept where things are at and use your energy to make the best of the cards you have rather using your energy against things that you can’t change or influence. In saying that, I’m pretty resourceful so always have a plan “B” up my sleeve to try and find a solution to many of the issues we face.

When I was little I wanted to be a Vet or a zoo keeper. When I was at college I spent a lot of time at our local vet clinic and realised it was maybe less of my thing. I’ve been lucky enough that our family lives on a block of land in Waitoki so we have a real collection of animals for me to look after.

Hello  
My name is Jenette  
Taupiri is my mountain  
Kaukapakapa is my river

My ancestors are from Waikato  
I grew up in Papakura  
I currently live in Waitoki

Margaret is my mother  
Brian is my father  
Brent is my brother  
Wayne is my brother  
Clifford is my brother  
Greg is my brother  
Stephen is my husband  
Connor is my son  
Jaime is my daughter

Therefore  
Hello  
Hello  
Hello to all.

Our family now has college age teenagers so life always seems really busy and at a fast pace. As we live out in the country I also feel like I spend a crazy amount of time driving. As a result when there is a bit of down time, I love nothing more than either hanging out at home with my family and our farm furbabies, riding my horse, or spending time in the garden. In winter this changes to reading a great book or watching a movie in front of the fire or wrapping up warm and a walk on the beach.

I would love to learn to play the guitar and learn Te Reo Māori. Hopefully when life gets a bit less busy I can tackle these.

Mine would be a toss up between Alaska or Africa – I think it would be amazing to see these two extremes and the wildlife there while it still exists!







# Elements of Māori world view

This document was distributed to delegates at the Playcentre Federation Bicultural weekend. Its origins lie in the *Guiding Principles/Kaupapa of Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa* document by Pakake Winiata. With his permission, Alaine Tamati-Aubrey has adapted this document, enabling us to consider the characteristics of a Playcentre Federation based on a Māori world view. Many of the tikanga are discussed with adult education in mind, however there are ways in which each Playcentre can incorporate the ten kaupapa Māori in their sessions on a day-to-day basis.

Through pūrākau, karakia, mōteatea, whakataukī and whakapapa our world view is described and a set of kaupapa are drawn from which the culture is founded. These are the bedrock, the foundation of the culture. The following are kaupapa with working definitions. Growing from within the kaupapa is our tikanga, just like a tree springs from Papatūānuku. The tikanga are actions, methods, processes, and policies that are aligned and consistent with the foundation kaupapa. All tikanga purporting to be Māori can find their bases in kaupapa.

We need to demonstrate how the tikanga of Playcentre are consistent with kaupapa Māori, which themselves are consistent with the Māori world view.

## 1 Manaakitanga

We endeavour to express manaakitanga, or mana enhancing behaviour towards each other, and to others, taking care not to trample another's mana. The concept of manaakitanga includes understanding tapu and mana. In pōwhiri rituals on the marae, the objective is to deal with the tapu and mana of the tangata-whenua and manuhiri in an enhancing, positive way. In our relationships with others we are aware of mana, our own and theirs. We act in a mana enhancing way, by expressing manaakitanga.

### Tikanga

- Our delivery format is maintained and the best teaching and learning related services and kai possible are provided.
- We are generous with our kaiāwhina.

- We are generous with our staff in terms of payments, research grants, professional development, work spaces, leave.
- Our policies foster manaakitanga by management of staff and members.
- Staff are provided with a delivery-training programme to enhance their capacity to teach.
- Annual reviews focus on how Playcentre can be supportive of staff aspirations.
- Reciprocal arrangements are developed between staff and teams.
- Members are looked after from enrolment to completion through a kaimanāki system.
- Members' work and assignments are treated as taonga and looked after properly.

## 2 Rangatiratanga

Rangatiratanga is the expression of the attributes of a rangatira including humility, leadership by example, generosity, selflessness, diplomacy and knowledge of benefit to the membership. Playcentre acknowledges the rangatiratanga of individuals, whānau, centres and associations in its activities. We understand the importance of 'walking the talk', following through on commitments made, manaakitanga, integrity and honesty.

### Tikanga

- Playcentre nurtures and develops rangatira attributes amongst staff and members.
- The contributions made by staff, kaiāwhina and members to Playcentre are regularly acknowledged.
- The activities of senior management are reflective of the attributes of rangatira, of whakaaro Māori.
- All staff and members are considered rangatira in their own right and are treated accordingly.
- High academic standards and excellence contribute to the rangatiratanga of Playcentre.

## 3 Whanaungatanga

The people are our wealth. This system of kinship, including rights and reciprocal obligations (utu) that underpin the social organisation of whānau, centres and associations should be part of the life of this organisation. Whanaungatanga is about being part of a larger whole, of the collective. Māori are related to all living things and thus express whanaungatanga with their surroundings. Whanaungatanga is about knowing you are not alone, but that you have a wider set of acquaintances that provide support, assistance, nurturing, guidance and direction when needed.

Whanaungatanga is the antithesis of Pākehā models of individualism. Independence, 'standing on your own two feet', accusations of nepotism, tribalism and racism and

other such ideas are inconsistent with whanaungatanga. Interdependence with each other rather than independence is the goal.

### Tikanga

- Providing opportunities for the expression of whanaungatanga amongst members and staff.
- Developing policies consistent with whanaungatanga.
- Maintaining close links with life members of Playcentre.
- Defining and maintaining role based systems in our activities.
- Encouraging reciprocity among staff and members.
- Planning and developing extensive support systems for members to enhance sustainability.

## 4 Kotahitanga

This is developing and maintaining a unity of purpose and direction and avoiding approaches and decisions that lead to division and disharmony. A commitment by the organisation through oneness of mind and action to achieving its vision would be the expression of kotahitanga. All are encouraged to make their contribution, to have their say. The collective would then determine what is best and appropriate for the organisation.

### Tikanga

- Keeping people informed and in the loop.
- Providing for contributions from all staff and members to decision-making processes.
- Prioritising the development of unity within the organisation.
- Discouraging division between staff and members.
- Major research projects are conducted across all disciplines.

## 5 Wairuatanga

An emphasis on the fostering of wairuatanga is a unique feature of Playcentre. Wairuatanga is about understanding and believing that there is a spiritual existence in addition to the physical. The physical world is represented by Te Ao Mārama, surrounded and connected to Ngā Rangi Tūhāhā and Ngā Pō, the spiritual realms. We as Māori represent these realms within us, having both a taha kikokiko and a taha wairua. We are intimately connected spiritually to our environment, our maunga, awa, moana and marae, all of which have their own wairua.

The wairua of a person requires nourishment as regularly as the tinana, and the forms of nourishment differ among people. The environs of Playcentre are nourishing and nurturing of the wairuatanga of staff and members.

### Tikanga

- Further developing a wairua nourishing and nurturing environment including the provision of noho puku spaces and marae style environs.
- Encouraging the inclusion of deliveries involving visiting and teaching in natural venues including te ngahere, te moana.
- Encouraging and continuing the practice of karakia and mihimihi at the start of the day.
- Providing for karakia Māori and other belief expression in our activities.
- Mirimiri sessions provided to staff for stress relief.
- Increased involvement by staff in pōwhiri encouraged, including welcoming of new staff.

## 6 Ūkaipōtanga

The presence of Te Tiriti o Waitangi studies as a generic programme of study highlights the importance of this kaupapa and the importance of tūrangawaewae, te hau kainga, to ground themselves to the land and home. Ūkaipō are the places we find ourselves, our strength, our energy. Having a place where you belong, where you count, where you are important and where you can contribute is essential for Māori wellbeing. As a whole person with your identity intact, you can make your contribution.

Playcentre is considered more than a place of service and education. The benefits derived from people being stimulated in their work and study, feeling energetic, believing they are important and having a contribution to make are considerable.

### Tikanga

- Arrangements that foster a sense of importance, belonging and contribution.
- Work related stress management practices.
- Commitment to a higher purpose of the survival of Māori.
- Prioritising stimulating exciting activity.
- Maximising member retention and completion.
- Better communications relying less on email and more on kano ki te kano.
- Developing interdepartmental relationships and cooperation, professionally and personally.

## 7 Pūkengatanga

Te ako, te pupuri, te waihanga, teaching, preserving and creating mātauranga Māori and having a recognised ability in these areas is a reflection of pūkengatanga. This would not be to the exclusion of mātauranga drawn from other traditions, but our traditions should be the priority and the focus for this purpose.

Excellence in our mātauranga Māori academic pursuits is fundamental to our vision.

### Tikanga

- All academic programmes have a clear mātauranga Māori basis.
- A significant proportion of research funding and time is targeted towards the preservation and creation of mātauranga Māori.
- Mātauranga Māori based teaching pedagogy, assessment and evaluation is developed and implemented.
- Noho puku spaces are developed around the rohe.
- On-going support for conference attendance and other opportunities to display the pūkengatanga of Playcentre.

## 8 Kaitiakitanga

Preserving and maintaining the existence of Playcentre so it can continue to fulfil its functions and duties is the essence of this kaupapa. This kaupapa has several facets including:

- the preservation of taonga e.g. te reo, tikanga, kōrero-a-tangata,
  - appropriate financial management that ensures Playcentre does not go bankrupt,
  - accountability to ourselves first, to the Crown and its agencies second.
- The dollar is but one aspect of one of the ten kaupapa,

however it is not being promoted as the paramount consideration in the life of a tikanga Māori organisation, nor the primary motivator to action. It is important however and is part of this kaupapa.

### Tikanga

- Financial management practices consistent with the kaupapa of the organisation.
- Financial accounting practices consistent with the kaupapa of the organisation.
- An extensive recording programme to collect and archive mātauranga Māori kōrero of our life members.

## 9 Whakapapa

This is the foundation of the Māori world view. Insight into the meaning of whakapapa can be found in the kupu itself; to make or move towards papa, or in other words grounding oneself. As Māori we trace our descent from Te Kore, to Te Pō and eventually through to Te Ao Mārama, where we are grounded to Papatūānuku and look upwards to Ranginui. Māori descriptions of the creation, conception to childbirth, the growth of a tree and the acquisition of knowledge are all whakapapa based recitals.

Shirres describes the concept of the eternal present, where in ritual, the past and the present become the present. Ranginui and Papatūānuku and their children

are here and now, our tūpuna are beside us. As such we become one with these ancient spiritual powers and carry out our role in creation and contributing to our future. This is whakapapa.

### Tikanga

- The developing links between members, staff, centres and association through mihimihi sessions and national meetings are promoted and encouraged.
- Whakapapa as an analysis and synthesis tool within the research activity of the Playcentre is promoted.
- Recording (audio and video) of life members.
- Research into the Māori world view is encouraged.

## 10 Te Reo

Halting the decline and the revival of te reo Māori is a focus of activity within the Playcentre organisation. As such, te reo Māori has been identified as a kaupapa of Playcentre, and its revival central to not only the academic pursuits of the Playcentre, but all of its activities.

Te reo Māori is the medium through which Māori articulate a Māori world view. Debate about whether you are Māori if you can't speak Māori is not being promoted. What is being promoted is that a tikanga Māori organisation ought to have te reo Māori as a focus. The survival of our people as Māori will no doubt be enhanced if te reo Māori survives. We simply will not be able to maintain our uniqueness as a people without it.

Our planning, policies, development, course proposals,

staff development have incorporated into them processes and facets that promote te reo Māori and ensure its survival within this organisation and amongst our membership.

### Tikanga

- All official documents and papers of the Playcentre are rendered in Māori e.g. the Constitution and policy statements.
- All staff are provided with the opportunity to become capable speakers and writers of te reo through courses and experiential learning.
- Playcentre strives to improve its delivery of reo programs and the outcomes for members.
- There is development towards establishing a reo Māori environment.

## He Kōrero Whakakapi

There is a lot more work to be done, particularly on the implementation of the kaupapa. It is felt that it is important to have a range of kaupapa rather than try to condense too many ideas under one kaupapa. Where kaupapa are seen to be in opposition in certain conditions, a natural process of prioritising and finding balance will take place. It is suggested the daily decision-making needs to be based on at least one of the kaupapa, whereas major decisions need to find their basis in all ten of the kaupapa.

It is important that Playcentre consider how the adoption of these kaupapa and the resultant tikanga will intersect with other requirements regarding how an organisation should operate. Some of these include the law, notions of best practice, equal employment opportunities, employment contracts and conditions, strategic and business planning etc.

This is an opportunity to forge a new kind of organisation that will be distinctive in the Early Childhood Education landscape.

Pakake Winiata, Kaihautū o Te Whare Mātauranga Māori, is the author of the Guiding Principles/Kaupapa of Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa document on which this article is based.

Alaine Tamati-Aubrey is Point of Contact for Puriri Whakamaru o Taranaki which was re-established in August 2007 and a whānau member of Māori Caucus. She organised the 2009 Playcentre National Māori Hui-a-tau held at Owae Wāitara Marae in Taranaki. Alaine is also a member of the NZPF Promotions Team.

### From time to time the question is asked, "Why?" and, "What is our role as an education provider?"

Some of the answers to these fundamental questions have included:

- to contribute to the development and well-being of Māori in order to promote Māori survival and prosperity;
- to teach, maintain and create mātauranga Māori to ensure our uniqueness as a people and guide us in our decision-making as a people now and in the future;
- to establish and maintain an institution that is a viable, robust and attractive option for Māori.

# Kōrero Mātauranga - let's talk about Education

Question: Why did you start at Playcentre?

Answer: For your children?

Question: Why did you stay at Playcentre?

Answer: For you?

## Our pivotal role in our children's lives

I believe many of us think this way – I have come to understand that it's still actually about the children... our own children as much as for the children of our whānau; our communities; our society and of Aotearoa.

As parents, we have a pivotal role in our own children's lives – throughout their lives. As active citizens, we have a role in society to be advocates for all children in our communities. You're probably quite aware of this already but I have developed a deeper understanding of my role as a parent and as an active citizen as my own children have grown. Particularly over the 5 years I was studying at University and even now, I am still trying to work out what the role of parents actually is... especially within education.

At Playcentre, our role is defined by our Philosophy statements:

### Vision

**Whānau tupu ngātahi –  
Families growing together.**

### Mission

Playcentre is a family organisation where:

- we empower adults and children to play, work, learn and grow together
- we honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and celebrate people's uniqueness
- we value and affirm parents as the first and best educators of their children so that whānau are strengthened and communities enriched.



Our Playcentre cooperative community often enables us to become better parents, better advocates for our children and empowers us to become truly engaged in our children's education. We are the ones with the vested interest in our children's lives; their success is our success. It is up to us, the parents, to support our children throughout their educational journey, as well as the rest of their lives.

Playcentre, through our members, has had a strong voice within the early childhood arena over the years; you only need to listen to our Life Members

(like Beverley Morris) and look at old Playcentre Journals to see the influence we have had on the curriculum (the development and the review of Te Whāriki) along with the development of early childhood policy as a whole in Aotearoa.

We will soon have this opportunity again. Some of you may be involved in the Education Summits being held in May. I encourage you to complete the survey in the Ministry of Education's online engagement forum (<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/>).

## We need your feedback for the 10 Year Strategic Plan

Later this year, public consultation will begin on the draft 10 Year Strategic Plan which is being developed by an independent Ministerial Advisory Group and a Reference Group. This Reference Group is made up of sector representatives (including me, as the Playcentre representative) and academic experts.

The Minister of Education, the Hon Chris Hipkins, said recently:

“Quality early learning provides children with a strong foundation for

their future learning that can influence the rest of their lives... There is a strong case for having a strategic plan to set out a systematic and stepped approach to continuing to develop and strengthen the early learning sector, to meet the needs of children and their families and whānau” <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/early-learning-strategic-plan-terms-reference-announced>

The ‘Terms of Reference’ for the Reference Group describe the purpose

and scope for the work along with a range of focusing questions. To support me in this role, we are looking for a group of Playcentre members to provide some feedback on these questions. If you are interested in providing your thoughts’ on all or any of these questions, please email them to [advocacy@Playcentre.org.nz](mailto:advocacy@Playcentre.org.nz). This will give me a wider view of the Playcentre perspective when I’m at the table with the other members of the Reference Group.



### Focusing questions may include:

#### Raising quality

- How can government and sector work together to raise the quality of early learning provision?
  - How can we ensure that every child accesses a rich curriculum and empowering pedagogies?
  - What is the best approach to developing teaching and leadership capability across the sector?
  - What regulatory and funding settings best support quality provision across diverse service types?
  - How do we build an early learning sector that enables continuity as children travel across educational setting, including school or kura?
  - How best is quality measured across the early learning sector? How will we know its improving?
  - How do we develop and support parents and whānau understanding of what high quality services look like in order for them to advocate for their children?

#### Improving equity

- How can government and sector work with parents and whānau to improve educational equity?
  - How can government ensure that all children regardless of background or learning needs access high quality early learning?
  - How can we foster connections

with broader social sector agencies, iwi and communities to support children’s well-being and ensure that they have the support they need?

- How can we drive pedagogical innovation and interventions that support equity?

#### The role of choice

- How best can the government and sector support parents and whānau understanding of high quality ECE so that they can make informed choices in their children’s early learning while avoiding unnecessary duplication and quality services being undermined by competition?
  - How best can Government manage the match between demand and supply of early learning services?
  - How can choice be balanced against the drive for quality and equity?
  - How can our sector best support te reo Māori to thrive?
  - How best can the early learning sector respond to the educational, cultural and language aspirations of parents and whānau?
  - What choices should be available to parents regarding the type, philosophy and location of early learning service they can access?

(<http://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/consultations/Strategic-Plan-ToR-no-header.pdf>)

Playcentre has a unique position in the early learning sector in that our membership is intrinsically connected to the outcomes for our children; they are OUR children. The more we can engage with this process, the stronger the voice of Playcentre will become.

**Susan Bailey**  
Tāngata Tiriti Co-President  
New Zealand Playcentre Federation



### Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki

The previous strategic plan for early childhood education “Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki” (2002 – 2012) was developed as a “journey towards increased participation, improved quality and stronger relationships” (Ministry of Education: 2002). I see this as still being relevant today, particularly the ‘stronger relationships’ part. Several government policies and societal perceptions/expectations revolve around parents being in the paid workforce and do not value the role of parents as being actively involved or engaged in their children’s education, as we do at Playcentre.



# Tīvaevae Cook Islands communal art

Tīvaevae are beautiful patchwork quilts handmade by women in the Cook Islands. They are often given as gifts at important occasions such as weddings, funerals, pakoti'anga rauru (boy's haircutting ceremonies), birthdays, gifts to VIPs and dearly loved people in the family and the community because they have great intrinsic value and become family heirlooms. By custom they are not measured by monetary value, its value is reflected by the time, patience and love put into the work of art. Tīvaevae are often made from brightly coloured fabrics.

## History

It is believed that the art of quilting and needlework was taught by the Christian wives of missionaries and nuns from Tahiti who taught embroidery, needlework, sewing and crochet

in the 19th Century. Tīvaevae has played an important role in the daily life of Cook Island women. It is largely a social activity and is nearly always carried out communally.

Despite its European origin,

patterns and techniques have evolved. The tīvaevae reflect the women's surroundings and designs include geometric shapes, flowers, leaves, birds, fish, insects and animals.

## Activities to explore

### Looking at tīvaevae

Show children tīvaevae. You can take them on a trip so they can see the size of them, bring in a book or print out some copies of the artwork.

Talk to the children about the symbols, colours and patterns used. Do they recognise the flowers? How many times are they repeated? Talk about how they have been made.

### Making your own tīvaevae

Explore sewing with the young children using a large eye plastic or embroidery needle for example:

- Punch holes in a paper plates for the children to thread wool through
- Children can cut up felt to sew together or sew on another piece of felt
- Explore finger knitting

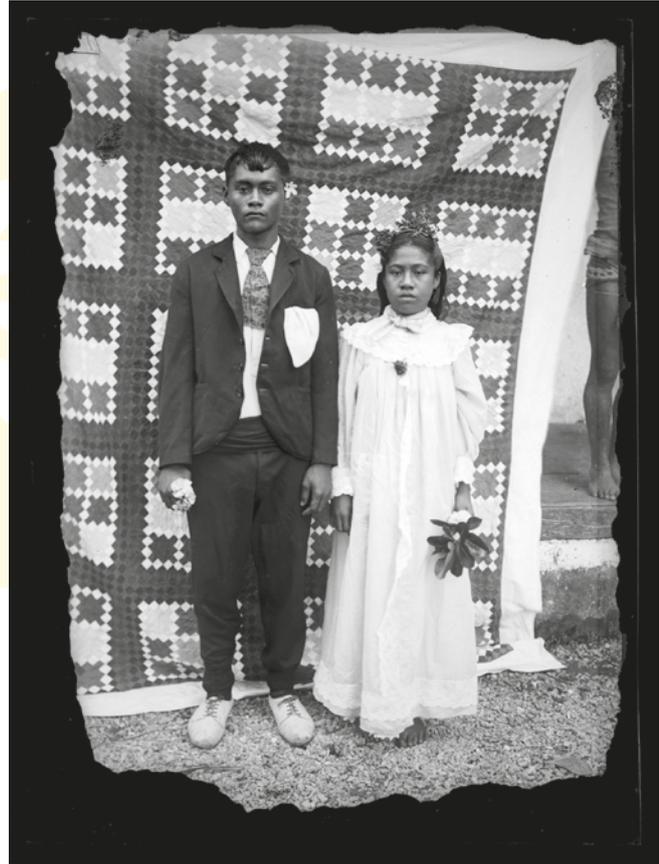
### Making their own artwork

The children could make their own artwork that tells a story. You could take them on a trip outside in nature to collect items (or take photographs). They could select their favourite items to draw and colour.





Family group portrait, circa 1914, Cook Islands, by George Crummer. Te Papa (B.027753)



Unknown man and woman, circa 1910, Cook Islands, by George Crummer. Te Papa (B.028256)

The type of cloth used in the construction of this tivaevae as well as its provenance suggest it was probably made some time in late 1800s or early 1900s. For many years, this tivaevae was in the family of Margot Stewart, who received it from her husband's uncle and aunt, Robert and Agnes Stewart, who were closely associated with the Melanesian Mission in the early 20th century. It is thought that this tivaevae was purchased by Agnes to benefit the Melanesian Mission. It was offered to Te Papa in 2006 by Mary Lee Boyd Bell on behalf of St Georges Church, Seatoun, Wellington New Zealand.



**Credits/ further reading:**

*"Tivaevae – Portraits of Cook Islands Quilting"* by Lynnsay Rongokea, published in 1992 by Daphne Brasell Associates Press, Wellington, New Zealand.

Images sourced from: [www.collections.tepapa.govt.nz](http://www.collections.tepapa.govt.nz)

# Encouraging a Growth Mindset

## What is a growth mindset?

Professor of Psychology Carol Dweck from Stanford says that praising children for their perceived intelligence may be limiting their potential for growth. Carol feels a more helpful way to encourage children and cultivate a growth mindset is to praise them for what they are doing, how they are doing it and their willingness to give it a go. When children believe that their ability can increase they are more open to trying new challenges.

## What is a fixed mindset?

A person with a fixed mindset may avoid challenges, ignore feedback and is threatened by other peoples success.

## Children who have a growth mindset are more likely to:

- Give their best effort
- Take risks and embrace challenges
- Seek feedback
- Learn from their mistakes
- Becomes inspired by others success

## Ways to support children with a growth mindset?

- Praise the effort, progress and hardwork for example "you must have worked really hard on this picture", "what a creative way to solve that problem" and "you have tried really hard".
- Support children with their language. When they say "I can't..." reply by saying "keep trying, you can't do it yet but with more practice you will be able to", "you don't know to yet" or "mistakes help you to improve".
- Share with children that their brain acts like a muscle and is growing. Each time they learn something new their brain is making more connections and becoming stronger and smarter.
- Share with children that we all learn through our mistakes and perseverance. Remember to praise them when learning from a mistake.
- Depending on the age of your child talk to them about their day. Ask "what they found difficult", "what did they try hard at" or "if they made any mistakes today that taught them something".

